

CRE S4**2/MAY/2022****UNENDING LIFE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.**

1. To the Africans, the dead are not dead. How true is this statement basing on A.T.S?
2. Explain the ideas in A.T.S that Africans who were dead had life after death.
3. The Africans believed that the dead were not dead, but they were the living dead. Explain what they meant by that.

In African Tradition Society, they believed that the dead had power to either bless or curse the living eg among the Baganda the dead would bless people with children, good harvest and would also curse people to become barren/unimportant, poor harvests etc.

They believed that the dead relatives acted as mediators, between God and the living because they believed that the dead were too close to God while in spiritual world.

The dead were buried with material things to use in next world. Eg among the Egyptians, the Pharaohs buried with his most beautiful wife, food, spears, slaves and other items.

Some cultures, the living whispered to the dead which showed that they were living dead. e.g. the Bemba of Zambia used to whisper messages to the dead so that they deliver it to those in the spiritual World.

According to ATS they offered sacrifices to the dead in order to appease them. They would also give these sacrifices in order to ask for favours from the dead.

The dead were buried on a common burial ground which was highly respected and cleaned because they believed that in the spiritual World the dead had to stay as a family.

In some cultures, a big feast (funeral rites) was organised before and after burial which meant that the family was sending off the dead to the spiritual World.

In some cultures, when one lost a partner, one would sleep a dead partner. This meant that the living partner was showing respect and love to the dead partner.

Special huts (shrines) were constructed with a belief that the dead people in a spiritual form would come back and live with them, and be consulted. Common among Baganda.

Names of the dead were given to the new born babies, showing that they lived again in the new born babies.

The dead also continued to come back on earth in form of dreams, spirit/vision which indicated that the dead are not dead but are the living dead.

The way the dead were described showed that they were a living dead. E.g. the Banyankole described the dead as AYESIRWE meaning he has just been called and AGYENZIRWE he has just gone.

The demands of the dead were highly respected and honoured, there was no option but to meet the demands made the dead e.g. among Baganda and Basoga, the dead would demand for transfer of their home burial ground, if one had died far away from home.

The dead were always consulted before making decisions since they were regarded to be part of the family.

They offered libations which were poured on the ground for the dead to stare. e.g. among the Baganda they used to offer local brew and water, milk for Banyankole.

The living dead were believed to be the upholder of morals they were believed to identify wrong doers and punish them.

There was the concept of partial rebirth, this was when the baby features and character of the dead was noticed in the new born baby and Africans believed that the dead were reborn again.

IMPORTANCE OF ANCESTORS (LIVING DEAD).

- Blessed the living.
- Acted as Police.
- Mediators.
- promoters of good health.
- Solved problems of the living.
- Promoters of good behaviours.

- Cursed the living.
- Acted as advisors.
- United Africans.

Ancestors were believed to bless the living, e.g. among the Baganda the ancestors blessed people with children.

They solved the problems of the living, eg among the Baganda and Basoga when people were faced with a problem of drought and famine, they would offer sacrifices to their ancestors.

They help to unite the Africans among the Baganda during the time offering sacrifices, people of the community would gather and offer sacrifices.

They were also capable of cursing the wrong doers e.g. among the Banyoro and Baganda, the ancestors would curse women to become barren.

Africans shared items with ancestors which helped people to develop the spirit of sharing e.g. among the Baganda before drinking anything like local brew, water, they had to pour some on the ground so as to share with the ancestors.

The ancestors also acted as the police as they used to maintain peace and stability in the family

Ancestors were promoters of good health eg among Baganda, Basoga people used to dream of herbs that would help them cure certain diseases.

They were promoters of good behaviours in the society and they also helped in moral influence.

They acted as advisers since they were always consulted before making any decision.

RITUALS THAT WERE PERFORMED WHEN A PERSON DIED IN A.T.S(REASONS WHY)

- Bathed the body
 - Tied their waists when mourning.
- Had to light fire
 - performed last funeral rites
- Buried them facing specific direction
 - Buried early enough
- Buried with personal belongings
 - slept with the dead
- Buried on a common burial ground
 - Buried in a courtyard.

Africans used to bathe the body of the dead because people wanted the dead to go in the spiritual world when they are clean.

They used to light fire in order to show the dead the way to the spiritual world.

In some tribes, they used to bury the dead facing specific directions e.g. among the Ngobi clan among the Basoga they buried the dead facing West because they had to return where they came from.

