



SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 32

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39)

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BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

404 Lesson

CEREMONIAL CLEANSING OF THE UNCLEAR

MEMORY VERSE : “But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean” (Numbers 19:20).

TEXT: Numbers 19:1-22

Our text focuses on a special ordinance of ceremonial cleansing for those who became defiled in the camp of Israel. In the passage, we see the divine provision for cleansing, the definite procedure for cleansing and the death penalty for those who presumptuously refused to submit themselves for cleansing. This rite underscores the importance of freedom from all forms of defilement.

Prior to the institution of this ordinance, particularly in the book of Leviticus, God ordained specific daily sacrifices for the purpose of atonement for sin and to keep His people in fellowship with Him. Such sacrifices included the burnt offering, meat offering, peace offering, sin and trespass offerings. However, in addition to these regular daily offerings, God also made provision for special offerings and purification rites for those who became ceremonially unclean for one reason or the other.

Question 1 : What can we learn from the divine institution of purification rites in the Old Testament?

From the institution of the many purification rites in the Old Testament, we learn that God places a high premium on holiness. He wants His people to be absolutely pure and free from every form of defilement. God is holy and He will have His people know that He hates any kind of uncleanness, however little it may seem, For this reason, those who desire to maintain fellowship with Him on earth, and dwell with Him in heaven, must be cleansed from all traces of defilement.

DIVINE PROVISION FOR CLEANSING (Numbers 19:1-10; Zechariah 13:1; Hebrews 13:10-13; 9:11-14).

God commanded Moses to institute the law of purification using the ashes of a red heifer. An heifer is a young cow, and the kind to be used must be red, spotless, unblemished and one that had never carried a yoke. Those who were ceremonially defiled either by direct or indirect contact with the dead were rendered unfit to participate in worship in the tabernacle. They were to remain unclean for seven days. During these seven days, the unclean person was expected to undergo a purification rite that would 'separate' him or her from uncleanness. This is the reason the water used for purifying the unclean person was called **“water of separation”**.

It is important to note that God told the children of Israel that death was a source of ceremonial defilement. This was so because death is the wage for sin and as such, it was considered a defiling thing. But in addition to this, the Egyptians among whom Israel dwelt for a long time held their dead ones in veneration. They embalmed their dead and kept their mummified corpses in vaults within their dwellings. However, God did not want His people to learn the way of the heathen (Jeremiah 10:2). He wanted His people to see death in its true perspective, as an enemy, an aberration that was not part of God's original plan for man.

Question 2: Mention some contemporary practices relating to burial and funeral which believers should avoid.

In our present day, we do not become defiled by participating in funeral or touching the corpse of our loved ones. However, we can learn some important lessons from this Old Testament principle. One, we must not copy the worldly practices of our society in the way they bury their dead. Two, we should have a sober attitude and reflect deeply on the spiritual implication of death whenever a beloved person dies. Most often, people are overwhelmed with the emotional pain and the physical loss associated with bereavement. On other occasions, the anxiety generated by the cost of preparation for the funeral ceremony renders the bereaved insensitive and careless

about the implication of death of, especially, an unconverted parent or relative. However, we need to use such occasions to examine ourselves and prepare for eternity. Three, we must avoid defiling practices such as printing tattoo for the dead on our bodies, sleeping around corpses, shaving off the hair, exchanging garments over the graveyard of the dead, consulting the spirit of the dead to obtain information (necromancy), inheriting the wife of the dead, to mention a few. All these practices defile the believer (Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

Question 3: what provision did God make for cleansing the unclean in (a) the Old Testament, (b) the New Testament?

In our text, we see the provision of God for cleansing the unclean. For the Old Testament dispensation, God directed that the children of Israel should bring a red heifer to the priest, who should take her out of the camp, and under his supervision, a man was appointed to kill it. The priest collected some of the blood of the sacrificial animal and carried it into the camp to sprinkle it seven times before the tabernacle. Then, a man who was free from uncleanness would burn the carcass of the slain heifer, its skin, blood and dung, together with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet. Thereafter, the ashes of the burnt heifer was gathered in a heap and kept in a clean place outside the camp. The ashes were used to prepare the water of separation, when needed, for purifying unclean persons.

As we look at the ordinance of the red heifer, we can easily discern its rich symbolism for the New Testament era. The book of Hebrews classifies the ashes of the heifer in the same category as the blood of bulls and goats which were used for ceremonial cleansing (Hebrews 9:13,14). Therefore, the heifer symbolized Jesus Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God, in whom the qualities of the chosen heifer were strikingly fulfilled. One, He was spotless and blameless (1 Peter 1:18,19). Two, before the supreme sacrifice, Christ had never borne any yoke of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Three, He was young and tender, crucified in His prime (Isaiah 53:2,3). Four, He suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem and bore the whole heat of God's wrath against our sins (Hebrews 13:12). Five, through His death our sins are forgiven and

through His resurrection we are justified (Romans 4:25). Just as sprinkling the blood of the slain heifer before the tabernacle atoned for the sin of the whole nation, in the same manner, the blood of Jesus atoned for the sin of the whole world. Six, those who rejected the ordinance of the red heifer were to be cut off from the congregation of Israel; in like manner, those who reject the provision and offer of salvation through Christ will be eternally cut off from God. They will be cast into the lake of fire (John 3:18).

Question 4: In what ways were the purification rites of the Old Testament inferior to the sacrifice of Christ.

Though the ordinances of purification rites in the Old Testament were effective, in that they were sufficient to cleanse the unclean from his or her impurity, the book of Hebrews reveals that they were imperfect and inferior, when compared with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:13,14). First, the cleansing effects of those Levitical ordinances were short-lived. For this reason, the sacrifices had to be often repeated. In contrast, the sacrifice of Jesus did not need to be repeated because of its perfection and finality (Hebrews 10:11, 12). Second, the men who ministered at the Levitical purification were people who had infirmities of their own. As a matter of fact, those who were clean became unclean while they were engaged in the purification of others for which reason they themselves needed cleansing (Numbers 19:7-10). But Christ did not need to offer any sacrifice for himself because He was sinless (Hebrews 5:1-3). Third, the sacrifice of Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices. Under the old covenant, there was a dichotomy between the priest and the sacrifice. But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is both the Priest and the Sacrifice.

DEFINITE PROCEDURE FOR CLEANSING THE UNCLEAN (Number 19:11-22; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 13:12,13).

Question 5: From our text, state the procedure for cleansing and point out its significance to the present day believer.

The process of cleansing a defiled Israelite followed a specific procedure. First, the heifer was slain, its blood sprinkled before the tabernacle for general atonement for the entire nation. Then, the body of the heifer was burnt to obtain ashes that were used to prepare the water of purification. Second, the unclean person needed to acknowledge his/her defilement and approach the priest for personal cleansing. Immediately, the priest would pronounce him or her unclean and kept out of the camp for seven days (Numbers 5:1-4). Three, on the third day of his uncleanness, the water of purification was sprinkled upon him by a clean person. This marks the beginning of his cleansing. Four, on the seventh day, the water of purification was sprinkled on him again. Five, the priest would then pronounce the man clean and he was restored to the camp. It is important to note that if the water of purification was not sprinkled upon the unclean person on the third day, then he would not be clean even if he was sprinkled on the seventh day. In other words, the sprinkling of third and seventh days were mutually inclusive and one was not effective without the other.

The procedure of cleansing with the ashes of the heifer is very significant for us today. Though we are no longer to carry out such obsolete rituals as we see in our text, we can draw important analogies from them.

First, we observe that sprinkling of the blood of the heifer was done on behalf of the entire congregation while the water of separation was sprinkled on individual Israelites for cleansing. The implication of this in the New Testament is very clear; namely, that the blood of Jesus has been shed for all men, but we must individually come to Him for personal cleansing. Two, while the carcass of the heifer was burning, the priest threw into the fire cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet. This signified burning off all that represented the greatest height of carnal glory, self-righteousness as well as the deepest disgrace and shame of sin (I Kings 4:33; 2 Sam. 1:24; Songs 5:15; Isaiah 1:18). Our cleansing cannot be complete until we are cleansed from fleshly lust and the guilt of sin. **“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”** (Galatians 5:24; 6:14).

Three, we see the importance of constant self-examination to detect the slightest moral defilement in our lives. We must be sensitive and watchful over our spiritual lives lest we continue in fellowship or Christian service with our hearts already defiled. Four, acknowledgment and confession of sins qualify us to experience spiritual cleansing. If we cover our sins we cannot receive God's forgiveness, neither can we be free from the guilt and condemnation for sin in our hearts. But **"if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:9). Five, a sinner must be willing to separate himself from his sins through genuine repentance and total consecration to God (Proverbs 28:13). This was evident in the fact that the water of separation that was used in ceremonial cleansing signified a separation between the person and his uncleanness. Six, sprinkling of the unclean person on the third and seventh days are analogous to the experiences of the new birth and sanctification. A person must be born again and also sanctified in order to live a victorious life that pleases the Lord.

DEATH PENALTY FOR REFUSING DIVINE CLEANSING
(Numbers 19:13,20; Leviticus 7:20,21; 15:31; 22:3; John 3:18,36; Hebrews 2:3).

Though God has made provision for the unclean person to get rid of his defilement, He stipulates death penalty for those who deliberately refuse to be cleansed the way He has appointed. Man is a free moral agent, and so he can choose to obey or disobey God. However, God also is a just and severe Judge who punishes every act of disobedience and transgression (Romans 11:12). One wonders why an Israelite could be aware of his defilement and yet, in the face of such provision for cleansing, refuse cleansing and presumptuously go into the tabernacle. God says such an act defiles the sanctuary.

Question 6: In what ways can an individual avoid eternal death?

Today, anyone who deliberately refuses to accept God's provision for spiritual cleansing from sin will also earn eternal death. This means permanent separation from God in eternity. Sinners who refuse to repent, and backsliders who fail to retrace their steps back to the Lord will be finally cut

off from God. That is a case of deliberate disobedience and it will end in definite destruction. The only way to avoid this kind of terrible penalty is to repent of sin and come to Jesus for cleansing.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	LUKE	15-16	2 Samuel	23-24
TUE	“	17-18	I Kings	1
WED	“	19	“	2
THUR	“	20	“	3-4
FRI	“	21	“	5-6
SAT	“	22	“	7
SUN	“	23	“	8

405 Lesson

MOSES STRIKES THE ROCK

TEXT: Numbers 20:1-29

MEMORY VERSE: “And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also” (Numbers 20:11).

In our last lesson, we studied God’s definite requirement for holiness. He does not only make known His demand for holiness, He also made provision for the purification of His people. Unfortunately, the Israelites failed to appropriate this provision. This is evident in our text today, as a temporary challenge of lack of water made them to forget all that the Lord has done for them all through their wilderness journey until now. As usual, they reproached the Lord and His servants (Moses and Aaron), and even God’s redemptive acts in bringing them out of the house of bondage.

Israel’s impatience with Moses and God led to a chain of tragedies. Moses was caught off guard and moved to speak unadvisedly to God’s people due to provocation by the ungodly lifestyle of the people. He struck the rock instead of speaking to it to bring out water as instructed by God. Although water came out of the rock, Moses and Aaron had incurred God’s wrath. It brought God’s judgment on them. Israel made them fail just as they were at the verge of getting into the Promised Land. Aaron died at the end of the chapter. What a train of evil sin sets on! We should not take God’s love for granted, whoever we are. How we ought to have our heads bowed in godly fear as we study this today, for the scripture says, **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12). And the congregation, rather than helping to raise the weary hands of Moses and Aaron, they pushed their leaders to the precipice and made them unable to enter the Promised Land.

THE DEATH OF MIRIAM (Numbers 20:1; Exodus 15:20,21; Micah 6:4)

Miriam was the daughter of Amram and Jochebed and sister of Moses and Aaron. She came into the limelight after the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel. When Moses and Aaron with their rod went before them, to work wonders for them, she, with her timbrels and dancing, went before them, leading the chorus of the women and praising God for His wondrous works. Referred to as “**Aaron’s sister,**” she occupied a prominent place in the congregation but was not Moses’ equal. Though she is of the same parents with Moses, she, like Aaron, subordinated herself to Moses. She is the first person of that household to whom prophetic gifts are ascribed. One of the influential leaders of the time, she was an instrument of much good to Israel.

Her blemish was her envious attitude at the exalted position of Moses. This rebellion led to being summoned to the tabernacle where they were administered a stern rebuke by God. She was, afterward, struck with leprosy which led to delay in the progress of the whole nation of Israel. Moses prayed for her and she was healed. It is on record that this series of event is from the last public event in her life. Here we are told of her death: she died toward the close of the wanderings, at Kadesh, and was buried there.

It is noteworthy that Miriam’s once luxurious godly life was never heard of again until this chapter where her death is recorded. This means that our pleasantness is a function of the godly life we live. As soon as our light goes out, we can neither see nor lead others. Besides, when Miriam went out of circulation, she did not take it as having an axe to grind with Moses the leader. She must have learnt her lessons.

ISREAL’S MURMURING AND THE FETCHING OF WATER OUT OF THE ROCK {Numbers 20:2-13; 14:11-12, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:4}

The children of Israel had always manifested unbelief and ungratefulness despite the several miracles they had experienced in Egypt, and at the Red Sea. There is no report that they gathered together to praise God for bringing them so far in the journey. Each time they gather when there was any inconvenience, it was either to murmur, complain or revolt against God and Moses. Their gatherings were not to express appreciation or what He had done for them but to complain for what they perceived He has not done for them.

While they journeyed in the wilderness they experienced God's power in their victories over the enemy nations, provision of water and manna from heaven and meat in the wilderness. As a direct consequence of their unbelief, they wandered in the wilderness for many years. The problem at this particular time was lack of water. Consequently they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron. This was not the first time the children of Israel lacked water. They had had similar experiences in the wilderness of Shur (Exodus 15:22-27) and Rephidim (Exodus 17:1-7). On each occasion, they never learnt from past challenges, and God's miraculous interventions. Whenever they came across challenges in their journey to Canaan, their habitual reaction was grumbling, complaining and murmuring. They were fond of pointing accusing fingers at their leaders. They never prayed for Moses that he might receive needed divine assistance, support or provision in time of trouble. Instead, they found fault with God's leading and love. According to them, they preferred to have died with their brethren, rather than come out of Egypt.

Question 1: Mention the reactions of the Israelites in our text that believers should avoid in time of difficulties.

The attitude of ungratefulness of the Israelites serves as a great lesson for us today. One, they always easily forgot God's miracle and favour; Christians should not. Two, they lacked faith in God's ability to supply all their needs, and never developed their faith to respond to diverse situations of life. Three, they misused their tongues. Four, they lacked self control and were not ready to endure any difficulty. Five, they did not appreciate God for their leaders' love, care and concern. As believers today, we should avoid such negative reactions when things are not working the way we expected. Rather than speak against our leaders or God, we should pray and remind God of His promises and cast all our care upon Him (1 Peter 5:7)

Question 2: What lessons do we learn from the response of Moses and Aaron to the behavior of the people?

In response to the complaints and murmurings of the children of Israel, Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the

assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and fell upon their faces and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. Instead of arguing with the people, Moses and Aaron went back to God. What a good example to leaders of God's people today. This attitude of Moses and Aaron is instructive to church leaders whenever they are faced with challenges in the ministry. They should take everything to God in prayer.

MOSES' TRAVAIL {Numbers 20:12; Leviticus 10:3; Numbers 27:14; Deuteronomy 1:37; 3:26-27; 32:51; Ezekiel 20:41; 36:23; 38:16; 1 Peter 3:15}

Question 3: What lessons do we learn from Moses' disobedience and God's response?

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water...” (Numbers 20:7-8).

God was very clear as usual as to what Moses was to do: he was to speak to the rock, and not to strike it.

Moses obeyed God's instruction to a large extent but the obedience was not complete. As instructed, he took the rod and gathered the people together. However, he disobeyed God by speaking to the people instead of the rock. In anger, he called them rebels and struck the rock twice. Moses, arrogating God's power to himself and Aaron, his brother, said **“Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?”** (Numbers 20:10). God was unhappy with Moses. **“And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them”** (Numbers 20:12).

Moses, who was referred to as the meekest man on earth (Number 12:3), lost focus momentarily and went off target. He was not spared because there are no sacred cows before God. He recalled that this single action affected him negatively in terms of entering the land flowing with milk and honey. **“O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according**

to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter” (Deuteronomy 3:24-26). This shows the delicate responsibility or position of leadership: there is no level of spiritual development that precludes falling. This is evident from the fact that Moses, whom God had appointed to lead Israel to Canaan could not enter the promised land because of disobedience. Total obedience is a necessary condition for enjoying divine favour.

