

**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME ON
CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES AND INTERPRETATION
TO BE RUN IN ODL MODE
THROUGH THE INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS**

1. Conditions for Admission

A candidate who has passed +2 conducted by Tamilnadu Board of Higher Secondary Education or an examination of any other State accepted by the Syndicate of the University of Madras as equivalent thereof shall be permitted to appear and qualify for the **Certificate Programme on Christian Scriptures and Interpretation** to be run in ODL Mode through the Institute of Distance Education

2. Eligibility for the Award of Certificate

A candidate shall be eligible for the award of the **Certificate Programme on Christian Scriptures and Interpretation** if he/she has undergone the prescribed course of study earning 20 credits and fulfilling such conditions as have been prescribed therefore.

3. Duration of the Programme

The **Certificate Programme on Christian Scriptures and Interpretation** shall run for 6 months in ODL Mode through the Institute of Distance Education.

Norms for delivery of courses through open and distance mode:

S No.	Credit Value of the course	Size of SLMs Range (in terms of units, to be divided into blocks)	No. of Assignments	Practical Sessions	No. of Counselling sessions Theory (10 percent of total study hours)	Study hours of Learner
1	4 credits	14-20 units	2	120 hours	12 hours	120 hours
2	6 credits	20-28 units	3	180 hours	18 hours	180 hours

4. Examination

Examination will be held at the end of the course. The subjects with six credits will have three internals, the subjects with four credits will have two internals. The internal exams will carry 25 marks and the external exams 75 marks.

5. Syllabus

Code No.	Course Title	C/E	L	T	I	Credits
	OLD TESTAMENT: BOOKS, AUTHORSHIP, CONTEXTS AND CONCERNS	C				6
	NEW TESTAMENT: BOOKS, AUTHORSHIP, CONTEXTS AND CONCERNS	C				6
	SALIENT THEMES IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES	C				4
	INTERPRETATING CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE: METHODS AND CONCERNS	C				4
		TOTAL			20 CREDITS	

SYLLABUS

Courses:

1. OLD TESTAMENT: BOOKS, AUTHORSHIP, CONTEXTS AND CONCERNS

Unit 1: Pentateuch: The word 'Pentateuch' means 'five rolls or books' – it is a name given latterly for the Law or the Torah of the Hebrew Bible – It is attributed to Moses as the author – contains narratives on genesis, faith of Abraham, exodus, life of Moses, and journey in the wilderness – Book of Leviticus contains the rules and regulations of purity and pollution and therefore the important book of the Torah

Unit 2: Joshua, Judges & Ruth: Counted as part of the historical books of the OT – Joshua is the main character of the book of Joshua – it deals with the conquest of Canaan, the division of the promised land among the tribes of Israel – Judges are military leaders believed to have been sent by God at critical moments in the history of Israelites – Ruth is a story set within the context of Jerusalem's harvest season, and tells the life-story of two widows who are rewarded for their faith in God

Unit 3: I & II Samuel and I & II Kings: Counted as part of the historical books of the OT – These books deal with the kings of Israel – Books of Samuel deals with the introduction of kingship among the Israelites – Books of Kings is a theological account of the kings and kingdoms of Israel – deals also with the division of the kingdom and the Babylonian exile

Unit 4: I & II Chronicles: Counted as part of the historical books of the OT – Events mentioned in books of Samuel and Kings are narrated here with a different perspective – God's loyalty is preserved through the multiple failures of Israelites.

Unit 5: Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther: Ezra was a priest and an expert at Law – He led a section of Israelites back from the exile and established them as covenantal people – he made priests to be responsible not merely for their religious life, but also their social life – Nehemiah, made a governor by the king of Persia, built up the walls of Jerusalem – made socio-religious reforms – Many of Nehemiah's prayers are found in the book – Book of

Esther contains events which took place in the palace of the Persian king and shows how Esther saved her people with God-given valour

Unit 6: Psalms: A collection of 150 poems recited during Israelites' worship – contains praises, prayers, petitions seeking forgiveness, thanksgiving for God's blessings, instructions and on kings – majority of the poems are generally attributed to king David.

Unit 7: Job: Book of Job addresses the question 'why do the innocent suffer?' and comes up with a conclusion that those who withstand the sufferings on the basis of faith are finally rewarded

Unit 8: Proverbs: Book of proverbs dwell upon ethics and faith, and instructs that 'fear of God is the beginning of wisdom'

Unit 9: Ecclesiastes: Book of Ecclesiastes dwell upon the impermanence of life and the inabilities of the human – however, instructs that one can win over despondency with the help of God

Unit 10: Song of Song: Book of Song of Songs, attributed to king Solomon, flourishes the relationship of love which is analogously attributed to the relationship between God and Israelites.