They buried the dead with personal belongings because they believed that they needed these belongings in the spiritual world among the Egyptian a king would be buried with his most favourite wife because they believed that this king needed his wife in the spiritual world.

They buried the dead on a common burial ground known as EKIJJA eg among the Baganda of central Uganda, they buried all their relatives on one common ground known as EKIJJA.

They used to tie their waists when mourning in order for them to be firm while mourning.

There was performance of the last funeral rites which marked the climax of mourning and it would make mourners forget their sorrows.

Africans used to bury the dead early enough for them to begin their journey to the spiritual world when it is still early.

In some societies one partner would be asked to sleep with a dead in order to show respect and love to the dead partner.eg this practice was common among the Bakiga of western Uganda and it was referred to as OKUGGERA EMPANGO.

The head of the family in some tribes was buried in a courtyard, in order to scare men who would encroach on the widow. e.g. among the Basoga of Eastern Uganda the family head (husband) would be buried in a courtyard.

CAUSES OF DEATH IN A.T.S

- Witchcraft
 - Violation of the blood bond/pact
- God's will
 - Failure to respect elders
- Insulting and dishonouring God
 - Violation of the Oath
- Violation of the taboos
 - Involving in immoral acts
- Community condemnation
 - Disrespect of sacred places and objects

Witchcraft practices was one of the causes of death in ATS where envious people would bewitch others up to the point of death.

Insulting and dishonouring the Almighty God would cause death in A.T.S where they believed that God had powers to give and to take away someone's life

Violation of the taboos caused death in A.T.S, a taboo is a religion custom which stops people from doing something bad e.g. among the Baganda they had sex taboo which prohibited young people from having sex before marriage and they would tell that if they had sex before marriage their parents would die.

Violation of the blood bond also caused death in A.T.S because people who entered a blood bond entered a permanent relationship.

Failure to show respect to the elders in the society could cause death among the Africans.

Violation of the oath also caused death in A.T.S because Africans used to swear that MAY I DIE IF WHAT I SAID WAS WRONG.

Some people died due to divine will because they believed that God was the giver of life and was free to take away life.

Involvement in immoral acts as rape, murder, night dancing would also cause death in ATS.

Death was also caused due to community condemnation i.e. failure to have a good will for the society would also cause death.

Spiritual disrespect also caused death in ATS when people failed to respect sacred places and objects. They would undergo physical suffering and even die.

UNENDING LIFE IN CHURCH HISTORY'

WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE IN CHURCH HISTORY PREPARED FOR THEIR LIFE AFTER DEATH.

They had a duty to attend to fellowship meetings through which they would share their experience in the journey to unending life.

They had to regularly praise and worship God as they prepared for their life after death.

Some Christians prepared for their life after death through composing hymns that praised and worshipped God. e.g. Bishop Milton Ambrose composed hymns that praised and worshipped God.

They continued to share the Eucharist in which they brought bread and wine as they shared the Holy communion.

Through repenting for their sins and abandoning their evil ways. E.g. St. Clement of Alexandria repented his sins and turned back to God because he was coming from pagan family.

Through offering charitable services to the needy which reflected God's love where they used to help the needy in the communities where they stayed e.g. St. Francis of Assisi sold off his wealth and shared with the poor St. Peter and John also cared for the sick'

Some Christians bore the discipline of endurance where they faced all sorts of trials for the sake of Christ eg Stephen and St. Ignatius of Antioch accepted to be persecuted for the sake of their faith.

Through writing encouraging letters to the new converts eg St Paul wrote an encouraging letter to the Corinthians and Galatians.

Through carrying out scripture/Bible studies in order for them to understand God better.

Some decided to live a celibacy life in order to dedicate themselves to God's work e.g. St. Francis of Assisi decided to live a single life in order to serve God better.

By remaining committed to living a prayerful life and in their prayers they presented their needs and life challenges to God e.g. St. Francis of Assisi spent most of his time in the deserts praying and fasting.

Through preaching the word of God which gave people hope for life after death eg st Paul moved to Gentle land and preached to the people he found there.

They prepared for their life after death by establishing churches for the new converts e.g. St. Paul established church and St. Francis established a church for his followers.

They carried out missionary journeys and holy journeys to holy places e.g. St. Peter and St. Paul visited Rome.

HOW THE MESSAGE OF UNENDING LIFE WAS DISTORTED IN CHUECH HISTORY?