God’s response to Moses’ disobedience is as instructive to Christian leaders as it is to every other believer today. On a general note, God is not a respecter of persons. Therefore, every believer should be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath (James 1:19). There are several lessons for Christian leaders. First, they should not allow their followers to drag them down from their heights but remain focused so as not to derail. Second, they should learn to rest. The Lord Jesus Christ recommended this for His disciples (Mark 6:31,32). When there is tension and leaders fail to pray and rest, they may find that they are so exhausted that they are unable to manage the combination of personal and occupational stresses. Third, they should not be weighed down by the challenges that come to them; they should rather take it to the Lord in prayer and leave them there. Fourth, they should learn not to worry. They should do their duty and leave God to do the rest. Five, when tempted to descend so low to the level of name-calling, mudslinging and abuse of members of the congregation, they should know that it is time to retreat. Most importantly, they should always recall how far they have come: it will soon be over.

On the part of the followers, they should learn to help their leaders to help them. It is important they pray for them and encourage them in the great work of the gospel these leaders involved in. What serves as tonic to leaders is loyalty and obedience of the congregation. If they keep His word without selecting passages to obey or disobey, they are unlikely to provoke their leaders to derail.

MESSENGERS FROM ISRAEL AND EDMOM'S UNFRIENDLINESS (Numbers 20:14-21; Deuteronomy 2:1-8; Psalm 137:7; Amos 1:11,12).

After encounter at Kadesh, there was need for progress in their journey to Canaan. Moses, therefore, sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, telling him what they encountered in Egypt, how God had graciously delivered them asking for the permission to pass through their country. **“Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king’s high way, we will not turn to the right hand’ nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders”** (Numbers 20:17). Edom refused this humble request and consequently Israel had to turn away from their border. The Edomites were the lineage of Esau while the Israelites are the descendants of Jacob, both children of Isaac. The unfriendliness of the Edomites is traceable to the age- old enmity between Esau - the ancestor of the Edomites and Jacob – the father of the Israelites (Genesis 36:8,9;32;11). That was rivalry carried too far, It showed that Esau’s children still harbor grudge against the children of Israel.

Question 4: What challenge do we receive from the peaceful response of Israel to Edom’s unfriendliness?

The unfriendliness of Edom and the peaceful response of Israel present us with several lessons. One, that we should always follow peace with all men (Romans 12:18). Rather than allow the negative attitudes of our unbelieving neighbors and colleagues to affect us, we should **“let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 5;16) and come to the light. Two, we should bear in mind that not all our requests from people will be granted. Therefore, whenever our requests are not granted by others, we should not take offence or become bitter. Three, we can avoid unnecessary strife with people if we maintain close communion with God and learn to always forgive others, Four, we should not foster tribal hatred or family feud.

THE DEATH OF AARON AND INSTALLMENT OF ELEAZAR AS HIGH PRIEST (Numbers 20:22-29).

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah” (Number 20:23,24).

After Israel left Kadesh, they came to mount Hor where God decided to fulfil His verdict on Aaron because of the rebellion at Meribah. God directed Moses to remove the priestly garments from Aaron and install Eleazar as the next high priest. Thereafter, Aaron was to die on top of the mount. In obedience to God, Moses, Aaron and Eleazar went to the top of the mount. Moses did as the Lord commanded; and Aaron died on Mount Hor.

Question 5: Point out important lessons from the Death of Aaron.

From this incident we observe one, the first transition of the post of the High priest from Aaron to Eleazar his son. This teaches us that the Levitical Priesthood had a limitation by reason of the mortality of the Priests. Also, though succession in the Levitical priesthood was hereditary, Moses was not presumptuous in the appointment of a replacement for Aaron. This instructs Christian leaders to always seek God’s counsel before making any appointments in the church. Two, another important lesson here is the unwavering commitment and perseverance of Moses. He was bereaved of Miriam his sister and Aaron his brother and companion in ministry in quick succession. Yet, he maintained an unbroken relationship with God. In spite of his momentary loss of concentration, he soon returned to his discipline and consecration. As believers, circumstances and situations, such as bereavement, loss of job, accidents and the like should not affect our commitment to God, His work and His people. Three, they should keep themselves unspotted from the pollution of the world (Revelation 19:8; James 1:27). Four, the children of Israel mourned Aaron their leader, as a mark of love and appreciate their leaders for the great work they are doing for God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Luke	24	1 Kings	9-10
TUE	John	1	"	11
WED	"	2-3	"	12
THUR	"	4	"	13
FRI	"	5	"	14
SAT	"	6	"	15
SUN	"	7	"	16

406 Lesson

THE FIERY SERPENT

MEMORY VERSE : “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14,15).

TEXT: Numbers 21:1-9

Our previous lesson revealed that Edom denied Israel passage through its territory to Canaan. This refusal elongated their journey and made the children of Israel to move from Kadesh to Mount Hor, seeking alternative route through which they could enter Canaan. This option would not be without resistance either, as we shall see in the course of our present study. Meanwhile, news of the approaching presence of the multitude of Israelites marching to the Promised Land unsettled the king of Canaan. Therefore, he, in what appears to be a pre-emptive strike, fought against Israel and took some Jews prisoners. God overturned this victory over their enemies. This victory was short-lived as the Israelites’ besetting sin of murmuring would not allow them to enjoy the blessing of God for a long time. Thus, they incurred once again the divine wrath in our text when they murmured because of the hardness of the way. The consequent bite from fiery serpents and accompanying death taught them and us the indispensability of repentance. And God’s provision of a brazen serpents and accompanying death taught them and us the indispensability of repentance. And God’s provision of a brazen serpent hung on a pole for those who looked upon it to receive mercy and healing was more than an immediate solution to the sin-problem than as this lesson would unravel.

ISRAEL CONQUERS THE CANAANITES (Numbers 21:1-3; Judges 11:16,17; Deuteronomy 7:1,2,5; Psalm 50:15)

The children of Israel, now in the fortieth year of their journey to the promise land, were at the borders of Canaan. God’s promise to give the land to Abraham’s descendants (Gen 15:18,21) was about to be fulfilled. And these heathen nations who were mightier than Israel could not hinder the

age-long promise of God concerning their inheriting Canaan from coming to pass. Like Israel, the believer's enemies are mightier than him: it is only through dependence on His promised presence and victory that he overcomes them.

God's promises of victory, provision, protection, etc. are not unconditional. The believer has his part to play. For Israel, the promise of Canaan was sure. But the inhabitants would not watch the Israelites' dispossess them of their land. Thus, without any provocation, they mustered their forces and fought against Israel, taking some of them captive. The Canaanites most probably came upon Israel in a sudden way to be able to take some of them captive. This emphasizes the need for believers, soldiers of Christ, to always put on the whole armor of God against the wiles of the devil. This is because the devil does not want the believer to enjoy the abundant provisions of God. So, he fights to deny the believer the enjoyment of his right.

Question 1: What lessons do we learn from the victory of Israel over the Canaanites?

The incident here appears to be a breach of God's promise that Israel would possess the land (Genesis 12:6,7; 35:12; Deuteronomy 7:1). But His promises are ever so sure. He says, **"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips"** (Psalm 89:34). God will never fail; so we can rely on His promises. The children of Israel in their distress called upon God and He turned their defeat to victory. What a great lesson for us. God can turn the seeming and temporary victory of the enemy over us to their permanent and everlasting defeat. Secondly, there is nothing prayer cannot do, For example, Peter, who was marked for death, was miraculously delivered from prison in answer to the believers' prayers (Act 12:5-10). Thirdly, we should not give up in the face of apparent defeat. Israel never gave up in the face of defeat since it was clear that it was not occasioned by any known sin against God. Believers need not give up but persist in doing the will of God and in their pilgrimage to heaven, the rage of the enemy notwithstanding. The dread of the enemy or his sudden assault should not make us to turn back from doing the will of God. Canaan is also akin to the field of evangelism that we want to capture for the Lord so He

can establish His reign in the hearts and lives of the people won. And as such, Christian servants shouldn't give up on any village, town or city that is at first resistant to the gospel. It can turn to embrace the gospel news if believers can pray. An individual who is hostile to the gospel today can become a preacher of the same gospel tomorrow if we pray and won't quit on him. It is also clear that when a believer suffers an assault from the camp of the enemy, it might not be as a result of certain sins he has committed. A faith-filled believer will not even take such as a permanent defeat. David also fought to recover all that he lost in the event of the enemy's attack on him at Ziklag. Rather than give up, the believer must engage in spiritual warfare to be able to recover all that he has lost.

Question 2: What lessons can be learnt from the vow Israel made to God in their time of trouble?

In their time of trouble, Israel made a vow unto God. Their vow was consistent with the word of God (Deuteronomy 7:1,2,5). The believer must be careful not to make a rash vow or one that is inconsistent with God's word. Secondly, when we vow, we should not fail to fulfill same. **"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou has vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay"** (Ecclesiastes 5:4,5). Thirdly, we should keep our promises, whether to friends, colleagues or strangers. The Christian's word is his bond. In this world of broken promises and vows, the Christian should be faithful to his promise. Couples should ever be mindful of their conjugal vows. Business partners should abide by their agreements; any change should be by mutual consent. Fidelity is the hallmark of the Christian pilgrim (Psalm 15:1). We should not be like the people of the world whose promises are unreliable and who break vows at will.

ISRAEL'S MURMURING AND DIVINE PUNISHMENT
(Numbers 21:4-6; Exodus 16:2,3; Psalm 106:24-26; I Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:14; Romans 6:13).

No sooner that Israel enjoyed victory at the opening of our text than he slid back into sin of murmuring. This dramatic

and sad turn of events is a warning to careless believers. Obviously, it indicated that the children of Israel were yet to learn from their past mistakes. The Lord who had just recently given them victory over the Canaanites, **“sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died”** (Numbers 21:6). God decided to punish the people because of their murmuring due to some inconveniences **“...and the people were much discouraged because of the way”** (Numbers 21:4).

How hard was their way? The Bible reveals that God led them **“through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; ...a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?”** (Deuteronomy 1:19; 8:15; Jeremiah 2:6; Isaiah 63:9). Challenges, difficulties and storms may characterize the path that leads to heaven but they cannot be more than what our Saviour suffered. Besides, there is the assurance of the divine presence, care, guidance and victory. Even for the Israelites, the Bible says, **“in all of their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old”** (Isaiah 63:9). Hardship, life-threatening situations, afflictions, deferred hope, disappointment, trials, delay, stagnancy, mysterious loss, death and other storms or vicissitudes of life have the potential of making men lose their excitement and purpose for living. Discouraged, they usually resort to murmuring, crying, transferring aggression, violence, and even contemplating suicide (Jonah 4:3,8; Nehemiah 4:10; Ps 42:3,5;73:2;116:11; Proverbs 13:12; Isaiah 42:4; Luke 5:5; Colossians 3:21). If not quickly, properly taken care of, it leads to withdrawal from fellowship, loss of faith in God and backsliding. It is a fact life that adverse situation that bring discouragement come to all. But God expects, eith His investments of grace in our lives, to respond differently from the people of the world. He expects that we cleave to Him and not cast away our confidence in God as our true spiritual stamina manifest at such times. Adversity is not everlasting. Besides, believers receive comfort from God in such precarious situations of life as they prayerfully, patiently wait for divine intervention. It is

also the duty of believers to exhort and assist the discouraged to forge ahead in the Christian race. They need to present, through their conduct and preaching, proofs that God still cares for those whose faith are dwindling (Isaiah 49:15,16; Psalm 103:13; Malachi 3:17; Matthew 7:11; Romans 11:29; Exodus 13:9; Songs of Solomon 8:6). Rather than murmur during hard times, it is good to seek the Lord in prayer. **“The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD”.**

Question 3: What should be the attitude of Christians in difficult times?

As usual, Israel soon forgot God’s past goodness and wonders and began murmuring and grumbling. They focused on current problems and forgot the graciousness of God in the past. How Israel mirrors the life of many today! Many people complain and murmur when they face challenging situations. But as believers, we should learn to rely on God and trust Him to see us through and deliver us in times of difficulty. We should be patient and refrain from murmuring or complaining.

Question 4: What dangers are inherent in concentrating attention on problems of life and forgetting God’s faithfulness?

It can be observed that focusing on problems of life and forgetting God’s faithfulness in the past disposes one to ingratitude. Secondly, it diminishes faith, enlarges the problem and hinders progress. It results in sharp words, which usually attract divine displeasure and discipline. For the children of Israel this murmuring was one too many. They murmured at Marah (Exodus 15:23-29) the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1-3) and at Rephidim (Exodus 17:21). Now, their cup appeared full and God decided to punish them by sending fiery serpents to bite them resulted in death.

Question 5: What lesson does God’s punishment on Israel for murmuring teach us?

The first lesson we learn the divine discipline meted on the children of Israel is that **“the soul that sinneth, it shall die”** (Ezekiel 18:4). Second, misuse of the tongue will always bring divine punishment and eternal domination in hell

(James 3:6). Third, if one does not deal with a particular sin in his life, it becomes a habit. The children of Israel were in the habit of murmuring at every challenge that came their way. Fourth the children of Israel were not spiritual enough to know that the challenges of the present should not distract them from the promise of inheriting a **“land flowing with milk and honey”**. Believers should not allow present challenges to make them lose focus of heaven. Fifth, we need to be careful that while we are near heaven, we do not miss it. **“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it”** (Hebrews 4:1). The people were at the threshold of Canaan, yet many of them died because of sin, Sixth, believers should never think of going back to the world. The children of Israel always looked back with pleasure to life in Egypt. They painted the life of servitude in Egypt as if was pleasurable. As believers, we know that the world and its all allurements are preserved for destruction (2 Peter 3;10).

ISRAEL’S REPENTANCE AND GOD’S REMEDY (Number 21:7-9; Judges 10;9-16; 11:21; I SAMUEL 12:19,20; Psalm 78:34,35; John 3:14,15)

The people realized that the plague of death in their midst was as a result of their sin of murmuring. They quickly repented, went to Moses, confessed their sins and asked for his prayer. Moses prayed for them and God provided a remedy for the plague, a brazen serpent to be hung on a pole, at which those bitten must look to live. A sinner’s remedy consists in repentance and looking to Jesus for salvation. Secondly, they made restitution **“...We have spoken against thee”** (Numbers 21:7). We should learn to retribute our ways to those we have slandered or defamed.

Question 6: (a) In what ways does the brazen serpent typify the Lord Jesus Christ? (b) What benefit does the cross of Christ offer?

The brazen serpent is a type of Christ and His work in several ways (John 3:14,15). One, the serpent was lifted up on a pole and Christ was hung on the cross. Two as the victims of the serpent bite looked on the brazen serpent on the pole and lived, so also those who look by faith unto Jesus will live eternally. Three, just like the brazen serpent was the only remedy for death, so Christ is the only remedy for eternal

damnation (John 3;14,16; Acts 4:12). Four, faith in the brazen serpent provided remedy for sicknesses. Similarly, we are healed from all kinds of sicknesses and diseases by exercising faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Five, it was obvious that God was the invisible force behind the brazen serpent remedy, the same with salvation through Christ (Romans 1:16; Colossians 2:12,13). Finally, the people had to manifest faith and obedience before they could enjoy the benefit of the brazen-serpent remedy, so also sinners must obey the gospel and trust Jesus for salvation.

It is, however, unfortunate that the Israelites did not understand the message God was passing to them on the brazen serpent, They, later, turned the brazen serpent to an idol; and King Hezekiah had to destroy it (2 Kings 18;4). How many people are like the Israelites today! Many have turned to idols men, handkerchief, water, oil or other objects which God might have used as points of contact of faith in Him in the past. We should not put our faith in the wooden or metal cross, rosary or other objects. Also, we should not worship men of God. We should realize they are instruments in the hands of God. They might have been used to bless us; but we should not forget that their power comes from God and they are mere divine instruments. Therefore, they shouldn't be hallowed as deities or turned into means of divine solutions in times of need.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	John	8	1Kings	17-18
TUE	“	9	“	19
WED	“	10	“	20
THUR	“	11	“	21
FRI	“	12	“	22
SAT	“	13-14	2 Kings	1-2
SUN	“	15-16	“	3

407 Lesson

ISRAEL CONQUERS ENEMY NATIONS

MEMORY VERSE: “He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents”(Psalm 78:55).