Unit 11: Major Prophet– Isaiah: Book of Isaiah is generally attributed to a prophet who lived in Jerusalem during the eight century B.C. – However, the book is being divided into three sections (1-39; 40-55; 56-66) emerging from different contexts

Unit 12: Major Prophet–Jeremiah: Book of Jeremiah is a prophet who lived during the last part of the seventh and early part of the sixth century B.C. – Though he witnessed the Israelites being deported to Babylon in exile, he enlivened them with the hope of the return

Unit 13: Major Prophet – Ezekiel: Prophet Ezekiel lived before and during the exile – prophesied to those who were under exile as well as those in Jerusalem – True to the meaning of his name 'God gives strength', he instilled hope in the people through imageries and symbols.

Unit 14: Major Prophet – Daniel: Daniel is a book written when Israelites were being persecuted by foreign rulers – it tells of the story of Daniel and his friends overcoming their enemies with their deep faith in God.

Unit 15: Minor Prophets – I (Hosea, Amos, Micah): Prophet Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Samaria before its fall during the eighth century B.C. – He indicted the people for their idolatry – it speaks of the unfaithfulness of the Israelites to God through an analogy of marriage – Book of Amos was perhaps the first book to be written among the prophecies – Though born in the southern kingdom, he went to the northern kingdom and prophesied during the eighth century B.C. – He upheld the values of justice and righteousness through his prophecies – Micah is a contemporary of Hosea, and prophesied against the evil doings of Judah, while Amos was prophesying to the northern kingdom.

Unit 16: Minor Prophets – II (Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah): Book of Nahum sings the destruction of Nineveh during the seventh century B.C. – Prophet Habakkuk, who lived probably during the reign of Babylonians, questions God as to why God is tolerating the evil doings and gets an assurance from God - Zephaniah lived during the latter part of the seventh century BC and warned about the fall of Jerusalem and of the resurgence of Jerusalem again

Unit 17: Minor Prophets – III (Joel, Obadiah, Jonah): Book of Joel could have been written during 5-4th centuries BC during the reign of Persian kings – He reminds the promise of God even amidst sufferings caused by drought and locusts – Book of Obadiah is written after the fall of Jerusalem during the sixth century BC, and warns the neighbouring enemies of Judah of God's punishment – Book of Jonah speaks about the unconditional mercy and forgiveness of God.

Unit 18: Minor Prophets – IV (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi): Prophet Haggai prophesies in the post-exilic context and encourages the people to build the temple for God – Book of Zechariah, having two parts (1-8 & 9-14), emerges in the post-exilic context, offers the promise of building of the temple and the purification of the people and the second part goes on to speak about the Messiah and the final judgement – Prophet Malachi prophesied during the fifth century B.C. after the building of the temple, and warns of the people who defiled the name of God and speaks of the coming of the messenger of God.

Unit 19: Deutero-Canonical Books - I (Tobit, Esther, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch, Daniel (some sections), and I & II Maccabees): Known as apocryphal or deutero-canonical books – Tobit, Sirach, I & II Maccabees, part of Esther and Daniel were written during the period of the Hellenistic influence.

Unit 20: Deutero-Canonical Books - II (Judith and Wisdom of Solomon): Judith and Wisdom of Solomon were written during the Roman dominance – written in apologetic tone in order to defend the Israelite's religious beliefs and practices.

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2. NEW TESTAMENT: BOOKS, AUTHORS, CONTEXTS AND CONCERNS

Unit 1: Gospel of Mark: Written by Mark the disciple of Peter (John Mark) in whose house early Christians gathered for prayer and worship – He was a relative of Barnabas - Written to Christians in Rome – Earliest among the Synoptics – written between 64 – 70 AD – In the context of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, this Gospel was written to the Christians in Rome who were being persecuted – dwells upon the Mystery of the Messiah – Mystery of the Son of Man

Unit 2: Gospel of Mathew: Gospel of Mathew was written after the destruction of the temple in the context of Jewish groups persecuting the Christians – it was a context when early Christians had left the synagogues to form the Churches in cities like Antioch – it was a time when early Jewish Christians were disturbed by doubts upon the Christian belief and this book addresses them - during this context, the book dwells upon ethics, forgiveness and good relationship among the Christians

Unit 3: Gospel of Luke: Luke, a medical practitioner, was from Antioch, and worked with Paul – He wrote it in good Greek for those speaking Greek – should have been written after the destruction of the temple – he presents the Gospel in three chronological phases – until the time of John the Baptist, the time of Jesus and the time of early Christians – the events of this book begin from Jerusalem and ends in Jerusalem, pointing out to the importance of Jerusalem in the redemption of humanity – redemption of the 'lost' is an important message of this Gospel and therefore, the sinners, poor, women, and Samaritans get focussed in the content.

