



IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH

5|6 LATEEF JAKANDE AVENUE (FORMERLY BELL),
IKOYI, LAGOS, NIGERIA.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lessons Manual

JANUARY - JUNE 2025



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The Manual Belongs To

Class





Preface

***B**ut grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18.*

The theme and text of the church for 2025 will be the heart of our Sunday school lessons for the next 12 months. Our heart cry is that each of the lessons in this book will open our hearts to know Christ more personally so that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of Him. Our only focus will be to make Christ known so that we may grow and increase in all dimensions of our walk with Him and in life. This commitment is reinforced with the inclusion of the reflections for supernatural increase.

It is my pleasure therefore, on behalf of God's servant, Rev Dr Olusegun Adeleke and the Sunday school department to welcome you to another impactful series of glorious encounters with the Lord.

Michael Onyegbu

Minister for Youth and Education





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JANUARY

5

THE LORD IS KING

Theme For The Quarter: A King Forever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Our God Reigns

Topic: The Lord Is King

Devotional Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Background Scriptures: Psalm 9, 10

Lesson Scriptures: Psalm 10:12-18

Memory Verse:

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted, you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. Psalm 10:17

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, participants should be able to;

1. Mention three ways God helps the oppressed and the afflicted.
2. Identify the characters of God that assures you He does not forget you.
3. Express appreciation to God because He hears our cries even as we give Him all our worship this week and always.

INTRODUCTION

Lord we have come with a heart full of gratitude to say thank you for preserving our lives and bringing us to this New Year 2025. It can only be you Lord. We pray for divine strength and inspiration to remain relevant as we teach God's word to His people throughout the year, in Jesus mighty name. Welcome to the first Sunday of January 2025. May God help us to do great exploits as we grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

There's so much trouble all over the world. In Nigeria there is so much hardship, that people begin to wonder whether those in power really care about the people they govern. There is power failure every now and then, affecting people's businesses. Many

have been forced to close down their businesses. Cost of fuel is very high and this has affected the entire populace. We all cry to God for help. Sometimes people begin to wonder whether God is really hearing our cry in Nigeria. Some people feed fat on the nation's common wealth while majority of others live in abject poverty. We struggle with so many things that diminish our strength. There's hardship due to terrorist attacks, bad economy, bad leadership, injustices here and there, oppression etc. Some people have been rendered homeless because of terrorist attacks. Does God hear the cry of his people (this may be our worry or question) or has God forgotten his people? The answer is no! The wicked have forgotten that all the evil they perpetrate are bare before God and will eventually be brought to light one day. In our lesson today the psalmist admonishes, encourages and assures us to have confidence in God that He will deliver the righteous. The passage also reveals that God is the helper of the oppressed. The psalmist declares that God is King forever and ever, He is in control and will break the arms of the wicked and evil men, no matter how long it takes.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

GOD'S ABILITY TO SAVE (PSALM 10:12-14)

There is so much hardship in the land today. This has led to several protests. People are not happy with the leadership who seem unperturbed by the reactions of the people. Just like the psalmist's prayer in our lesson today, we need God to arise and step into our situation. It looks like the wicked were having their way when David wrote the psalm. The same can be said of what is happening in Nigeria, that sometimes it looks like God is hidden. We need to cry to God because He is aware of all that is happening, the injustices and the hardships. Asking God to lift up His hand implies that we have a God who has the ability and

capacity to save us. Our God is Jehovah the man of war (Exodus 15:3). He is God who fights our battles and rescues those who call upon Him for help (Psalm 17:7). Sometimes when faced with some overwhelming situations we feel God has forgotten us. The prayer of “forget not the humble” suggests a feeling that God seemed unconcerned about the plights of the poor and vulnerable, Our God never forgets His own, He is a faithful God. The God that sees and knows everything- be rest assured that He is in control of all that happens. Our dependence on Him makes Him listen to us as He comes forth to help us. Do we help the oppressed, the poor and the needy when we are in a position to do so or do we turn our eyes away from them?

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LESSON 2

GOD'S INTERVENTION (PSALM 10: 15)

I love the song that says; “He knows my names; He knows my every thought. He sees each tear that falls and hears me when I call” God knows us.

He is aware of all that we go through and will surely fight our battle. He is a mighty warrior and will render the evil one powerless over us. Their arms were broken such that they could no longer oppress the vulnerable. Those who have been crushed in life have a sure advocate in God. God uses his hand to defeat the wicked and his strength to provide for the oppressed. People who pervert justice with impurity, God sees them. While human courts may ignore the cries of the oppressed. Our God does not. God will intervene in all that we go through as he did for David.

He will break the oppressor's power. Verse 15b says God will seek out his wickedness till he finds none. God's cleansing of sin will be so complete till none is remaining because He is the judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25)

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LESSON THREE

GOD'S CHARACTER (PSALM 10:16-18)

Our God is a holy God, absolutely truthful righteous and just. The psalmist closes with a declaration that God is King forever and ever. David expresses his confidence in God that He is king and reigns forever. Verse 16 is basically exalting God and His supremacy as king over all. “The lord is King forever and ever; the nation perishes from his land” verse 16. God is King, He is sovereign, and He is the ruler. The psalmist affirms that God hears the desire of the afflicted, encourages them and listens to their cry. Not only will God hear the prayers of the afflicted and encourage them, He will surely bring justice to those who are helpless, abandoned, abused or oppressed by others. He is the father to the fatherless. God thwarts the plans of the wicked. God sees, and takes note of every evil deed done to His children. He hears our cries and comforts our hearts. God is all powerful, all mighty and uses His powers to deliver and rescues, unlike the powerful human beings that use their powers to oppress others. May God help us to be a reflection of him as we help others and show His love by being God's hands in relieving oppression.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- 1) Like in our lesson today how would you counsel a Christian who feels he has been forgotten by God?
- 2) What have we learnt about the wicked in today's lesson?
- 3) What cries would you raise to God for Nigeria today?
- 4) Which of God's characters has ministered to you most?
- 5) How would the knowledge that “the Lord is King forever and ever” influence your behaviour?

APPLICATION

- 1) Let us put all our trust in God because he surely listens and hears our prayers
- 2) Our God never forgets us
- 3) God delights in using His power to defend and fight for us
- 4) We must strive to be a reflection of God's character as we help the helpless and the oppressed

CONCLUSION

In our time of need or distress, let us put our trust in God, not in man or a lesser god. God is a defender of the defenceless, a father to the fatherless. He is King for ever and ever and He uses His power to protect us and fights our battles.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

We can only have all round increase and be blessed if we are like Him, use our positions or powers to help the helpless and showcase His love to the world by being His ambassadors.

Our God Reigns

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Mon, Jan 6 | Faithful and True | Rev. 19:11-21 |
| Tues, Jan 7 | God makes great and gives strength | 1Chron. 29:10-20 |
| Wed Jan 8 | Our God reigns | Isaiah 52:1-12 |
| Thu, Jan 9 | Shout joyfully to God | Psalm 47 |
| Fri, Jan 10 | Exalted through obedience | Phil. 2:1-13 |
| Sat, Jan 11 | The wind and the sea obey Jesus | Mark 4:35-41 |
| Sun Jan 12 | Robed in majesty | Psalm 93 |



JANUARY

12

THE LORD IS MAJESTIC

Theme For The Quarter: A King For Ever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Our God Reigns

Topic: The Lord Is Majestic

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 52:1-12

Background Scripture: Psalms 47, 93

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 93

Memory Verse

The LORD reigns, He is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and is armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure. Psalm 93:1

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, participants should be able to:

1. Mention two attributes of God in psalm 93
2. Identify what God is mightier than.
3. Acknowledge the lordship of God by giving Him all your worship and the honor due to him in the coming week and always.

INTRODUCTION

Our clothes matters a lot. Remember, you are addressed the way you are dressed. What garments are we putting on as children of God? Thank God that through his son Jesus Christ, we wear the garment of His righteousness because Jesus has bought us with his precious blood.

Clothes conceal our nakedness but also serves other purposes. Clothes reveal a person's status: pastors wear clerical collars; soldiers wear uniforms for easy identification. Kings and queens wear royal crowns and live in palaces. These images of crowns, palaces, some royal robe etc. signify power and authority. All these symbols of authority are meant to evoke respect and inspire confidence in the people.

Human authorities, even good leaders, fall short of perfection. Those called to protect us as our leaders fail us, they even cause us harm. Kings and all powers have all failed the people. Human beings keep seeking and looking for the better leader. The world longs for a new kind of authority, a different king. Psalm 93 celebrates the perfect King we have been seeking, the king of kings. The children of Israel used psalm 93 in worship to celebrate the sovereignty of God and the greatness of His power over creation. God deserves our praises and honour. He is from beginning to the end. His throne is firmly established from eternity to eternity.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE:

GOD'S REIGN (PSALM 93:1-2)

The Lord reigns, the LORD with capital letters translates God's proper name YAHWEH as revealed to Moses by God Exodus 3:14. The name means I AM THAT I AM showing God's unchanging nature not like human beings who keep changing. The name also shows God's reliability. Psalm 93:1 says the LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty: the LORD is robed in majesty. Majesty describes the dignity of his reign, his sovereign authority and power over all. God's reign is described with the characteristics of an earthly king, but his majesty is incomparable to any other, His reign is limitless. It stretches beyond this world. Earthly kings are clothed in linen (1 chronicle 15:27) of royal colours, but our God is clothed (robed) in majesty. Unlike earthly thrones that are temporary, God's throne is firmly established from everlasting and will be to everlasting. The psalmist says God has robed Himself in majesty and armed with strength. God's reign does not change as time does. God's life is without a beginning and without an ending. God stands majestically above and beyond his creation. God is always in control. As a child of

God learn to view your life's experiences in the light of who God is. When you do, you will realize that though many things in this world could overwhelm you, they do not overwhelm God. That means God is able to subdue whatever challenges you.

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LESSON TWO

GOD'S WORDS PSALM 93:3-5

The psalmist here declares God's might over creation. The psalmist reverberates every verse of this song (psalm 93) or even with doubled or trebled expressions except the last verse (verses 5). In verse 3 it seems there are strong things that seem to oppose God. A flood of water seems unstoppable and unsparing in its destruction. Like mighty waves of the ocean, the floods rose up with their waves. In all these, the LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters. As fearsome and powerful as the mighty waves of the seas are, they are not higher or stronger than GOD. He reigns over all that might challenge or oppose and even over the mightiest things of the earth. The psalmist extolled the power of the Lord as more significant than the raging wave and the roaring seas. The roaring of the seas and its tempest are all under God's control. As children of God, remember the bible says in Isaiah 59:19b *when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.* No matter how the devil tries to rise against God's children, causing them to encounter troubles, pains: He that stills the roaring sea and its tempest will raise a standard against him and put things in order. Be rest assured that you have God's protection, you have complete security in him for now and for your future. The

psalmist understood that the might, sovereignty and strength of God is powerfully expressed in and through His word. Psalm 93:5 says your statutes (word, testimony), LORD, stand firm, holiness adorns your house for endless days; God's reign is revealed in His word, that is His law, His word to men is sure. God the supreme ruler of the universe manifested His limitless power to deliver the Israelites through his word that is enduring. God's word is sure, it is yea and amen. His word has been proven to be trustworthy even in our lives. Christians should live by the principles of God's word. He is a reliable God. No matter what comes our way let us hold unto God to the end. The key to God's eternal reign is His holiness. The mighty God is holy, different from any man or woman. His power is holy power and His sovereignty is holy. God's holiness is connected to all He is and does and could be said to adorn his very house. This is true both for the representation of His house on earth (the temple) and His ultimate house in heaven. God will never do anything that is not morally perfect. This reassures us that we can trust Him, God's holiness places a demand on us. That we must desire to live holy lives dedicated to Him. and morally clean, as our only suitable response. We must not use unholy means to reach a holy God because he says in his word; ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy; (Leviticus 19:2) if we are not holy, we cannot adorn the house of God. Our God reigns, he is worthy to receive our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving even as he blesses our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) In what ways can we allow God to reign in our lives?
- 2) How can the sense of God clothed in His majestic robe and seated on his throne help renew how we worship him?
Discuss
- 3) Share one or two stories in the scriptures that portray God's power over waters and how they apply to us.

- 4) How can we respond to God's holiness as we run the Christian race?
- 5) What would you do differently this week based on what you have learnt from psalm 93?

APPLICATION

- 1) Reflect on God's majesty and give him all the praises due him, regardless of your prevailing situations.
- 2) Challenges will surely come but because our God is trustworthy and reliable, He is more than able to carry us through.
- 3) I am not afraid of the roaring seas, the pounding of the waves and the thunders of the water because God is in control and he is mightier than they are

CONCLUSION

As we worship God for who He is, let us submit to His authority and lordship by following his teachings and examples, living according to His great love as revealed in Jesus Christ. Be rest assured that God is in control of the universe and everything that happens in our lives he will surely make a way even where there seems to be no way.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

If we are going to experience lasting increase, we must look beyond the vastness of our world and the mightiness of the things we see around us and constantly keep our gaze on the Almightyness of the God who is on high.

Our God Reigns

DEVOTIONAL:

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mon, Jan 13 | God's Heavenly Thrones | Rev 4 |
| Tue, Jan 14 | Life Springs from Gods Thrones | Rev 22:1-14 |
| Wed, Jan 15 | My Eyes Have Seen the King | Isaiah 6:1-8 |
| Thu, Jan 16 | Draw near to God in humility | James 4:1-10 |
| Fri, Jan 17 | Boldly Approach the Throne of Grace | Heb. 4:11-16 |
| Sat Jan 18 | Heaven Is God's Throne | Isaiah 66:1-14 |
| Sun Jan 19 | Bless God's Holy Name | Psalms 103:1-11, 19-22 |



JANUARY

19

THE LORD IS ACTIVE

Theme For The Quarter: A King For Ever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Our God Reigns

Topic: The Lord Is Active

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 66: 1 – 14

Background Scripture: Psalm 103

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 103: 1 – 14

Memory Verse:

The Lord Works Righteousness And Justice For All Who Are Oppressed;

Psalm 103:6

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

- 1) Identify five reasons to be thankful to God
- 2) Mention five Divine characters of God that makes you praise him.
- 3) Resolve to respond to God's love and compassion by living obedient lives this week and always.

INTRODUCTION

The children of Israel were constantly being reminded not to forget God when they get to the Promised Land. We humans have the tendencies to forget the good things God has done in our lives or even the good things people have done for us. This is the reason why many people are ungrateful. Sometimes we even complain about life as if God has not been so good to us. In this psalm, David gives us plenty reasons why we must praise and appreciate God for who He is and for so many things He has done in our lives. We receive many of His blessings even without being deserving of them. No matter how difficult life's journey has been, you can always count your blessings – past, present and future. When you feel you have nothing to praise God for, please read this psalm. Our lesson today dwells on the need to always remember God's

unmerited favours in our lives and the need to be grateful.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

REMEMBER GOD'S GOODNESS (PSALM 103:1-5)

David's praise was focused on God's glorious acts. David started by saying; bless the Lord; to bless God means to express praises and thankfulness to God for His glorious acts toward us. When we bless God, we acknowledge God's goodness and express our gratitude for experiencing them. The psalmist stated the reasons why we must bless God's holy name. He forgives our sins and does not treat us according to our sins; He heals all our diseases, redeems us from trouble, envelops us with His love and compassion, satisfies us with good things and renews our strength like the eagles. Our hearts must always abound with thanksgiving and praises to the Lord. The psalmist admonishes us not to forget all God's benefits towards us. We must remember God's blessing to us. We must always acknowledge God for his goodness toward us. His blessings in our lives are too many. He gave us life, He provides for our needs, He sustains and heals us. These are enough reasons to appreciate God for in our everyday life. Gratitude to God and singing praises to his holy name must be our lifestyle.

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LESSON TWO

REMEMBER GOD'S DEEDS (PSALM 103:6-10)

I am sure we all can testify that the God we serve is a God of justice. Truly the Lord is good to all as He executes righteousness and judgment, not only for His own people but for all that are oppressed. God revealed Himself and His grace to us (verse 7). He made known His ways unto Moses and by him, He revealed His acts to Israel, not only by His rod to those who then lived but by His pen to succeeding ages. Christians must constantly remember God and give Him all the glory for the revelation of Himself and his laws. Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of God's divine favour with which He has blessed us; by restoring us to Himself and revealing Himself to us. He has made known His acts and His ways (his nature) that men may know what to conceive of Him and what to expect of Him. God deals fairly with us. He truly executes righteousness and judgment.

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LESSON 3

REMEMBER GOD'S MERCY AND COMPASSION. (PSALM 103:11-14)

Verse 11 of our text says: *“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear Him”* This is poetic. The verse emphasizes the vastness of God's love comparing it to immeasurable height of the heavens above the earth. David was talking about the boundless and overwhelming love of God for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us. We know

east and west can never meet. This is a symbolic portrait of God's forgiveness. When He forgives our sins, He separates it from us and doesn't remember it. We need never to wallow in the forgiven past because God has wiped our record clean. If we follow God, we must also model His forgiveness. When we forgive others, we must also forget the sin. Too often we focus on God as judge and lawgiver ignoring His compassion and concern for us. When God examines our lives, He remembers our human condition. Our weaknesses should never be used as justification for sin. Trust Him, God will deal with you compassionately. Remember to always ponder on God's mercy and compassion. This should cause us to appreciate Him more and seek to serve Him with everything we have. Do you have everything in your life that you haven't allowed to be touched by God's love and forgiveness? Spend time in prayer today and ask God to clearly show you how much His love and forgiveness have the capacity to bring you freedom and wholeness.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- 1) In what ways can we believers show that we remember God for all the things He has done in our lives?
- 2) How should we as Christian respond to God's love and compassion?
- 3) What role should guilt or shame play in the life of someone whose sins have been forgiven by God?
- 4) How can we cultivate the habit of praising God always?
- 5) What advice would you give to someone who seems to have no reason to praise God?

APPLICATION

Do you have any reasons to praise God? Reflect on your life today and the Salvation God freely gave you through His son Jesus Christ- this should spur you to glorify and praise the name of the Lord. Do not allow your challenges becloud your heart of gratitude to God. Always remember that if God had not been on your side, you would not be alive today, so from this moment begin to bless the name of the Lord and give Him all the praises, for the things He has done and even for those things He has not done.

CONCLUSION

Today again the Lord wants us to praise Him now and always irrespective of the situations we are all passing through. Remember God inhabits the praises of his children Psalm (22:3). Even when you don't feel like still tell your soul to praise the Lord, all the time.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

We must never forget the benefits we have in God – Everything we need for sustained supernatural increase, He has provided. So, our surest path to entering into this guaranteed increase (devoid of any suggestion from the enemy to slow us down) is largely dependent on how we are able to appropriate the depth and weight of the huge investment of God's redemptive agenda for our lives.

Our God Reigns

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|-------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mon, Jan 20 | The Kingdoms of This World | Daniel 2:31-45 |
| Tue, Jan 21 | The Kingdom of Gods Son | Colossians 1:11-20 |
| Wed, Jan 22 | Christ in you, the Hope of Glory | Colossians 1:21-29 |
| Thu, Jan 23 | The Lord Reigns Over The Earth | Zechariah 14:8-11, 16-21 |
| Fri, Jan 24 | An Unshakable Kingdom | Hebrews 12:18-29 |
| Sat, Jan 25 | Seek First God's Kingdom | Matthew 6:25-34 |
| Sun, Jan 26 | Bless God's Name Forever | Psalms 145:1-10, 17-21 |



JANUARY

26

THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS

Theme For The Month: Our God Reigns

Topic: The Lord Is Righteous

Devotional Scripture: Hebrews 12:18-29

Background Scripture: Psalm 145

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 145:1, 10-21

Memory Verse:

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. Psalm 145:13

LESSON AIMS

After participating in the lesson participants should be able to:

- 1) Explain what the Psalm teaches about exalting the Lord as King.
- 2) Mention how you would encourage someone in need, using this psalm.
- 3) Plan to give God all your praises this week and always

INTRODUCTION

In our lesson today, David the great king of Israel leads the Israelites and all of creation in word of praise and thanksgiving to God as King over all. The Psalm is titled “A praise of David” Psalms 17 and 86 were called “A prayer of David,” but this Psalm is the only one titled “A praise of David.” Psalm 145 is the last Psalm attributed to David in the collection of Psalms, and it is last of the nine Psalms using some kind of acrostic pattern (Psalm 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119 and 145). Five of these acrostic Psalms are attributed to David. In Jewish practice this Psalm was recited twice in the morning and once in the evening service. The psalmist and all creation will glorify God by telling of the greatness of His kingdom, power and his character. God is the creator and the one who sustains heaven and earth. The vastness of God's creation is

enough to attract God's creation to worship Him. As we study this psalm, let us all prepare to give God all our praises as our God will forever be praised in heaven. No matter how difficult or dark things may seem, God is the everlasting king who rules in the affairs of men. We must always praise him as our Lord every day of our lives.