TEXT: Numbers 21:10-35

As they recovered from the impact of the incident of the fiery serpent, the children of Israel appeared resolved to press forward to the Promised Land. They seemed to have learnt something from the ugly consequences of their murmuring against God and against His servant Moses and were now determined to move forward. The account shows that they made consistent progress, had notable miraculous provisions, showed evidence of spiritual maturity, manifested commitment, had implicit faith in God and victories over formidable nations. The record of their progress is quite encouraging after a dismal incident that cost the nation **“much people”** and offers definite lessons to heaven-bound pilgrims. One, the chastised believer can amend his ways and return to God’s favour. Two, the backslider can recover from his fall and begin afresh with God (Micah 7:8). Three, once fellowship with God is restored, victory is sure. This is eminently demonstrated in the unfolding scenes in the text.

ISRAEL’S PROGRESS AND GOD’S ABIDING PRESENCE(Numbers 21:10-20; 33:43,44; Psalm 105:1-5; Proverbs 28:13).

From the unpleasant experience at the borders of Edom, the Israelites bounced back to a strengthened relationship with the Lord. “And the children of Israel set forward...” (Numbers 21:10). Unlike the previous lesson, here there was no record of weariness, discouragement or complaint. They had come to realize that no situation defies God’s solution and had resolved to depend on His sufficiency to obtain victory over their enemies and for provision of all their needs. This improvement in their spiritual stamina saw them moving on tirelessly, valiantly and consistently to conquer their enemies.

Question 1: How can a believer make consistent progress in life?

Every Christian today can experience continuous progress, success, and victory by avoiding sin in any form. Both outward and inward sin should be done away with. Two, the believer should always be grateful for God's gracious provisions. This should strengthen his faith to claim scriptural promises for current or future challenges. Three, to enjoy God's favour continually, the believer should seek to love God more dearly and serve Him more faithfully. Four, he should never be complacent no matter the current level of accomplishment. One victory should motivate him towards another. Five, he should completely depend on Christ in all situations. It is this absolute reliance that secures heaven's supply, is this absolute reliance that secures heaven's supply, replaces disability with ability and brings heaven's artillery into life's battles (Proverbs 14:34; John 14:23; Genesis 32:10-12; John 12:26; Philippians 3:13,14; 4:19).

Though the Israelites had had many unpleasant records of complaints before now, this study presents us with a positively different Israel. They believed what the Lord said to Moses: **"Gather the people together and I will give them water"** (Numbers 21:16) and diligently did their part. **"The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the directions of the lawgiver, with their staves..."** (Numbers 21:18).

Question 2: What lessons can we learn from the nobles and princes in manual work?

The princes and nobles occupied leadership positions under Moses' supervision. They showed implicit obedience and diligence. Not minding the crudeness of available implements, they co-operated and God gave them miraculous results. The active participation of the nobles and princes should challenge key leaders in all Bible-believing assemblies. One, true Christian leaders should not consider any aspect of God's work too menial to engage in. This will motivate the brethren and enhance their dedication. Two, they should willingly and joyfully submit to God-ordained superior leaders. Three, believers should co-operate with one another to ensure that God's work is done, regardless of apparent

obstacles or hindrances. When every believer brings his knowledge, aptitudes, dexterity and professional expertise to bear, the church will hardly know any impossibility. Four, it should remind the church that Christ's desire for her is to be one. Such unity attracts God's attention and secures divine presence (Nehemiah 3:1-4; Hebrews 13:7,17; Ephesians 4:16; John 17:11,20, 23).

That God was with Israel was not in doubt. His mighty acts, miracles, revelation and guidance attest to his abiding presence with them. But though they had miraculous provision of water at Beer, they knew the place was only a temporary abode. They realized that no wilderness miracle could compare with what lay ahead in the Promised Land. So, when the Lord decided it was time to move, they complied without further delay. **"...And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah..."** (Numbers 21:18-20). They trudged on from Mattanah to Nahaliel, to Bamoth and to the top of Pisgah, towards their final destination. New Testament believers can also experience progress and enjoy the privileges of divine presence in their personal as well as family lives (Psalm 105:1, 10-12; John 14:16; Hebrews 13:8) yet, they should not, for any present benefit or future prospect on earth, forget or forsake heaven (1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Timothy 6:12-19).

ISRAEL'S PROPOSAL AND SIHON'S AVERSION TO PEACE
(Numbers 21:21-23; Deuteronomy 2:26-32; 20:10-13,15; Judges 11:14-23; Numbers 20:14-21)

From the top of Pisgah, Moses sent messengers to king Sihon of the Amorites saying. **"Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders"** (Numbers 21:22).

Question 3: What can we learn from the message Moses sent to Sihon?

The content of the message was very easy to comprehend. The request was well thought out. It tried to address any anxiety that might arise from human needs of sustenance. **"Thou shall sell me meat for money, that I may eat and give me water for money..."** (Deuteronomy 2:28). It indicated the consistent peaceful disposition characteristic

of true believers. In fact, Christians should be proponents of peace (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:17,18; James 3:17,18). Two, godly people should not use their personality, position or privileges to oppress others. Three, our request should be clear and considerate to believers and unbelievers alike.

Moses' message at this time was similar to those he had earlier sent to the kings of Edom and Moab. It could have benefited both nations. For Israel, it would have saved them the physical and emotional stress of having to travel a longer and more difficult terrain. It could also reduce their possible risk of murmuring and God's attendant displeasure and discipline. For the Amorites on the other hand, it might have prolonged king Sihon's reign and positively impacted on their economy. But Sihon bluntly refused Israel a peaceful passage. This was because he did not trust Israel (Numbers 21:23 Judges 11:20). However, his apprehension was baseless because Israel had never failed to keep agreement with any nation before this time.

Question 4: What lessons can we learn from Sihon's refusal of Moses' request?

Sihon was neither the first nor the last king to be hostile to Israel in their journey towards Canaan. The obstinate often refuse God's offer of peace at crucial times. This is unwise and dangerous. Sihon must have heard of the resistance of Edom and Moab and how Israel consequently took tortuous routes rather than fight. He must have expected a similar detour from his borders. However, he was ignorant of the fact that God's will in respect of the former nations was different from His decision on the Amorites this time. The Amorites had failed to reconcile with God in spite of divine patience for over four hundred years. By now, the cup of their iniquity was full and God had determined it was time to overthrow them for the Israelites to occupy their territory. Men and nations ought to realize that God's timing of punitive visitation on earth may be diverse for different people. We must not imitate those who sin and judgment seem to be delayed (Genesis 15:12-16; Psalm 73:3,18,19; Proverbs 16:5). The only wise course is to steer clear of whatever may incur divine wrath.

INCLUSIVE VICTORY FOR OBEDIENT PEOPLE (Numbers 21:24-35; Deuteronomy 4:46-48; Joshua 2:9-11; 9: 9,10; Judges 11:21-23; Psalm 135:10-12).

“And Israel smote him... and Israel took all these cities and Israel dwelt in the cities of the Amorites...” (Numbers 21:24,25). Israel defeated Sihon and his army, took his land from Arnon to Jabbok, and dwelt in all the cities including Heshbon, the capital. Sihon had previously taken Heshbon after defeating Moab in battle. By that feat, he had become a military force to be reckoned with and people had written poems and proverbs to taunt Moab and praise Sihon’s might (Numbers 21:27,28). Therefore, this defeat of Sihon by Israel was a great humiliation of erstwhile super power, and it sent serious danger signals to neighboring nations.

Having captured Heshbon, Moses sent spies to Jaazer and eventually sacked its inhabitants, Next, he went to Bashan. The Lord encouraged His people against king Og (Numbers 21:34,35). The people hearkened, became stronger, eventually defeated and dispossessed them of all their land. All these territories were later shared to the Israelite tribes of Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Manasseh for possession. It was a complete conquest, This was done to fulfil God’s promise to His people, It was also to serve as reference to boost believers confidence for victory in subsequent generations.

Question 5: What does the defeat of the Amorites by Israel teach New Testament Believers?

Believers should always realize that God is the ultimate power He is the Almighty. We should be rest assured of victory as long as we remain steadfast and obedient to the Lord, Two, as Israel took all the enemy’s lands for a possession, Christians should know that it is possible to possess all that Christ has offered to us in time and eternity. Three, like the Israelites hearkened to God’s counsel against Og, Christians should not be ensnared by fear of man.

From the time Israel came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, news of the mighty acts of God on their behalf had spread far and near. Like other neighboring nations, the Amorites were afraid of Israel’s God (Exodus 15:11-16). yet they marched out in battle against the people. This

was merely intended to deter them from making divinely-ordained progress. In like manner, the hosts of darkness are terrified by the Christian’s spiritual armory and God’s presence with him. The earlier we realize this and refuse to be harassed by the Christian’s spiritual armory and God’s presence with him. The earlier we realize this and refuse to be harassed by the enemy, the sooner we shall begin to enjoy our privileges, and the better will our lot in life be. **“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ...And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God”** (Philippians 1:27,28)

Christ will return one day to rule the world whether its inhabitants – kings, rulers and the ruled – like it or not. The question is; Will you be among those victorious conquerors in Christ’s company? The choice is yours.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	John	17	2Kings	4
TUE	“	18	“	5
WED	“	19	“	6
THUR	“	20-21	“	7-8
FRI	Acts	1-2	“	9
SAT	“	3-4	“	10
SUN	“	5-6	“	11-12

408 Lesson

THE PLOT TO CURSE ISRAEL

TEXT: Numbers 22:1-41

MEMORY VERSE : “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”(Genesis 12:3).

Israel had defeated Og the king of Bashan and Sihon the king of Amon with their people at the battle of Edrei, and had taken possession of their lands. After this, they proceeded in their journey and would have by-passed the land of Moab harmlessly because of the divine direction to spare it. **“And the Lord said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession”** (Deuteronomy 2:9). However, the news of Israel’s conquests of neighboring lands threw the leaders and people of Moab into panic. How true the saying that **“the wicked flee when no man pursueth”** (Proverbs 28:1). If only they knew the mind of God concerning them, they would have spared themselves of a needless agony of worry and anxiety.

Today, the story of the attempt of Balak and Balaam to curse Israel is the focus of our study. Balak, the king of Moab, sent to hire Balaam to cast a spell on God’s people.

Question 1: What should be the attitude of believers today to diabolical activities of enemies against their lives?

Moab, unable to face the Israelites in a straight battle, resorted to the diabolical alternative of hiring Balaam the prophet to curse Israel so that they could defeat them in battle. But it is encouraging to note that while the enemy hatched the plot to curse Israel, the faithful God who watches over His people **“neither sleep nor slumber”**. He promptly rose to intervene against the diabolical plot of Balak and Balaam from being hatched. Israel could not be cursed as God had declared them **“blessed”**. Believers should not fear the diabolical plans of the wicked. Our God is on the throne and watches

over us. In order to allay our fears, He commands, **“Say ye not, A confederacy, neither fear. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread”** (Isaiah 8:12,13).

MOAB’S DISTRESS AND PLOT TO CURSE ISRAEL (Numbers 22:1-14; Deuteronomy 2:25; Acts 13:6-12)

Following Israelites’ victory over Sihon the king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan, the children of Israel pitched in the plain of Moab, near Jericho. From this position, Balak, the king of Moab could see them in their camp; so he became afraid of them. The news of the victories that the children of Israel had, had caused a dread in the heart of Balak. Therefore he sought for a diabolical way to fight the children of Israel, whom he thought were out to attack and destroy his land as they had done to other nations. The arrangement of the tribes became a source of worry to Balak. Concerning this divine order and arrangement of the tribes, Balaam declared that, **“For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”** (Numbers 23:9,10).

It should be pointed out that Balak embarked on his path of self-defeat out of fear of Israel. However, his fear was unfounded as God had specifically told the children of Israel not to contend with them for He would not give them their land for a possession. The children of Israel were not after his land yet fear of the unknown drove him into taking actions that would be detrimental to him and Balaam.

Question 2: What lesson can believers learn from Balak’s fear of the children of Israel?

A lot of lessons can be learnt by believers today from the actions of Balak which was precipitated by his fear of the children of Israel. One, the advancement of the gospel is a major threat to Satan and his agents. Two, in their fear, they could use all kinds of diabolical means in their attempt to hinder its progress. However, believers should not be afraid of such or any opposition of the enemy since God has promised to protect His faithful children. It should be noted

that behind the bold-face and stern look that the enemies of Christ often display is an overwhelming dread of God's power working through the believers. This is an eloquent confirmation of the promise that God made to the children of Israel, and to all believers: **“This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee”** (Deuteronomy 2:25). The same fear that moved Balak to attempt cursing Israel also motivated the people of Jericho to shut their high gates against Israel having failed to seek to kill the two spies (Joshua 2:1-11; 6:1). In the same way, the Midianites were afraid of Gideon and the Israelites' army despite their superior military power and experience in battle (Judges 7:9-15). It is unfortunate, however, that God's people are often afraid of the enemy rather than going ahead to win a resounding victory.

BALAAM'S DISOBEDIENCE TO DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS

(Numbers 22:15-21; 31:15,16; Hebrews 2:2,3; Psalms 50:16,17; Proverbs 15:32,33; 19:27; 1 Samuel 15:22; Deuteronomy 15:22; 13:1-4).

Balaam had a clear knowledge of God's plans for the children of Israel because God had already told him that they were a blessed people. He was also aware of the contradictory request of the Moabites against the children of Israel. Yet, he was willing to compromise by yielding to the persuasion of the Moabites to come and curse Israel. Balaam's decision to go and curse Israel was motivated by greed and the love of sinful gain. The promise of reward and the prospects of honour from the king of Moab weakened his earlier resolve not to go with the ambassadors from Moab. In Balaam, we see a man whose inner corruptions overpowered his apparent convictions. Though he kept confessing that he would only say what God commanded, his love of reward prevented him from following through on his promise. He easily compromised with king Balak and his self-will decided to go against God's command. Balaam was a man given to covetousness, compromise, insincerity and self-will. This predisposed him to fall into the trap of the allure of material things Balak used to persuade him to curse the children of Israel in order to defeat them in the battle.

Question 3: (a) What are the dangers of materialism, covetousness and compromise? (b) What should be a Christian's attitude to them?

Believers are strictly warned against worldliness, materialism, covetousness and pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). This is because when there is covetousness in the heart, it becomes easy to compromise and fall from the heart, it becomes easy to compromise and fall from the faith and righteousness (Hebrews 10:38,39). It is very unfortunate that greed and materialism are wreaking havoc on the testimonies of many Christians today. Therefore a true believer should consistently shun the world and its alluring offers so as to be able to maintain a steady pace towards heaven.

The disobedience of Balaam and God's eventual judgment on him should serve as a further warning to believers. Initially, Balaam acted as a prophet who truly depended on God. He went to seek God's counsel to know whether to go with the ambassadors from Moab or not (Numbers 22:8-11). Then God spoke clearly to him and he refused to go with the first ambassadors from Moab. However, when Balak sent more high ranking officials to him, with promises of greater reward and honour, Balaam began to shift in his conviction. Eventually, he went to ask God again whether to go or not; and of course, God told him to go. Here we see the decline of Balaam from God's perfect will to His permissive will. We should beware lest a cherished or desired thing which we harbour in our hearts become a stumbling block in our walk with God.

Whenever a person has an idol in his or her heart concerning a project or endeavour, God said even though such a person approaches Him for guidance, He would answer such a person according to the multitude of his preconceived ideas (Ezekiel 14:1-5).

DIVINE REBUKE FOR A COVETOUS PROPHET (Numbers 22:22-41; 2 Peter 2:15,16; Jude 11; Ephesians 5:3; Luke 12:15; Proverbs 15:27; Habakkuk 2:9; 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

God was angry with Balaam for flouting His initial direct instruction not to follow Balak.. God saw through Balaam's motivation. He knew he wanted to go with them due to his love for material gain. He was being propelled by greed

rather than a decision to do God's will. However, because of the hardness of Balaam's heart, God permitted him to go to Balak. But while Balaam was on the way, the angel of the Lord intercepted him thrice. On each occasion, instead of realizing his perversion, repenting and returning unto God's perfect will. Balaam would not hold back because of the promise of gain and promotion. Even when Balaam's ass was enabled by God to speak so as to restrain the prophet's madness (2 Peter 2:16), he was adamant.

Question 4: What should be the attitude of believers when enticed with material gain to wander out of God's revealed will?