Unit 4: Gospel of John: This Gospel was written by John, son of Zebedee, formerly a disciple of John the Baptist and latterly a disciple loved by Jesus – the aim of the Gospel as given out in 20:31 is for enabling the readers to believe in Jesus as the son of God and Messiah and that those who believe in him will receive eternal life – it was written during the later part of the first century to address some of the issues faced by the Christians of the time.

Unit 5: Acts of the Apostles: It is generally accepted as a continuity of the Gospel of Luke – the author of this book participated in the ministry of Paul and wrote about them – the aim of the book is to show that the Christians are not against Rome and that they have not done anything against the Jews either – it speaks about the ministries of Peter and Paul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit – it speaks also about the beginnings of the early Church

Unit 6: First and Second Letters to Thessalonians: First Letter to the Thessalonians was the very first letter written by Paul in the year 51 – It speaks about resurrection and the second coming of the Lord

Unit 7: Letter to Galatians: Letter to the Galatians introduces the basic Christian tenet of justification by faith – it was written to clear the confusions created by Judaising trend among the Christians

Unit 8: First and Second Letters to Corinthians: Letter to the Corinthians address some of the issues of division and un-Christian practices among the Christians in Corinth – Second Letter to the Corinthians was written to convey Paul's satisfaction that some criticism against him have been answered and understood.

Unit 9: Letter to Philippians: Letter to Philippians dwells upon the themes of unity and joy – Paul writes this letter to thank the Philippians for helping him and to encourage them to live in the hope in Christ.

Unit 10: Letter to Philemon: Letter to Philippians dwells upon the themes of unity and joy – Paul writes this letter to thank the Philippians for helping him and to encourage them to live in the hope in Christ – Letter to Philemon was a personal letter written to seek forgiveness for Onesimus, a former slave of Philemon, and to accept him not as a slave but as a brother in Christ

Unit 11: Letter to Romans: Letter to the Romans contains the matured theology of Paul and serves as the basis of important doctrines of Christianity today.

Unit 12: Letter to Ephesians: Letter to Ephesians, closely related to the letter to Colossians, presents good imageries of the Church, and presents the theological idea that the plan of God is not only to redeem the human beings but to reconcile the whole of creation in Jesus Christ

Unit 13: Letter to Colossian: Authenticating the tenets of the Gospel, Creation hymn, Christ.

Unit 14: Letter to Hebrews: It was a letter written to Jewish Christians, who, having accepted Christ as the Messiah, wavered in their faith and tended to return to Judaism – the salvific significance of Christ is the core content of this letter – it shows how the priesthood of Jesus is superior to the Jewish priesthood and that it fulfils the promises made to the Jews.

Unit 15: Pastoral Letters (1&2 Timothy and Titus): Letters to written to Timothy and Titus, who were heads of churches, are known as pastoral letters. Timothy, who had joined the mission journeys with Paul, was from Lystra, from a Greek father and a Jewish mother – Paul appointed Timothy as overseer of the Church at Ephesus – the letters speak about the duties of the overseer – Titus was a non-Jewish Christian – he journeyed with Paul during his third missionary journey – He became the overseer of the church at Crete – the letter instructs on choosing the helpers for the church and on Christian ethics.

Unit 16: Letter of James: Letter of James was written to all the diaspora Jewish Christians – the author James writes about how a Christian should conduct herself / himself in the ordinary life-situation with Christian values of self-less love, life of holiness, trust, faith that bears fruits, etc.

Unit 17: Letter of Jude: The letter of Jude was written to all Christians – it was written to save the Christians from false preachers as well as to instruct them on duties of Christian love.

Unit 18: Letters of Peter: First Letter of Peter was written to Christians in Asia Minor to strengthen them against persecutions and to revive their hopes – the second letter of Peter was written to assure that Christ would come again and that they should know the true God and Jesus Christ.

Unit 19: Letters of John: First letter of John has many similarities with the Gospel of John and even interprets some tenets of the Gospel – It should therefore be associated with the Johannine community – this was aimed at removing some of the errors in the teaching about Jesus and for deepening the faith of the Christians – the second letter of John was written to warn those who left the Church and instruct the church members to show their faith by loving one another – the third letter of John too was written by an elder and shows the kind of authority structure that existed among the early Christians.