LESSONS EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE:

EXTOL THE NAME OF THE LORD (PSALM 145:1, 10-13)

We all ought to learn from David's example of a heart fully given to praise, David said "I will extol you, my God, o king and I will bless your name forever" (verse 1). To extol is to praise, to lift high, to exalt David honoured and promoted the name of God in the most personal of ways. He praised God by making reference to Him as my God (personal). He also did it unendingly (forever and ever, every day). Although David had been the king of the elect nation of Israel, God is nevertheless the King of Kings, whose reign is from everlasting to everlasting, and creation itself praises God, and does so out of grateful duty. Yet even more than the river and hills praising God (psalm 98:8), God's people should gratefully praise and bless the LORD. Believers are to live a lifestyle of praise to God, instead of complaining about unmet needs and other challenges of life. David again sensed the responsibility of God's people to tell the wider world of the greatness of what God has done and who our King is (the glorious majesty of his kingdom). As the state cannot teach these holy histories, the people of God must take care to do it themselves. The kingdom of our God is an everlasting one, so we must continually praise Him. Men come and go like shadows on the wall, but our God reigneth eternally. We distinguish Kings as they succeed each other by calling them first, second, but this king is Jehovah, the first and the last.

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LESSON TWO

COMPASSIONATE, WORTHY GOD (PSALM 145: 14-21)

God's compassion is especially evident toward those who fall and fail. He does not despise or reject them, there is a sense in which he specially draws near to them and holds them up. Many are despondent and cannot lift up their hearts with comfort, but these, He cheers them. Some are bent with their daily loads and these he strengthens.

Throughout this psalm, David talked much about how we should praise God for who He is and what He has done for us. Here again David gives us a reason to praise the Lord recognizing the incomparable combination of being righteous and gracious. God's responsiveness to his praying people demonstrates His graciousness. He can always be trusted concerning all His promises. The poor, the needy and less privileged can look up to Him for their survival and sustenance. The psalmist also declared that the Lord is righteous and faithful. He is near to those who fear him and call on him in truth. He is a dependable God. He deserves to be praised by all creatures. He is just, fair and righteous.

Having written so eloquently about who God is, and what He has done for his people, David's firm decision was to use his mouth to praise and bless God again and again "Whatever others may do, I will not be silent in the praise of my God". "The last verse of psalm 145 is the last word we have from David in the bible. In it he praises God and invites others to praise God also. I am sure with all that

the Lord has done for us, we all like David can invite others to come to his saving knowledge. *We can also sing “Come and join me sing halleluiah, Jehovah Jireh has done me well (2ce)”*. May this be our testimony in Jesus' name.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How can our understanding of God as king who reigns forever improve our relationship with Him?
- 2) In times of scarcity, what gives you confidence to wait for God's timing for provisions?
- 3) State three reasons why God is to be praised
- 4) How would you respond to the situations of hardships that we are facing in this country knowing well that our God is holy and righteous?
- 5) Take time this week and praise God for who He is and also extend the love of God to someone by presenting Christ to him or her.

APPLICATION

This psalm celebrates God's kingship and His goodness to us. This should stir us to praise Him, because He alone is worthy of our praises. Our God is the only true God; therefore, we must worship him alone and not the lesser gods who have no power to help us.

CONCLUSION

Psalm 145 is about praising God and the aim of the psalm is to remind people to praise God forever. The message on the lips of King David is that the Lord is King over all generations of the Israelites and over all peoples. He alone is worthy of all our praises. David ended by saying “My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever”

Our God Reigns

This is an invitation to all people (friends, families etc.) to join in the praise of our God. Praise ye the Lord!

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

As we advance in our mandate of supernatural increase, one way to be raised is to praise! Instead of giving in to hopelessness, murmurings and complaints when things are not going well with us, we should sing praises to our reliable and dependable God who alone can give us everlasting joy and peace. As we worship God, He will give us the grace to do exploits for Him, as grow in grace and knowledge of Him.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Mon Jan 27 | Come All Who Are Weary | Matthew 11:25-30 |
| Tue, Jan. 28 | God Answers Me When I Call | Psalm 4 |
| Wed, Jan. 29 | Cry Out for Justice | Luke 18:1-8 |
| Thu, Jan. 30 | Pray For One Another | James 5:13-20 |
| Fri, Jan. 31 | God Is My Refuge and Fortress | Psalm 91 |
| Sat, Feb 1 | God Will Deliver Us | Psalm 92 |
| Sun. Feb 2 | The Prayer That Jesus Taught | Matthew 6:5-15 |



FEBRUARY

2

PRAYING PROPERLY

Praying Properly

Theme For The Quarter: A King Forever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Life In God's Kingdom

Devotional Reading: Psalm 4

Background Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Memory Verse:

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List Jesus' key teachings about prayer in Matthew 6:5-15
2. Explain the purpose(s) of the prayer's four couplets
3. Resolve to devote more prayer time to one area identified in Matthew 6:5-15 that may currently be lacking.

INTRODUCTION

We learn various essential skills throughout life, such as walking, talking, eating, and pursuing education to achieve our goals. Even when seeking employment, we often need to acquire specific knowledge or skills. Learning is indeed a vital aspect of life. Today, we will focus on one of the most important skills to learn: “HOW TO PRAY.” The passage provides a quintessential template for prayer. Jesus, in teaching his disciples how to pray, encourages us to seek Him with sincerity, ensuring our public prayers are as genuine as our private ones. To make this effective, He offers a systematic checklist on how to pray. By following this pattern, we can learn what and how to pray, avoiding self-centredness and hypocrisy. The passage is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, even though we did not see where the Lord Himself prayed this prayer, because it is not a prayer itself; rather, it serves as a guide on how to pray (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). To use it

otherwise would be like feeding corn to eggs without allowing them to hatch, it would be pointless. The value of the prayer would only be clear when contrasted with how one should not pray.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

DIRECTIVES FOR PRAYER (MATTHEW 6:5-8)

In the text under review, Jesus warns us against facades and hypocrisy in our spiritual practices. He emphasises doing things to please God rather seeking human recognition, which he termed as hypocrisy. The hypocrites Jesus speaks of pray in public places to be seen by men, their prayers sound good but their hearts are far from God. Their reward is limited to a mere public admiration, not eternal recognition. We should note that Jesus is not condemning the practice of public prayer, giving, or fasting as such; but the self-seeking motives behind them (Matthew 6:2,5,16). He wasn't necessarily saying that we should hide when we pray, but to build strong conviction in us by speaking to the issue of our hearts; to shun public performance by directing our prayer to Him alone.

Jesus again said that prayer should not be a vain repetition of memorised words meant for public show / admiration but instead, words of the moment which expresses our feelings, thoughts and desires to God for help. Let us make no mistake, God knows the thoughts of our hearts even before we open our mouth, but he still expects us to pray because, amongst others, it reflects the measure of faith we have that He listens to us (James 1:6; 5:15).

The only audience of our prayer should be God, seeking Him with all sincerity, and ensuring our public prayers are as genuine as our private ones.

NOTES:

LESSON TWO

THE PROTOTYPICAL PRAYER (MATTHEW 6:9-13)

Having discussed the form of prayer above, we now come to the content as taught. Jesus teaches us a model of prayer, not a repetition of memorised words or a word system that is to be repeated as a prayer. Prayer is a conversation with God and as such, it should be directed to Him alone. (Rm 8:14-16; Eccl 5:2). Our prayer should have elements that revere and honour God, such as:

- Hallowing the Name of God speaks about our reverence, honour and acknowledgment of His sovereignty and holiness.
- The kingdom reign referred to here could mean seeking God's kingdom and will, both within us and in the world as we submit to the will of the Father, and or the urgent need for God's kingdom to come in its fullness where all we do is worship Him. Simply put, to submit to His will and kingdom.
- Once the will of God is done in the hearts of men as it is in heaven, it automatically translates to the acceptance of the kingship of Jesus in/over our lives, thus, bringing all oppositions of his reign to an end.
- Verse 11-13 simply shows our complete dependence on

God for our provision/sustenance (both physical and spiritual) and

- the use of bread should be construed in a broader sense as speaking to the necessities of life rather than, just baked bread/food (Jn 6:33; 1 Tim 6:7).
- Seeking and accessing God's forgiveness calls for our readiness to exercise/extend the same to others;
- whilst not leading us to temptation could mean God not exposing us to temptations beyond our capacity to bear, asking for guidance and protection from sin and evil, seeking deliverance from harmful situations. God could allow temptation but not necessarily tempting us as God does not tempt man (1 Cor 10:13; Job 1:12; 2:6; James 1:13).

The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples popularly known and referred to as the "Lord's Prayer" is a model of constituents in a prayer and not a word system that should be repeated as prayer.

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LESSON THREE

ADDENDUM ON FORGIVENESS (MATTHEW 6:14-15)

Jesus emphasises the important of forgiveness, stating that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. We receive God's forgiveness when we forgive others their sins against us. Notice

the word sin here as opposed to debt in v.12; while debt could include all kinds of obligations, sin on the other hand is simply, a transgression against divine, religious or moral law

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some ways we can be hypocritical in our prayer lives?
2. Why does Jesus warn against praying to be seen by others?
3. What does it mean to hallow God's name in our prayers?
4. Why is forgiveness a crucial aspect of our prayers and why is it essential for our relationship with God?
5. What motivates you to pray; is it to seek God's will or to impress others?

CONCLUSION:

Prayers should be heartfelt, spontaneous, and directed to God alone, not seeking human applause. The Lord's Prayer is a guide for prayer content, not a prayer to be repeated.

APPLICATION:

Spend time with the word of God and pray from your heart, led by the Holy Spirit. Avoid using vain repetition for human admiration, seeking instead eternal value in your prayers.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

Open reward comes from prayers made in the secret place and divine response is not a function vain repetition. Our increase will depend on how well we pray in line with His will.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|-------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mon, Feb, 3 | Be Strong and Courageous | Joshua 1:1-9 |
| Tue, Feb, 4 | As Sheep Among Wolves | Matthew 10:16-31 |
| Wed, Feb, 5 | Resistance and Reward | Matthew 10:32-42 |
| Thu, Feb, 6 | God Is Our Salvation | Psalms 35:1-14 |
| Fri, Feb, 7 | Rescue Me from My Enemies | Psalms 35:15-28 |
| Sat, Feb, 8 | Don't Rejoice When Enemies Fall | Proverbs 24:8-22 |
| Sun, Feb, 9 | The Kingdom Presses On | Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24 |



FEBRUARY



HEEDING WHOLLY

Topic: Heeding Wholly

Theme For The Quarter: A King Forever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Life In God's Kingdom

Devotional Reading: Matthew 10:31-42

Background Scripture: Matthew 11

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24

Memory Verse:

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. Matthew 11:20

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarise Jesus' description of John the Baptist
2. Explain why the generation that Jesus criticised displayed a lack of wisdom in it's evaluation of both Him and John the Baptist?
3. Recruit an accountability partner to ensure that hearing results in heeding.

INTRODUCTION:

From prison, John sent his disciples to Jesus, seeking confirmation if He was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. John's inquiry likely stemmed from his confusion and disappointment. He had expected Jesus to take specific actions about their situation and the unrepentant, probably to be somewhat like himself, a bold revolutionary, who preached judgment to come and establish Israel kingdom by force, yet Jesus seemed to be falling short of his expectations, especially since John was imprisoned and Jesus had not intervened.

A couple, eager to educate their children about the history of slave trade in Nigeria, decided to surprise them with a holiday to Lagos, specifically to Badagry, where the slave trade began around 1473 with the arrival of Portuguese slave merchant, Ferman Gomez.

The children were thrilled to visit the slave trade site, where actors in period costumes recreated life in the 1400s. Upon arrival, they were captivated by a beautifully designed gate with inscriptions about the slave trade. The gate was so impressive that the children were reluctant to leave it and continue to the slave site, despite their parents' nudging. They had travelled from Kaduna to learn about the substance of the slave trade but were now so interested/content with the sign.

This anecdote illustrates the theme of our lesson today: John the Baptist was merely a sign pointing to Jesus Christ, the substance. Just as the gate was a precursor to the slave site, John the Baptist was a precursor to Jesus Christ. Today's lesson picks up where the disciples, sent by John to query Jesus, left to report back to John the response they received from Jesus.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

JOHN, THE MESSENGER (MATTHEW 11:7-15)

Speaking of John the Baptist, Jesus began by saying that people would not have travelled to the wilderness to meet him if he were indecisive or concerned with popularity of fashion. Instead, they believed John was a prophet, possibly even the Messiah. Jesus confirmed that John was indeed a prophet, and more than that. He was specifically foretold, filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, and born for a purpose determined by God centuries earlier - to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ (Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke 1:15).

As a prophet, John spoke God's word, preached repentance, warned of judgment, led people to trust God, and pointed them to Jesus. His lifestyle demanded faith from those who followed

him. Jesus' statement in verse 11 highlights John's importance as a transitional figure in salvation history. He was the last and greatest Old Testament prophet, not because of miracles, writings, or status, but because he identified Jesus with clarity, fulfilling all previous prophecies.

In the same way, we are considered greater because we can identify Jesus as the Messiah with even greater clarity than John. We can boldly proclaim Jesus' death, forgiveness, and salvation. Our greatness stems not from our abilities but from the finished work of Christ and our testimony.

Jesus declared that the kingdom is forcefully advancing and those who are eager and intentional will take hold of it. He concludes by saying John came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for His coming, fulfilling Malachi 4:4-6. Jesus encourages us to ponder and digest His words in our hearts.

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LESSON TWO

JESUS, THE WONDER WORKER (MATTHEW 11:20-24)

Jesus rebuked cities like Chorazin and Bethsaida, where He had taught and performed great miracles, yet they refused to repent due to unbelief. Despite seeing His mighty works, they rejected His message. He noted that if Gentile cities like Tyre and Sidon had experienced the same miracles, they would have humbled

themselves, repented, and turned to God. He also said that if Sodom had seen the miracles performed in Capernaum, it would have repented and avoided destruction. Jesus concluded that on judgment day, it would be more bearable for Sodom and the Gentile cities than for those who rejected Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Jesus mean by saying John was more than a prophet?
2. What can we learn from John's humility and willingness to point to Jesus?
3. How does the passage emphasise the importance of repentance and responding to God's message?
4. What is the relationship between faith and repentance in this passage?
5. How can we apply the lesson from John's humility and Jesus' rebuke to our own?
6. What is one area where you need to repent and turn to God?

CONCLUSION:

Although our lesson focused on John, it ultimately points to Jesus. This echoes our introduction: John was merely a sign pointing to Jesus, the substance. In essence, the passage is actually about Jesus, not John. We must not focus on the sign, but rather follow it to the substance, Jesus Christ. We live among unrepentant people who are often proud of transgressing God's standard. The power and prosperity of an unrepentant culture confront us relentlessly with a choice: Will we allow Jesus to direct our thinking and doing? As we make the right choice daily, may we repeat neither the infamy of evil Sodom nor the unrepentance of Chorazin, Bethsaida, or Capernaum.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

We can safely draw a parallel between John the Baptist with Chorazin and Bethsaida. Imagine the commendation from Jesus about a man and the condemnation about the cities. Imagine the impact made by a man and the two cities that missed the opportunities that came their way. We must make our lives count so that we will not be on the wrong end of God's eternal judgment.

APPLICATION:

Move beyond the sign (John) and focus on the substance (Jesus Christ). Recognize that John's purpose was to point to Jesus and redirect your attention to Him.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE : | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mon, Feb, 10 | God is Generous to All | Matthew 20:1-16 |
| Tue, Feb, 11 | Those Who Are Generous Are Blessed | Proverbs 22:1-9 |
| Wed, Feb, 12 | Blessings and Woes | Luke 6:20-26 |
| Thu, Feb, 13 | Be Rich in Good Works | 1 Timothy 6:17-21 |
| Fri, Feb, 14 | God Sets All Things Right | 1 Samuel 2:1-10 |
| Sat, Feb, 15 | God Lifts Up the Poor | Psalms 113 |
| Sun, Feb, 16 | All Things Are Possible with God | Matthew 19: 16-30 |



FEBRUARY

16

LIVING LASTLY

Topic: Living Lastly

Theme For The Quarter: A King Forever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Life In God's Kingdom

Devotional Reading: 1 Samuel 2: 1-10

Background Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Memory Verse:

“Again I tell you; it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 19:24

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the Old Testament commandments Jesus cited.
2. Explain what Jesus meant by the first being the last and the last being the first.
3. Identify any “do more to get right with God” habit in one's life and seek the Spirit's guidance in breaking free of it.

INTRODUCTION

Some members of United Baptist Church recently returned from a trip to Kenya, where the team carried five 50 kg bags and carry-ons, filled with books and discipleship materials, groceries/foods, water, medical supplies for the mission trip. Imagine lugging one of those bags everywhere; what a burden. Similarly, in our spiritual journey with God, we can accumulate baggage that hinders us from freely following Jesus. The baggage may be material possessions, personal agendas, toxic relationships, harmful habits, or unconfessed sins. God wants us to shed /do away with these/this weight(s). Today, we will be considering a story where Jesus challenged a young man to do just that. This young man had it all, so to speak: youth, wealth, and a spotless record; but despite his outward appearance, he was struggling.

Follow me to learn what happened.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

A SEEKER'S INQUIRY (MATTHEW 19:16-22)

A young man approached Jesus, kneeling before Him, and asked, "Teacher, what good things must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16, Mark 10:17-22). Jesus' response was unexpected; instead of providing a direct answer, He posed a question and then instructed the man to keep the commandments. By addressing Jesus as "Good Teacher," the man unintentionally acknowledged God's goodness. Jesus seized this opportunity to redirect the man's focus beyond mere morality to recognizing God's presence before him.

Jesus' instruction to keep the commandments was not a prescription for salvation but rather an invitation to appreciate sonship, demonstrate love for God, and express gratitude for salvation. However, the law alone cannot save (Romans 3:20, Galatians 2:16). The young man claimed to have kept the law, yet felt an inner void. Jesus, knowing the man's heart, revealed the one thing he lacked; surrendering his possessions and giving to the poor, and come follow Him. This was not a general principle for Christians but a specific test of the man's sincerity. The man's reluctance to let go of his wealth revealed his true priorities, he loved his wealth and whatever that afforded him more than he loved God. In fact, he did not live up to Leviticus 19:18. He chose to walk away, sad and unchanged.

What is the one thing standing in your way to being perfect, the thing Jesus has pointed out but you have been reluctant to address? Will you heed His counsel and surrender, or will you walk away

like the rich young man?

LESSON TWO:

THE SAVIOUR'S INSTRUCTION (MATTHEW 19:23-30)

Following the young man's departure, Jesus made a profound statement "It is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23). This declaration stems from the tendency of wealth to foster self-sufficiency, distracting individuals from their spiritual needs. The rich often rely on their resources, security, and comfort, rather than God.

Jesus employed hyperbole in verse 24 to emphasise His point, leaving the disciples astonished and wondering, "Who then can be saved?" (Matthew 19:25). This question raises an important consideration; if wealth was once considered a blessing from God, why did Jesus "seemingly" condemn it? Jesus seized the opportunity to teach His disciples that salvation cannot be earned through law keeping or purchased with wealth and philanthropy. Rather, it is solely based on God's grace. Jesus was not implying that poverty guarantees heaven or wealth ensures hell. His focus was on the heart's condition, emphasising that salvation is a gift, not a reward for merit.

Jesus also corrected Peter and the disciples, clarifying that their reward would be a hundredfold, plus eternal life, not earthly recognition or special treatment. This promise extends to all who follow Him.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some modern-day idols that can distract us from following Jesus?
2. What is one area where you feel God calling you to surrender or re-prioritize your life?
3. What role does obedience play in the Christian life, as seen in Jesus' conversation with the young man?
4. How can we balance our responsibility to provide for our families with Jesus' call to detachment from wealth?
5. What does "selling everything" look like practically in your life?
6. Explore the biblical concept of stewardship and its relation to wealth.
7. Discuss the difference between detachment and deprivation

CONCLUSION:

Jesus cut to the heart of the matter, revealing the young man's idolatry. By calling him to sell everything, give to the poor, and follow Him, Jesus offered freedom from bondage. Yet, the man walked away, captive to his wealth. The lesson remains that anything we elevate above God becomes an idol. What's competing with God for your allegiance? Surrender it, and follow Jesus now.