Covetousness is a very subtle, dangerous and deadly sin. The Bible describes it as idolatry. Believers are therefore warned seriously against the evil of covetousness. **Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth**" (Luke 12:15). Covetousness manifests itself in various ways. It does this in (1) inordinate ambition as in the case of Absalom (2 Samuel 15:1-36); (2) Love for material property as seen in Achan (Joshua 7:1-26); (3) Lust for reward as seen in Gehazi (2 Kings 5; 20-27) (4) Lust for money as seen in Judas Iscariot (John 18:2); (5) Unrestrained appetites for food as in Esau (Genesis 25;29-34); (6) Quest for power and position as seen in sons of Zebedee; and (7) Adulterous desire for one's neighbor's wife (Exodus 20;17). The list is endless. It is interesting that Balaam acknowledged his sin but failed to turn back from his disobedience. This is an example of false repentance. It is not enough for a person to confess his sins; it must be followed up immediately with a practical turning away from those sins before one can receive God's favour. Balaam went on in disobedience even though he kept boasting that he would only do as God bade him. Eventually, when he got to Moab, he immediately compromised and walked his way unto perdition.

As soon as Balak saw Balaam, he reprimanded him for

Question 5: Point out the effects of Balaam's disobedience to God's command as seen in our text.

delaying his coming. He also boasted that he had the power to promote him to honour. This is always the case whenever

children of light belittle themselves by compromising with the people of the world. Compromise brings believers to such a low level that gives the wicked an opportunity to boast and deride the body of Christ. How terrible that Balaam could only speak in feeble self-defence before Balak, his patron. Thus, Balaam become another warning post for heaven-bound pilgrims. Today, Balaam has gone from the stage and it's our chance to choose: to obey God and be blessed or to disobey Him and suffer here and in eternity.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Acts	7	2 Kings	13-14
TUE	“	8	“	15
WED	“	9	“	16
THUR	“	10	“	17
FRI	“	11-12	“	18
SAT	“	13	“	19
SUN	“	14	“	20-21

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

409 Lesson

CHRIST'S INTERCESSION FOR THE CHURCH

MEMORY VERSE: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

TEXT: John 17:1-26

As Jesus approached the climax of His earthly ministry, He withdrew from the public in order to devote His last week on earth to perfection of His disciples. During this period, which is commonly called the Passion Week, Jesus took His disciples to an upper room and taught them many things. There, He inaugurated the Lord's Supper and also washed the feet of His disciples in order to teach them lessons in humility and Christian service. Also, He identified the one who was to betray Him. The highest point of the meeting in the upper room, His prayer of intercession for His disciples, is the subject of this lesson.

This prayer, often called the High Priestly prayer of Jesus, is the longest public prayer for His disciples before He would leave the world. The prayer is so profound and full of instructions for believers today. One, it reveals the great contest between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of God. Satan and his entire world system stand in avowed opposition against Christ and His followers. However, God is able to keep His people in spite of Satan's onslaught. Two, it shows the great need for intercessory prayer to back up the work of soul-winning and the establishment of believers in the faith. Leaders should pray for the people they lead. Parents, too, should pray for their children. Three, it points out the spiritual emphasis that should form the focus of believers' prayers. The prayers of believers, rather than center on physical and mundane things, should dwell more on spiritual necessities such as: deeper knowledge of God and purity of heart. Four, the prayer of Jesus underscores the importance of sanctification for those who believe in Christ. He prayed that His followers be sanctified. Five, it

shows the need for unity among the followers of Christ. Six, it reveals the confidence and assurance that Christ had in the eventual outcome of his death and resurrection. He knew that many people would later believe on Him through the testimony of His immediate disciples. Seven, the prayer shows the ultimate desire of Christ that His followers share in His eternal glory.

CHRIST'S SUBMISSION TO THE FATHER IN PRAYER (John 17:1-5; 12:23,27,28; 13:31).

The Lord Jesus began His intercession for the Church by affirming His own relationship with the heavenly Father. He said, **“Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify thee”** (John 17:2). Being sensitive to His Father’s will, He knew that the time of His death had finally come. He recognized the timing of God’s purpose for His life and willfully surrendered Himself for it to be accomplished. Rather than being absorbed or overwhelmed with grief because of His impending suffering, Jesus was more concerned about the spiritual welfare of His disciples on the one hand, and that the Father be glorified through the whole events of His passion, on the other hand.

<p>Question 2: Mention some major truths that were revealed in Christ’s prayer for Himself.</p>
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In praying for Himself, Jesus pointed out certain truths that demand close attention. One, God has a time-table for the fulfillment of His plans. As individuals, we must be spiritually sensitive to recognize such divine timings and align ourselves to God’s schedule. This truth can be seen in the way Jesus conducted Himself on those occasions when **“His hour had not yet come”** (John 2:4; 7:30) and when His hour had come (John 12:23; 13:1; 17:1). Two, Jesus has power over all flesh to give eternal life to those who come to Him (John 17:2). This implies that there is no other means by which anyone can obtain salvation except through repentance and faith in Christ. **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). Only those who respond to God’s universal call to repent will be saved.

Three, the true meaning of eternal life is to know and maintain

a living relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Those who believe on Christ have eternal life; and those who do not believe on Him do not have eternal life (1 John 5:11-13,20; 3:14,15). From this, it is clear that eternal life has to do with quality of life rather than duration. Both sinners and saints will live forever, the former in the lake fire and the latter in heaven. However, the difference between the two classes is as clear as daylight. Whereas sinners will suffer eternal death (total separation from God in eternity), saints of God will enjoy eternal life as they will be in fellowship with God eternally.

Four, Jesus declared that He had finished the work which His Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). The implication of that declaration is staggering. It means that all the objectives of Christ's incarnation have been accomplished and those who believe on Him can now enjoy the benefits of His finished work (Luke 4:18,19; 1 John 3:8b). Five, Jesus requested that the Father glorify Him with the glory which He had before His incarnation (John 17:1,15). This request points to the pre-existence of Christ and His equality with the Father. It also reveals what is commonly described as the "Kenosis" or self-emptying of Jesus. Simply put, it shows that in His divinity, "Jesus had the same glory as God the Father, but in humanity He emptied Himself of heavenly glory and became like mortal men. He had to do this so that He could taste death for all men (Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:9). However after His resurrection, He was exalted and once again He sat on His throne of Majesty. From Christ's conduct, we learn the principle of humility before exaltation. If a person humbles himself, the Lord will exalt him (1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10).

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS IMMEDIATE DISCIPLES

(John 17:6-19; Luke 22:31,32; Romans 8:34; Isaiah 53:12)
After His brief prayer for Himself, Christ began to intercede for His chosen disciples. This is a great lesson for Christian leaders and ministers of the gospel. The intercession of Christ for His immediate disciples teaches us the importance of balancing our ministerial efforts with effective intercession. Though Jesus had taught the disciples virtually in all areas of discipleship and ministry, we find Him now making intercession for them.

Question 3: What are the qualities of scriptural intercession?

Looking at Christ's intercession for His disciples, the qualities of effective, scriptural intercession can be identified. First, Jesus approached the Father in confident assurance of His close relationship with Him. An intercessor must maintain a cordial relationship with God. Second, the prayer of Jesus for Himself was very brief (John 17:2-5), whereas His requests for the disciples was quite long (John 17:6-26). True intercession is never self-centred but aimed at the benefits of others. Third, Jesus did not pray that God would take the disciples out of danger zone (that is, the world) but rather that they would be kept from the influence of the evil one. He reckoned with the omnipotence of God the Father to preserve His own people while they are on the path of duty, even in the enemy's territory. This should serve as a lesson for those who, because of their great fear of so-called enemies, are ever so eager to see their foes destroyed. A true child of God is not afraid of the fury of the enemy because he knows that God has the power both to keep the enemy in check and even prepare a table before him in the presence of the enemy (Psalm 23:5). Four, faith is an essential ingredient of true intercession. Jesus manifested faith by praying for His future believer. He believes that beyond the clouds and darkness of his imminent suffering, a glorious light and great harvest of souls would follow later. Intercessory prayer must be offered in faith and total dependence on God.

Question 4: Mention the prayer points contained in the intercession of Jesus for the disciples.

In this prayer for His immediate disciples, Jesus focused on five major points. One, the preservation of the disciples (John 17:11,12), Two, the comfort and joy of his followers despite tribulations (John 17:13). Three the sanctification of the disciples (John 17;17-19). Four, the unity of believers (John 17:20-23). Five, that the disciples might be with Him in glory (John 17:24). And six, that they should abide in his love while on earth. Jesus prayed that the Father should keep His followers from the evil one. This shows the concern and jealous care of Christ for the preservation of believers. He manifested the same concern when He predicted the fall of Peter. **“And the Lord said , Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you**

as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fall not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22: 31,32). How comforting to know that Jesus intercedes for all true believers and He ever watches over them with a jealous concern (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Because of Christ’s intercession for the Church, the members can be preserved from the influence of the world, satanic attacks, false doctrine, physical harm and apostasy.

Question 5: With reference to the prayer of Jesus explain what sanctification is and state why it is a necessary experience for all believers.

In His prayer, Jesus requested the Father to sanctify His disciples though they had already experienced the new birth. There should be no doubt about the fact that these disciples, for whom Christ prayed, were already saved. Christ had manifested the Father to them; they were not of the world; and they kept the word of God (John 17:6). Furthermore, they have known the union between Christ and the Father (John 17:7); they have received the word of God as given by Christ; and they have believed that Jesus is the Messiah (John 17:8). In fact, Jesus clearly distinguished between them and the world. He said in the ninth verse of our text. **“I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine”**. They were certainly saved and belonged to God; but they needed to be sanctified.

From the prayer of Jesus for the sanctification of His followers it is very clear that a believer must be sanctified after the initial experience of salvation. Sanctification is the work of grace by which a believer in Christ is set apart for God and made completely holy and pure. The experience of sanctification enables the believer to love God with all his heart, soul and might. It also makes the believer to be of one mind with other believers regardless of their position, class, race, peculiar strength or weakness. God wants His people to be sanctified. Jesus paid a great price for it (Hebrews 13:12,13; John 17:17). Apostle Paul also prayed that the Thessalonian believers be wholly sanctified (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Therefore, all believers should accept this scriptural doctrine and ensure that they partake in its glorious experience.

In order to experience genuine sanctification, the seeker must: One, have a current experience of salvation; two, thirst for purity of heart and a closer walk with God; three, entirely consecrate himself or herself unto God; four, pray in faith for the experience. In view of the fact that God has made adequate provision for believers to get sanctified, it is disheartening to observe that many children of God remain unsanctified. This is because of lack of knowledge of the importance of the experience, worldliness and carnality, lack of commitment to God, absence of thirst and hunger for this spiritual experience, and lack of faith.

THE PRAYER OF JESUS FOR HIS FUTURE DISCIPLES (John 17:20-26)

While Jesus prayed for His immediate disciples, He also prayed for those who would believe in Him through the testimony of these early disciples. Even though Christ knew that His immediate disciples, unto whom He would commit the great task of world evangelization were weak, fearful and largely inexperienced, He was not in doubt as to the success of their mission. He knew they would be empowered to preach the gospel convincingly and that many people would respond to their message. Therefore, Jesus prayed for the unity of those who would believe in Him in the future. This prayer was prophetic and anticipatory in nature. Jesus knew that the gospel net would rake different kinds of people: Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, educated, illiterates, kings, peasants, men of divine nature and character. Therefore, Jesus, knowing these different categories of people would need more than human ingenuity to keep them united, prayed for them. He prayed: **“that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hath sent me”** (John 17:21).

Question 6: Why is the unity of believers so crucial to the effectiveness of the gospel message?

The unity of all the believers in Christ is very essential. Jesus said if the believers are united, the world would believe that He is the Messiah. This could be seen on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. They were united, in one accord in one place. Also, when they were

all filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke different languages as prompted by the Holy Spirit but they all declared the same thing – the wonderful works of God. As a result of that wonderful unity, the Holy Ghost brought into the Kingdom about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). So also when the early believers were united in mind and purpose, the apostles were empowered to testify of Christ and multitudes of people believed and joined the church (Acts 4:4,32-37).

There is a great power in unity. When believers are united, they can do great exploits for God (Nehemiah 4:16,17); the weak can be strengthened by their strong fellows (Exodus 17:12; 2 Samuel 21:15-17); battles of life are easily won as there is mutual encouragement to continue in spiritual warfare (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Judges 20:11; Proverbs 27:17; 1 Samuel 14:6,7); answers to prayers are guaranteed (Matthew 18:19); multitude of souls can be won to Christ (Acts 2:44-47) and God is glorified (John 15:8).

Jesus prayed for the unity of believers because He knew that Satan would attempt to use all means to tear His followers apart. Disunity weakens an army and frustrates collective purpose. This is what happened at the tower of Babel when the people were scattered because the Lord confused their language (Genesis 11:6-8). Satan attempts to use the same strategy in a diabolical way to scatter the church. Therefore he sponsors and promotes division, strife, segregation, and dissension among believers.

Question 7: How can the believer promote unity in the Church of God?

Each believer should be an agent in promoting unity by avoiding anything that can gender strife or dissension in the church. We should not dwell on minor offences which are not significant. Rather, we should foster unity by being of one mind with other believers in propagating the gospel and edifying believers in propagating the gospel and edifying believers in the church. We should be careful not to offend others, and be eager to forgive when we are offended. We should also forgive and forget the hurts we might have experienced from one another in the past. Our old differences, disagreements and “diplomatic” malice should be forgotten as we reconcile with one another. This will give us a fore-taste of Christ’s millennial peace predicted by Isaiah the prophet: **“The envy**

also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” (Isaiah 11:13).

Jesus ended His prayer by asking the Father to give His disciples a share in His exaltation and glory (John 17:24,25). This is the great hope and consolation of true followers of Christ. At present, those who believe in Christ may appear to be the off-scouring of society. They may be ridiculed, scorned and little esteemed by the people of the world. But in the day of Christ, they shall be exalted and glorified with exceeding glory. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). In view of this, similar should make haste and become part of God’s people so that they can partake in the coming glory. Also, believers should shun the world and its allurements, watch and pray to be found worthy to go with Lord when He comes.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Acts	15	2 Kings	22
TUE	“	16	“	23
WED	“	17	“	24-25
THUR	“	18	1 Chronicles	1
FRI	“	19	“	2
SAT	“	20	“	3-4
SUN	“	21	“	5

410 Lesson

THE BETRAYAL AND DENIAL OF CHRIST

TEXT: John 18:1-18, 25-27

MEMORY VERSE: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psalm, 41:9).

After Jesus Christ had eaten the Passover with His disciples in the Upper Room, He went out with them to the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas had led a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Him. While they were eating the Last Supper, Jesus predicted His betrayal by Judas (John 13:21-30; Luke 22:21,22) and denial by Peter (John 13:36-38; Luke 22:34). Shortly after these predictions, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives to prepare Himself in prayer for the salvation of the world. How believers need to prepare themselves in prayer today for the challenges of life, especially as the Lord Jesus hinted that in the world we shall have tribulations (John 16:33). Prayer gives strength and grace to endure afflictions and helps the believer to maintain his peace and conviction during trial.

Question 1: What lessons can believers learn from the way Christ prepared for His imminent suffering?

Having prepared Himself for His suffering and death, He went out boldly to meet His persecutors. He was not afraid of the public disgrace, the pain and agony of death that the crucifixion would bring upon Him because He had prayed and committed His life into the Father’s hand. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, the Lord did not fight back or defend Himself. He knew that He had been ordained to so suffer and die that mankind may be redeemed (John 3:16; Isaiah 53:3-11). Therefore, the Lord would not challenge His Father’s will (John 18:11; Matthew 26:24,39,42). Like the Lord, we should remain calm, steadfast, focused and resolute in the face of trails of faith remembering that **“hereunto were ye called:**

because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:21-23).

For every crown, there is a cross to bear and for eternal laurels, there is spiritual warfare. As Christ prepared Himself for the cross, not minding the pain because of the joy that was set before Him, we too must be ready to go through whatever trial God permits in our lives so that we can obtain the crown of righteousness at last (Hebrews 12:2).

THE PRETENCE AND BETRAYAL BY JUDAS (John 18:1-5; Matthew 26:14-16,47-49; Luke 22:3-6,47-53; Psalm 55:12,13; Matthew 23:28,33; John 12:6).

It was the practice of Jesus to resort to a solitary place to have communion with God, His Father. His ministry consisted of the public aspect spent in preaching and healing and the quiet retirement for deep communion with God. The garden of Gethsemane was a place He often resorted to with His disciples. Therefore, the place was well known to Judas Iscariot; hence it was not difficult for him to lead the band of soldiers there to arrest Him.