Unit 20: Book of Revelation: The last book of the Bible belongs to an apocalyptic genre of writing – it was written by John, an elder in a church – the book was written against the context of persecutions of Christians by Nero or Domitian – When the emperors demanded emperor's worship, the Christians refused to do so – the book has this reality as its background – Christian response is given in imageries and symbols.

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3. SALIENT THEMES IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

Unit 1: Theological Themes in Pentateuch: Primeval History: Creation, Human Disobedience (Sin and Fall of Humankind), Destruction of Humankind by Flood, Covenant with Noah, Dispersal of Nations at Babel. Ancestral History: Call of Abraham and Sarah, Promise to Abraham and his descendants, (Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel, Joseph and his brothers), Motif of Blessing and Covenant, Creatorship and Lordship of God in Genesis; The Israelites in Egypt: The Hebrew Oppressed in Egypt, The life and Mission of Moses, Plagues of Egypt; The Crossing of the Red Sea, The Journey through the Desert, Covenant at Sinai, Commandments, Sanctuary, Levites, Priesthood, Clean and Unclean Things, Atonement, Law of Holiness, Redemption Offerings.

Unit 2: Yahweh and His People in Historical Books: The Conquest of the Promised Land, Division of the Land among the Tribes, Renewal of Covenant, Mission of the Judges, Tribal Federation, Demand for a Ruler, Anointed Kings, Monarchy, Divided Monarchy, Prophetic Ministry, Covenant, Idolatry, Repentance, Judgment, Destruction, Exile.

Unit 3: Key Theological Themes in Major Prophets - I (Isaiah and Jeremiah): Holiness of God, Yahweh as God of History, the idea of the remnant, universalism and justice in Isaiah; The ideas of vocation and its demands, religion in spirit and truth, sin and repentance, new covenant in Jeremiah.

Unit 4: Key Theological Themes in Major Prophets – II (Ezekiel and Daniel): Sin and individual responsibility, hope and comfort, messianism, new heart and new spirit, new temple and living water in Ezekiel. Sovereignty and messianic visions in Daniel.

Unit 5: Prophetic themes and key ideas in some Minor Prophets: Virgin Israel, Remnant Israel, day of the Lord, Restoration of Israel and the meaning of different oracles in Amos; Decalogue, Steadfast love of God, Sins of Israel and the role of Torah in Hosea; Definition of a true religion, agents of injustice, God's Judgment and punishment as a lesson—in Micah

Unit 6: The nature and function of wisdom in Wisdom Literatures: Personification of wisdom, Fear of the Lord, Wisdom and folly, The righteous and the wicked, the idea of retribution and the themes of presence and absence in divine love

Unit 7: Theological Themes in the Book of Psalms: God in Psalms (Monotheism), Praise, Celebration, Laments and Curses in Psalms, Human beings in the Psalms (their status, their relationship with God, death, resurrection and the future life of humans) and depiction of nature in the Psalms (Creation and Fall), Election and Covenant, Eschatology.

Unit 8: Jesus and his teachings in Synoptic Gospels: Abba Experience of Jesus and his revelation of God's love as unconditional, merciful and forgiving; Reign of God and metanoia as a human response, Sermon on the Mount, Parables of Jesus (their nature and purpose) and its kinds (Parables of Kingdom of God, Parables of God's Mercy and Forgiveness, Parables of Discipleship, and Parables of Crisis) Miracles of Jesus and its meaning, Jesus' contrast community, Jesus and the poor, Significance of his Table-fellowship, Salvific acts of Jesus (Passion, death and Resurrection) and the significance of disciples' encounter with Post-resurrectional Jesus.

Unit 9: Major themes in John's gospel: Jesus as Logos - Concept of Glory in John's Gospel – Johannine theological themes (Light, Way, Truth); seven "I am saying" teachings; miracles as signs of God's glory; Unity as a key to understand the relationship between Jesus, His Father and the Disciples.

Unit 10: Major Themes in Acts of the Apostles: Community life, Diakonia and Service to the poor.

Unit 11: Major Themes in St. Paul's Original Epistles: Sin and its destructive power (1 Cor 1:18 – 3:20); Salvation through faith in Christ & new life in him (Rom 3:21 – 8:39); Jewish people in God's plan (Rom 9:1 – 11:36); Rule of Christian conduct (Rom 12:1 – 15:13); Division and disorders in the community (1 Cor 1:10 – 6:20).