APPLICATION:

"Do not be arrogant nor put your hope in wealth, which is uncertain, but put your hope in God, who richly provides you with everything for your enjoyment" (1 Timothy 6:17).

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

The true value of our increase is not measured by our earthly accumulations but by the worth of our spiritual investment. It is a calamity that a man who had a great resume could fail the test of

the real thing that truly counts. All our achievements, accumulations, and acquisitions without the attainment of the one thing that matters to God is a waste of divine opportunities.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE : | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mon, Feb, 17 | Equipped for Every Good Work | 2 Timothy 3:10-17 |
| Tue, Feb, 18 | Delight in God's Ways | Psalm 119:17-24 |
| Wed, Feb, 19 | The Bridegroom Is Coming | Matthew 25;1-13 |
| Thu, Feb, 20 | Praise for a Faithful Servant | Matthew 25:14-15, 19-30 |
| Fri, Feb, 21 | Choose the Way of Faithfulness | Psalm 119:41-48 |
| Sat, Feb, 22 | The Fast That God Chooses | Isaiah 58 |
| Sun, Feb, 23 | Compassion for the Least | Matthew 25: 31-46 |



FEBRUARY

23

MINISTERING MIGHTILY

Topic: Ministering Mightily

Theme For The Quarter: A King Forever And Ever

Theme For The Month: Life In God's Kingdom

Devotional Reading: Matthew 25:14-15, 19-30

Background Scripture: Matthew 25

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Memory Verse:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,'" Matthew 25:34-35

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarise Jesus' description of what will happen at the final judgment,
2. Contrast the behaviour of the "sheep" with that of the goats,
3. write a plan to serve Jesus in the week ahead as the sheep do.

INTRODUCTION

Countless philosophies promise to guide us through life, but most fall short. Many focus solely on individualism, neglecting our responsibility to others. Consider:

Ancient Greece: "Know yourself, be wise."

Rome: "Discipline yourself, be strong."

Epicureanism: "Enjoy yourself, indulge in pleasure."

Psychology: "Assert yourself, build confidence."

Materialism: "Please yourself, accumulate wealth."

Pride: "Promote yourself, strive for superiority."

Humanism: "Believe in yourself, tap into your potential."

Babatope Ebenezer, founder of The Worldwide Ministries left an indelible mark on the lives of those he encountered. During a visit to Liberia, Babatope accompanied a local pastor and others on a journey to a mountain village to meet with Christians. The trek left their shoes caked with mud. When asked what he remembered most about Babatope, the pastor replied, "He cleaned our shoes." Imagine the pastor's surprise when he awoke the next morning to find that the renowned Christian leader had risen early to scrub the mud from their shoes, thus exemplifying servanthood, embodying the spirit of Matthew 25:40

Jesus' words in Matthew 25:31-46 teaches a radical contrast to the philosophies above, it reminds us that true greatness lies in serving the least, giving of ourselves, demonstrating compassion, and humility which is the central lesson of our text today.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

THE JUDGE (MATTHEW 25:31-33)

Our lesson is set in the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, during his Olivet Discourse. This discourse was prompted by the disciples' question about the signs of his coming and the end of the world. Jesus' response emphasized the certainty of his return within a set time. Jesus described his second coming in majestic terms, accompanied by all the angels, to sit on his glorious throne. Unlike his humble first coming, this return will wield unparalleled power, bringing all nations under his authority. The outcome will be the separation of the righteous (sheep) from the unrighteous (goats), symbolizing God's judgment of the world through Jesus (John 12:48; Acts 17:31).

However, as noted in Acts 2, individuals already judge themselves by accepting or rejecting the gospel. Yet, there will be a final judgment. It's crucial to remember that only Jesus has the authority to gather nations and separate the righteous from the unrighteous. We must avoid assuming this role in the church or elsewhere.

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LESSON TWO

THE SHEEP (MATTHEW 25:34-40)

Jesus, speaking as the King, announces the admittance of the righteous (the sheep) into the kingdom of heaven, prepared for them since creation. These individuals have submitted to Jesus' kingdom reign on earth and already belong to the kingdom of God, awaiting its final consummation, as promised in 2 Timothy 4:18. Jesus then highlights various physical conditions of life that exemplify our human service to one another. The righteous render these services to others as a response to God's extended mercy and grace. Consequently, humble service to our fellow humans demonstrates our inward appreciation of God's grace.

While salvation is solely by grace through faith, it encompasses both divine and human responses. As Ephesians 2:8-10 emphasizes, true salvation inherently leads to good works, illustrating that faith without works is incomplete. For the sake of emphasis, it bears repeating that we are not saved by works, but that we are saved for works (James 2:14-26). So, we should go

about this while it's still day, while we still have life and the opportunity, impacting lives for the sake of Christ. We would notice that the works or mercy we show to our fellow human is actually to Christ.

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LESSON THREE

THE GOATS (MATTHEW 25:41-46)

In stark contrast to the righteous, Jesus condemns the unrighteous to hell fire, originally prepared for the devil and his agents (Matthew 25:41-46). Those who lived according to Satan's desires will inherit their father's destiny which is hell fire. Although scripture affirms that salvation is solely by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), our relationship with others nonetheless has profound implications for our eternal destiny. The unrighteous had the same opportunities as the righteous but chose to ignore the needs of fellow brethren and I dare add, non-brethren too. Both sins of omission and commission are considered sinful. A simple summation of the above in numbers would be, that:

1. Works manifest faith, though salvation is not meritorious.
2. Failing to meet others' needs is failing to serve Jesus.
3. Eternal punishment awaits the unrighteous in hell fire.
4. Eternal life, described as the heavenly city, awaits the righteous.

Eternal life is certain and sure through God's grace, poured out through Jesus' cross. Only in God's presence can one experience eternity. Which one will it be for you? The decision is in your hands; choose eternal life with God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the main theme of Matthew 25:31-46?
2. What are the criteria for judgment?
3. What are some practical ways to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, and visit the sick? (vv. 35-36)
4. How does this passage motivate you to serve others?
5. What changes do you need to make in your life to serve others.
6. How can our church/community serve others more effectively?
7. What are some obstacles to serving others, and how can we overcome them?

CONCLUSION:

Inspired by Matthew 25, this picture explores the story of judgment and the separation of sheep and goats. While this passage may raise concerns about works-based salvation, our emphasis is on responding to Christ's love by serving and loving others. Serving others honours God and ultimately serves Him. We are admonished to show kindness through tangible acts, care for others and embody the characteristics of "sheep" through selfless love.

APPLICATION:

Jesus holds three positions as we have seen – the King on his glorious throne, a shepherd dividing sheep from goats and the judge determining eternal destinies; so, if we want to stand confidently before him in anticipation of inheriting the Kingdom,

we must be obedient to his voice by attending to the needs of others that he has placed on our hearts. what has the Lord been saying/is now saying to you about the needs of that brother/sister/church etc, determine today to attend to it without further delay. The LORD bless you as you do so in Jesus Name.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

Our ability to identify Jesus in all the small details of our lives is a reflection of our commitment to a holistic ministry that has a lot of eternal consequence. How many times have we looked the other way just because it did not look like what we have always known? We must open up to people around us in order to build a community where walls are broken and love binds.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|---|--------------------|
| Mon, Feb, 24 | We Are Priests | Revelation 1:3-8 |
| Tue, Feb, 25 | Give Thanks to God's Holy Name | Psalms 106:36-48 |
| Wed, Feb, 26 | Be Holy | Leviticus 19:1-10 |
| Thu, Feb, 27 | Love Your Neighbour as Yourself | Leviticus 19:11-18 |
| Fri, Feb, 28 | Priests of God and Christ | Revelation 20:1-6 |
| Sat, March 1 | Do Justice, Love, Kindness, Walk Humbly | Micah 6:1-8 |
| Sun, March 2 | The Sacred Assembly | Exodus 19:1-14 |



MARCH



A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS,
A HOLY NATION

A Kingdom Of Priests, A Holy Nation

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifices

Theme For The Month: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, And
Atonement

Devotional Reading: Leviticus 19:1–10

Background Scripture: Exodus 19

Lesson Focus: Exodus 19:1–14

Memory Verse:

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”—Exodus 19:5–6a

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner should be able to:

1. Summarize God's expectations as expressed through Moses.
2. Explain the concept of “covenant” in its original context.
3. Declare God's praises as one of his treasured people.

INTRODUCTION

The themes of worship, sacrifices, and offerings run through the Scriptures. Grasping the sacrifices and offerings of the old covenant is essential to our understanding of the New Testament's presentation of Christ's sacrifice. This quarter will explore sacrifice and worship in the Old Testament and what the New Testament has to say about sacrifice and worship under the new covenant.

God delivered Israel out of Egypt four hundred and thirty years

from the time of Joseph (Exodus 12:40; 18:10). Through miraculous plagues, which showed Egypt's deities to be powerless (7:8–11:10; 12:29–42), God brought the people out into the wilderness, where he continued to protect and provide for them (Exodus 13–18). Despite dangers and trials, the people arrived at their destination: Sinai, the mountain where God had first revealed himself to Moses (Exodus 3). Exodus 19 begins the climactic meeting of God with his redeemed people. The Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19–24) treats sacrifices as (1) expressions of praise to a God who had rescued his people and chosen them for his own, and (2) a method of cleansing to allow a sinful people to remain in relationship to a holy God. Atoning sacrifices were not about God's needs but the needs of his people.

The key role of a mediator is related to today's lesson in three ways. First, Moses played the role of communicator and mediator at Mount Sinai. Second, God communicated a plan through his mediator to form Israel to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Third, those functions took on new meaning at the coming of the ultimate mediator, Christ, who brings lasting peace to all who turn to him with faith (Romans 5:1).

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

COMING TO SINAI (EXODUS 19:1-2)

Moses had been sent to bring the Hebrew people out of Egypt “so that they may worship [God] in the wilderness.” They arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month (compare Exodus 12:2; 13:4). The Desert of Sinai was adjacent to the wilderness of Sin, where the

people had grumbled and quarrelled with Moses (Exodus 16:1; 17:1). They had been without natural access to water or food, and they learned to depend upon God's provision of each.

At Rephidim, Moses struck a rock to produce water for the children of Israel, who doubted God's provision (Exodus 17:1–7). It is also where the Israelites fought the Amalekites, a group who came out to wage war on God's people in their vulnerable state. In response, God provided supernatural protection by allowing Moses to raise his hands to assure victory (17:8–16). Now at their interim destination, the people camped before Mount Sinai, also called Mount Horeb (Exodus 3:1). It is where Moses saw the burning bush and removed his sandals before a holy ground (3:5). The Hebrews would spend just under a year camped before this mountain (compare Exodus 19:1 with Numbers 10:11–12).

Hardly are we, believers, different from the Hebrews of old! We grumble and complain when confronted with life's unpleasant situations, easily forgetting the past and present mighty deeds of God in our lives and His promises of deliverance and answered prayers (Isaiah 41:10). We must learn to have faith in God in all situations. He is on His throne, He watches over His own, and He will prevail (Hymn 508, Baptist Hymnal 2008).

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LESSON TWO

THE COVENANT (EXODUS 19:3-8)

In verse 5, God initiated a covenant, just as he made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3; 15; 17). Covenant is part of his plan to bring blessing to the world. Typically, covenants were agreements between two parties (usually humans or nations). The promise is that, if the people hold up the requirements of the covenant, then out of all nations they will be God's treasured possession. Israel's obedience would set them apart from all the world. The holy status that the Israelites received was not intended just for their personal benefit but ultimately for the benefit of the world as a kingdom of priests (John 4:22, Romans 3:2). The description *“a royal priesthood, a holy nation” is valid for God's people of the new covenant* (1 Peter 2:9). Unlike the Sinai covenant, which would be repeatedly broken, the redemptive work of Jesus offers Christ's followers a “new covenant” (see Jeremiah 31:31–32).

God had sent plagues on the Egyptians and shown their magicians and deities to be toothless (see Exodus 7:8–11:10; 12:29–42; compare Psalm 106). The reference to eagles' wings stands for species of great birds which hover over their young, spreading their wings to catch them and carries them aloft (Deuteronomy 32:11). This is an image of great care (compare Isaiah 40:31). God had fulfilled his plan by bringing the formerly enslaved people to this mountain to serve him (Exodus 3:12). And the Hebrew people didn't just barely escape from Egypt; they were led out by the glorious power of God. The image might seem ironic to a people tired of walking. But their deliverance from Egypt was unprecedented and a clear indication of the benevolent power of their rescuer-God.

Instead of leading them directly to their promised land—giving them instant consolation—God took his time. The Lord did everything possible to lay a solid foundation in their covenant relationship, for God wanted them to remember their mission and their redemptive history. Can you think of any way that God has been preparing you? Has there been an area of your life that requires starting from scratch? God reminded the Israelites of all the dangers passed and trials overcome. Has God done something similar in your life, perhaps carrying you to the place you need to be? Or, perhaps, are you on a journey with your Heavenly Father right now?

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LESSON THREE

THE CONSECRATION (EXODUS 19:9-14)

God promised His visible manifestation (theophany) to the Hebrews as soon as they confirmed their agreement to the covenant. Earlier in Exodus, God had used a cloud to reveal his presence and to give a sign of his protection (Exodus 13:21). In the New Testament, the Father speaks from a cloud at Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:5–6; Mark 9:7–8; Luke 9:34–35). Later, Jesus ascends from a mountaintop and is taken up in a cloud, which shows God's heavenly presence (Acts 1:9). In Exodus 19:9, the function of God's appearance in a dense cloud shows Moses' authority as God's messenger.

The people must be correctly prepared to receive God's presence. Two days will be the length of this preparation, and the command to consecrate means “to transform someone into the state of holiness” or “to dedicate.” Moses will direct the people to avoid ceremonially unclean things, while at the same time they will wash and prepare themselves in body and spirit. Washing of clothing is associated with holiness in dozens of places in the Old Testament.

God's holiness was not something to haphazardly approach. Merely touching the area's border would bring death. This penalty is less as a punishment than a means to protect the community from a defiler's misdeed. The people were not to permit anything defiling to remain in their midst as they prepared to meet God. A time of spiritual preparation is appropriate when entering God's presence, signifying being treated as the “kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6, Exodus 40:12–16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Enumerate the privileges and responsibilities of God's chosen people.
2. What are some ways to prevent corporate confessions of faith from becoming mere rituals?
3. In our lesson today, Moses gave God's instructions to a chosen group of elders, which was much more practical than trying to communicate with thousands of people all at once. What is one thing you can improve on to improve on how you render God's words to others?
4. How important is our physical appearance as we approach God in worship? Some do argue that God is only concerned about the preparedness and purity of our

hearts during worship. How do we strike a balance between these two aspects as we appear before the holy God?

5. What are some ways you can better reflect your consecrated status to the world? What guardrails will keep that reflecting from becoming legalistic, “holier than thou” or a perversion?

APPLICATION

1. Believers must learn to declare God's praises in all circumstances as His treasured people, recalling His mighty deeds of the past, and His promise to prosper His own.
2. The holy God is the redeeming God. Have faith in Him in all situations.
3. That we are counted among God's chosen people is enough reason to rejoice always.
4. Do not allow your life troubles or physical deprivations to distract you from effective walk with, and work for, God (2 Corinthians 12:9). Be faithful to God's covenant.
5. Be an effective mediator who introduces others to the ultimate mediator, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:15).

CONCLUSION

In its context, Exodus 19 shows the responsibilities that fall upon people whom God chooses and redeems. They are required to prepare themselves for God's presence. In the new covenant context, it is not church buildings that house God's presence; rather, it is the bodies of Christians themselves, those who become “temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19). Followers of Jesus also serve as mediators who introduce others to the ultimate

mediator, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:15).

By making Israel his “**kingdom of priests**” and “**holy nation**” (Exodus 19:6), God was laying the groundwork to bless the world through the children of Jacob. Israel would break the Sinai covenant and fall victim to sin, but God had a plan to make a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–32; compare Matthew 26:28) through Jesus, the seed of Abraham, the inheritor of God's promise (Galatians 3:16).

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

This finds expression in 1 Peter 2:9. For we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. However, we must be careful not to desecrate the royalty of our priesthood. Our obedience to God must not be compromised and we must constantly consecrate ourselves in order to be fit for kingdom service.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE : | TOPIC : | TEXT: |
|---------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mon, Mar. 3 | Idolatry Confronted | Ezekiel 14:1–11 |
| Tue, Mar. 4 | Desire for God's Presence | Psalm 26 |
| Wed, Mar. 5 | God's Glory Fills the Temple | Ezekiel 43:1–12 |
| Thu, Mar. 6 | Who May Draw Near? | Ezekiel 44:15–27 |
| Fri, Mar. 7 | The Temple of Christ's Body | John 2:12–22 |
| Sat, Mar. 8 | Worship God in Spirit and Truth | John 4:13–26 |
| Sun, Mar. 9 | Prepare a Sacred Space | Exodus 25:1–9; 26:1, 31–37 |



MARCH



A DWELLING PLACE FOR GOD

A Dwelling Place For God

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifices

Theme For The Month: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, And

Atonement

Devotional Reading: John 4:13-26

Background Scripture: Exodus 25-27

Lesson Focus: Exodus 25:1-9, 26:1,31-37

Memory Verse:

“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.”—Exodus 25:8

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner should be able to:

1. Categorize the types of offerings that God specified.
2. Compare God's instructions to Moses with New Testament directives.
3. Write a prayer of gratitude for God's willingness to dwell with him or her today.

INTRODUCTION

The narrative of Scripture as a whole can be summarized according to the ways that God manifests His presence to his creation. After banishing humans from the Garden of Eden, where God himself walked (Genesis 3:8), he set in motion a plan to restore the relationship that had been broken by sin. God's rescue of Israel from the Egyptians was a major step in that plan. Two months later, God initiated a covenant agreement with the Israelites (Exodus 19).

The Sinai covenant was given for God's people to be able to live

with the divine presence in their midst. Their breaking of the covenant didn't take long (Exodus 32:7–8). Despite this, God continued in faithfulness as he brought the Israelites to the land promised to them as children of Abraham (Genesis 13:14–17). In the context of today's lesson, Moses had gone up Mount Sinai and entered the cloud of God's presence (Exodus 24:15–18). During that 40-day encounter, God gave him instructions for offering, and for a tabernacle, for the items to fill it, and for the ministry of the priests. These instructions span Exodus 25–31 (see lesson 3). God desired to grant access to his holy presence, but that required a systematic approach to prevent anything profane (not just sin, but also things ritually unclean) from entering the tabernacle.

Today's lesson examines the construction of God's tabernacle, the specially designed place that God asked his people to create. God wanted to be in their midst.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

GIFT FROM THE HEART (EXODUS 25:1-9)

Since the Israelites arrived at Sinai in Exodus 19:1, Moses had been functioning as a mediator: taking messages from God down the mountain and returning responses from the people. The instructions came directly from God, and Moses did not alter the words. He received these words while on the mountain, hidden from the people's sight for 40 days (Exodus 24:18).

Before they left Egypt, they received valuable articles from their Egyptian captors (Exodus 3:21; 11:2–3; 12:35–36). The offering that God commanded was surrendering those items that God had

helped the people receive in the first place, for this very purpose. The phrase “whose heart prompts them to give” indicates that the offering God prescribed was to be voluntary and given cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). God did not specify that the offering be taken up for the construction of a tabernacle—although that is what it would be used to build—but God said bring me an offering of different kinds. As gifts, these offerings are directed first and foremost to God.

Four rows of three precious stones each would be set in the breastplate of the ephod, with “each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes” (28:21). The high priest would wear the names of all 12 tribes when he came before God's presence and entered the Holy Place (see 28:12, 29–30). God wants to dwell with his people. So, he directed the people to construct a place suitable to that purpose: a sanctuary. This refers to the tabernacle (or to the holiest part thereof) and, much later, the temple. The sanctuary would announce God's presence, for it would be the most prominent feature of Israel's camp.