Question 2: What does the lifestyle of Judas teach us about hypocrites in the church today?

While Jesus was engaged in an agonizing prayer, Judas was seriously planning to betray Him (Matthew 26:36-46). Judas, like Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15:30,31), plotted against his Master and Friend. Judas was a pretender and a hypocrite. He demonstrated this earlier when he suggested that money should be raised to assist the poor when, in reality, he was a thief looking for opportunity to steal more from the bag (John 12:4-6). He also pretended at the Supper table to be innocent while other disciples were asking the Lord who would betray Him. He knowingly asked if he was the betrayer. He deliberately left the Supper table in the night and led a band of soldiers to the normal resort of Jesus where he identified Him. Moreover, the immediate action that led to Jesus' arrest was Judas' hypocritical show of love when he drew near

and kissed Him like a friend (Like 22:47,48). Many in the church today pretend to be true believers but inwardly, they are ravening wolves among God's sheep. They steal church money, commit immorality, smoke and drink secretly, speak evil of church leaders, defraud church members and yet act as though they are still holy and innocent. The Bible recommends honest self-examination as the cure to pretentious living. **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”** (2 Corinthians 13:5).

While it is true that the betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ was predicted, Judas' pretentious and covetous lifestyle, predisposed him to fulfilling the prophecy. All along, he had a secret sinful disposition which now blossomed into open betrayal of the Saviour. One, he allowed his desire and love for money to override his concern and love for his Master. Two, he allowed Satan to manipulate his mind thinking he would be richer with thirty pieces of silver. Three, he was part of the mixed multitude who only profess their faith in words and not in deed. Four, he had a treacherous and deceitful disposition. He was a whited sepulcher which appeared to men to be beautiful but corrupt and rotten on the inside. He covered his true nature with his garment. Fifth, he was very close to Jesus but never gave Him first place in his heart.

Question 3: What led Judas to his eventual betrayal of Jesus and how can we avoid betraying the Lord today?

“But Jesus said unto him, Judas betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48). This statement from the Master's mouth was enough to bring conviction into Judas heart but, being a child of perdition, he had gone to the point of apostasy so much that no divine disapproval could move him to repentance. This should serve as a warning to all so-called Christians in the church today: they should repent of their backsliding before it is too late. As for Judas, he could not recover himself but went and committed suicide.

Many people betray the Lord today through unfaithfulness in service or disobedience to God's word. In order to remain faithful till the end, believers should be watchful, prayerful and constantly rededicate their lives to the Lord. They should

avoid the rat race for material wealth, **“for the love of money is the root of all evil...”** (1 Timothy 6:10).

CHRIST’S POWER AND VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION TO DEATH (John 18:6-14; 7:44-46; Matthew 26:52-54; John 10:17,18; Philippians 2:6-9).

Question 4: How did the arrest of Jesus demonstrate His divine power and voluntary submission unto death?

The arrest of Jesus demonstrated the paradox of His divine power and His voluntary submission for the salvation of the whole world. **“As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground”** (John 18:6). This shows that Jesus could have overpowered or destroyed the band of soldiers that came to arrest Him but He did not, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. A band of armed Roman soldiers would have been awesome for any ordinary person to overcome. But they all went backward and fell to the ground as soon as Jesus addressed them. This further demonstrates that Jesus is Lord over men, angels and all elements of nature. Even after Peter, alarmed that he could not watch helplessly while his Master is being taken away, drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the Lord demonstrated His divine power by instantly healing him.

In spite of the fact that Jesus had power to deliver Himself and escape arrest, He voluntarily submitted to the soldiers to be taken away. This was a lesson to the enemies that they had no power over Him without His voluntary surrender; and to His disciples that He was committed to doing the Father’s will at all costs.

As Christ has unlimited power so has He given unto us **“power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the powers of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt us”** (Luke 10:19). Believers have been endued with divine power to live victorious lives over sin, sickness, principalities, powers and even Satan. We have been raised up and made to seat with Christ in heavenly places far above principalities, powers, witches or wizards. The Christian who recognizes his or her place in Christ cannot continue to live a defeated life because greater is He that lives in us. However, the power Christ gave to us is not for self-gratification but for

preaching of the gospel, healing the sick and delivering those that are oppressed by the devil.

There are great lessons to be learnt from the voluntary submission of Christ to be arrested and be crucified. First believers should cultivate the habit of total submission to the will of God in spite of difficulties that they face. We should avoid the tendency to strive against God's will when we face challenges, instead, believers should learn to live by faith. Second, Jesus healed the severed ear of Malchus in order to demonstrate the principle of overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21). Possessing the mind of Christ will enable the believer go beyond mere non-retaliation to doing good to his persecutors (Matthew 5:43-45).

PETER'S DENIAL AND DISLOYALTY TO CHRIST (John 18:15-18,25-27; Matthew 26:58-75; 10:33; Mark 8:38; Luke 22:54-62; Acts 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:12).

“Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not” (John 18:17).

One of the high points of Jesus' suffering was Peter's denial. This denial came when Jesus needed him and other disciples most. His backsliding started gradually. First, when Jesus predicted that all the disciples would abandon Him, Peter was the first to boast that he would follow Him till death (Luke 22:33). Second, while the Lord agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, he slept off and could not pray. Third, he walked with the Lord at a distance while He was being taken away. Fourth, he stood among the enemy-soldiers and warmed himself near their fire, while His Master faced the trauma of unjust trail. Eventually, he denied that he ever knew the Lord.

Question 5: What lessons can we learn from the steps that led to Peter's denial of Christ?

The build-up to Peter's denial of Christ teach us valuable lessons as Christians. First, believers should beware of overconfidence and spiritual pride. Peter was so sure that his knowledge and experience about the personality, power and mission of Jesus had produced in him sufficient ability to withstand any temptation to backslide. He had

reasoned, “others may but I won’t”. But he did not reckon that the devil is cunning and tricky. Without God’s grace and constant watchfulness with prayer; no human resolve can withstand the devil’s craftiness. Only those who heed Christ’s admonition to “watch and pray” can be able to withstand in the evil day and still stand (Ephesians 6:13).

Second, we should not detach ourselves from the fellowship of Christians of like precious faith. Believers of the same spiritual stock should band together with the Savior. He who leaves the Lord afar of and thus put himself within the enemy’s shooting range.

Third, we should not compromise the demands of the faith or have fellowship with unbelievers, as Peter did, warming himself in the company of his Master’s enemies with the fire made by them.

Fourth, we should not seek carnal pleasures, nor crave for comfort in dangerous or critical times. Peter sought for the fire to warm himself because the weather was cold. But His Master was facing trial and he also faced the danger of arrest. A Believer should **“endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”** (2 Timothy 2:3)

Question 6: Mention some ways backsliding begins and what prompts people to deny Christ today.

In our own time, backsliding sets in when an individual begins to feel comfortable with sinful pleasure, prayerlessness, self-confidence, laziness, spiritual slumber, careless living and lack of fellowship and communion with God. Christians should be wary of these forerunners of backsliding and ensure that they are dealt with as soon as there is an appearance of any.

There are many things that prompt people to deny Christ today; they include: delay in knowing the will of God in marriage, intense persecution from parents, spouses, boss in the place of work, denial of promotion, economic hardship, unemployment, sickness, delay in child-bearing and other problems of life.

After Peter had denied him, Jesus turned and looked at him apparently to remind of him of His warning and prediction.

He remembered the warning of the Master that the cock would not crow till he had denied Him thrice (John 13:38). Immediately, he, with a broken spirit and contrite heart, went out and wept bitterly (Matthew 27:75). However, because of his genuine repentance, Peter received pardon for this great sin (Matthew 28:16,17; Mark 16:5-8,14). This teaches us that there is hope of forgiveness and restoration for all backsliders who acknowledge their sins, repent of them and return to the Lord.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Acts	22	1 Chronicles	6
TUE	“	23	“	7
WED	“	24-25	“	8
THUR	“	26	“	9
FRI	“	27	“	10-11
SAT	“	28	“	12
SUN	Romans	1	“	13-14

411 Lesson

THE TRIALS OF CHRIST

TEXT: John 18:19-24, 28-40

MEMORY VERSE: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together” (Acts 4:26,27).

Having learnt of His betrayal and arrest in previous studies, we now come to the series of trials that the Saviour of the world was made to go through. After His arrest, the soldiers and officers bound Jesus and led Him away to the palace of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas; but the trial was not completed before Annas. Although Jesus’ trial lasted for less than eighteen hours, He was taken to six different hearings: (1) Hearing before Annas (John 18:19) (2) hearing before Caiaphas (John 18:24) (3) Hearing before the Sahendrin (Matthew 27:1, 2) (4) First hearing before Pilate (John 18:33) (5) Hearing before Herod (Luke 17:21) (6) Last hearing before Pilate (John 18:33). It is a wonder of all time for an accused to undergo six different hearings before four different judges and still be condemned when in reality there was **“no fault in Him.”**

The One who would judge the world in righteousness was put on trial that was completely a mockery of justice. Those in the law profession would say, “Justice must not only be done but must be manifestly seen to have been done.” But in the case of our Lord, it was clear that those who put Him on trial were bent on vengeance mission as they did not care to properly arraign or try Him.

Question 1: What should be the attitude of Christians during trials as exemplified by the Lord Jesus?

In the fact of this travesty of justice, Jesus maintained a high degree of decorum and endurance, bearing everything without complaining, threatening or reacting negatively. The joy of believers is that one day, there would be role reversal:

all who put the Lord on trial would be put on trial. The charade called trial brings out in the Lord a perfect example to believers on how to react and conduct themselves when under persecution, provocation, intimidation and any other form of exposure to injustice.

JESUS' ARRAIGNMENT BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST (John 18:19-24, 28; acts 2:23; 4:27; Isaiah 53:7-8; Matthew 18:55)

After His arrest, Jesus was led to Annas first. Now, He was taken to Caiphas, who later sent Him to Pilate. The Talmud (a Hebrew record of rabinnic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history) has it that "Criminal processes can neither commence nor terminate, but during the course of the day. If the person be acquitted, the sentence may be pronounced during that day; but, if he be condemned, the sentence cannot be pronounced till the next day. But no kind of judgment is to be executed, either on the eve of the Sabbath, or the eve of any festival. " But contrary to their established laws, the high priest, who should have been considered the proper judge, violated this law as his judicial interrogation in the night.

Instead of honestly evaluating Jesus claims based on his knowledge of scriptures, the high priest sought to entrap Him into some statements which might be used against Him at the trial. He, being the high priest, wanted to know by what authority or right He gathered disciples, formed a different sect, preached a new doctrine, and set Himself up as a public reformer. From the high priest's question, it is obvious that he and the Sanhedrin needed information on these two sore points: **"his disciples, and of his doctrine."** The Lord's reply indicated that His ministry was not a clandestine one: **"I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing"** (John 18:20). The religious leaders knew they had no ground for charging Jesus, so they tried to build evidence against Him by using false witnesses because **"they hated Him without a cause"** (John 15:25). When deceitful men and women pursue evil, they seek to eliminate all opposition. And believers who suffer such injustice and wickedness of unbelievers because of their principled stand on the word of God should not be discourage as Christ first supplied it.

Question 2: What parallel can you draw between the attitude of the religious leaders and those of believers today?

It should be noted that the Jewish leaders stayed out of the judgment hall, ostensibly to avoid being defined in view of the imminent Passover. They betrayed their deep hypocrisy by harbouring murderous thoughts and treachery while appearing to be deeply religious. They were sacrificing true righteousness on the altar of mere external religious profession. Lest we get angry with the high priest and religious leaders for the injustice done to Christ, believers must examine themselves to see if they are not involved in the business of bringing Christ to trial by their lifestyles and conduct. While believers cannot be grouped with the religious leaders, they have, like Apostle Peter, caused Him grief by not standing with Christ in critical times.

JESUS' TRIAL BEFORE PILATE (John 18:29-35; Matthew 27:24; 1 Timothy 5:19; Deuteronomy 19: 15-20; Proverbs 17:15)

From the Jewish council, Jesus was brought for trial before Pilate. Unable to find Him guilty either under Jewish or Roman laws, Pilate finally turned Jesus over to mob judgment to be crucified. Pilate knew that the religious leaders hated Jesus and that they had delivered Him to be condemned simply out of envy but He did not want to be their executioner.

It must be borne in mind that the political situation of Israeli territories at this time was that the Roman government was in control. The religious leaders had no legal authority to pass the death sentence as that power had been eroded by the government in power. All the power they had was over religious and minor civil matters. This was what necessitated the transfer of the case to Pilate. Had the religious leaders power to adjudicate on such matters as the one concerning Christ. He would have had the maximum sentence passed right there before the high priest. But the Jews thought that the allegation that Jesus was a mischief maker, being political in nature, would portray Jesus as a major threat to the political leader. By making the case political in nature, they sought to achieve what they could not achieve earlier in attempting to entrap Him in the matter of forbidding to give tribute to Caesar (Luke 23:2,3). The wisdom with which Christ

answered the question, **“Art thou the King of the Jews?”** asked by Pilate reveals that all believers must pray for godly wisdom to answer entangling questions from enemies of the gospel and the church. The question was in consequence of the Jews against Christ that He was pretending to be a king, which they said was rebellion against Caesar.

When Pilate asked for what offence Jesus was being arraigned, their answer simple was, **“if he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.”** None of them could specifically say what He actually did that made Him a **“malefactor”**. Seeing they could not justify the reason for Christ’s arrest and arraignment, and for lack of sufficient evidence for which Christ could be sentenced, Pilate told them to **“Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.”** But the Jews and the religious leaders who were bent on having their pound of flesh would not relent but pressed hard on Pilate to have Jesus sentenced to death because according to them, **“It is not lawful for us to put any man to death”**.

Question 3: How did the trial of Jesus fulfill prophecy?

Bringing Jesus before Pilate was a fulfillment of what He had said concerning His death, signifying how He would be put to death, that is by crucifixion. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, while the Jewish punishment for the crime of which they accused Him was that of stoning (Leviticus 24:11,15,16). All that happened at the trial of Christ had been predicted. The Lord was delivered into their hands **“by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”** (Acts 2:23). Everything that happened to Christ were in fulfillment of God’s plan for the salvation of man (Acts 2:23; Isaiah 53:7,8; Psalm 35:11; Luke 9:22; Matthew 26:67; 27:26-30). Though no Believer can die for the sins of humanity to be forgiven, he is called to suffer for Christ’s sake in Christlike manner (Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 2:21).

Question 4: What do you learn from Pilate’s indecision?

Pilate initially refused to sentence Jesus without evidence. He had the mind to release Him. The pressure and blackmail from the Jewish mob was too much for the weak character

of Pilate. He delivered Jesus to them to be crucified. A Bible scholar writes that Pilate's "indecision was a political ploy to court the friendship of both Jesus and the angry mob." He added that, "but attempts to play such games often end disastrously as both parties" end up losing out. It is not different from what politicians do today: they are ready to take up matters of religion only as long as it puts them in the good book of the people. Soulwinners and church leaders must be wary of people who claim to be new converts but lack corresponding newness of life as evidence of that claim. In the same vein, those who, like Pilate, are undecided, must be separated from true believers so that they don't negatively influence them.

CHRIST'S CLAIMS, COURAGE AND CONDUCT AT HIS TRIAL (John 18:36,37; Proverbs 28:1; I Peter 3:14-16; 4:15,16)

Question 5: What is the difference between the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom?

Pilate said unto Jesus, "**Art thou a king then?**" Jesus answered, "**Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world...**" There was certainty in His heart and tone. "**Thou sayest**" is a common expression meaning "yes, it is so". This straightforward question was followed with a clear answer. Jesus is King, but not in the sense that the people thought of it; His kingdom is not of this world. Having been arraigned on a charge of laying claim to the office of a king, Jesus here substantially admits that He did claim to be a king, but not in the sense in which the Jews understood it. They charged Him with attempting to set up a parallel kingdom to that of Caesar and thus, inciting sedition against Caesar. But in His response, Jesus clarified that His kingdom is not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly. Earthly kingdoms are defended by arms, maintained by armies and engage in wars. His heavenly kingdom is different. If not, He would have mobilized the multitudes that followed Him for battle. He would not have been alone, unarmed and unguarded in the garden of Gethsemane. Though a King, His dominion was over the heart of men, subduing evil passions and corrupt desires, and bringing the soul to righteousness, holiness and love of peace and unity.