Unit 12: Major Themes in St. Paul's Pastoral and other letters: The Mystery of Christ in Ephesians (Eph 1:3 – 3:21); Exhortation for worthy Christian living (Eph 4:1 – 6:20); Norms of household behaviour (1 Tim 2:1 – 3:16); Pastoral advice, warnings, exhortations to Timothy (1 Tim 4:1= 6:2; 2 Tim 2:1 – 4:8); Christian living (Tit 2:1 – 3:11) and Christ and the lawless ones (2 Thes 2:1-17).

Unit 13: Key ideas in the letters of John, Peter and James: Love of God and Love of neighbor, Royal priesthood of the people of God, suffering in Christian life, Condemnation of faith without work.

Unit 14: Unpacking meanings, symbols and metaphors in the book of Revelation: The meaning of prologue (1:1-3); the idea of praise, promise and divine responsibility in seven letters to the churches (1:4-3:22); Revelatory experiences-I—in the visions of the heavenly court, seven seals and seven trumpets (4: 1-11:9); Revelatory Experiences-II in the visions of the Dragon, the beasts and the Lamb, Seven plagues and seven bowls, Victor of Christ and the end of History (12:1—22:5).

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4. INTERPRTING CHRISITAN SCRIPTURE: METHODS AND CONCERNS

Unit 1: Biblical Interpretation: Historical, theological and Philosophical underpinnings of Biblical Interpretation – The need for interpretation – ‘Bible, the Word of God in Human Words’ – Bible as multidimensional library

Unit 2: Interpretation of Bible during Biblical Period: Bible in Oral Traditions / Forms – Context of worship – Letters to Churches – Interpretive Methods: Literal – Midrash – Peshet – Allegorical – Typological – Christological, etc.

Unit 3: Patristic Period: Emergence of the ‘Canon’ of the Bible – Question of Inerrancy – Methods of Interpretation: Allegorical Interpretation of the Alexandrian School; Literal-historical and Typological Hermeneutics of Antiochene School; Tradition and authority in biblical interpretation, Eastern and orthodox theologians’ views on interpretation of scriptures.

Unit 4: The Medieval period: Catena as Biblical Commentaries – Peter Lombard's *Four Sentences* – Scholastic theological methods and integration of Biblical texts, e.g. Thomas Aquinas

Unit 5: Reformation Period: Preaching the Word of God as a New Method (Peter Waldo) – Translating the Bible into native languages as Interpretations (John Wycliff) – Reformation Principles - *Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide* – Principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture – Birth of Evangelical Methods

Unit 6: Modern Period: Rationalism – Urge to apply scientific principles of interpretation - Historical-critical method: Source Criticism – Form Criticism – Historical Criticism – Redaction Criticism – Social-Scientific Criticism – Canonical Criticism – Principles of Existentialism in the Study of Bible [e.g. Rudolf Bultmann]

Unit 7: Post-Modern & Post-Colonial Approaches: Post-structuralism – Deconstruction – Rhetorical Criticism and Inter-textuality – Structural Criticism – Narrative Criticism – Postcolonial Interpretations- Asian-African-Latin American Interpretations

Unit 8: Contextual/Ideological and Cultural Reading of the Bible: Liberative Hermeneutics (Liberation Theology) – Reader-response Method – Subaltern Perspectives— Feminist/Womanist Reading – Socio-Political Reading – Pentecostal and Charismatic Interpretations of the Bible.

Unit 9: Interpretation of Scriptures in India: Survey of Biblical Interpretations in India – Dhvani method of reading and interpretation, Re-reading of the Bible from the perspective of the Margins or People in the Periphery – Dalit Reading, Indian Feminist/Womanist Reading, Tribal/Adivasi Interpretations.

Unit 10: Bible and Human Concerns-I: Biblical views on Poverty, Social Justice, Caste and Gender based Discriminations; Biblical response to Global Pandemic (e.g., SARS, COVID-19). Bible and the disabled

Unit 11: Bible and Human Concerns II: Bible as a source for Counselling to overcome Mental Illness, Domestic Violence, Rupture in Relationships and Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol and Pornography

Unit 12: Bible and Contemporary Issues: Biblical views on Nationalism, Secularism, Globalization, Migration, Refugees, Religious Violence, Religious Plurality, Interfaith-Interpretations.

Unit 13: Bible, other Cultures and Religions: Cultural encounters in Bible, inculturation and Bible, Bible and Multiculturalism, Bible and Ecumenism, Bible and Inter-faith relations.

Unit 14: Bible and Ecological Concerns: Revisiting Biblical idea of Dominion over Nature; Biblical Understanding of the Cosmic World as God's Creation; Understanding of Land and its Resources, Plants and Birds and other creatures in Bible; Nature in Christian eschatology.

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