God's instructions show a spirit of practicality and a concern for the details. You might look at your own life and the resources God has given you. What tasks have you been prepared to complete? What service does God ask you to render when you examine your tools and resources?

LESSON TWO

TABERNACLE DIRECTIONS (EXODUS 36:1,31-37)

After describing the construction of the tabernacle's contents in Exodus 25:10–40, Exodus 26:1 begins with specifications of the tabernacle's construction itself. The ark of the covenant was

constructed to feature two cherubim of gold on its cover (25:18–20). Cherubim are angelic attendants of God. They are mentioned dozens of times in the Old Testament but never in the New Testament.

A skilled worker was to make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it for the separation of the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place within the tabernacle. The curtain had no gaps; it sectioned off the area of the presence of God. This is the same kind of curtain found in the temple in Jesus' day, and it would be torn from top to bottom at his death (Matthew 27:51).

God is never described as being in the ark of the covenant. Instead, the ark is sometimes called God's “footstool,” perhaps meaning that God was (invisibly) pictured as enthroned in Heaven while resting his feet at this point on earth (1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalms 99:5; 132:7; Isaiah 66:1). The ark would be a focal point of Israelite faith until its disappearance at the time of the Babylonian exile. The ark is like a memory box for the Israelites. How have you stewarded the memories of God's redemption in your life?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the sovereign God desire so much to be in the midst of His people?
2. What steps do you take to ensure you voluntarily and cheerfully give to God? What obstacles prevent you from giving to God in this manner? How do you deal with these obstacles?
3. In the midst of a very severe trial and their extreme poverty, the Macedonians “welled up in rich generosity” (2 Corinthians 8:2-5). To what extent should believers, who are going through deprivations, give to the church?
4. Are buildings such as temples or sanctuaries necessary for the presence of God?
5. How has this lesson changed your understanding of worship? What will you do in light of that change of thinking?

APPLICATION

1. God wants to dwell with his people.
2. God is holy, and His very presence is sacred.
3. God made His presence to be with His people in the tabernacle for ancient Israel. Also, He is present in the person of Christ, who sent the Spirit to reside in our midst even now.
4. God has a purpose for every believer. He prepares every believer for specific task(s).
5. God is the ultimate planner.

CONCLUSION

The planning of materials, arrangement, and careful division of duties were necessary for the construction of the tabernacle.

Without instructions, the people of Israel—who were by no means free of sin—could not have endured a holy God in their midst. But with the careful management of access, no one would haphazardly wander into the sacred space and look upon God enthroned above the atonement cover, for this would mean certain death (see a warning even to Aaron in Leviticus 16:2).

God is the ultimate planner. He planned His creation, contrary to what the proponents of theories of evolution and the big bang want to make us believe. Not only did he plan the construction of a tabernacle, but he ensured that his people would have the necessary materials before they left the land of Egypt. Both in the Sinai covenant and in the new covenant, God can make a way for his presence to be with his people.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

Today, God is looking a place where He can dwell. He is not looking for well-built house but willing hearts that can meet the divine requirements for the dwelling place of the God of all flesh.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Mon, Mar. 10 | A Compassionate High Priest | Hebrews 5 |
| Tue, Mar. 11 | A Chosen High Priest | Leviticus 8:1–13 |
| Wed, Mar. 12 | A Cleansed High Priest | Leviticus 8:14–23 |
| Thu, Mar. 13 | A Chaste High Priest | Psalms 133 |
| Fri, Mar. 14 | A Commendable High Priest | Hebrews 7:1–14 |
| Sat, Mar. 15 | A Continuous High Priest | Hebrews 7:15–28 |
| Sun, Mar. 16 | A Consecrated High Priest | Exodus 29:1–9, 35–37 |



MARCH

16

**THE ORDINATION OF
PRIESTS**

The Ordination Of Priests

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifices

Theme For The Month: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, And
Atonement

Devotional Reading: Psalm 133

Background Scripture: Exodus 29:1–37; Leviticus 8:1–36

Lesson Focus: Exodus 29:1–9, 35–37

Memory Verse:

“The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.”—Exodus 29:9b

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner should be able to:

1. Define “ordination” in the sense of “consecration.”
2. Compare and contrast ordination/consecration in the Old Testament with its value and practice in the New Testament.
3. Make a plan to serve as a member of the Christian's holy and royal priesthood per 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

INTRODUCTION

In Israel's earliest days, Aaron and his sons became the first priests under the nation's leadership by Moses, who was Aaron's brother (Exodus 7:1; 28:1). They were anointed, ordained, and consecrated to do so (28:41). The act of anointing consisted of pouring oil on the priest's head, done as a ritual to show a person had been selected. Ordination was the act of appointment through the authority of the congregation of the people. Consecration was the “setting apart” of the person for the tasks of the priesthood, with the tacit agreement that the person would strive to live a

holy, blameless life, observing the laws of Israel as given by God through Moses.

Ordination within the Nigerian Baptist Convention is two pronged: The ordination of Ministers and that of Deacons. Ordination began in all holiness at God's initiative, but it eventually became an unholy travesty of sinful rulers (example: 1 Kings 12:31). The shocking picture of this decline is best appreciated by a consideration of priestly ordination at its ideal beginning—the subject of today's lesson.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

PREPARING THE OFFERINGS (Exodus 29:1-3)

Moses was instructed to carry out consecration as God's designated representative to the people. “Consecrate” is the verb form of the noun regularly translated “holy.” The idea of holiness is pervasive in the Law of Moses and the history of Israel. It being “set apart” as pure and undefiled; it is the opposite of that which is unclean or profane (Leviticus 10:10). Being made holy is a prerequisite to ministering as priests. However, the requirement for personal holiness isn't just for priests under the old covenant—it is for everyone (1 Peter 1:15–16, quoting Leviticus 11:44–45; 19:2).

A young bull and two rams without defect, and three distinct types of bread made from the finest flour were specified for the ordination. The bread was to be unleavened (made without yeast). Up to this point in Bible history, there have been two incidents associated with unleavened bread. The lesser-known incident

involved the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:3); the better-known incident was the Passover and its subsequent remembrances (Exodus 12). Both situations involved a need for haste—yeasted bread would have taken too long to rise.

All Israelites were to witness the ordinations (Leviticus 8:1–4). The exacting nature of the instructions reveals how important and serious this ceremony should be in the eyes of the Israelites. By means of meticulous instructions, God prepared hearts to recognize the seriousness of the task at hand, as His Word won't impact unprepared hearts, whether under the old covenant or the new. The end result of God's work of preparing hearts is connected to our own receptivity to that preparatory work. How do you see this playing out in the contrast between the shallow and good soils of Matthew 13:5–8?

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LESSON TWO

PREPARING THE ORDINANDS (EXODUS 29:4-9)

The entrance to the tent of meeting faced east: where Moses was to bring the ordinands. There, the men were to be washed with water, a ceremonial cleansing to begin the ordination ceremony. Washing with water in a ceremonial sense is also noted in Exodus 30:17–22; Leviticus 14:8–9; 15:4–27; etc. Moses followed God's instructions exactly (Leviticus 8:6). The sons of Aaron were four in number; their names were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar

(Numbers 26:60). The first two lost their lives when they offered “unauthorized fire before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:1–2). That happened after the ordination ceremony, so all four were present to become priests (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 3:2–4).

The sacred emblem was to be attached to the turban placed on Aaron's head. The sacred emblem was of solid gold, was engraved with the message of holiness, and it has the function of the high priest's bearing of guilt (Exodus 28:36–38). The anointing oil was a mixture of olive oil and four fine spices (Exodus 30:22–25). This use of this formulation was highly restricted i.e. “divinely proprietary” (30:26–33).

Comparing the sons' tunics, caps, and sashes with the clothing of their father is insightful. The results of such a comparison classifies the garments in terms of (1) those common to both father and sons, (2) those unique to the father, and (3) those unique to the sons. That bigger picture is found in God's stated intent for these vestments to evoke a sense of “dignity” and “honour” regarding the priesthood (Exodus 28:2, 40). The priestly office was an enduring gift (Numbers 18:7). The same can be said of our new covenant priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). Do you treat it that way?

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LESSON THREE

PERIOD OF ORDINATION (EXODUS 29:35-37)

The seven days prescribed for the ordination of Aaron and his sons could have served as a necessary period of familiarization with God's required actions. In Leviticus 8:35, Moses stressed the seven-day requirement and the deadly consequences of not honouring it. Two of Aaron's four sons died for a different violation shortly after their seven days were completed (Leviticus 9:1; 10:1–3).

A sin offering was a means of atonement (Leviticus 4). The altar needs to be purified and consecrated (Leviticus 16). The fact that whatever touches the altar will be holy is quite remarkable given that it is the opposite of the normal laws of defilement. When **“clean”** and **“unclean”** come into contact with one another, the regular pattern is that the clean becomes unclean (Leviticus 5:2–3; Haggai 2:11–13; etc.). Jesus took as given that the altar sanctifies the sacrificial gift on it (Matthew 23:19).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you respond to someone who says that Scripture texts like today's are meaningless to modern-day believers?
2. Read Matthew 16:6 and 1 Corinthians 5:6–8. How might the concept of “unleavened” apply to modern-day believers?
3. How scriptural is it to anoint with oil today?
4. Ordination to the priesthood is mentioned repeatedly in the scriptures. What is the primary relevance of this?
5. Explain the symbolism of seven days of ordination (Exodus 29:35-37).

APPLICATION

1. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Halleluyah!
2. The old covenant provides a foundation for the new covenant in Jesus Christ.
3. The altar makes the gift sacred (Matthew 23:19).
4. Being made holy is a prerequisite to ministering as priests.

CONCLUSION

A natural, perhaps instinctive way of seeing the relevance of today's lesson is to see parallels between the ordination of priests in the Old Testament and the modern practice of ordaining pastors and deacons. However, the primary relevance is at least twofold. The first is that the functions of the tabernacle, priests, and blood sacrifices form the framework for understanding Jesus' sacrifice as an atonement (propitiation) for our sins (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; etc.). The second concerns the fact and obligations of our own priesthood (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; etc.). We must not neglect the facts of the old covenant as foundations for the new covenant (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

The critical matter in priesthood is not just in the ministration but in the preparation. God is more interested in being than in doing. Our increase is best established when we spend time in the place of making. When we are properly made it becomes easier to make a mark.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT” |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mon, Mar. 17 | Building a Spiritual House | 1 Peter 2:1–5 |
| Tue, Mar. 18 | Prayer like Incense | Psalm 141 |
| Wed, Mar. 19 | The Fragrance of Knowing Christ | 2 Corinthians 2:12–17 |
| Thu, Mar. 20 | God's Delight | Zephaniah 3:14–20 |
| Fri, Mar. 21 | A Holy and Acceptable Sacrifice | Romans 12:1–8 |
| Sat, Mar. 22 | Worship Through Loving Genuinely | Romans 12:9–21 |
| Sun, Mar. 23 | An Acceptable Offering | Leviticus 1:3–17 |



MARCH

25

**OFFERING A SWEET
AROMA TO GOD**

Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifices

Theme For The Month: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, And
Atonement

Devotional Reading: Romans 12:1-8

Background Scripture: Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13

Lesson Focus: Leviticus 1:3-17

Memory Verse:

“You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”—Leviticus 1:9

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner should be able to:

1. Identify God's key expectations for burnt offerings.
2. Compare and contrast the expectation of an unblemished sacrifice with that of 1 Peter 1:19.
3. Recruit an accountability partner for mutual support in giving God the best of your service.

INTRODUCTION

This quarter's previous lessons, taken from the book of Exodus, emphasized that God would dwell with his people and receive their worship in the tabernacle. Leviticus contains the most thorough instructions on the proper forms and procedures for the worship of God: the “where” and “how” for worship. The book's divine authority and purposes are emphasized from the start (Leviticus 1:1–2). These are the Lord's regulations and instructions for his people and how they must conduct themselves in relation to him.

Leviticus takes its name from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament. The title reflects the fact that the book relates to the tasks of the Levites, who assisted the priests in carrying out duties associated with worship at the tabernacle. All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

A key word in Leviticus is the word *holy*, found more in Leviticus than in any other book of the Bible. Holiness refers to a state of being set apart, including both ritual and ethical purity. The words “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2) are directed not only to all the people of ancient Israel but to all of God's people forever (1 Peter 1:15–16, quoting that verse).

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1

OFFER PLEASING SACRIFICE TO GOD: LEVITICUS 1:3-13

Flock is generally reserved for sheep or goats while herds are mostly larger ungulates like cows or horses. The directive to sacrifice only animals without defect emphasises the fact that God deserves the best of one's herds rather than the worst. Leviticus 22:17–33 gives an extended warning against unacceptable sacrifices. The added specification that the blemish-free sacrifice be male foreshadows the sacrifice of Jesus (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19).

The burnt offering could not be presented just anywhere the giver desired. The worshipper had to bring it to the place specifically designated for such a sacred purpose: the tabernacle. The Lord was to be worshipped on his terms and at the sole place designated

for that purpose. Given the cost of a cow without any blemish in Nigeria, giving up a head of cattle for a burnt offering was significant for an Israelite, showing a high level of devotion to the kingdom of God. Look at the level of your financial giving, and ask yourself: What am I giving up the opportunity of buying when I put this amount of money in the offering plate or devote X amount of time to ministry activities?

The smoke of the sacrifice creates an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Even though God is spirit (John 4:24), the Scriptures speak of him as having physical characteristics (examples: Psalm 34:15–16; John 12:38). Here, the sense of smell depicts how the Lord was pleased with the burnt offering as presented in the manner set forth in the text (compare Amos 5:21). The requirement for an unblemished sacrificial animal describes Jesus, upon whose perfection our salvation depends (1 Peter 1:18–19). That standard must also be ours (Matthew 5:48; 2 Peter 3:14). Is this your priority?

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LESSON 2

THE WIDOW'S MITE (LEVITICUS 1:14-17)

An offering of birds for a burnt offering was provided for people who could not afford to bring their offerings from a herd or flock (Leviticus 5:7–10). Such an option was also provided for women

after childbirth who could not afford to offer a lamb for the burnt offering of purification (12:8). Also, Joseph and Mary offered the same type of sacrifice following the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:24). The anatomy of a bird is quite different from that of sheep and goats; thus, the sacrificial procedure was quite different. The priest was solely responsible for preparing and presenting the bird as a burnt offering.

Though not as monetarily valuable as something offered from the flock or the herd, this offering still produced an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Whether the worshipper was well-to-do or not made no difference to the Lord, who treats everyone alike (Acts 10:34; compare Deuteronomy 10:17).

As followers of Jesus, our duty is to offer to God, not burnt sacrifices of animals or birds, but our lives as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Our sacrifices do include the monetary (Hebrews 13:16; 2 Corinthians 8:3–4; Philippians 4:18) but are primarily spiritual (1 Peter 2:5), consisting of “the fruit of lips” offering our thanks to God (Hebrews 13:15) and the good deeds we do as salt and light in our spheres of influence (Matthew 5:13–14).

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you respond to the claim that the book of Leviticus has no value for modern-day Christians?

2. How will your life be a pleasing sacrifice to God?
3. Which most motivates you to worship: the “where” or the “how”?
4. What are some ways to ensure that you offer “the best” to Christ?
5. List the elements of the foreshadowing nature of the Levitical sacrifices.

APPLICATION

1. Always worship God on his terms, not yours.
2. See the meaning of offering as more than money. Demonstrate the commitment and obedience to bring your best before the Lord.
3. Thank God always for the sacrifice of Jesus, who gave himself unreservedly to be the sacrifice needed to remove our sins and provide full atonement that we might be reconciled with Him.
4. Emulate David who said he will not sacrifice to the LORD offerings that cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24)
5. Loving God and our neighbours is more important than all offerings and sacrifices.

CONCLUSION

The burnt offering is the first of several kinds of sacrifices in the book of Leviticus. The burnt offering is mentioned first, perhaps because it was the most committal. Burnt offerings are mentioned about 270 times in the Old Testament. Their association with atonement makes their study important; recall the New Testament teachings that to love God with all our hearts, with all our understanding and with all our strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves is more important than all burnt offerings

and sacrifices (Mark 12:33; Hebrews 10:1–14).

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

There is a kingdom specification for the offerings we offer to God and divine requirements for the life that is making the offering. How sad, if there offerings that are constantly offered that do not ascend to God as a sweet smelling aroma. How painful can it be that our offerings are rejected? Consider your offerings – do they meet God's requirements?

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|--|-----------------------|
| Mon, Mar. 24 | Delighting to Do God's Will | Psalms 40:1–8 |
| Tue, Mar. 25 | Safe in God's Love and Faithfulness | Psalms 40:9–17 |
| Wed, Mar. 26 | A Preferred Sanctuary | Hebrews 9:1–14 |
| Thu, Mar. 27 | Christ's Perfect Sacrifice | Hebrews 9:15–22 |
| Fri, Mar. 28 | Vertical and Horizontal Reconciliation | 2 Corinthians 5:12–21 |
| Sat, Mar. 29 | Approach God in Awe | Leviticus 16:1–10 |
| Sun, Mar. 30 | Cleanse the Sanctuary | Leviticus 16:11–19 |



MARCH

30

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day Of Atonement

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifices

Theme For The Month: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, And
Atonement

Devotional Reading: Psalm 40:9-17

Background Scripture: Leviticus 16

Lesson Focus: Leviticus 16:11-19

Memory Verse:

“In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”—Leviticus 16:16

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner should be able to:

1. Explain the significance of the Day of Atonement.
2. Compare and contrast the Day of Atonement with Jesus' sacrifice.
3. Commit to a regular confession of sin.

INTRODUCTION

Within the Old Testament, the world is divided in part between pure and impure things. While God has always desired to dwell with his people, his presence cannot reside in an impure location, so barriers must be erected. Today's lesson text describes how God addressed the problem of sacred space and impurity in the Old Testament era.

God established several feasts and holy days for the new nation of Israel. These are listed in Leviticus 23; Numbers 28–29;

Deuteronomy 16; etc. In the book of Leviticus, the Day of Atonement takes center stage among them (compare Numbers 29:7–11).

The sacred space designated “most holy” is the context for the actions taken on that day of every year. The Most Holy Place was the heart of the tabernacle, the sacred structure that God commanded Moses to build as a site for God's presence among the people (Exodus 26). In today's lesson, we will study the Lord's instruction on how Aaron, brother of Moses and the first high priest (Leviticus 16:2–5), was to discharge his duties when that sacred day came around each year.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

ATONEMENT FOR THE HIGH PRIEST: LEVITICUS 16:11-14

Making atonement is a means of escaping the penalty for one's sin by the offering of a substitutionary sacrifice (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). God gave the sacrificial procedures needed to cleanse the Most Holy Place, starting with the cleansing of the high priest, Aaron himself. He had to address his (and his family's) uncleanness before taking the next step of atoning for the people's sins. After doing so, Aaron proceeded to offer the required sacrifices that were part of the day's procedures.

Aaron (or any high priest who would take part in these proceedings on the Day of Atonement) had to prepare himself carefully and appropriately before entering behind the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place within the

tabernacle (compare Exodus 26:33; Hebrews 6:19; 9:2–5). Aaron's loss of two sons when they misused censers of fire (Leviticus 10:1–2) made clear the necessity of following these instructions with great care and seriousness.

The ingredients for the fragrant incense served as a perceptible reminder that God was holy and that the precincts of his abode should be respected. The high priest could not enter the Most Holy Place carelessly or casually. God must be approached on his terms, not ours. The high priest was also to sprinkle some of the blood seven times on the ground directly in front of the atonement cover. This represented the entirety of the Most Holy Place being brought into contact with the blood of the sin offering. The number seven often represents completeness or perfection (examples: Revelation 5:6; 15:1, 8).

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LESSON 2

ATONEMENT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE: LEVITICUS 16:15-17

Having provided atonement for himself and his family, the high priest was then to prepare to enter the Most Holy Place a second time on behalf of the people, his fellow Israelites. The spiritual state of the Israelites entails uncleanness, rebellion, and sins. Rebellion implies deliberate and wilful defiance. God foresaw that the Israelites would pollute the places of worship to the degree that they, too, needed to be cleansed. That preparation involved

killing one of the two goats for the sin offering, mentioned in Leviticus 16:5. The first goat was slaughtered as an atoning sacrifice, cleansing the sacred precincts from the impurity of Israel's sins.