The Lord spoke of His kingdom right from the inception of His ministry (Matthew 4:17) till His ascension (Acts 1:3). Christ gave an account of the nature of His kingdom within men (Luke 17:21; Revelation 3:20). It is set up in the hearts and consciences of men. Both its riches and power are spiritual. Its glory is eternal. In fact when they wanted to take Him by force to make Him an earthly king, he declined (John 16:15). But in the millennium, Christ's literal kingdom shall be revealed and established.

Question 6: What challenge does Christ's response before Pilate teach believers today?

From Christ's response, we learn the following lessons; (1) There is a time to keep silent and to speak (Ecclesiastes 3:7). (2) We must not play it soft when it comes to defending the truth (I Peter 3:15; Jude 3). (3) Whatsoever trial we suffer for the kingdom's sake, we should not be moved as we shall eventually reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12; Acts 20:24). (4) We must not be intimidated by the majority. (5) We must speak up for the kingdom and bring sinners to Christ. (6) We must live as citizens of the kingdom of heaven here on earth. (7) We must not suffer as evil doers and if we suffer as a Christian we should rejoice (1 Peter 4:15,16).

THE UNGODLY CHOICE OF DEPRAVED MEN (John 18:38-40; 3:19-20; Genesis 13:10-13; Judges 14:1-3; Hebrews 12:16, 17; 11:24-26).

Pilate asked a very significant question: **“will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?”** (John 18:39). Pilate offered the religious leaders a choice between Jesus and Barabbas who was imprisoned for insurrection. The Jews callously opted for Barabbas and rejected the Messiah. They preferred an injurious person to Jesus Christ – the pure, holy, harmless, innocent and sinless Lord. Jesus was condemned while Barabbas was discharged and acquitted. Everyone has to decide what to do with Jesus. The sinners cannot afford to linger in indecision so as not to miss eternal life. Every believer must also learn to refuse the evil and choose the good even when under intense pressure. We are also commended by the Lord to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24).

The choices of the religious Jews reveal that natural men

love darkness rather than light. In the same way, the world still prefers “Barabbas” to Christ today as they make carnal, ungodly choices while deciding on career, marriage partners, business friends and associates and where to settle.

Question 7: What principles should guide believers’ choice today?

Believers should be guided by scriptural principles in making choices today. Believers should maintain uncompromising stance against evil while making choices. We should avoid taking sides with evil doers in the society. We must always seek to please God and do His will though men may be displeased by our choice. We must not be so fearful of losing our position and privilege in the church or society and in the process veer away from holiness and righteous judgment. We must seek to please God in our daily choices.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Romans 2-3	1 Chronicles	15-16
TUE	“ 4-5	“	17-18
WED	“ 6-7	“	19-20
THUR	“ 8	“	21-22
FRI	“ 9-10	“	23-24
SAT	“ 11-12	“	25-26
SUN	“ 13-14	“	27-28

412 Lesson

THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day; according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3,4).

TEXT: John 19:1-42

Our lesson this week brings us to the judgment hall of Pilate. The Roman procurator where Jesus was tried and confirmed innocent. Before His arrest, Jesus himself established His absolute purity when He said “... **the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me**” (John 14:30); What a challenge to all Christians to maintain a consistent holy life every time, everywhere. Ordinarily, proof of innocence, not only by the accused but by the judge, is a legal basis for acquitting a suspect of allegations leveled against him. It’s a heart-rending however that at the declaration of His innocence, the people He came to save cried out “crucify him! Crucify him!”. Cowered by mob action, Pilate succumbed. He delivered the sinless Son of God to be crucified. This is a perversion of justice and gruesome murder of the holy God-man. God expects everyone who learn of Christ’s death to benefit from it as His suffering and death, designed by divine wisdom, is for our present good and eternal bliss.

Question 1: What challenge do we receive from Pilate’s verdict about Jesus’ innocence?

THE CRUEL TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST (John 19:1-15; Matthew 27:1,2,11-14; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 23:1-25; Psalm 22:1-6; Isaiah 53:3-9; I Peter 2:23,24)

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him” (John. 19:1). The injury inflicted on Jesus’ body is more severe than a casual reader of the Bible can comprehend. It was a punishment which among the Romans, generally preceded crucifixion and was sometimes so painful that the sufferer died under it. In the Roman mode of scourging,

the culprit was stripped and tied to a frame with cords or thongs. As if that was not enough, the rough pagan soldiers aggravated the injury of Christ by crowning Him with thorns and draping his bleeding body with a purple robe. Then, they mocked, jeered at Him and hit His tortured face. Our Lord underwent six trials under four authorities in one night - Annas, Caiaphas, Jewish Council (Sanhedrin), Herod and Pilate (twice).

Question 2: Describe Jesus attitude during his trial. What does this teach us about our conduct when under persecution?

In each of the trials, He never spoke in self-defence. No one spoke on His behalf and He was eventually condemned to death by crucifixion. He had done no violence neither was any deceit found in His mouth just as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 53:9; Mark, 14:56-59). This is a great example for believers under persecution or false accusation to be spirit-controlled in conduct and speech.

Pilate made frantic attempts to release Jesus but the Jews resisted. He eventually succumbed to their pressure to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he delivered Him to their will (Luke 23:25). This shouldn't appear strange. There wasn't any way Pilate could have persuaded the wicked Pharisees and Sadducees to let Jesus go. The Jews wanted to kill the Lord. The only thing Pilate could do to save the Lord from death was to apply his official authority and veto the release of Jesus. But the fear of a Jewish revolt that may undermine his own position in Caesar's government made him back out. Christians in position of authority should beware of the 'Pilate complex' that is, the tendency to ignore the truth and duck justice in order to preserve the honour and privileges of their office. **"He that ruleth over men"**, the Scripture admonishes us, **"must be just, ruling in the fear of God"** (2 Samuel 23:3).

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST (John 19:16-37; Matthew 27:33-50; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:32-49; Isaiah 53:9; I Peter 2:24)

Question 3: Mention important places of significance in Jesus' journey to Calvary and the lessons for believers today.

Jesus carried His own cross at first until He could no longer carry it. Then Simon of Cyrene was forced to help Him (Matthew 27:32). He was led to a place of skull which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There were three places of significance as Jesus journeyed to Calvary. The first place was Gethsemane – the place of agony (Matthew 26:30-47). The second place was Gabbatha – the place of judgment (John 19:13) and the last place was Golgotha – the place of public execution. Jesus bore all agony, judgment and public execution for the redemption of the human race. Our Lord Jesus was very calm and forgiving in all series of cruelty meted out to Him (Luke 23:34). This teaches the believer that the Christian life is not a bed of roses. But the needs to maintain Christian attitude of forgiving persecutors while praying for sustaining grace to pass through trials triumphantly.

Question 4: How did the soldiers unknowingly fulfill the scriptures at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?

At His crucifixion, Pilate instructed that an inscription **“Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews”** be put on the cross. The chief priests resisted this in their desire to disprove His Kingship; but Pilate prevailed. This single act of Pilate and many other occurrences associated with the death and burial of Jesus Christ showed the fulfillment of prophecy and the exactness of the word of God. **“Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat; now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which sayeth, they parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did”** (John 19:23,24). The soldiers were ignorant that they were fulfilling prophecies of scripture. **“ They Part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture”** (Psalm 22:18), This happened precisely at His crucifixion. It is amazing to note that in the midst of all the shame and suffering that surrounded the cross, a few people still clung to Christ. John, in our text, mentioned that Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary’s sister, Mary Magdalene and John,

the disciple were at the feet of the cross. We need to learn some lessons from these people. One, they showed fortitude as they endured the public scorn and ridicule to which their Master was exposed. Two, they showed strong affection for Jesus. Three, they stood by Jesus not just in His hour of joy, fame and power, but also in His great suffering trial and humiliation. We should learn from this little band and stand with brethren in the hour of disappointment and despair not only in hour of opulence and hilarity.

While hanging on the cross, Jesus cried for water. This testified to His humanity. The cruel response to Christ's cry of thirst was a fulfillment of the scriptures. They filled a sponge with vinegar, put it upon hyssop and gave Him to drink. It will be recalled that it was with hyssop that they sprinkled the Passover blood on their lintels and door posts during the first Passover (Exodus 12:22). Now, the real Paschal Lamb had been slain and hyssop was used as at the beginning. **"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink"** (Psalm 69:21).

Question 5: Mention five benefits of Christ's death.

Before Jesus died on the cross He said, **"It is finished"**. He thus accomplished the purpose for which He came to the earth (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:21). This simple statement **"It is finished"** literally means "paid in full" and it encapsulated the perfect fulfillment of the prediction of work of redemption. The ransom had been paid that salvation may now be made available to whosoever will, through the crucified Christ. Through His suffering and death, Christ has the power to save all who believe. The Death of Jesus has many benefits such as atonement, propitiation, redemption, reconciliation, access to God and deliverance (Ephesians 2:11-20; Colossians 1:12-14).

The soldiers had to break the bones of the crucified criminals who were still alive, but when they got to Jesus, they saw that He was dead already. He therefore fulfilled the prophecy of the Pascal Lamb who would have no bone of His body broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12). Although He was dead already and His bone spared, one of the soldiers with a spear still pierced His side (v 34). This again was in fulfillment of scriptures. **"And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced..."** (Zechariah 12:10).

CHRIST’S BURIAL AND HIS DISCIPLES’ COMMENDABLE EFFORTS (John 19:38-42; Luke 23:50-53; Mark 15:42-47; Matthew 27;55-60).

Question 6: What roles did Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus play in the burial of Jesus and what does it teach believers today?

Joseph of Arimethaea and Nicodemus, two secret disciples of Jesus, were raised by God to give Jesus a befitting burial. Both were men of influence. While Joseph used his influence to obtain the body of Jesus from Pilate, he also donated a decent tomb which he had hewn out for himself. Nicodemus on his part provided the spices for His burial. Interestingly, both of them co-operated in the physical burial (vs 40). They both gave cheerfully and sincerely. God expects us to honour Him with our substance – time, talents and treasure. The moderation in the burial of Jesus is instructive for believers today. Believers engaged in the burial of their loved ones should be moderate in their dress, spending and general conduct.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Romans	15-16	I Chronicles	29
TUE	I Corinthians	1-2	II Chronicles	1-2
WED	“	3-4	“	3-4
THUR	“	5-6	“	5-6
FRI	“	7	“	7-8
SAT	“	8-9	“	9-10
SUN	“	10-11	“	11-12

413 Lesson

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

MEMORY VERSE: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20).

TEXT: John 20:1-10

In the previous lesson, we considered the crucifixion and burial of Christ. The manner of His crucifixion was cruel as it was gruesome. While the Jews who crucified Him were relishing the thought of an accomplished wicked task, the Father was glad that the final sacrifice for the salvation of humanity had been accomplished. As humans, the Jewish leaders were oblivious of the fact that even their murderous actions of crucifying Christ was allowed by God to fulfil His word that Christ should suffer and die to save mankind from sin (Isaiah 53:3-11).

One truth they could still remember after His burial and felt would deflate their ego was his prophecy concerning His resurrection. And to prevent it from being fulfilled, they secured the tomb with stone and stationed Soldiers around it to make it impossible for anyone to gain access to the sepulchre to remove His corpse and thereafter fabricate a story of His resurrection. Thus, they put themselves directly against God to fight against the knowledge of His word and will for Christ to resurrect. But their efforts, as mortals who are ignorant of God's power, only helped to lend credence to the truth of His resurrection. No one gained access to the sepulchre to remove His body. It was the power of God that froze the guards, rolled away the stone from the sepulchre and quickened Christ from the grave.. All actions of men to prevent the fulfillment of God's word are but theatrical. In spite of all their attempts, the chief priests and Pharisees could not prevent His resurrection. By the operation of the power of resurrection, all the things the devil and his cohorts have put in place to prevent the fulfillment of God's promise for the believer will be swept away. This proves that whatever the attempt of men, the plans and purpose of God cannot be thwarted.

Question 1: What is the significance of Christ's resurrection?

Our text opens the history of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is very significant since it is the pivot around which the Christian faith revolves. The apostles of Christ did much to give proof of the resurrection. This is because one, Jesus Himself appealed to the resurrection as the most cogent proof of His being the Messiah. He referred those who would not believe Him to the signs of the prophet Jonas which was an allusion to His resurrection (Matthew 12:38-40;16:1-4; Luke 11:29,30). Two, our redemption and salvation depended on His resurrection (Romans 4:25). Three, His resurrection was a clear indication that a sacrifice of his life was accepted by the Father.

PROOFS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION (John 20:1 8;Matthew 27:6,6; Luke 24:39; John 20:20; Acts 1:3;1 Corinthians 15:3-17)

The teaching on Christ's resurrection occupies a very central position in the gospel. This is what the apostles preached and died for. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation of the believer's faith.

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is vain” (1 Corinthians 15;14). Knowing the importance of Christ's resurrection to the Christian faith, the devil fought not only to hinder it but also to prevent men from believing it.

Question 2: What are some of the errors commonly held by skeptics on Christ's resurrection?

There are so many fallacies put forward by skeptics to disprove Christ's resurrection. One, the chief priests and the Pharisees claimed that His disciples took away His body saying that He had resurrected. The claim is false due to the fact that the Chief priests and Pharisees suspected this could happen and took precautions to prevent it (Matthew 27:64-66). They bribed the soldiers and instructed them to spread this error deliberately and in the process contradicted themselves. Two, some people categorically denied the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12). Three, some say that Christ did not die

on the cross but merely fell into coma. To this group of people, what actually happened is resuscitation and not resurrection. But, they err not knowing the scriptures. **“But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs”** (John 19:33). And in order to further ensure that he was totally dead, **“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came thereout blood and water”** (John 19:34). It must be remembered that Christ was not crucified by His friends but by those who actually wanted Him dead. Therefore, it would be a costly neglect to hand over His body to His friends without ascertaining that He was dead. **“And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead, And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph”** (Mark 15: 44,45).

Question 3: What are the proofs of Christ’s resurrection?
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In spite of the errors of the skeptics, we have infallible proofs of Christ’s resurrection. One, the stone that was rolled away (John 20:1; Luke 24:2; Mark 16:4; Matthew 28:2). Two, the empty tomb (John 20:5-7; Luke 24:3; Mark 16:5-7). Three, the watch who came to the chief priests after witnessing the resurrection but were given money to say otherwise (Matthew 28: 11-15). Four, the grave clothes which were left intact exactly as they were used to wrap the body of Jesus (John 20:5-7; Luke 24:12). Five, the testimonies of the disciples (Acts 2:32). Six, the witness of the angels: **“He is not here but is risen, remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee”** (Luke 24:6). Seven, Christ post-resurrection appearances and speeches (Luke 24:39; John 20:20).

PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST’S RESURRECTION (John 20:9,10; Psalm 16:10;49:15; Matthew 16:21;26:32; Mark 9:9; 14:28; Luke 9:22; John 2:19-22).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been prophesied in the scriptures and Christ Himself predicted it. David in the Old Testament prophesied of Christ resurrection when he said **“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”** (Psalm 16:10). The apostle Peter alluded to this prophecy and explained that it applied to Christ’s resurrection (Acts 2:25-31). On various

occasions, Christ predicted His own resurrection: **“Saying, the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day” (Luke 9:22). “But after that I am risen; I will go before you into Galilee” (Mark 14:28).**

Question 4: What does the fact of Christ’s resurrection teach us as believers?

The fact of Christ’s resurrection teaches us the following lesson: one, biblical prophecies are credible and dependable, We can rest assured that whatever God has predicted will come to pass. Two, Christ’s resurrection assures us of the certainty of our own resurrection. Three, death has no final power over the believer (I Corinthians 15:55-57). Four, Christ’s resurrection confirms His claim to deity and messiahship. Five, it validates Christ’s judicial authority over all mankind. **“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).**

THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION
(John 20:8; Romans 4:25; 8:11; 10:9; Colossians 2:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Peter 1:3,4; 1 Corinthians 15:11-14)

Apostle Paul declared **“And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins”** (1 Corinthians 15:17). This declaration drives home the importance of Christ’s resurrection to the Christian faith. Christ the sinless Lamb of God offered for the salvation of the world rose up the third day from the dead. If He had not risen, He would have in no wise differed from all mortals especially founders of other religions but He demonstrated His divinity by rising from the dead. This brought to perfection the work of redemption.

Question 5: What are the benefits of Christ’s resurrection?