- Presenting God as a person who was harsh and cruel
- Selling of Indulgencies
- Putting more emphasis on hell instead of heaven
- Involving in sexual immorality.
- Giving women insignificant position
- Missing spiritual gifts
- Giving children unsatisfying position in church.
- Getting greed for material wealth.

- Involving in intellectual debates
- The rich presenting God or God for the poor.

The message of unending life was distorted in church history when they presented God as a person who was so harsh and cruel who would not estate to send people to hell.

More emphasis was put on hell when presenting the gospel and less was preached about heaven which distorted the message of unending life.

Women in church history were given unsatisfactory position which was wrong, because Christianity calls for equality in God's presence e.g. women were denied chance to preach the word of God, lead prayers, join church choirs etc.

Children were also given unsatisfactory attention in church where they were denied chance to serve God.

There was misuse of spiritual gifts which led to spiritual pride and arrogance in church eg people who would speak in tongues used to boast over those ones who were not spiritually gifted.

There was disunity in church yet Christianity calls for unity which distorted the message of unending life.

There was a lot of immorality in church which destroyed the message of unending life. e.g. in the church of Corinth, people practised incest.

There was selling of indulges where people were asked to pay in order for their sins to be forgiven. e.g. people were asked to

pay money and to also fast for a long period of time in order for their sins to be forgiven.

There was a lot of material greed among church leaders where they used church offerings and tithes for their personal interests, which distorted the message of unending life.

There were intellectual debates where the educated people disagreed about the message of unending life. Eg the educated Greeks and Philosophers disagreed with some of the teachings which led to debate in church.

BIBLICAL TEACHING ABOUT UNENDING LIFE.

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING;

- Death is a universal passage
- Teaches about sheol Eccl 9;5-6
- Daniels vision.
- Serving God earns one eternal life.
- God continued to protect us even after death.
- Teaches about God's forgiveness of the righteous.
- Teaches about those who die but appear again in form of spirits.
- One's life on earth determines one's life after death.
- Teaches about the coming of the messiah.
- We are just mere visitors.
- Those who repent will be granted eternal life.

The old testament teaches us that God continues to protect us even after death, therefore there is life after death and God loves us even after death.

The O.T teaches about God's forgiveness and restoration of the righteous people which gives people hope for life after death.

The O.T teaches about the coming of messiah to restore mankind. this gives hope for life after death.

The O.T teaches us that there are people who died but appeared again in spirit form eg priest Samuel died but appeared again to king Saul in form of spirit (1sam 28;1-6).

The O. T teaches about sheol which everyone feared because they believed it was place full of darkness where God could easily forget those who lived there. Eccl 9; 5-6

The O.T teaches that death is a universal passage which everyone goes through to his/her final home, regardless of one's sex.

The O.T teaches us that man on earth is just a mere visitor who goes through death to his final home to live unending life Eccl.12; 5-7

The O.T teaches that when the rebellious Israelites repented and abandon their evil ways, God will grant them salvation (eternal life).

The O.T teaches that serving God earns one better eternal life, God will prepare for those who serve him everlasting life. Eg

the prophets and the priests in the O.T will get everlasting life when they die, because they served while on earth.

Daniel in this vision revealed the resurrection of all mankind a sleep in the grave that they would raise again and the wicked will forever be lost in God's presence. Daniel 12;2-4

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH.

- Eternal life is prepared for everyone
- Jesus is the way to eternal life
- No one will see the kingdom of God unless he/she is a born again.
- There is enough accommodation for everyone
- To do away with worldly riches
- Jesus's resurrection is an assurance for life after death.
- Should have the virtue of the beatitudes
- Obedience to Jesus' words earns one eternal life
- Lazarus' resurrection is as assurance
- Should put our faith into practice to earn eternity.

Eternal life is to be prepared for every one without discrimination unlike in O.T where it favoured only the Israelites.

The N.T identifies Jesus as the only way to eternal life. (John 14;6) teaches that whoever believes in him will have everlasting life.

The N.T teaches us that no one will see the kingdom of God unless he/she is a born again. This refers to one's repentance of the past evil and embrace God's righteous ways.

The N.T teaches that there is enough accommodation for everyone in heaven (John 3;2) Jesus committed himself as the one in charge of making sure that all his followers have places in heaven.