The other goat became the scapegoat, which was released into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:8–10, 20–22). The priest would first lay hands on the goat's head and confess the people's sins over it, thus transferring them symbolically to the animal (16:21). A person would then be charged with taking the goat into the wilderness and releasing it so that it wouldn't return (16:22, 26–28). The scapegoat and its destination thus represented the complete removal of the sins and impurities of the people. The high priest was to follow the same procedure that he did in providing atonement for himself and his household.

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LESSON THREE

ATONEMENT FOR THE MOST HOLY PLACE AND THE ALTAR (LEVITICUS 16:18-19)

Atonement addressed not only individual sins but also the contamination of places and things closely associated with the holy God. So, the high priest must also make atonement for the Most Holy Place. On the Day of Atonement, no one could re-enter the tabernacle until atonement had been made for priest, places, and people. After the purification of the Most Holy Place, the

cleansing regimen progresses outward to the horns of the altar.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Considering Revelation 8:3–4, how will you adjust your prayer life to be more of a fragrant incense before God? Which is more important in that regard: quantity or quality? Why?
2. In what ways do you see the spiritual, mental, and physical preparations for ministry tasks to be interrelated?
3. The Lord is to be worshipped on His terms, not ours. Explain this in practical terms.
4. Explain how the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament foreshadows the New Testament's Day of Atonement.
5. What are some spiritual guardrails you can erect to ensure you are not in rebellion against God?

APPLICATION

1. Praise God for his provisions of atonement!
2. God reconciled us to Himself first, through a Day of atonement designed for the ancient Israelites and now, through a superior Day of Atonement designed for the entire world and accomplished through Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice.
3. Prepare to be in God's holy presence always.
4. Believers must beware of uncleanness, rebellion, and sins in our daily lives; and pray for forgiveness always while forgiving others.

CONCLUSION

The Day of Atonement has a fivefold purpose. First, it highlights God's hatred of sin. Second, it underlines the requirement for

blood to be shed for the forgiveness of sin. Third, it reveals how “contagious” sin is—even inanimate objects needed atonement. Fourth, it uses “types” to foreshadow the death of Christ. Fifth, its yearly repetition was a self-demonstration of the need for a permanent remedy for sin.

On the cross, Jesus achieved in one day what Aaron and the high priests of the old covenant who followed him could never accomplish. The effectiveness and finality of Jesus' sacrifice was demonstrated visually by the tearing of the temple curtain that set apart the Most Holy Place (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38). The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus' flesh as the “curtain” that was “opened” to give every Christian access to the presence of God. Jesus is now our high priest, the only one necessary under the new covenant (Hebrews 10:19–21).

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

The priest made atonement first for his sins and then for the people with the blood of the bull as the sin offering, but Christ with His own blood became our sin offering and by so doing, made atonement 'at-one-moment' and paid the price once and for all.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mon, Mar. 31 | Enter God's Courts with an Offering | Psalms 96 |
| Tue, Apr. 1 | Christ's Suffering and Exaltation | 1 Peter 3:18–22 |
| Wed, Apr. 2 | Suffering Servant | Isaiah 52:13–53:3 |
| Thu, Apr. 3 | Light out of Anguish | Isaiah 53:4–12 |
| Fri, Apr. 4 | A Ransom for Many | Mark 10:41–45 |
| Sat, Apr. 5 | Christ in Heaven on Our Behalf | Hebrews 9:23–10:4 |
| Sun, Apr. 6 | Confidence in God's Presence | Hebrews 10:11–14, 19–25 |



APRIL

6

**CHRIST'S ONCE FOR
ALL SACRIFICE**

Topic: Christ's Once For All Sacrifice

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Christ's All Sufficient Sacrifice

Devotional Reading: Mark 10:41-45

Background Scriptures: Hebrews 9:23-10:25

Lesson Focus: Hebrews 9:23-28; 10:1-4; 11-14; 19-25

MEMORY VERSE

Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Hebrews 9:24

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify how a person enters the holiest place.
2. Explain why Christ had to die only once.
3. Recruit an accountability partner for mutual encouragement in love and good works.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Hebrews explains the connection between the old and new covenants. Written for Jewish Christians at risk of returning to Judaism, this letter shows how the rules in the Law of Moses pointed to Jesus and His work. It identifies Jesus as the high priest of the new covenant and describes the worship rules under the old covenant, which were temporary. These practices have been replaced by Jesus' one-time sacrifice, as He is the perfect high

priest. This sets up the key summary found in chapters 9 and 10, which is the focus of today's passage.

LESSON ONE

ABSOLUTE NECESSITY (HEBREWS 9:23-28)

This passage highlights the significance of Christ's sacrifice compared to the practices of the old covenant. The phrase "copies of the heavenly things" refers to earthly items that symbolize spiritual truths. In the old covenant, animal blood was used to cleanse worship objects. The need for heavenly things to be purified raises the question of why they would need cleansing if they are untouched by sin.

Some scholars suggest a "lesser to greater" argument: if earthly items require cleansing, then heavenly ones must also. Hebrews 9:24 clarifies that Christ didn't enter a man-made temple; He entered heaven itself to serve as our priest. This emphasizes that His sacrifice is complete and sufficient for all sins, freeing us from repeated rituals.

The word "for" in verse 24 explains that Christ's ascension allowed Him to serve in the true heavenly sanctuary. Unlike earthly priests, who made sacrifices repeatedly, Christ's one-time sacrifice addresses all sins forever. Now, He intercedes for believers directly before God, reminding us of the importance of prayer.

Verses 27-28 remind us that all face death and judgment due to sin. Christ's death was unique; He willingly sacrificed Himself for

many. His return will not be to deal with sin again, but to bring salvation to those eagerly waiting for Him. This motivates us to reflect on the certainty of death and judgment, urging us to live righteously and share the message of salvation while anticipating His return.

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LESSON TWO

WEAK SACRIFICES (Hebrews 10:1-4)

This letter contrasts the old and new covenants, emphasizing the superiority of Christ's sacrifice over animal sacrifices. The phrase "the law" refers to the Law of Moses, which, while holy, serves primarily as a shadow pointing to greater realities. Some recognized its holiness but failed to see its limitations, leading to an unrealistic burden on others. This teaches us the importance of understanding the limitations of religious rules and avoiding the imposition of unrealistic expectations on others.

The law served as a temporary guide meant to lead us to Christ. However, it cannot make anyone perfect, as no one has kept it perfectly except for Christ. The term "otherwise" in Hebrews 10:2 indicates that if the Law of Moses were sufficient, animal sacrifices would not need to be repeated indefinitely. This

emphasizes the need to embrace Christ's sacrifice, recognizing it as the ultimate solution for our sin and guilt.

Instead of freeing individuals from guilt, animal sacrifices served as an annual reminder of sins. This reminds us to focus on heart transformation rather than merely following rituals. Genuine faith in Christ leads to true change and freedom from the cycle of guilt.

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LESSON THREE

PERFECT SACRIFICE (HEBREWS 10:11-14)

This passage highlights the difference between the repetitive work of priests in the old covenant and the one-time, perfect sacrifice of Christ. Priests performed various rituals and sacrifices repeatedly. In contrast, Christ offered Himself as a single sacrifice for all humanity, completing His work and taking His place at God's right hand. Psalm 110:1 confirms that this sacrifice is fully sufficient and doesn't need to be repeated.

By recognizing this finality, believers can escape the cycle of guilt tied to ongoing rituals and rest in Christ's finished work. Hebrews 10:13 emphasizes that Christ remains seated, indicating that His work is complete. Unlike the endless animal sacrifices, His

sacrifice perfects believers, a task the old covenant sacrifices could not achieve.

Understanding that we are perfected in Christ empowers us to share this message of grace with others.

LESSON 4

IMPLICATIONS (HEBREWS 10:19-25)

The implications of Jesus' work as our high priest are significant. In the old covenant, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, where God's presence dwelled, and this was permitted only once a year. Jesus' sacrifice has opened the way for everyone to access God, something unimaginable before. Now, we can approach God confidently.

The “new and living way” mentioned in verse 20 highlights the difference between the old and new covenants. This path to God became available only after Christ's sacrifice and gives life to those who follow it. His self-sacrifice tore the curtain of His body, symbolizing that His death allows us to enter God's presence.

Next, we receive an exhortation urging us to draw near to God with sincere hearts and assurance from our faith, having our consciences cleansed. This cleansing is both internal and external, possibly referring to baptism.

We are encouraged to hold firmly to our hope, trusting in God's faithfulness. Additionally, we should motivate one another toward love and good deeds and not neglect gathering together, as community support is essential for encouragement and growth.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. How does knowing that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient impact how you view your own sins?
2. In what ways can you encourage someone who is struggling with guilt to seek Christ's forgiveness?
3. How can you help someone understand the limitations of merely following religious rules?
4. In what ways can you encourage someone to experience the transformation that comes from genuine faith in Christ?
5. How does understanding your perfection in Christ change your approach to daily life?
6. In what ways can you share this message of grace with someone in your life?
7. How can you confidently approach God in prayer, knowing that Jesus has made a way?
8. What steps can you take to encourage a friend in their faith journey?

APPLICATION

Believers are called to embrace Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, confidently approach God in prayer, and actively support one another in love and good deeds, reflecting the transformative power of His grace in our daily lives.

CONCLUSION

Today's lesson illustrates the absolute necessity of Christ's sacrifice, contrasting the temporary and imperfect nature of the old covenant with the perfect and sufficient work of Christ. As we engage with these lessons, let us be reminded of our access to God, the freedom from guilt, and our call to support one another in faith. May we eagerly await Christ's return, living lives that reflect His love and sacrifice.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

It is heart-warming to imagine that Christ paid the ultimate price for our redemption once and for all so that we do not have to go through the yearly reminder of sin as was the practise in the Old Testament - a practice that did not deal with the sin issue.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
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| Mon, Apr, 7 | Our Sins Have Hidden God's Face | Isaiah 59:1-8 |
| Tue, Apr, 8 | Healed by Christ's Wounds | 1 Peter 2:19-25 |
| Wed, Apr, 9 | The Promise of Eternal Life | John 3:1-15 |
| Thu, Apr, 10 | God So Loved the World | John 3:16-21 |
| Fri, Apr, 11 | Atonement Through His Blood | Romans 3:19 - 31 |
| Sat, Apr, 12 | Reconciled to God by Christ. | Romans 5: 1-15 |
| Sun, Apr, 13 | Atonement Through His Blood | 1 John 2: 1-6; 4:9-17 |



APRIL

13

**CHRIST, THE ATONING
SACRIFICE**

Topic: Christ, The Atoning Sacrifice

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Christ's All Sufficient Sacrifice

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 59:1-8

Background Scriptures: 1 John 2:1-6; 4:7-21

Lesson Focus: 1 John 2:1-6; 4:7-17

Memory Verse:

*This Is Love: Not That We Loved God, But That He Loved Us And Sent
His Son As An Atoning Sacrifice For Our Sins. 1 John 4:10*

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify his or her advocate with the Father.
2. Explain the motivation and significance of Jesus' sacrifice
3. List three ways to practice 1 John 2:6 in the week ahead.

INTRODUCTION

Our lesson today is based on the theme of Jesus as the "atoning sacrifice" for our sins, taken from the book of 1 John. This letter was written by the Apostle John to encourage early believers in their faith and understanding of who Jesus is. John makes it clear that Jesus is both fully God and fully human, and through His sacrifice, He has made it possible for us to be in a right relationship with God.

In 1 John 2:1, we learn that Jesus is our *advocate* with the Father. This means He stands on our behalf, speaking for us in heaven.

When we fall short or sin, Jesus is there to plead our case, reminding the Father that His sacrifice has covered all our wrongs. The motivation for this sacrifice is simple: love. God loves us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to take away our sins. This sacrifice was not just to show God's power but to restore the broken relationship between humanity and God. Because of this, we are called to live like Jesus—loving others, walking in obedience, and reflecting His love in our daily lives.

As we reflect on today's lesson, let's ask ourselves: How can we walk as Jesus walked this week? How can we show love, forgive, and be advocates for others just as Jesus is for us?

LESSON TWO

THE SOURCE OF NEW LIFE (1 JOHN 2:1-2)

John often calls his readers "children" (1 John 2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), showing his caring relationship with them and hinting that they are still growing spiritually. He calls Jesus our "advocate," the same word used for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). An advocate is someone who speaks on our behalf. Even though Christians are forgiven, we still sin. But when we genuinely repent, we don't need to be justified again. Jesus, who is with the Father, intercedes for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus is "righteous," meaning He is without sin, so He can take our place before God. His sacrifice, described as "propitiation" (Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10; Hebrews 2:17), turns away God's

anger. This substitutionary atonement covers all our sins—past, present, and future (2 Corinthians 5:21). This grace is available to everyone but only works for those who believe in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26).

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LESSON TWO

THE PROOF OF NEW LIFE (1 JOHN 2:3-6)

John repeatedly uses the word "know" in his letter to highlight the assurance Christians can have in their faith and salvation. In 1 John 2:3-6, he explains that the way we can be sure Jesus is our advocate and atoning sacrifice is by keeping His commandments (John 14:15; 15:10). Accepting Jesus as Savior also means accepting Him as Lord, and obedience to His teachings is the evidence that we truly know Him. Even though believers are forgiven, we still sin. However, sin no longer controls us; as followers of Christ, we continuously strive to live in obedience. John contrasts ongoing sin with ongoing obedience, showing that while we still sin, Christ's influence is shaping us. Verse 4 reinforces this by stating that claiming to know Jesus while living in disobedience is self-deception (1 John 1:6). Some early believers may have separated spiritual faith from their actions, but John insists that our actions

reveal what is in our hearts (Matthew 12:34).

Living as Jesus taught reflects the power of His work in our lives. Jesus' death is the ultimate expression of God's love, and by following His teachings, we express that love to others (John 3:15; 1 John 3:16). The term "made complete" in 1 John refers to fulfilling a task, just as Jesus completed His mission to show God's love (John 4:34; 17:4). Through our obedience, that love continues to be fulfilled. Obeying Christ means living as He did, which requires staying closely connected to Him, like branches connected to a vine (John 15:1-11). We cannot live like Jesus by our own strength; we need God's Spirit working in us to help us follow His commandments. When we remain in Jesus, our lives will naturally reflect His love and teachings.

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LESSON THREE

LOVE IN ACTION (JOHN 4:9-12)

God's supreme expression of love is seen in the incarnation—Jesus Christ, God's unique and beloved Son, coming in human flesh to offer salvation to humanity (John 1:14, 3:16). Jesus emphasized that He is the only way to God (John 14:6), and through Him, we receive life. While other religions

speak of humanity seeking God, Christianity is about God seeking humanity, evidenced by Christ's sacrifice for a world in rebellion (Luke 19:10, Romans 3:10-12). His becoming human is the ultimate act of love, and through His death, that love is fully revealed (1 John 4:19).

The gospel calls us to love God and our neighbours (Matthew 22:34-40). Our ability to love stems from God's love, made known through Jesus' death and resurrection. John's message is clear: love is action, not just words. God demonstrated His love by sending Christ as the atonement for our sins (Romans 5:8). This means we, too, must love everyone, including our enemies, as God does (1 John 2:2, Matthew 5:43-47).

Although no one has seen God, Christ revealed Him to us (John 14:8-9). Through loving others, we make God's love visible to the world. This command to love one another is central to both Jesus' teachings (John 13:34-35) and other New Testament writings (Romans 13:8, 1 Peter 1:22). By loving others, we reflect God's presence and show His love in action.

LESSON FOUR

CERTAINTY OF KNOWLEDGE (1JOHN 4:13-17)

The Holy Spirit's presence in believers assures us that we are in Christ, and He is in us (John 14:16-17; Romans 8:9-11). The Spirit's presence is God's own, affirming our belonging to Him through Christ's atoning death. From the start of 1 John, the apostle affirms that Jesus, who was seen by eyewitnesses, is the

basis of the gospel (1 John 1:1-3). The author emphasizes the centrality of Jesus' mission as the Savior of the world (John 3:17). Acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God is a crucial step in faith, but it must be paired with spiritual maturity (Hebrews 5:12). Merely confessing Jesus is not enough—demons do the same and remain lost (Mark 5:7; James 2:19). True spiritual growth leads to a deeper understanding of how God lives in believers, fostering a unity that mirrors God's love (Ephesians 2:8-10). Without love, our confession is empty, but with love, it becomes complete (1 John 4:8).

John's repeated emphasis on love underlines its importance. Jesus' life and sacrifice fully demonstrate God's love, which we are called to emulate. If we confess Christ, we must also love one another, for genuine love reflects our unity with God. John ties this to the Day of Judgment, where the love of God in us gives us confidence before Him. Our boldness comes not from our deeds but from our faith in God's mercy (Titus 3:5). The evidence of our loving works will reflect the reality of our faith, as taught by Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46).

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

1. What steps can believers take to overcome sin and submit to Christ's authority?
2. Share how your life has changed since you submitted to Christ's authority
3. How do you respond to the idea of Jesus constantly

interceding on your behalf?

4. How can you be better attentive to the work of God's Spirit to produce fruit in you?
5. In what specific ways can we walk as Jesus walked in our daily lives?
6. What are some ways we can love one another just as God loved us?
7. How would you deal with negative attitude that prevent you from loving those you might consider unlovable?
8. How would you respond to someone who claim that they have confess that Jesus is the son of God but wilfully and intentionally commit sin?

APPLICATION

We are called to reflect Christ's love daily by walking in obedience to His teachings and extending grace to others. Our actions should show the love that Jesus has shown us, especially in forgiving and serving others.

As we live out our faith, we should deepen our relationship with Christ, allowing His Spirit to guide our actions, so we represent Him faithfully in all we do.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Christ's sacrifice not only reconciles us to God but also calls us to live in a way that reflects His love and obedience. As we embrace His atoning work, let us strive to walk as He walked,

demonstrating love, grace, and faithfulness in every aspect of our lives. Through our actions and commitment to His teachings, we reveal God's love to a world in need.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

The mark of our knowledge of God is built on the foundations of keeping His commandment, loving God, and walking as Christ did. So, the true mark of our relationship with God is when people can easily see Jesus in us and in our everyday interactions with others.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mon, Apr, 14 | From Despair to praise | Psalms 71:12-24 |
| Tue, Apr, 15 | Made Perfect Through Suffering | Hebrews 2:1-13 |
| Wed, Apr, 16 | The Provider | Genesis 22:1-14 |
| Thu, Apr, 17 | Servanthood, Suspicion, and a Sign | Matthew 26:17-30 |
| Fri, Apr, 18 | Darkness, Despair, and Death | Matthew 27:39-40, 45-54 |
| Sat, Apr, 19 | Ransomed | Psalms 49:1-15 |
| Sun, Apr, 20 | He Has Resen! | Matthew 28:1-10 |



APRIL

20

**CHRIST DIES AND RISES
TO NEW LIFE**

Topic: Christ Dies And Rises To New Life

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Christ's, All-sufficient Sacrifice

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 2:1-13

Background Scriptures: Matthew 27:24 – 28:10

Lesson Focus: Matthew 27:39-40, 45-54; 28:1-10

Memory Verse:

"Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshiped him." — Matthew 28:9

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize Matthew's account of the crucifixion and resurrection.
2. Identify and explain allusions to and quotes of the Old Testament in this account.
3. Sing with classmates a hymn or praise song that celebrates the resurrection.

INTRODUCTION

After Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus began preparing His disciples for His coming death and resurrection (Matthew 16:13-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). Despite Jesus' clear warnings, His disciples struggled to understand what was to come (John 20:9). In the trials leading up to His death, Jesus was sentenced to

crucifixion by the Roman authorities, who often used this brutal method to make an example of those considered the most dangerous criminals (Matthew 26:57-68; 27:11-26).

Crucifixion was intentionally designed to be agonizing, humiliating, and prolonged, serving as a deterrent to others. Victims were either tied or nailed to a wooden cross in a highly visible location, ensuring the public witnessed their suffering. Left to the elements, their death would come slowly from blood loss, respiratory failure, and exposure, all while enduring public ridicule. As today's lesson begins, we find Jesus on the cross, suffering this horrific punishment for our salvation.