Christ rose from the dead to justify as many as will repent of their sins and exercise faith in him. Had Christ not risen from the dead, no one would have been saved. Our salvation is the result of the power of Christ’s resurrection. Through Christ’s resurrection, everyone who believes in Him is

cleared from condemnation. Secondly, as a result of Christ's resurrection, the believer has his faith grounded in the truth. Otherwise his faith will be in vain and false (I Corinthians 15:12-16). Thirdly, Christ's conquest of death means for the believer a lively hope that God is able to quicken his mortal body and raise him up at the rapture. Christ rose to give the believer assurance of victory in the battles of life over sickness, affliction, bodily infirmity and the like. Christ is the resurrection and the life. By Christ's resurrection, all believers who continue in Him till death or rapture are free from the second death.

Question 6: What steps should sinners, backsliders and believers take to benefit from Christ's resurrection?

To benefit from Christ's resurrection, the sinner must repent of his sins and the backslider must return to the Lord, turning away completely from sin unto righteousness. The believer must continue to abide in Christ's word and preach the gospel to others so that they also can partake of the benefit of Christ's resurrection.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Corinthians	12-13	2 Chronicles	13-14
TUE	"	14	"	15-16
WED	"	15	"	17-18
THUR	"	16	"	19-20
FRI	2 Corinthians	1-2	"	21-22
SAT	"	3-4	"	23-24
SUN	"	5-6	"	25

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

414 Lesson

REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold” (Luce 19:8).

TEXT: LUKE 19:1-10; Genesis 20:1-14.

Salvation, the greatest miracle that can ever take place in the life of a sinner, is wholly by grace. It is a gift which he could never have earned were he to work for it. Self-righteousness or goodness cannot earn the sinner forgiveness, divine favors, salvation or acceptance in the presence of God. Identifying with a popular church or observing religious rites does not solve the problem of sin. It has been discovered that one can be an active member of a renowned, large congregation without possessing a renewed, regenerated nature. There is need for God’s power to bring about a definite, drastic change in the life of a sinner before he can have fellowship with God. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”**(Ephesians 2:8). In spite of whatever civilization, culture or refinement a person may attain, the word of God has concluded that, **“all have sinned.”** Until a sinner repents, he or she is outside the kingdom requires repentance. He must come, therefore, throwing himself upon the unfailing mercy and love of Christ who paid the price of his redemption. He must place his hope of salvation on the finished work at Calvary, stand upon God’s word and accept the gift of His love and pardon. He needs to believe in the Lord Jesus, renounce his sins by confessing them and surrendering totally to the Lord.

The Christian life is not a game of chance. The Bible has given us enough light on how to live an acceptable life before God and make heaven ultimately. There is no hope of salvation

for anyone who blindly follows religion without taking heed to the doctrines of the Bible. Mere interest in the doctrines of the Bible is not enough. There must be a definite day or time when a man has consciously decided to forsake his sins and follow the Saviour.

Question 1: Enumerate some religious activities carried out by churchgoers without repentance.

REPENTANCE: THE GATEWAY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD
(Mark 1:14,15; Acts 3:19,26; 2:38; 8:22; 17:30,31; 20:21).

The natural man is estranged from God. He lives in rebellion and self-will. He is dead in sin and trespasses. On his own, he can never please God. He needs a fundamental change of direction and must repent to have worthwhile dealings with God. Sincere repentance and godly sorrow for sin are important prerequisites for salvation. Repentance is the deep inward sorrow which makes a sinner turn from sin unto God. True repentance always results in confession of sin (Psalm 38:18; 1 John 1:9; Luke 15:21; Mark 1:5; Luke 5:8); forsaking them (Isaiah 55:7; Proverbs 28:13) and turning to God (I Thessalonians 1:9; Acts 26:18). True repentance makes the sinner see sin as God sees it. This is possible only through the agency of the Holy Spirit who produces conviction in the heart of the sinner.

Question 2: What is repentance?

Biblical repentance is different from remorse. Remorse or regret deals only with the embarrassment or painful consequences of sin. Sorrow on the other hand is associated with repentance; the sinner is brought face to face with the reality that he has wronged God. The full weight of this sorrow makes the sinner to abhor and hate sin. It leads the sinner to turn away from sin wholeheartedly. **“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be the repented of : but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Repentance occupies a central place in the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14,15). The message of salvation is the same for all people irrespective of country, continent, race, culture, tribe, class or status.

The pillars of the first century church emphasized repentance. Peter, in his second epistle stressed, **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). Paul, the apostle, preaching to the Athenians stated that God **“... commandeth all men every where to repent”** (Acts 17:30). In his messages to the Jews and Gentiles, the apostle also emphasized **“repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 20:21).

Question 3: Describe the changes that take place in a person after repentance.

RESTITUTION: EVIDENCE OF GENUINE REPENTANCE
(Matthew 3:8; Acts 24:16; Luke 18:8).

Having repented of sin, God requires that the believer make right every wrong perpetrated against others, This is called restitution. The doctrine of restitution is one of the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith. Restitution is an act of making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen; restoring stolen or misappropriated things, properties or persons to their rightful owners; paying back just debts; giving back where one has defrauded, uncovering crimes committed and confessing lies told, making confessions to the offended and apologizing to those slandered. It is done whether the person injured knew it or not (Hebrews 4:13). God forgives when we repent but He requires us to make amends to any person we may have injured or wronged. Repentance towards God necessitates restoration to man of all property gained by fraud, lying or pretence of whatever kind.

Question 4: What is restitution?

Restitution must be done with deep contrition and sobriety. It must be done in obedience to God, not as if we were doing the injured person a favour. It should be carried out with the objective of having a conscience void of offence toward God and men (Acts 24:16). However, acts of restitution which would implicate others or bring injury or harm to others needs care and God’s wisdom. In such cases it is essential to seek counseling from faithful, experienced, competent and mature Christian believers, teachers or preachers.

Some people consider restitution as unnecessary. They argue that repentance is all God requires. But they err, forgetting that most sins committed by men are offenses against God as well as their fellow men. And the only way to obtain a conscience void of offence towards God and man is the reparation of losses and damages. Whereas repentance is between God and man, restitution is between human beings. Repentance is private – before God, restitution is public: we go to the offended people to straighten out every rough edge. Repentance removes sin from the heart, restitution removes objects we gained sinfully from our house. Repentance is very important for our relationship with God; restitution is necessary to ascertain the genuineness of our repentance. Thus, with restitution you make your ways right before men and with repentance you come into right relationship with God. There is need for genuine repentance and immediate restitution. This is the Bible way.

Question 5: Why is restitution necessary?

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF RESTITUTION (Luke 19:8; Acts 23:1-5; Genesis 20:1-14).

One of our texts introduces us to the chief collector of customs for the district of Jericho. His name is Zacchaeus. Like all publicans, he had become very rich by oppressing the Jews and extorting money from them. Zacchaeus heard about Jesus' passage through Jericho. **“And he sought to see Jesus who he was.** Quite obviously, something more than mere curiosity prompted Zacchaeus to climb the sycamore tree. It was a sure conviction of sin.

Thus, Zacchaeus **“ran before Jesus, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.”** But Jesus had His eyes on Zacchaeus as truly as the latter had his eyes on the Lord. Jesus always sees inquiring souls. He always reveals Himself to sincere seekers. It is significant to note that Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully. And in that single act, he repented of his sins, received salvation and was additionally blessed with a visit from the Lord. But the Jews murmured because Jesus visited a publican. Zacchaeus probably anticipated the murmuring as well as the negative and uncomplimentary comments of the Jews. He knew

he had always been unfair to the people. Perhaps he saw the incisive glare of those he had extorted in the past. And though God had forgiven him and Jesus had received him, the people still had something against him.

He then stood up and spoke. He said, **“Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor”**. This did not refer to his past life but to the present. He went further and said, **“if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”** Zacchaeus showed that repentance is more than shedding tears. Such is not godly sorrow unless it straightens crooked ways. Restitution requires restoring anything – money, books, car, house, ill-gotten wealth, clothing or even a woman or a man – to its rightful owner.

<p>Question 6: Apart from Zacchaeus, name other Bible characters that did restitution.</p>

SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE PRATICE OF RESTITUTION

(Genesis 20:1-8,14-18; Exodus 22:1-7; Leviticus 6:1-7; Numbers 5:6-8; 2 Samuel 12:1-6; Proverbs 6:30;31; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Matthew 5:23,24; Luke 19:8,9; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16; James 4:17).

The Bible doctrine on restitution, in practice and precept, spans virtually all the dispensations of God’s dealing with men till the present day. The revelation of God’s will and word before the Mosaic law demands that we make restitution (Romans 1:19,20). Therefore, the law cannot abolish this teaching or doctrine of God’s word which had been established many years before the law. Restitution is part of the moral law.

If God told Abimelech to restore Sarah to her rightful husband, He is telling us the same today. If God demanded that stolen goods be restored, He demands the same from us today. There is **“no variableness nor shadow of turning”** with Him (God). Repentance and restitution form the gateway into total freedom and liberty in Christ. The rules of righteous living in the New Testament are just as high, if not higher than what obtained in the Old Testament.

Similarly, the doctrine and practice of restitution is upheld in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded and taught the doctrine, the Apostles in the early church

practiced and taught it and, in fact, the whole church of God lived by the teaching (Matthew 28:19,20; John 14:26; Acts 2:42; 16:4,5; Philemon 7-21).

Question 7: Why do you think that the doctrine of restitution is biblical?

Restitution must be a product of repentance for it to be acceptable unto God. Restitution without repentance from sin and faith in Christ is a filthy rag before God. Whatever is done without the grace of God working in the heart is the mere morality of men. If an unbeliever puts away all his extra wives, restores all stolen goods and says sorry to all those he offended without consciously accepting his guilt of sin before God and disposition to sin, he is yet dead in sin and trespasses. **”Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (John 3;3).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Corinthians	7-8	2 Chronicles	26-27
TUE	“	9-10	“	28
WED	“	11	“	29
THUR	“	12-13	“	30-31
FRI	Galatians	1-2	“	32
SAT	“	3-4	“	33
SUN	“	5-6	“	34

415 Lesson

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE DURING PERSECUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so Persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11,12).

TEXT: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Persecution is suffering for righteousness’ sake or suffering for Biblical Principles and beliefs the Christian upholds. So, everyone who has repented of his sins and received Jesus as Savior and Lord is bound to suffer persecution. All categories of believers-young believers, older believers as well as fathers and mother in the Lord suffer one form of persecution or the other at different stages of their Christian life. Persecution, therefore, is not a strange experience for the believer in Christ. **“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering...”** (1 Peter 4:12).

Question 1: What is persecution? Mention the kinds of suffering that cannot be regarded as persecution.

Believers need to understand that persecution or trial of faith is not (or even a part of) the Christ’s cause, the great tribulation is a world-wide unparalleled suffering of unbelievers during the reign of anti-Christ after the rapture of the saints.

Besides, believers who suffer as a result of their unscriptural attitudes to others or wrong doing should not hide under this Christian precept and claim they are suffering persecution. That is why the scripture admonishes believers to maintain good works before men. To suffer as a result of any of these sinful attitudes can not be for Christ’s sake. **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.”**

Christ predicted that believers would be persecuted as He was persecuted. **“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he death God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me”** (John 16:1-3). Therefore, no believer is exempted from it.

PERSECUTORS AND SCOPE OF PERSECUTION (I Peter 4:12-19; John 16:3; Galatians 4:29; Acts 7:2)

Question 2: What are the identifying marks of those who persecute believers?

Christ revealed the identity of persecutors as those who have not **“known the Father, nor me”**. Sinners and backsliders are the ones the devil inspires and uses to persecute believers in his attempt to dissuade them from continuing in the Christian faith. This is the uniform testimony of Scriptures. **“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now”**. Persecution then can come from unbelieving relations, co-workers, bosses, fellow-students, teachers or any one that the believer chances to have interactions with. Though persecution generally comes from people who are yet to be born again, carnal believers also do allow themselves to be used by the devil to stand in the way of other brethren.

Question 3: In what ways can the believer be persecuted?

Suffering persecution can take different forms. It can be mild as verbal assault, serious as physical assault or critical as martyrdom. A righteous believer can be evil spoken of or hated, have his promotion withheld in the place of work or have his entitlements seized by his parents, be denied jobs that he is qualified for, be beaten, etc. for his principled stand on the word of God.

It is interesting to note however that the persecution the believer suffers today can not be more than what Christ suffered. Christ suffered all forms of persecution during His earthly ministry. Thus, He is our Example. Not only in conduct but also in suffering.

PERSECUTION: A COMMON EXPERIENCE OF SAINTS
(Matthew 24:13; Mark 10:38,39; 2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:33;
Matthew 10:17,18; John 9:28,34; Jeremiah 38:6; 1 Peter
1:6; Matthew 5:39,40).

Question 4: Mention some believers in the Bible who experienced persecution.

To prepare the minds of His disciples for what they were going to suffer when He eventually leaves the world, Christ declared that they would be persecuted. This was essentially part of the beatitudes He taught on Mount Olives. Persecution is the lot of every Bible Christian. Old Testament believers had their share of persecution. Joseph was hated and sold by his brethren for relating his God-given dream. Moses was derided by some as he led Israel under God's guidance through the wilderness. Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and other prophets were plotted against for upholding the scepter of righteousness as were Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego and Daniel for their stance in worshipping the only true God.

Persecution did not end with the Old Testament dispensation as some erroneously believe. The truth needs be told that in any Christian assembly where persecution is no longer the experience of members, compromise with the world exists either in doctrine or lifestyle. The reason is, the devil who is the god of this world is highly intolerant of a holy lifestyle and truth such as Christ lived and preached. The Lord Jesus Christ was vehemently persecuted by the religionists of His days for declaring the good news of the kingdom. He was spoken against, falsely accused and finally arrested and killed because He claimed to be the Son of God. His fore-runner, John the Baptist was given a similar treatment. The early church leaders (and members) were also persecuted by the religious Jews as well as pagan Gentiles wherever they preached the gospel. While some were arrested, whipped and jailed, others were martyred for **“speaking in the name of the Lord Jesus”**. Paul the apostle went through similar experiences after his conversion and in the course of his obedience to the heavenly vision. The believer therefore must bear in mind that doing the will of God or obeying His commands does not exempt him from being persecuted. The scripture affirms that **“...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Timothy 3:12).

Question 5: Why are believers persecuted?

Christ, addressing His “brethren” who did not believe in Him said, **“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil”** (John 7:5,7). Since inception, the society has always hated anyone who walks contrary to the course of the world and its accepted norms. Religionists have always despised non-conformists to existing tradition. As our lives and preaching expose and rebuke sin and its foolishness, we are bound to be persecuted.

CHRISTLIKE ATTITUDE DURING PERSECUTION (1 Peter 4:12-19; Matthew 24:13; Luke 21:14-19; 21:28; 2 Corinthians 4:17,18; 1 Peter 1:3,4)

Question 6: How should believers react during persecution to persecutors?

It is obvious from scripture that every sincere and practicing Christian will go through persecution like our Lord Jesus Christ did. But while going through it, certain principles of behavior are expected of him: sinlessness, non-retaliation and submission to God.

Whatever we, as believers, go through in the world – however bitter our neighbors, superiors or peers are to us because of the faith – the Bible is clear as to what our attitude should be. As our perfect Example endured, blessed and prayed for the forgiveness of those who persecuted and crucified Him, so we are instructed to forgive our persecutors. We are to bless those who curse us, rejoice for every opportunity to suffer for His sake, patiently cleave unto the Lord and His word and be ever conscious of the eternal weight of glory reserved in heaven for us (2 Corinthians 4:17,18; 1 Peter 1:3,4).

When we do these, we are promised divine help. As the Lord promised (Isaiah 51:12,13) and as He stood with Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego (Daniel 3:14-30) Daniel (Daniel 6:16-23), Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-20) and many others, He will uphold us in all experiences throughout our stay on earth. If we patiently hope and cleave unto Him, love and faith will open the door out of every dungeon for us. Heaven’s windows for an immeasurable outpouring of divine blessings will be open unto us. We must not allow persecution, which

the Bible calls our light affliction, to becloud our view of our promised eternal inheritance. Rather, we need to renew our consecration and commitment to the Lord as we remain in unbroken communion with Him to see us through whatever we may be passing through. Or, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

During persecution, believers must hold to their Christian convictions. Since Jesus did not compromise with the world to avoid suffering persecution, believers must not. The time of persecution should be made a time of unceasing prayer for our persecutors and for grace to suffer shame and reproach for his name without sinning. We must not recant to avoid suffering; our conviction must remain intact because **“in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Romans 8:37-39).