The N.T teaches us that the followers of Jesus should do away with worldly riches because they are barriers to man's way to the kingdom of God (Mark 10;17-23)

The N.T teaches us that in order to get eternal life, we should put our faith into practice by helping the needy, the sick, disabled etc. (Mtt 25; 37-46)

The N.T teaches that for any believer to get salvation he/she should have the virtues of the beatitudes i.e. should be merciful, peaceful, humble, gentle and calm (Matt 5;)

Jesus's death and resurrection gave an assurance to his followers that there is life after death for those who believe in him (John 11;45)

The N.T teaches that those labour to build the kingdom of God while on earth would be rewarded by giving them eternal life (Corinth 3;8)

Obedience to Jesus' words and God' commandments is said to earn anyone salvation since his words bear the truth about salvation (John 5;24)

JEWISH BELIEFS

Give the Jewish beliefs about life after death;

- They belief in shoal
- They believe that death is a way to continue life
- Some believe that there was no life after death, while others believed that there was life after death
- They believe that was for the living not for the dead.
- They believed that those who die when they are unrighteous they would be eaten up by the maggots.
- They believed that the names of the faithful ones would be written in the book of life.
- They believed that there are rewards that would be given to the righteous for their deeds.
- Some believed that forgiving one another earns one eternal life.

MESSAGE OF UNENDING LIFE TO A PERSON SUFFERING FROM AIDS

Even if a Christian dies of AIDS she/he shall be raised to life on the last day as Jesus assured his followers.

I can advise this person that its God' will for him/her to suffer from AIDS and God allows x-tians to suffer as Jesus suffered on the cross.

A Christian has to know that death is the entry point to eternity with God.

A Christian with AIDS has to go/turn back to God, abandon evil ways and repent for his/her sins.

A Christian has got to know that all mankind will have to die since death is a universal passage and its only who will never die.

A Christian should know that when the body weakens and die the soul continues to live. IDS should know that there is always a cross to carry in living Christian life and all this prepares him/her salvation.

A Christian with AIDS should get more committed to God by living a prayerful life.

The affected Christian should get more devoted to God and for bible studies which can draw him closer to God.

Christians should have hope that resurrected Christ is ever available and living among his people.

VENERATION OF THE DEAD CHRISTIANS IN MODERN CHURCH

The term veneration means remembering the dead / depart Christians.

Christian have organised church services which are dedicated to the dead.

Some Christians have been burned on church entry which is highly respected by x-tians.

Special days have been dedicated to the dead in a year e.g. every 3rd June each year is a martyr's day.

Through carrying out religious journeys to special places dedicated to the saints e.g. Protestants and Catholics always visit Namugongo shrine every 3rd June.

Composing songs praising the exemplary work done by the departed e.g. Christians composed songs praising the Uganda martyrs.

Baptising Christians

names that belonged to the departed Christians.

The modern church has established several institutions and named them after the dead eg Uganda martyrs SSS Namugongo.

By using the dead as mediators through whom they present their requests e.g. Catholics use mother Mary as their mediator.

Putting monuments in place i.e. pictures depicting the resemblance of the dead, e.g. at Rubaga cathedral they have the monument of mother Mary.

Important roads and streets around town have been named after the dead e.g. Luwum street in Kampala was named after the late arch Bishop Jonan Luwum.

Biographies (stories) have been written about the dead and have been put in major libraries e.g. the Biography of the late cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga been put in major libraries.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WAY OF PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH.

SIMILARITIES (BOTH)

They both respect the dead and use them as their mediators.

They both venerate the dead by giving their names to new born babies. They both believe that death is the only way through which one can leave the earthly life and join the spiritual life.

Both require to dedicate them to God as a way of preparing for eternal life.

They both recognise that at the time death, the spirits separate from the body.

They both emphasise living morally upright in life as way of preparing for eternal life.

In both performing of good work (charitable work) like caring for the sick, elderly is emphasised.

DIFFERENCES (WHILE/WHEREAS);

CHRISTIAN //AFRICANS;

- Christians pray through Jesus Christ//They prayed through ancestor spirits.

- Believe in Jesus Christ as the last sacrificial lamb//They offered sacrifices to appease the spirits.
- They call upon the Holy spirit to guide them. //The dead were the custodians of morals who guided them.
- Take the Eucharist in preparation for unending life//They used to give food and libations to the dead in preparation for unending life.
- Believe in resurrection. // They believe in partial re-birth.
- Believe in Baptism as a way of preparing for eternal life//They demanded fulfilling cultural obligations, like circumcision.
- Practised forgiveness and repentance of sins.
//punishments were administered to the wrong doers as way of forgiving them.
- Believe in heaven and hell where the dead will/would go after death. //Believe that the ancestors continued to be members of the family.

END