LESSON TWO

THE DEATH OF THE KING (MATTHEW 27:39-40, 45-54)

The accounts of Jesus' crucifixion in Matthew (27:39-40), Mark (15:29-30), and Luke (23:35) depict the mockery He faced. This ridicule connects to Jesus' earlier prediction in John 2:19-20 about raising the temple, which referred to His body (John 2:21), and not the physical temple. The accusations against Him were baseless, originating from false witnesses (Matthew 26:60-62; Mark 14:58), as speaking against the temple was a capital offense (Jeremiah 26:1-11). The taunt "come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God" echoes Satan's temptation at the start of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:3), representing a final attempt to thwart God's plan. While others referred to Him as the Son of God, Jesus primarily identified as the "Son of Man" (Matthew 8:20; 9:6).

Despite having the power to come down from the cross (Matthew 26:53), Jesus chose to remain and offer Himself as an atoning sacrifice, taking upon Himself the punishment for humanity's sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). As the scene shifts to Matthew 27:45-50, parallels can be found in Mark 15:33-37 and Luke 23:44-46. The supernatural darkness that enveloped the land during Jesus' crucifixion lasted three hours, signifying God's displeasure (Exodus 10:21-23). Jesus' cry of abandonment, quoting Psalm 22:1, illustrates His suffering and separation from the Father as He bore humanity's sins (Matthew 1:21; 20:28; 26:28). Misunderstandings arose as some people misheard Jesus' Aramaic cry for Elijah (Matthew 16:14; 17:10-13). The act of giving Jesus' vinegar may have been mockery or an attempt at kindness (Mark 15:36-37; Luke 23:36; John 19:29).

In His final moments, Jesus cried out in a loud voice (Luke 23:46) and proclaimed, "It is finished" (John 19:30), demonstrating His control and physical strength until death. The tearing of the temple curtain from top to bottom (also in Luke 23:45) symbolized the removal of barriers between God and humanity, as explained in Hebrews (9:11-12, 24; 10:19-20). The accompanying earthquake indicated divine action, as such occurrences often signified God's presence or judgment (Judges 5:4-5; Psalm 114:7-8; Joel 3:16). The centurion overseeing the crucifixion, witnessing these events, declared, "Surely he was the Son of God," recognizing the extraordinary nature of the occurrences around him, similar to the disciples' response to Jesus

calming the storm (Matthew 14:28-33).

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LESSON TWO

THE RESURRECTION OF THE KING (MATTHEW 28:1-10)

The Jewish calendar marks days from sunset to sunset (Leviticus 23:32), so the Sabbath ended at sunset before the events described here. The women set out on the first day of the week (Sunday), as Sabbath was a day of rest (Luke 23:56). Mary Magdalene and the other Mary play crucial roles in Matthew's narrative. They witnessed Jesus' crucifixion and burial (Matthew 27:55, 61). Mary Magdalene had been a follower of Jesus since He delivered her from demon possession (Luke 8:2). The "other" Mary is identified as the mother of James and Joseph (Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:47).

Due to the Jewish leaders' actions, Jesus' body was quickly buried by Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-58). The women, unable to properly prepare the body for burial on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11), were present at the tomb to witness the miraculous events that followed. An earthquake marked divine intervention as an angel rolled back the stone—not to release Jesus, who could

enter locked spaces (John 20:19-20), but to show the empty tomb to the women. The angel, with a brilliant appearance (Matthew 17:2), reassured them, echoing the message given to Joseph at Jesus' birth (Matthew 1:20).

Pilate had placed guards at the tomb to prevent any claims of resurrection (Matthew 27:62-66). The guards fell as if dead upon encountering the angel, reminiscent of John's reaction to the risen Christ (Revelation 1:17). The angel conveyed that Jesus had risen as He promised (Matthew 16:21-28; 20:19). The emphasis on the empty tomb counters the idea of a mere "spiritual" resurrection; Jesus physically rose from the dead. The disciples, previously abandoned by the women at the garden (Matthew 26:47-56), were to be the first to hear of His resurrection, reaffirming Jesus' promise to meet them in Galilee (Matthew 26:31-32). Filled with fear and joy, the women obeyed the angel's instructions, an uncommon act for adults of their time. They were tasked to inform the disciples of Jesus' resurrection before they personally encountered Him. Upon seeing Jesus, their silent recognition and reverence affirmed His divinity, as they worshiped Him in His resurrected body (Matthew 2:11; John 9:37-38; 20:28).

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QUESTIONS:

1. What should you do when you come across a misinterpretation of Jesus' teaching?
2. What does Jesus' choice to remain on the cross teach us about sacrifice and obedience to God's will?
3. How do the supernatural events during the crucifixion reinforce the significance of Jesus' death as the ultimate act of atonement?
4. Without giving direct advice, how would you counsel someone who feels forsaken by God?
5. What spiritual disciplines help you sustain faith in God during times when it feels he is distant?
6. What evidence do you find best to use when sharing the gospel?
7. How would you respond to a fellow Christian who believes a testimony approach to evangelism is better than an approach based on historical evidence?
8. Who would you react to the claim that early morning is the best time for connecting with God?
9. What biblical examples of connection with God at other times of the day can you cite?
10. What does the presence of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at the tomb signify about their faith and devotion to Jesus?
11. How does the physical nature of Jesus' resurrection challenge our understanding of life after death?

APPLICATIONS

Reflecting on personal sacrifices reveals how we embody the spirit of obedience Jesus exhibited during His crucifixion, encouraging us to share our experiences of faithfulness within our communities. Furthermore, considering the women's pivotal role in the resurrection narrative challenges us to recognize and celebrate contributions from all members of our faith community while embracing the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection as a foundation for our lives.

CONCLUSION

In our busy lives, we often forget the most important truths and let urgent matters overshadow them. It's essential for Christians to continually reflect on what God has done for us. Jesus died and rose from the dead, fulfilling God's promises in ways no one expected. This ultimate act of sacrifice not only provided salvation but also established a new relationship between God and humanity. Let us cherish the wonder of these events in our hearts every day and for all time, actively living out the implications of His resurrection as we engage in our communities and relationships.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

Jesus' death on the cross was not a walk in the park, it was filled with insults, pain, and more torturous was the feeling of divine absence but His resurrection brought day light to the darkest

moment in human history. He resurrected in glory, made many sons of God and has given us a glorious and eternal hope.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mon, Apr, 21 | Here Is the Lamb of God | John 1:29-36 |
| Tue, Apr, 22 | The Lord Has Become My Salvation | Psalms 118:1-14 |
| Wed, Apr, 23 | Live and Not Die | Psalms 118: 15-29 |
| Thu, Apr, 24 | Worthy Ransome | 1 Peter 1:13-25 |
| Fri, Apr, 25 | Celebrate God | Psalms 99 |
| Sat, Apr, 26 | Live in the Light | Revelation 21:9-16, 21-27 |
| Sun, Apr, 27 | The Slaughtered, conquering Lamb | Revelation 5: 1-10 |



APRIL

27

THE LAMB IS WORTHY

Topic: The Lamb Is Worthy

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Christ's All-sufficient Sacrifice

Devotional Reading: Psalm 118:15-29

Background Scriptures: Revelation 5

Lesson Focus: Revelation 5:1-10

MEMORY VERSE

"They sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" — Revelation 5:9

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the Lion, the Root, and the Lamb.
2. Explain the significance of each of those three designations.
3. Participate with classmates in writing lyrics for a new song of praise.

INTRODUCTION

The apostle John's vision of heaven, presented in Revelation 4 and 5, gives us a glimpse into the divine throne room. Before this vision, John recorded messages to seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 1-3). These messages provided both encouragement

and warnings to churches with varying levels of faithfulness. In chapters 4 and 5, John's vision transitions to the throne room of God, showcasing His ultimate power and authority, reminding us that God is in control even when earthly events seem chaotic (Psalm 47:8).

In Revelation 4, John, "in the Spirit," sees God on His throne surrounded by powerful symbols—elders with crowns, lamps, and creatures worshiping day and night (Revelation 4:1-2; Isaiah 6:1). This divine scene sets the stage for what happens next: the appearance of a scroll that no one seems to be worthy to open. The focus of John's vision zooms in, highlighting the significance of the scroll and the One worthy to break its seals.

LESSON ONE

WHO IS WORTHY? (REVELATION 5:1-4)

John sees a scroll with writing on both sides, symbolizing its fullness (Ezekiel 2:9-10). It is sealed with seven seals, representing perfection or completeness (Revelation 15:1, 8). In the ancient world, important documents were sealed to ensure only authorized persons could access them. The angel's question about who is worthy to open the scroll is not just about someone capable but about someone with authority and moral excellence.

Despite a search across heaven, earth, and under the earth, no one is found worthy (Exodus 20:4, 11; Psalm 146:6; Philippians 2:10). This leads John to weep bitterly, realizing that without someone to open the scroll, God's plan for the future may remain

unknown. His intense grief reflects his longing to understand God's revelation. This moment emphasizes the importance of knowing the One who can reveal God's plans and fulfil His promises.

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LESSON TWO

CHRIST IS WORTHY (REVELATION 5:5-10)

John is comforted by one of the 24 elders, who assures him that someone is indeed worthy: the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David (Genesis 49:9-10; Isaiah 11:1, 10; Revelation 22:16). These titles highlight Jesus' authority and messianic lineage. He is called "the Lion," symbolizing power and kingship, while "the Root" emphasizes His role as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, bringing justice and unity.

Unexpectedly, instead of seeing a lion, John sees a Lamb that appears to have been slain but is now alive. This symbolizes Christ's sacrificial death and His resurrection, reinforcing the idea of redemption (Isaiah 53:7; John 20:24-29; Revelation 13:8). The Lamb's wounds signify the suffering He endured, which was essential for humanity's forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

The description of the Lamb includes seven horns, symbolizing perfect power, and seven eyes, representing divine knowledge

(Psalm 132:17; Zechariah 4:10). Whether understood as referring to the Holy Spirit or angels, these attributes emphasize the Lamb's authority. As the Lamb receives the scroll from the one on the throne, all present recognize His worthiness, leading to a resumption of worship.

The elders, representing the people of God from both the Old and New Testaments, sing a new song, praising the Lamb for His redemptive work. They acknowledge that He has purchased people from every tribe, language, people, and nation, highlighting the inclusive nature of God's salvation plan. This moment underscores the centrality of the Lamb in worship and the eternal significance of His sacrifice.

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QUESTIONS

1. What has to happen for you to live a "worthy life"?
2. How do Ephesians 4:1 and Colossians 1:10 inform your answer?
3. What are some ways that Jesus would want you to react to the sorrows of life?
4. Are specific cases such as Jeremiah 22:10 and Ezekiel 24:15-18 relevant to this question? Why, or why not?
5. How often should the church introduce new songs in

worship services? Why?

6. What would nudge you toward being more open to learning a new song?
7. What are some practical ways we can express our gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice through worship, service, and sharing the gospel with others?
8. In what ways will you live as a priest of God in the week ahead?
9. In addition to 1 Peter 2:5, what passages encourage you to do so?

APPLICATIONS

Reflect on the attributes of Jesus as the Lion, the Root, and the Lamb, acknowledging His unique worthiness to open the scroll and reign, while striving to live as a kingdom of priests by serving others, offering prayers, and sharing the gospel with those around you. Additionally, consider writing a personal prayer or song of praise that recognizes Jesus' sacrifice and worthiness.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, only Jesus deserves all glory and honour, and He is the only one worthy to open the scroll. While Jesus will always be in charge, we will be honoured by being called to reign with Him, but our worthiness will be tested along the way.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

The statement. 'No one in heaven or on earth was worthy to open the scroll' must have been so discouraging. Little wonder John wept. However, thanks be to God because Jesus had prevailed and has not only taken the scroll but opened the seal. Every limitation to your further growth and progress can come to an end when Jesus takes charge of the affairs of your life.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mon, Apr, 28 | Answer Me, O Lord | Psalm 86: 1-7, 10-17 |
| Tue, Apr, 29 | Be Alert | 1 Peter 5 |
| Wed, Apr, 30 | The Lord Will Not Reject Forever | Lamentations 3:21-36 |
| Thu, May 1 | God Patiently Waits for Repentance | 2 Peter 3:1-10 |
| Fri, May 2 | Live the Godly Life | 2 Peter 3: 11-18 |
| Sat, May, 3 | A Presumptive King | 1 Chronicles 21:1-13 |
| Sun, May, 4 | A Costly Sacrifice | 1 Chronicles 21:14-30 |



MAY

5

DAVID'S SACRIFICE

David's Sacrifice

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Special Offerings And The Sanctuary

Devotional Reading: 2 Peter 3: 11-18

Background Scripture: 1 Chronicles 21: 1-22:1

Lesson Scripture: 1 Chronicles 21:14-30

Memory Verse:

King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing". 1 Chronicles 21:24

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each class member will be able to:

1. Specify what David accepted responsibility for.
2. Explain why David insisted on paying for what was offered to him as a gift.
3. Write an intercessory prayer on behalf of his or her community.

INTRODUCTION

King David's decision to take a census of Israel was considered a prideful and sinful act in the eyes of God as it showed he rejected his reliance upon God for Israel's security. Putting our trust in the military alone is idolatry. To allow anything to take God's place is sinful and it may cause disastrous consequences. This lesson narrates the punishment that followed David's disobedience, his profound repentance, and the subsequent divine forgiveness he received. It demonstrates the severe consequences of defying God's laws and His mercy upon genuine repentance.

In his distress, David chose to fall into the hands of the Lord, trusting in God's mercy. The Lord then sent a plague upon Israel,

and seventy thousand men fell dead. Seeing the angel striking down the people, David prayed to God, confessing his sin, and pleaded for mercy.

David pays the full cost to build an altar at Jesus' future place of sacrifice, at a place where the prophet Gad told him to build an altar. David turned down a landowner's offer to give him the land for free. David knew that deliverance could not come without sacrifice.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

THE PLAGUE (1 CHRONICLES 21:14-17)

After David picked his punishment, God allowed 70,000 men across all of Israel to die in a plague, which moved so fast and killed quickly. Seven is the number of God's completeness. The 70,000 fallen men symbolized God's complete judgment upon the source of Israel's pride, its military. God judges all of Israel, yet prematurely ends the plague out of compassion and then stops the judgment.

The sight of the avenging Angel carrying out his mission inspired David to plead emphatically for God's mercy to spare the innocent and punish him for his sins (1 Chr. 21:17). God showed His mercy as He spared Jerusalem. He was more merciful than any invading army. Like David, He wants people to know their need for His mercy. God is slow to anger and quick to forgive. (Ex. 34:6-7).

David made a very penitent confession of his sin, owned that he had sinned, had sinned greatly, had done foolishly, and he entreated that, however, the iniquity of it might be taken away. David accepted the punishment of his iniquity, He cast himself upon the mercy of God (though he knew he was angry with him)

and did not entertain any hard thoughts of him. He expressed a very tender concern for the people, and it went to his heart to see them plagued by his transgression. When we sin and we see the repercussions/ consequences, do we blame others like Adam or accept our guilt as David?

When disaster occurs, we usually attribute it to God. When we face personal disaster it's more valuable to focus on the change that will follow than worry that God might be punishing us. Disaster brings changes, at times to instigate change from sinful behaviour to Godly behaviour. We at times suffer for our leader's sins, whether we think it is fair or not, just like the Israelites suffered for the sin of David. Similarly, our actions affect other people whether we want them to or not. We should therefore be careful in all we do.

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**LESSON TWO:
THE FIERY ALTAR (1 CHRONICLES 21: 18-27)**

The severity of David's sin demanded more than words of repentance and submissive body postures. So, the Lord made his expectations clear to David through the prophet Gad.

When God commanded David to go up and build an altar, he went to Araunah the Jebusite's threshing floor to buy it. Araunah generously offered it as a gift, but David refused, saying he would not present a burnt offering that has cost him nothing to God. David wanted to offer a sacrifice to God and understood that a

sacrifice should cost the giver something. It has to be something given sacrificially and should cost the giver time, money, sweat, or self as encouraged by Paul to be “a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).” Giving to God what costs us nothing does not show commitment. A sacrifice that costs little or nothing is a contradiction in terms. Do you offer God pseudo sacrifices? The same goes for how you spend your time.

An acceptable sacrifice to God does not necessarily have to involve money, but it should be costly in some way. The sacrifices God appreciates the most are not even material. As the psalmist says, “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). And that psalmist was none other than David himself.

The Lord's response to the sacrifice was fiery and immediate, as the angel put the sword back into its sheath. Sometimes *fire from heaven* is judgmental (example 2 Kings 1:10–14); at other times, it indicates divine approval in some sense (example: 2 Chronicles 7:1). In this instance, it seems to have reflected both. We should offer sacrifices that would be acceptable to God.

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LESSON THREE

THE SWORD OF THE LORD (1 CHRONICLES 21:28–30)

David did not go to Gibeon which was about two hour's journey north of Jerusalem where the place of worship Moses built was located. David did not go there to inquire of the Lord because he

was terrified of the drawn sword of the Lord's angel. It seems David doesn't seem to believe he has been fully forgiven. The fear he felt is the one we should all have when we consider God's character and standards. God is truly merciful and gracious; we should however not take His holiness and awesomeness for granted

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the consequence of David's sin on the people of Israel? How does this impact your understanding of the effects of our actions on others?
2. How did David respond when confronted with the consequences of his actions? How can this guide us when we realize we've sinned?
3. Why was it important for David to pay for the threshing floor and the offerings? What does this teach us about sacrifices and offerings?
4. How can we ensure that our offerings to God are meaningful and not just ceremonial?

APPLICATION

Out of gratitude, you should present your bodies *a living and holy sacrifice*, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” (Rom. 12:1). Jesus eliminated the need for any further physical sacrifices with His death on the cross (Heb. 10:14). Yet, this hopefully did not eliminate your gratitude for your undeserved salvation. (Heb. 13:15). This also includes presenting your body as a living sacrifice for God: Out of gratitude for His mercy and grace, are you offering Christ the best of your life?

CONCLUSION

Large numbers of people suffer deeply from the mistakes of a single individual. At the birth of Jesus, the insecurity and ruthlessness of King Herod led to the massacre of innocent babies and children in Bethlehem and nearby areas (Matthew 2:16). David understood that his prideful sin had resulted in the deaths of 70,000 men. God is merciful and patient—but his mercy and patience should not be taken for granted. (2 Peter 3:9).

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL ADVANCEMENT

Only faith in Christ's sacrifice at the cross can atone for your sins. The Bible is clear that you can never atone for your sins through your works or sacrifices. Only through faith in Jesus' sacrifice is your salvation possible. However, when the matter of God and His kingdom is involved, no price should be too high for us to pay. We must be willing to go the extra mile, the full length, and the whole stretch when the demand of the kingdom is at stake.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mon, May 5 | A Joyful Celebration | Ezra 6:14-22 |
| Tue, May 6 | God Heard Me in My Distress | Psalms 18:1-12 |
| Wed, May 7 | God in Mesopotamia | Acts 7: 2-16 |
| Thurs, May 8 | God in the Wilderness | Acts 7: 30-41 |
| Fri, May 9 | God Needs No Temple | Acts 7:42-50 |
| Sat, May 10 | Hear Our Prayers, O God | 2 Chronicles 6:12, 14-27 |
| Sun, May 11 | God's Glory Fills the Temple | 2 Chronicles 7:1-7, 11 |



MAY



**SOLOMON DEDICATES
THE TEMPLE**

Solomon Dedicates The Temple

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Special Offerings And The Sanctuary

Devotional Reading: 2 Chronicles 6: 12; 14-27

Background Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7: 1-20

Lesson Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:1-7; 11

Memory Verse:

“When All The Israelites Saw The Fire Coming Down And The Glory Of The Lord Above The Temple, They Knelt On The Pavement With Their Faces To The Ground, And They Worshipped And Gave Thanks To The Lord, Saying,” He Is Good; His Love Endures Forever.” 2 Chronicles 7: 3

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each class member will be able to:

1. Summarize what happened when Solomon finished praying.
2. Explain the idea of “dedicating” or consecrating” something.
3. State how one can respond to God's presence and love with worship and sacrifice.

INTRODUCTION

2 Chronicles 7 is a powerful testament to the Lord's responsiveness to His people's prayers, covenantal faithfulness, and the importance of obedience. The divine intervention and the glory filling the temple demonstrate God's approval, love, and mercy. 2 Chronicles 7 captures a significant event in Israel's history—King Solomon's dedication of the newly constructed temple. The chapter illustrates divine intervention in response to Solomon's prayer, underscoring God's power, His promise to Solomon, and the importance of obedience to His laws. The

people of Israel engage in an extraordinary feast of dedication, basking in the Glory of the Lord.

This experience was so awesome, that it would have made an atheist a Believer. If Solomon wasn't right with God before this manifestation of God, he would have been afterward. This encounter also teaches us what happens when a person gets right with God.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

GLORY OF GOD (2 CHRONICLES 7:1–3)

Fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices. This is one of the remarkable instances in the Old Testament where God manifests His approval by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices on the altar and filling the Temple with His glory, signifying His presence. It was a dramatic and visible proof of God's approval. This was a real dedication of the Temple because only God's purifying power can make something holy. In the same way, it is only God's purifying fire that can make us holy.

The surest evidence of God's acceptance of our prayers is the descent of the holy fire upon us. As further evidence that God accepted Solomon's prayer, still, *the glory of the Lord filled the house*. The divine glory remained in the Temple, preventing the priests from entering to perform their service. The purpose of the glory is consecration or sanctification. Ex.29:43-44

Witnessing this divine display, the people fall to the ground in worship, in awe of His presence and the sense they had of their unworthiness to come into God's presence and their inability to stand before the power of his wrath. The people worshiped and praised the LORD in response to God's presence, his all-consuming holiness, and his glory. Worship is expressing our love

to God for who He is, what He's said, and what He's doing. The people responded with a combination of reverence and worship. *“He is good, for his mercy endureth forever.”* This is a song never out of season, and for which our hearts and tongues should be never out of tune. However, whatever the circumstance, God is good. This should be a reminder to us of God's goodness and mercy in the past, present, and future. He deserves our worship and praise.

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LESSON TWO
WORSHIP BY PEOPLE (2 CHRONICLES 7:4–6)

As wonderful as the program and the praise were, they could not replace the sacrifices. God still had to be honoured through blood sacrifice, both for atonement and as a demonstration of fellowship with God. King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. This is a staggering – almost outrageous – amount of sacrifice. However, nothing is too much for the Lord Almighty. Each animal was ritually sacrificed and a portion was dedicated to the LORD, and a portion was given to the priests and the people. It was enough to feed a vast multitude for two weeks.

The king and all the people offered sacrifices in abundance. They had offered sacrifices before, but now they increased them. The tokens of God's favour to us should enlarge our hearts in His service, and make us give more and more. The king's example

stirred up the people. Good work is then likely to go on when the leaders of a people lead in it. Dedication means setting apart a place to worship God. Today our bodies are God's temple (2Cor 6:16). We should therefore dedicate it to God. Solomon's dedication of the temple shows that we should dedicate ourselves to carrying out God's special purpose (Eph.1:11-12). The whole congregation expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction imaginable and everyone played their part, the priests; the singers, and the musicians. We are all expected to play our part in the worship of the Lord our God. We must never grudge the time that we spend in the worship of God and communion.

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LESSON THREE
ACTIONS BY SOLOMON (2 CHRONICLES 7:7,11)

The abundance of sacrifices offered during this dedication reflected their gratefulness and desire to honour God. The desire of Solomon to rather consecrate the central part of the courtyard to offer the burnt and fat of the peace offerings because the sacrifices could not fit the brazen altar instead of turning the people back showed that nothing was too much to give to God. He gave such that he required an overflow altar! How do we give to God? What influences our giving?

This indicated a deep commitment to worship. It also emphasised the necessity of sincere worship, giving, reverence, and

appreciation of God. Solomon accomplished all that came into his heart. It was the end of a well-done job, a job that began with Solomon's father David. **This** verse goes into more detail about Solomon's palace. It seems that his palace was even more spectacular than the temple, based on the number of years it took him to build it. Those who are diligent with the service of God are likely to go on successfully in their affairs. It was to Solomon's praise that what he undertook he went through with, and it was by the grace of God that he prospered in it. This should encourage us to complete whatever work God we are doing for God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some ways to respond better to God's presence and love with worship and sacrifice?
2. In what circumstances should our actions as living sacrifices be visible to all? In what circumstances should it be visible to only God? How do Matt.5-13-16 and 6:1-4 influence your answers?
3. What steps do you need to take for greater consecration since 1 Corinthians 6:19 establishes that your body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit?

CONCLUSION

After the Jews built the Temple, God's Shekinah Glory filled the Temple. God loved His people and desired to dwell with them. The same way Jesus first took human form to dwell with His people. He then died at the cross so that He could dwell in fellowship with His people in heaven forever.

When fire fell from Heaven, the Israelites praised God for his goodness and enduring mercy. Think about the tremendous

actions of God throughout Scripture, in history, and in your own life. Which of these actions of God most inspires you to praise God spontaneously, and with what song? Are you giving thanks for all of God's blessings in both the good times and during your trials?

APPLICATION

Show your gratitude by offering Jesus the best of your life as a fellowship offering. Being grateful for Jesus' sacrifice for you on the cross is an important way to keep yourself free from returning to your sin. Being grateful should not be limited to the times when things turn out right for you. Your gratefulness should also include the stressful times when adversity strikes. You can always give thanks because God is in control.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL ADVANCEMENT

God cared less about the physical Temple than He did about the hearts of the people who worshipped at that Temple. God isn't concerned with the size of our programmes, institutions, church buildings, Christian colleges, or online ministries as much as He cares about our hearts. If the heart is not right, the programme, Ministry, or building will be in vain. Make sure your heart is right with God!

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|---------------|--|----------------------|
| Mon, May 12 | Joy Comes With the Morning | Psalm 30 |
| Tue, May 13 | Songs of Gratitude | Colossians 3:12-17 |
| Wed, May 14 | Blessed Be the Merciful, Consoling God | 2 Corinthians 1:2-14 |
| Thurs, May 15 | Enter God's Presence with Thanksgiving | Psalm 95 |
| Fri, May 16 | Worship in the Spirit of God | Philippians 3:1-14 |
| Sat, May 17 | The Exiles Return | Ezra 1 |
| Sun, May 18 | Building a New Foundation | Ezra 3:1-6, 10-13 |



MAY

18

WORSHIP IS RESTORED

Worship Is Restored

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifice

Theme For The Month: Special Offerings And The Sanctuary

Devotional Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Background Scripture: Ezra 3:1-13

Lesson Scripture: Ezra 3:1–6, 10–13

Memory Verse:

All The People Gave A Great Shout Of Praise To The Lord, Because The Foundation Of The House Of The Lord Was Laid. Ezra 3:11b

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each class member will be able to:

1. Outline the history of Judah's exile to Babylon and return to Jerusalem.
2. Summarize the behaviours of those who had returned from exile in light of their fear, joy, and sorrow.
3. Write a prayer that identifies an area where fear must be overcome so that godly service is not hindered.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ezra tells us of a time in Israel that was both triumphant and fearful. Many of the people were returning from exile as Jerusalem was being re-established. In chapter 3 we see sacrifices once again being brought before the Lord and the foundation of the temple being rebuilt. Their reasoning for these offerings and this temple is also important. Before the exile, the temple created awe in those who saw it. Israel had a vibrant economy, but they sinned and the hearts of both the leaders and the people strayed from following God. Generations later in their return we see that the people are fearful of the surrounding

nations who wish them harm so they run to the Lord for his protection. The offerings and festivals are done just as God commanded Moses (Ezra 3:2), showing the people's seriousness and devotion to pleasing God according to His terms. British author and theologian C. S. Lewis once said, "Put first things first and second things are thrown in. Put second things first and you lose both first and second things." In other words, it means doing what is *most* important before busying ourselves with other things! The people of Judah certainly did that in today's text. Our lesson indicates that the former exiles gathered "as one man" in Jerusalem and, as one of their first official acts, they set up the altar of God—even before they erected the Temple itself! Rebuilding the altar was their priority because daily burnt offerings were required by the Law of Moses. God had expressly commanded that sacrifices should be offered daily in the place that He appointed, so the people built the new altar upon the foundations of the old one.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE

REBUILDING THE ALTAR (EZRA 3:1–6)

We can learn a lesson from these people. The text said they were meeting "*with a unified purpose.*" Unity seems to be lacking in our culture today. So many people focus on self and their rights that the idea of unity with others is becoming rare. What does a unified purpose look like? These people were rallying around God's call to start over.

Being unified after years of separation in Babylon shows strength and solidarity. It seems they don't want to "get it wrong" this time. The lessons from years of captivity for disobedience to God had

taught them well. Do we learn from our mistakes and strive to get it right with God to avoid the same mistakes? The returning Judeans worked and worshipped despite their fear of the hostility around them by choosing an action response, which was to rebuild the temple. When faced with danger, how do we respond? Do we overcome the threat or fear, run away, or do nothing? Let us overcome our fear knowing that power belongs to our God- Psalm 62:11! It was a tribute to God that the people chose to rebuild the altar first. With an altar in place, the people would have no excuse for not focusing on sacrifice and worship. Do we, as a people, make God's worship our priority?

Whether we have physical altars or not, we can still offer our thanks and praise to God. That should be the first thing we do. We shouldn't have to wait until everything falls into place before we can worship. The Israelites didn't wait for the temple to be completed before giving God honour and praise. They saw the importance of honouring and obeying God and made it a priority. While we don't offer sacrifices like the Israelites did today, these people's priorities appear in place. They were giving their attention and showing their loyalty to the one true God. They seem intent on following the law to please the God who had chosen them for the restoration project.

How are you at making your time of worshiping God a priority? The Israelites gave voluntary offerings to God. We can worship Him anywhere we are and at any time. Let us like the Israelites also make the worship of God our priority and voluntarily honour God with the sacrifice of our time, money, and devotion.

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LESSON TWO

LAYING A FOUNDATION (EZRA 3:10–13)

The builders laid the foundation of the Lord's temple and the priests, Levite and the sons of Asaph praised the Lord after the ordinance of David I Chr. 6:31-46. This was a positive act to renew their past and not discard it.

Completing the foundation of the Temple required a great effort on the part of all those involved. No one tried to take glory for himself, but they all praised God for what had been done. Do you try to take glory for work done by God through you? We should realise that all good gifts come from God, talents, abilities, strength, and leadership. We should always thank God for what He has done through us.

The completion of the Temple triggered praise and thanks to God by the Priests, Levites, and the people as prescribed by King David. When you think of God's goodness and faithfulness does it invoke praise and thanksgiving? The very elderly ones who had as children seen the original temple however felt differently. The new temple was pitiful in contrast to the old one. This showed them just how far the nation of Judah had fallen. Although God had forgiven them and restored them, they felt the position they were restored to, was not as high as the one before. The truth of why this happened struck their hearts and likely reminded them of why this had happened. It happened because of their sin. We too should remember that while God is a forgiving God, sin has consequences.

However, the important thing is our attitude. God cares more about who we are than what we accomplish. The most important thing is we should seek to serve God wholeheartedly, so we won't be bothered about comparing our work with someone else's work. The Holy Spirit can motivate us both to rejoice over His goodness as we grieve over the sins that necessitate Him to correct us. In God's presence, we can be full of joy, while at the same time be sober because of our shortcomings. At times we have occasions that are so emotional that bring tears of joy. However, we are motivated in His presence, let us always remember His faithfulness, goodness, love, and awesomeness!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What can we learn from verse 1 about the spirit of the people? Why was this important?
2. What are some of the most common causes of disunity then and now?
3. How can we put God first in our lives instead of taking care of ourselves first and then giving God the leftovers?
4. Is there any situation that you are afraid of? What is the root cause for this fear? How does God want you to deal with it?
5. Who got the credit for their successes and accomplishments? What can we learn from this?

APPLICATION

We should never shift our focus from God to life's obstacles. We should always remember that there is a bigger picture. We should not be guilty of the shift nor be the obstacle ourselves.

CONCLUSION

Worship is your answer to fear, difficulties, and dark times. I do not mean just doing some worship activities. Our prayers should

praise God and implore God to act for us as we seek his will and work. Our songs are not just about feeling good but about praising God and imploring God to act for us as we seek his will and work.

Do we understand the words of praise in verse 11 are words of promise? The Lord is good because his steadfast love endures forever toward his people. In Jesus, we belong as the people of God. Jesus is the new Israel; the true vine and we are the branches if we love him and do his will. The Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever toward you. You can have faith in the face of fear and rise for the work when you believe and understand that the Lord is good because his steadfast love endures forever toward you. Make this promise real to you and real to your life. Then come to him in praise and implore the Lord to show you this truth again and again as you rise seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let us each offer praise and thanks to God for what He is doing in our lives.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL ADVANCEMENT

We must continue to ponder on the contrasting reactions of the people during the foundation laying of the temple. While the people were shouting in praise, many of the older priests, Levites, and family heads who knew of the former temple wept. Sometimes, events around us easily bring to mind memories of the past as we compare them with the experiences of the today's realities.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mon, May 19 | A New Covenant | Jeremiah 31:27-34 |
| Tue, May 20 | Saved by Grace | Ephesians 2:1-10 |
| Wed, May 21 | The Last Supper | Luke 22:7-20 |
| Thurs, May 22 | Hear the Word of the Lord | Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-12 |
| Fri, May 23 | Remember God's Salvation | Nehemiah 9:2-3, 6-17, 32 |
| Sat, May 24 | A Better Covenant | Hebrew 8 |
| Sun, May 25 | Revitalized Worship | Nehemiah 10:28-39 |



MAY

25

A COVENANT RENEWAL

A Covenant Renewal

Theme For The Quarter: Costly Sacrifices

Theme For The Month: Special Offerings And The Sanctuary

Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 31:27–34

Background Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1–10:3

Lesson Scripture: Nehemiah 10:28–39

Memory Verse:

“We will not neglect the house of our God.”—Nehemiah 10:39b

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each class member will be able to:

1. List the promises the people made.
2. Explain the historical background for the promises the people made and what hope was implied in those promises.
3. Recruit a partner for mutual accountability on two spiritually important actions: one to start doing and one to stop doing.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Nehemiah as a whole recount the story of a later generation of Judeans having returned to Jerusalem and Judah in the third of three waves to do so. Nehemiah 8 records a time of concentrated teaching from God's law followed in chapter 9 by confession of sin. God had been faithful to his covenant promises, while the people of Israel had not. The tangible sign of the people's confession of sin and their desire to repent can be seen in Nehemiah 10. However, the covenant renewal ceremony that unfolds in chapter 10 begins in Nehemiah 9:38, where we read, “Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests”. The people, embracing prayer, renewed their

dedication to God and His word. They signed their names to indicate their commitment and took an oath to live by the covenant. This recommitment to God involved two general categories: commitments to stop doing certain things and commitments to start or continue doing other things. They recognized the importance of upholding God's standards, rituals, and laws, and promised not to depart from them.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE:

PEOPLE'S COMMITMENT: NEHEMIAH 10:28–29

God desires that the nation of Israel be a witness to the rest of the world of the one true God. But they were to do that from a position of strength and connection with one another. Over and over again in the Old Testament, we see the Israelites being more often drawn into the ways of surrounding nations than we see them being a light-giving, life-giving witness.

Here we see all the people, priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants, everybody. Men, women, sons, daughters-everybody old enough to understand entering into this covenant together to separate themselves from the neighbouring people, to observe the commandments of God, his regulations, and decrees. They further bound themselves with an oath and swore a curse to show the seriousness of the matter. After years of indulgence, the people once again took seriously their responsibility to follow God and keep his laws wholeheartedly. This is a picture of a community of faith that forms the foundation, in the Old Testament, for that is the picture of God's design for the church in the New Testament. We are a part of God, by his grace, called to be

His people and to live as His people. And we don't ever need to underestimate the importance of this kind of community. As Christians, we are called to keep God's standards and remain faithful to God's word. This means living a life that is pleasing to God and keeping our promises to Him. Our relationship, however, must go beyond church attendance and regular devotions. It must affect our relationship with God, our time and materials. When we choose to follow God, it is a personal promise to serve Him at all times. We must therefore keep our promise in times of difficulty or prosperity.

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LESSON TWO

LAW'S RESTATEMENT (NEHEMIAH 10:30–39)

The Israelites further promised not to give their daughters in marriage to the people around them or take their daughters for their sons. Our intimate relationships need to be primarily with those of a common faith and worldview. This is to ensure we don't fall away from our commitment to God and separate ourselves from God. People change faiths for various reasons, but none is more common than romance. The Bible remains very relevant in this regard. Prohibition regarding intermarriage between believers and unbelievers finds its greatest expression in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 6:14.

The Israelites also promised not to buy or sell things on the Sabbath and Holy days. The issue was that this commerce took

away from the focus on God and dependence upon him. Though we don't have the constraints of Sabbatical laws and requirements in this church age of grace, there remains a similar pattern in the lives of people relative to attendance and church commitment. Having many other things to draw them away from God, before long it becomes a pattern to be absent, with a concurrent drift away from a relationship with God becoming less of a priority. Having covenanted against the sins they had been guilty of; they proceed in obliging themselves to revive and observe the duties they had neglected.

It was resolved, in general, that the temple service should be carefully kept up, and that the work of the house of their God should be done in its season, according to the law. Let not any people expect the blessing of God unless they make conscience of observing his ordinances and keeping up the public worship of him. Then it is likely to go well with our houses when care is taken that the work of God's house goes on well. They resolved to give their first fruits the foundation which is found in Exodus 13:1; 22:29; 25:19; and Numbers 17:12–13.

They promised not to make excuses for not paying their tithes but would render to God the things that were his, as well as to Caesar the things that were his. This is a reminder that we are stewards of everything that God has given us, and we must use our resources wisely to advance His kingdom. We must do what we can in the works of giving and generosity, notwithstanding the difficult times. We should cheerfully perform our duty to God, which will be the surest way to blessing in God's due time, for God loves a cheerful giver.^{2nd} Corinthians 9:6-7.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is intermarriage addressed under the new covenant? Read 1 Corinthians 7:39 and 2 Corinthians 6:14.
2. What actions can we take to better live a separate life for God?
3. Why is Sabbath-keeping not part of the requirements under the new covenant in Christ, but the other nine commandments are?
4. What are examples of sacrifices we need to make for God? What are examples of ungodly influence do we need to get rid of?
5. In what ways are we to maintain our bodies as temples, per 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 2 Corinthians 6:16?

APPLICATION

As Christians, we are called to uphold God's standards, follow His commands and remain faithful to God's word. This means living a life that is pleasing to God and keeping our promises to Him.

CONCLUSION

We are to express our dependence on God and the support of his worship and work by giving of the first and best of everything we have. It is not a matter of giving to God what might have been left over after every other life contingency was met.

Doing this place us fully in an honoured position that shows we care about bigger and eternal things, rather than being merely consumed with self and transient things.

This means that we trust God and He can be trusted. Trusting Him daily, day after day after week after month after year after year for our provision because He is our Provider.

This passage also teaches us the importance of keeping our commitments to God and remaining faithful to His word. We must strive to uphold God's standards, be good stewards of His resources, and hold ourselves accountable to Him and to one another.

We like the Israelites should live to grow closer to God and show others how that could happen and make practical commitments that would allow us to do that.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL ADVANCEMENT

The house of God is our collective responsibility. We must (as individuals) take ownership in providing and meeting the needs of our Father's house and bind ourselves to a personal commitment that the house of our God will not suffer neglect.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Mon, May 26 | Honour God with Your First Fruits | Proverbs 3:1-10 |
| Tue, May 27 | Struggles of Faith | Hebrews 10:26-34 |
| Wed, May 28 | The Righteous Will Live by Faith | Hebrews 10:35-11:4 |
| Thur, May 29 | Half-hearted Giving | Acts 5:1-11 |
| Fri May 30 | Give Your All | Luke 20:45-21:4 |
| Sat, May 31 | The Martyrs' Cry for Justice | Revelation 6:9-17 |
| Sun June 1 | Acceptable and Unacceptable Worship | Genesis 4:1-15 |



JUNE



**THE OFFERINGS OF
CAIN AND ABEL**

The Offerings Of Cain And Abel

Theme For The Quarter: Sacred Altars And Holy Offerings

Theme For The Month: The Genesis Of Altars And Sacrifices

Devotional Reading: Luke 20:45-21:4

Background Scripture: Genesis 4: 1-25

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 4:1-16

Memory Verse:

The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?”—Genesis 4:6-7a

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the offerings of Cain and Abel.
2. Define what doing right required of Cain and Abel.
3. Commit to a practice of “doing right” through his or her giving.

INTRODUCTION:

In all human relationships, you give your best to who or what you value. An offering is something given as a gift or contribution. This can be something tangible like money or goods and it can be intangible like time or affection.

In the Bible, an offering is given as an act of gratitude to and worship of God. This would be in recognition of the fact that whatever one has, it has been only by the grace of God and He

deserves the best anything we can offer.

The extent to which that you esteem someone, would determine how generous you will be and your attitude in giving. If you believe that the recipient does not deserve it, you will give a bare minimum and even grudgingly. This is what we see in the story of Cain and Abel.

LESSON EXPLAINED:

LESSON ONE:

TWO BIRTHS (GENESIS 4:1-2A)

From the passage, it appears that the reaction at the birth of each boy was different. At the birth of Cain, Eve made a pronouncement whereas the birth of Abel seemed to have been just another event. Was this an indication of how the brothers were treated in the household? This is not unusual, and we see it as the birth of the first child in any family is celebrated with a lot of fanfare and the excitement is not as loud with subsequent children.

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LESSON TWO:

TWO OFFERINGS (GENESIS 4:2B-7)

It's interesting that both brothers chose different occupations. Why did they not work at both occupations together as partners. Could this be an indication of inability to work together because of differences in personality?

When it came time to give an offering to the Lord, the attitude of both men was clearly different. Cain seemed to be doing it out of obligation whereas Abel took time to make sure he brought something that would be pleasing. The heart posture was very different. Even though there was no particular requirement for the offering, the heart of reverence and gratitude was to motivate each person to give as he saw fit. God's rejection of Cain and his gift reminds of the fact that God always looks at the heart first. Hebrews 11:4 says “It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain” NLT. We know that “without faith, it is impossible to please God”. Heb 11:6.

Cain's reaction to his rejection shows that he has “entitlement” mentality. He can do no wrong, rather than look to see how he can make amends, he got angry. Knowing Cain's heart and where it would lead him, God in His mercy warned him to take heed and control it. However, Cain ignored the warning.

LESSON THREE:

TWO OUTCOMES (GENESIS 4:8-12)

When you refuse correction and allow sinful thoughts to fester,

you will make decisions and take actions you will most likely regret. Cain lured Abel to the fields and killed him. What could he have been hoping to achieve with this? Remove a perceived rival or favoured son out of jealousy? Well, he got more than he bargained for. God cursed him and banished him. When we are consumed by the urge to satisfy our flesh, we forget that sin has consequences and might be more than we can bear.

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LESSON FOUR:

TWOTURNINGS (GENESIS 4:13-16)

When the weight of his punishment dawned on him, his arrogance turned to anguished and as he cried to the Lord, God turned around and showed him mercy.

Indeed, God does not delight in our suffering, He is always ready and willing to show us mercy as soon as we come to our senses, repent and ask for forgiveness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you consider to be the difference between the offerings brought by Cain and Abel?
2. Explain why the giver can be rejected even when he/she

brings a “worthy” offering.

3. Do you believe that the attitude of parents to the birth of their children can have an impact on how they turn out?
4. What was Cain's attitude to God's warning and how did this lead to his downfall?
5. What should be our attitude to correction and conviction of sin?

APPLICATION:

1. We must acknowledge God as the giver of all that we have.
2. A gratitude attitude is essential to continued blessings.
3. We must be attentive to the Holy Spirit and take steps to re-align ourselves to the word of God.
4. We should rejoice that we serve a merciful Father who does not want to perish.
5. Do not be too proud to cry out for mercy.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we are to take our preparation for worship seriously. The condition of our hearts must not be deficient so that our worship may be acceptable as Abel's was. As living sacrifices, our hearts must be a fitting sanctuary for God's presence and we must worship and serve Him at all times.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

God will first look at your heart before looking at your hand. You are first accepted before any consideration for your offering.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mon, June 2 | Obedience to God's Command | Genesis 6: 11-22 |
| Tue, June 3 | Jesus Joins Us in the Storm | John 6: 15-20 |
| Wed, June, 4 | Peace Through the Word | John 14: 18-27 |
| Thu, June 5 | God Protects | Genesis 7: 11-24 |
| Fri, June 6 | Divine Rescue | 2 Peter 2: 1-9 |
| Sat, June, 7 | A Cry for Deliverance | Psalm 77:1-2, 7-20 |
| Sun, June, 8 | A Covenant of Peace | Genesis 8:13-22; 9: 11-13 |



JUNE



NOAH BUILDS AN ALTAR

Noah Builds An Altar

Theme For the Quarter: Sacred Altars and Holy Offerings

Theme For the Month: The Genesis of Altars and Sacrifices

Devotional Reading: Psalm 77:1-2, 7-19

Background Scripture: Genesis 6:1-9:17

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 8:13-22; 9: 11-13

Memory Verse:

I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. — Genesis 9:13

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarise the terms of the Lord's covenant with Noah.
2. Suggest reasons why Noah's sacrifice pleased God.
3. Write a prayer of thanks to God for one specific instance of His covenant faithfulness.

INTRODUCTION

Since the fall in the garden where Adam and Eve went against God's instruction, it seems that man has continued to push the limits to see how far they can challenge the order of God. Could this be as a result of the awareness of the Covenant God made in Genesis 8:21 that He will never destroy every living thing or curse the ground? We see it everywhere and hear it every day, practices that were previously thought impossible and unacceptable are

becoming the norm. Immorality and perversion are at high levels, sadly there is yet more to come if we are to believe the Bible. These are part of the signs and birth pangs of the coming of the Lord. 2Tim 3:1-7.

Yet just as God judged Noah righteous in the perverse generation that caused Him to destroy all living things, so also today there are those who God judges righteous in this generation. Are you one of them? God preserved Noah and his family in a boat until it was time to get out, He will also preserve you from destruction. Amen

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE:

NOAH'S SITUATION (GENESIS 8:13-22)

After staying cooped up for 1yr in the Ark, Noah naturally would be anxious to get out. One would have expected that as soon as Noah saw dry ground, he would have rushed out with relief and rejoicing, praising God. Fresh air at last. Who could blame him? But Noah must have been led by this spirit “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has began a good work in you will complete it” Phil 1:6. He chose to wait for God who told him when to go in, to also tell him when to come out so he waited 2 more months.

At the right time, God spoke to Noah and Noah obeyed and came out. In gratitude to God and acknowledgement of His goodness and mercy toward him, the first thing Noah did was to build an

altar and offer a sacrifice. This is a heart that will please God every time. Not also that Noah was careful to take only the clean “approve” animals. And God was pleased with the sacrifice to the extent that He made the covenant we are enjoying even today.

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LESSON TWO

GOD'S RESPONSE (GENESIS 9:11-13)

Proverbs 16:7 says “When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even His enemies to be at peace with him”. God clearly was pleased with Noah, from His prompt and total obedience, waiting on God every step of the way, always giving God first place in everything and paying attention to the details. This moved God to make a declaration of an everlasting Covenant that transcended beyond Noah and his family.

To seal this and for eternal remembrance, God gave a sign. There will never be a reason to fear or doubt His commitment to the covenant. God knows human beings always crave a sign; He gave it without being asked. Mk 8:12 “But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation”. 1Cor 1:22 “For Jews request a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom”.

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the state of the world today compared to the world God destroyed?
2. How can we keep ourselves righteous in this perverse generation?
3. How can you position yourself to hear and obey God's instructions?
4. What is the importance of timing in our actions?
5. How relevant are signs from God in sustaining our faith?

APPLICATION

1. It is possible to stand out from the crowd.
2. Strive to live a life that God will judge righteous in His sight.
3. Hear God and obey God.
4. Wait for God to perfect that which He started, don't jump the gun.
5. Your obedience and acceptance can bring blessings that transcend generations.

CONCLUSION

Noah's patience and obedience serves as a model for Christians. But there's a caution here: sometimes, believers who are waiting impatiently for God to do something have already been given the command to take care of it themselves. But you aren't of one of those, are you?

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

Learn to build altars unto God as constant reminders of His dealings in your life. Let your heart be the altar and your substance the offering that will ascend to Him as a sweet smelling aroma.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Mon, June 9 | God Promises a Son | Genesis 17: 15-22 |
| Tue, June 10 | Abraham's Righteous Faith | Romans 4: 1-15 |
| Wed, June, 11 | Life Out of Death | Romans 4: 16-25 |
| Thu, June 12 | A Blessing to the Nations | Genesis 12: 1-7 |
| Fri, June 13 | Joy for Weeping | Psalm 125 - 126 |
| Sat, June, 14 | Abraham's Courageous Faith | Hebrews 11: 8-12 |
| Sun, June, 15 | God Will Provide a Lamb | Genesis 22: 1-14 |



JUNE

15

**ABRAHAM MAKES
AN OFFERING**

Abraham Makes An Offering

Theme for the Quarter: Sacred Altars and Holy Offerings

Theme for the Month: The Genesis of Altars and Sacrifices

Devotional Reading: Romans 4: 1-15

Background Scripture: Genesis 22:1-19

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 22:1-14

Memory Verse:

Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the Mountain of the Lord it will be provided." Genesis 22:14

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Outline the main points of the lesson text.
2. Identify acts of trust and what was required of the trusting person.
3. Identify how to exhibit greater trust in the Lord in a current difficulty.

INTRODUCTION

Faith is sometimes referred to as the currency of Heaven. And the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him".

This shows the importance of faith in the life of a Child of God.

Have you ever promised your child a gift but then you hear him talking to someone else making plans to get the same thing? How did that make you feel? Or just imagine it, how would it make you feel? Nobody likes to be doubted, especially not by those you expect to **TRUST** you because they **KNOW** you.

Abraham **TRUSTED GOD** and it was counted to him as righteousness. That is what qualified him for the blessing of being the Father of All Nations. Do you trust God?

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE:

GOD TESTS (GENESIS 22:1-2)

Trust, they say is earned and is built over time through consistent actions. Yet we see Abram in Gen 12:1-5 (being the first contact) making the choice to trust and obey God when He told him to leave his country and his family. From Abraham's story we see clearly that our confession or declaration of faith sometimes needs to be proved. After all they say: "Talk is cheap". For whatever reason God felt the need to test Abraham's faith. This shows that God understands human nature and the tendency to lose focus and get distracted by life and possessions. This also means that God can test us at any time. Thank God Abraham passed his test, how about you and I?

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LESSON TWO:

ABRAHAM ACTS (GENESIS 22:3-10)

It is said that delayed obedience is no obedience. This is clearly exemplified by Abraham who rose early in the morning Vs3. He did not waste time and refused to be distracted by anything and anyone. He obeyed immediately. Every word, every action showed his utmost trust and faith in God to do what is best for him and not harm him in anyway. He stayed focussed on doing what God had asked him to do. How committed are we to obey God's instruction, especially when things clearly look like not working in our favour? That's **FAITH IN ACTION**.

NOTES:

LESSON THREE:

GOD INTERVENES (GENESIS 22:11-14)

Have you ever heard the phrase “In the nick of time”? It means in the last moment when something can be changed or something bad will happen. This can be used to describe how Abraham must have felt when he heard God calling his name just as he was about to slay Isaac. Phew!! Relief!! Hallelujah!! Thank you, Lord!!! We serve a faithful, loving, merciful and kind God who loves us with an everlasting love and has good thoughts and plans towards us. Jer 29:11. He is always on time to deliver and to save. As Job declared in Job 23:10b “When He has tested me, I will come forth as gold” the motive of God in testing us is not to punish us but to bring out the best in us. He will not allow us to be consumed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is timing important in our obedience?
2. Why and how was Abraham able and willing to sacrifice his beloved and only son Isaac?
3. If you were in Abraham's position, what would you do? Do you have an “Isaac” that God is asking you to sacrifice?
4. What would it take for you to trust God completely?
5. How do you handle times of testing?

APPLICATION:

1. Remember that God loves you unconditionally and all things work together for your good.

2. God is faithful and never fails.
3. Delayed or partial obedience show lack of trust.
4. God is our great provider; He will not ask us for what He has not given us.
5. His thoughts towards are thoughts of good.
6. He rewards our sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

God challenges his people to remain faithful to and obey him even in the most difficult circumstances. The purpose of testing is to discover strengths and weaknesses. Trust in God helps us to build on the former and minimize the effects of the later, even if we don't understand why we are being tested.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

How much God can do in our lives to increase us is a function of how much we are willing to give up for Him. Our ability to give up our only 'Isaac' for God is a door opener for blessings too innumerable to count.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mon, June 16 | Love the Foreigner as Yourself | Leviticus 19:30-37 |
| Tue, June 17 | The Birth of Twins | Genesis 25:19-28 |
| Wed, June, 18 | Stay in the Land | Genesis 26: 1-11 |
| Thu, June 19 | God Will Supply Every Need | Philippians 4: 10-19 |
| Fri, June 20 | God Blesses and Provides | Genesis 26:12-23 |
| Sat, June, 21 | Live in Harmony | Romans 15: 1-13 |
| Sun, June, 22 | Making Peace with Others | Genesis 26: 24-33 |



JUNE

22

**ISAAC CALLS ON THE NAME
OF THE LORD**

Isaac Calls On The Name Of The Lord

Theme For the Quarter: Sacred Altars and Holy Offerings

Theme For the Month: The Genesis of Altars and Sacrifices

Devotional Reading: Genesis 26: 12-23

Background Scripture: Genesis 26:1-33

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 26: 24-33

Memory Verse:

Issac built an alter there and called on the name of the Lord. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well. – Genesis 26:25

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. State the importance of Isaac's godly heritage.
2. Present evidence of God's presence with Isaac.
3. Identify evidence of God's presence in his life or her life and express gratitude to God for His presence.

INTRODUCTION

There is a popular line from William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar spoken by Marc Antony “The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones”. Not so with Abraham. God remembered his total obedience to all His commands (Vs 5) and this secured a blessed future for his descendants.

Isaac was blessed and highly favoured because of the covenant that God had made with his father Abraham, God remained faithful to it and He guided, protected and prospered Isaac to the point that even in famine, he became very wealthy.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE:

COVENANT PROMISES (GENESIS 26:24-25)

God is a covenant keeping God, He does not repent or change His mind. Num 23:19 “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not make it good?”

When God has given His word, He expects us to believe it and call upon Him just as Isaac did. Isaac acknowledged the Lord and he prospered.

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LESSON TWO:

PROMISES KEPT (GENESIS 26:26-33)

Isaac obviously learned the importance of keeping ones promise. Having benefited from that, he also carried on that practice and acted with integrity in keeping the Oath he entered into with King Abimelech.

As children of God who are beneficiaries of His covenant keeping assurance, we must also be known to be Promise Keepers.

Is your word your bond? Do you keep your word? Can you be counted on to do what you say you will do? “But let your yes be yes and your no be no.” Matt 5:37a.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a godly heritage?
2. What are the benefits of a godly heritage?
3. Why did Abimelech come to ask Isaac for an oath and a covenant with Isaac?
4. How can you bequeath a godly heritage to your descendants?
5. How can you be sure of God's presence with you?

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APPLICATION

1. God is faithful and keeps His Covenant Deut 7:9
2. We should strive to leave a godly heritage for our generations.
3. We must be like our Heavenly Father and be known to keep our promises.
4. People must see evidence of God's presence with us.
5. Even in the harshest environment, we can flourish because of the favour of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

God's offer of grace comes to people who are counted as "enemies" before God. Therefore, we can take consolation that, even though human alliances can fail, the peace that God grants through Jesus will never fail. God is always faithful to keep his promises.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

Some destinies and blessings are tied to the lives of some people God brings your way. Never make light the opportunity relationships afford. Your supernatural increase may just be tied to it.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mon, June 23 | Jacob's Return to Bethel | Genesis 35: 1-7 |
| Tue, June 24 | Abide in Christ, the True Vine | John 15:1-8 |
| Wed, June, 25 | Seek God with All Your Heart | Jeremiah 29: 8-14 |
| Thu, June 26 | Christ Is Among His Gathered People | Matthew 18: 15-20 |
| Fri, June 27 | Christ Is with Us Always | Matthew 28: 16-20 |
| Sat, June, 28 | Fullness of Joy in God's Presence | Psalm 16 |
| Sun, June, 29 | The Lord Is in This Place | Genesis 28: 10-22 |



JUNE

29

**JACOB SETS UP A
SACRED PILLAR**

Jacob Sets Up A Sacred Pillar

Theme For the Quarter: Sacred Altars and Holy Offerings

Theme For the Month: The Genesis of Altars and Sacrifices

Devotional Reading: John 15: 1-8

Background Reading: Genesis 28:1-22; 33:17-20; 35:1-7

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 28:10-22

Memory Verse:

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, - Genesis 18-19a

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Locate on a map the geographical locations mentioned.
2. Analyse Jacob's if-then statement in Genesis 28:20-22.
3. Make a plan to commemorate a particular time when God's presence and work was evident in his or her life.

INTRODUCTION

Altars are important because they serve as a symbol of reverence and acknowledgement of God, a place where God is honoured. Altars can serve as a memorial of the places where God meets us and can represent the occasion or place where one has had a personal encounter with God.

An altar symbolises a place where offerings and sacrifices are made and this is not always a physical offering or sacrifice. Praise is an offering, Thanksgiving is an offering, giving up sleep is a sacrifice. It involves surrender, submission, commitment and devotion.

A personal Altar is important as this engenders a consciousness of your need to meet with and honour God. A personal Altar does always have to be physical, it and can also be in your heart.

LESSON EXPLAINED:

LESSON ONE:

JACOB'S JOURNEY (GENESIS 28:10-11)

Following the instructions and advice of his parents, Jacob set out on his journey both to escape from his brother Esau and to get a wife. This was clearly not a short journey, and he made the wise decision to stop and rest for the night. This decision turned out to be destiny defining. He set up camp and proceeded to make himself comfortable for the night. He picked up a stone to rest his head. How comfortable could this stone have been? Yet that stone became an important symbol. What is uncomfortable and seemingly insignificant in our lives that can become an important symbol to us?

LESSON TWO:

JACOB'S DREAM (GENESIS 28:12-15)

God speaks to people through various means and dream is an example of these ways and it is not always to pronounce a blessing e.g. when He warned Abimelech Gen 20:3 and Pharaoh Gen 41 etc. God appeared to Jacob in a dream and reiterated all the promises earlier made to his forebears and now made a covenant directly with him to keep him and be with him wherever he went. For the avoidance of any doubt, God introduced Himself to assure Jacob that it was not just any dream.

By this, Jacob was no longer just relying on the promise made to his father and Grandfather, he had received his own. Like Job said in Job 42:5a “I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees you”.

LESSON THREE:

JACOB'S REACTION (GENESIS 28:16-19)

Jacob was discerning enough to know that his dream was a visitation from the Lord and he gave the appropriate response of

awe and reverence. This moved him to pour oil on the stone as an act of worship and acknowledgment of God's holiness.

LESSON FOUR:

JACOB'S VOW (GENESIS 28: 20-22)

Jacob then made a vow that is surprising because he qualified it. This seems to indicate that he must have still had some doubt and feelings of unworthiness. This is not unlike believers who feel their sin is too grave to be forgiven and so do not embrace the grace of salvation. God has said "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" Ex 33:19b. We should take Him at His word. He who has promised is faithful to perform it. Rom 4:21

His Lordship and being our God should not be conditional as we read of Jacob bargaining, we ought to accept Him as Lord over our lives irrespective of what we are going through.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it mandatory to have an altar? Either family or personal?
2. How can symbols be abused?
3. Are all dreams from God? How can we discern one from the other?
4. What should be our response to the promise of God?

APPLICATION

1. God can visit us anywhere and at any time
2. We must pray for the spirit of discernment.
3. We should take God at His word.
4. Love God for who He is not what He can do for us.

CONCLUSION

God seeks us when we don't seek him. After being found, we should live differently, abiding in Him as He abides in us. This way, we will be an altar where God is honoured.

REFLECTION FOR SUPERNATURAL INCREASE

May we not miss out of God's divine encounter around us, only to awake to its reality and discover the opportunity is lost. As we sense God's dealings around us, we must learn to build altars and not 'sleep' on them.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE: | TOPIC: | TEXT: |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mon, June 30 | Living in God's Presence | Psalm 27 |
| Tue, July 1 | Anointed by the Holy One | 1 John 2 :20-28 |
| Wed, July, 2 | Remember Israel's Redemption | Deuteronomy 16: 1-10 |
| Thu, July, 3 | Rejoice Before the Lord | Deuteronomy 16: 11-17 |
| Fri, July, 4 | Judah has Become God's Sanctuary | Psalm 114 |
| Sat, July, 5 | The Father and I Are One | John 10:22-30, 34-38 |
| Sun, July, 6 | Jesus Learns in His Father's House | Luke 2:41-52 |



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