BENEFITS OF SUFFERING PERSECUTION (Matthew 16:25; 5:10-12; Mark 10:30; 13:19-11; Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 124:1-8; 129:1,2; Daniel 3:8-25; revelation 1:9-18; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8).

Though it is the will of God to suffer persecution, some believers are afraid of it hence their resolve to be secret disciples of Christ. They are ashamed to identify with the Bible or Bible-believing people for fear of ridicule. They do not profess to know Christ openly because of the privileges they presently enjoy which might be denied them. Such a life leaves much to be desired as they will not be able to bear fruit as expected. Such people are also not far from compromises that affect their loyalty to Christ. Obviously, love of material things and weakness of faith in God’s omnipotence underpin such a lack-lustre lifestyle. Theirs is not a demonstration of wisdom as standing for nothing or being of a double standard smacks of cowardice. Christ revealed that those who seek to save their own lives will lose them, while those who trust in the Lord and lose their lives – opportunities and privileges that should have been theirs were it not for their profession

of faith in Christ before men risk being denied by Him in heaven. The believer needs to note that persecution is part of his light affliction that cannot in any way compare with the suffering that awaits sinners and those who deny Christ in hell.

Question 7: Mention some blessings believers who endure persecution with Christlike attitude stand to enjoy.

The believer who endures persecution with Christ-like attitude will have the Spirit of Christ and glory rest upon him. His also will be the blessedness Christ pronounced during His teaching on the kingdom life. **“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake ... great is your reward in heaven...”** Matthew 5:10-12). Persecution fires the believer’s longing for his real, eternal home. That is why it is part of saints’ promised blessings (Mark 10:30; Acts 5:41). Persecution opens rare opportunities for believers (Mark 13:9,10). The Philipian jailor and his house, for instance, would not have been saved were it not that Paul and Silas maintained Christian attitude of peace, endurance, prayer and praises unto God. Thus, the gospel spread when believers endure persecution and stand firm on their Christian conviction.

Persecution provides opportunities for believers to enjoy the comfort of the Spirit during tribulation as promised by Christ. Obviously, God does not forget His children in the fire of trials of faith. Those who endure will discover God’s promise of protection, preservation and provision (Isaiah 43:1,2; Psalm 27:10) to be true and sure. And such discovery strengthens the faith of the believer to continue to grow into maturity of godliness. It is clear from the cases of Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, Peter and John the beloved that special revelation and the divine presence and ministration of angels attend intense suffering and persecution and continues in the race to the end will be saved and given a crown of life. So, **“blessed is the man that endureth temptation (persecution): for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”** (James 1:12).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Ephesians	1-2	2Chronicles	35
TUE	"	3-4	"	36
WED	"	5-6	Ezra	1-2
THUR	Philippians	1-2	"	3-4
FRI	"	3-4	"	5-6
SAT	Colossians	1-2	"	7
SUN	"	3-4	"	8

416 Lesson

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

MEMORY VERSE: “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23).

TEXT: Galatians 5:22,23; John 15:1-8

In Christendom, there is an emphasis on Christian character. Everyone appears to know that the true New Testament Christian life has a striking manifestation of a Christ-like pattern of character. The Scripture gives this character-pattern a pungent expression in Peter’s second epistle: “**And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Question 1: What is meant by the expression “fruit of the Spirit?”

These true Christian virtues are collectively called “**the fruit of the Spirit**” and couched in the best words in Galatians 5:22,23. Here we have the exact definition of the total Christian personality and a beautiful resume of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount presented in a most digestible form. It is the character of Christ reproduced in the Christian through the Holy Spirit. It is as though all New Testament principles are wrapped up there.

Some people produce the fruit of human efforts or what may be best described as “works of the human spirit”. Such people strive, endeavour, and by a great exercise of the will produce some fruits – good culture, courtesy, calmness (outward), kindness, endurance - which are only commendable to fellow human beings. But these products of natural effort are not the fruit of Spirit revealed in Scripture. They come

from man's labour. They are more of man's invention. That is why we call them fruits of human effort or works of the human spirit.

Works belong to the workshop, whereas fruit belong to the garden. Fruit is the silent growth of the abounding life, whereas, work comes from the skilful factory hand. The presence of fruit – the fruit of the Spirit – assigns the grace of the Christians character to the true source – God.

THE NATURE OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:22,23; Ephesians 5:9)

In direct contrast to the works of the flesh, Paul the apostle, by inspiration states the nine fruits produces by the Holy Spirit in the believer. They are: **“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...”** (Galatians 5:22,23). They are collectively called “the fruit”, implying that none is without the other and cannot be whole without others. Therefore, everyone who claims to have the Spirit of God must possess “the fruit” in its entirety.

Being the kernel of Christian character and embodiment of all virtues, a thorough analysis of each fruit is here commended: First, love (1 Corinthians 13; Romans 13:10; John 13:34; 1 John 4:7-12). It is interesting to note that the first of these fruits is love.

Question 2: How does love embrace all other fruits of the Spirit?

In reality, love is the very basic essential life of the living Christ which express itself in all the nine fruits. A Christian writer once wrote how the eight other fruits of the Spirit are anchored in love. He said: “Joy is love exulting; peace is love reposing; longsuffering is love enduring; gentleness is love refined; meekness is love with a bowed head; gentleness is love in action; temperance is true self-love; and faith is love confiding; so that the whole sum of Christian living is just loving.”

Second, **joy** (Isaiah 61:10; Jeremiah 15:16; John 16:22; Acts 8:2; 1 Peter 1:8). Joy is more than happiness. It comes from the Lord and is anchored in Him. Jesus is the source of joy. The way into this joy is repentance and practical confession of faith in Christ. Money, mansions, might or material wealth never gives this joy. They all give transient happiness which

is not better than misery. The book of Acts talks about people being filled with joy in the Holy Ghost. After Samaria received salvation, **“there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:6). Paul Said, “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17).**

This joy transcends troubles and challenges of life; it leaps over tough circumstances and abides through problems, pains and even death. It is unspeakable!

Third, **peace** (Philippians 4:7; Romans 5:1; Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 26:3). Peace is regarded as one of the supreme attainments. It is the state whereby the soul and spirit of man is so imbued with the presence of God’s gracious Spirit that he is not easily provoked. Peace is the selfless, self-giving, self-losing, self-forgetting and self-sacrificing love that is manifest in spite of true peace. He is called the Prince of Peace. If the heart is opened to receive the risen Christ, He comes in, speaking peace – just as He came again and again to His frightful disciples after His resurrection saying, **“Peace be unto you”**. The peace He imparts is the quiet, potent, gracious attitude of serenity and goodwill that meets the bitterness of others with good cheer and repose. This peace is calm in crisis, untroubled in trial and determined in disaster. The peace of Christ transcends trouble; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, **longsuffering** (1 Corinthians 13:4; Colossians 1:11; 3:12; 2 Peter 3:9; Exodus 34:6). Longsuffering is more commonly called endurance or patience. Longsuffering is the powerful capacity of selfless love to bear all things and continue in adverse situations. It is a generous willingness to try to understand awkward people, disturbing events and unwelcome situations that God allows to come your way. This quality of character was beautifully displayed in Jesus Christ **“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”** (Hebrews 12:2). Longsuffering possesses the benefits of discipline, development and direction.

Fifth, **gentleness** (1 Thessalonians 2:7,11; 2 Timothy 2:24; Psalm 18:35; James 3:17). Gentleness comes fifth in the package of the **“fruit of the Spirit”**. When love, joy, peace and longsuffering abound in the Christian’s heart, he is

characterized by an unusual but, essentially divine, gentle lifestyle. Gentleness in God's enduring quality in the centuries of His dealing with man. The gentleness of God has drawn man to Him with a bond stronger than steel. Gentleness, the fruit of the Spirit, stronger than steel. Gentleness, which grows out of the Spirit is enjoyed by all – our friends as well as our persecutors, revilers, scorers, scoffers and all who speak evil against us. Gentleness is loving, appreciating, caring, tending, accommodating and correcting a friend, child or partner in a firm manner.

Sixth, **goodness** (Genesis 45:5-8,15; 1 Samuel 24:17; Acts 7:60; 1 Thessalonians 5:15). Goodness is God's Special peculiarity and He puts a great emphasis upon it. When Jesus was physically in the world, it was reported in striking simplicity that He **“went about doing good”**. Goodness, the peculiar characteristic of Christ, comes from the life that has received of God's abundant grace. The Christian whose life reflects goodness is one with a noble purpose, strong character, reliable conduct and trustworthy lifestyle. He is good, gracious, generous, gentle, peaceful and joyful and in the business of making others happy. Goodness takes away any sense of pride or patronage.

Seventh, **faith** (1 Samuel 17:37; Psalm 37:3,5; Isaiah 26:3,4; Psalm 125:1). Faith, in its general sense, is our basis for belief. It is the divinely implanted principle of inward and wholehearted confidence, trust in and reliance on God and all that He says. This faith makes the believer rely on God, exercise confidence and assurance in the church, believe the leadership of the church and the brethren.

The basis of our faith is love. The Christian who is full of faith, loves to the point of trusting and yielding himself faithfully to the service of the Church and his fellowmen. Faith, therefore is active. It puts the best construction on every situation. It searches for any hint of honour in others – men, the Church and God. Faith pushes on, perseveres and remains loyal even when there are reverses and disappointments.

Eighth, **meekness** (Luke 6:29; 1 Peter 3:4; Galatians 6:1; Numbers 12:3). Meekness is the very true nature and character of Christ. Every heaven-conscious Christian needs to understand biblical and Christlike meekness. The meek is gentle, pliant, flexible but firm and frank. He is strong,

courageous and mild. He uses his strength and courage to defend the glory of God. The meek sees the good virtue in others and gives his best to help the brethren to live a happy life. The meek Christian is submissive, quiet, kind, soft and patient especially with the weak.

Ninth, temperance (Titus 2:2; Proverbs 16:32; Peter 1:5-7; James 3:2). Temperance is also called self-control, moderation or self-restraint. Temperance seems to be the last and crowning fruit of God's Spirit. It is the outward sign of a well-disciplined life. Temperance means bringing the whole person – body, soul and spirit – under subjection and to do just what Christ wants him to do. That implies that the believer's total personality – mind, emotion and will – is at Christ's command. The entire body's appetites, drives desires, instincts are governed by God.

Question 3: Explain the nature of any of the fruit of the Spirit you can remember.

CONDITIONS OF FRUIT-BEARING (John 15:1-8; Psalm 1:1-3; John 12:24; Romans 7:4).

Good as the fruit of the Spirit is, some Christians still find it missing in their lives. Many think it is impossible for someone who has not been baptized in the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of the Spirit. But this is wrong because the chain of virtues in Galatians 5:22,23 is simply referred to as the "fruit of the Spirit" and not 'fruit of the baptism in the Holy Spirit'. The fact is that the virtues that are collectively so called come from the Spirit of Christ that indwells the believer at the point he or she receives Christ as Lord and Saviour. This, therefore, explains that the bearing of the fruit is conditioned upon the possession of the salvation experience. At salvation, the Holy Spirit cultivates the ground of the heart of the saved soul to bring forth His fruit.

Question 4: Mention some of the conditions for fruit-bearing.

Mere membership of a church does not qualify anyone to bear the fruit of the Spirit, neither does tithing our income or being involved in church activities guarantee the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit. The journey to possessing the fruit begins with being born again. This means therefore that everyone that would bear fruit must first establish a living

relationship with Christ, the Vine. He or she must be a branch grafted into the Vine that supplies the life and nourishment (John 15:4-5).

Second, there is the necessity of abiding in the Vine (verse 4). We must remain and be close to Christ to continue to bear fruit. The power to overcome sin, do good and flourish in the graces of Christ comes from Him. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:4,5).

Third, we must partake in the divine nature. Every living branch partakes of the nature of the vine and continually does so to remain alive. God’s nature of holiness must manifest in our lives before we can bear fruits unto holiness.

Fourth, we must hold fast to the Vine so as not to be plucked off by the violent efforts of storms and winds. We must walk and hold fast to the Master. Those who follow Him ‘afar’ stand the danger of being removed from the source of their strength and security.

Fifth, believers who wish to bring forth fruits unto righteousness must, as it were be planted by God’s **“brooks of honey and butter”** (Job 20:17). For them the glorious Lord will be unto them **“a place of broad rivers and streams”** (Isaiah 33:21) where they drink consistently to the full.

Sixth, death to the old life (John 2:24). The old life is an impediment to growth in grace and fruitfulness. Sinful appetites and passions inhibit God’s grace so that it does not find full expression. Therefore, those who hope to flourish in God’s grace must put to death the old life or corruption (Colossians 3:5).

Seventh, fellowship and communion (Romans 7:4). It is a natural prerequisite that there cannot be fruitfulness in marriage without the union and fellowship of the couple. In the same breath, believers who wish to bear fruits of grace must be in regular and constant fellowship with Christ, the Bridegroom.

BENEFITS OF THE FRUIT-BEARING LIFE (John 15:7,8; Psalm 92:13,14; Ezekiel 47:12).

The fruit-bearing Christian is beautiful in the sight of God. He exudes fragrance that attracts God's commendation and blessing. Unlike 'branches' that are severed from the Vine resulting in withering away, believers who remain with the Lord and consequently bear fruits enjoy abundance of the juice coming from the Vine.

Question 5: Mention some of the benefits of the fruit bearing Christian life.

Christ, in the fifteenth chapter of John, commends fruit-bearing Christians and condemns fruitless ones. Among the many benefits of the fruit-bearing Christian life are, one, answer to prayers. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). There is a pledge that heaven would listen to such believers as abide in Christ and are fruitful in Him – His ears are open to the righteous.

Two, God will be glorified in them. What more honour can be earned by a child of God than that His Father should be glorified in Him and he becomes His **"workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto Good works"**?

Three, that the believer bears fruits of grace, righteousness and good works makes him or her like trees (of righteousness) planted by the Lord where the glory of His grace is displayed.

Four, such shall be called disciples of Christ and shall be identified with the Lord – **"so shall ye be my disciples"**. By bearing fruit in Christ shall men know that we are His followers indeed; for by their fruits **"ye shall know them"**

Finally, age shall not be a barrier to their fruitfulness. **"Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing"** (Psalm 92:13,14). They shall consistently enjoy God's riches and abundance.

DAILY BIBLE READING

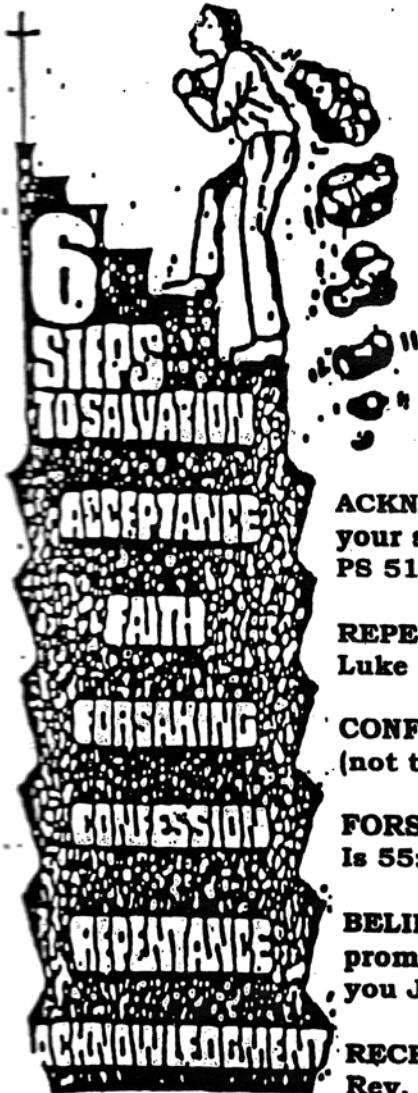
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	I Thess.	1-2	Ezra	9-10
TUE	“	3-4	Nehemiah	1-2
WED	“	5	“	3-4
THUR	2 Thess.	1-3	“	5-6
FRI	I Timothy	1-2	“	7
SAT	“	3-4	“	8
SUN	“	5-6	“	9

END OF SPECIAL STUDIES

THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANY TIME). THEREFORE, ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.

DISTRICT CHURCHES DIRECTORY

1. Bronx: 213 E. 144th Street (718) 292-7883
2. Brooklyn: 140 Saratoga Avenue (718) 919-1166
3. Queens: 188-21 Suffolk Drive, St. Albans, NY (347) 200-3301
4. New Jersey: 23-39 South 20 Street, Irvington (973) 202-3989
5. Staten Island: 909 Castletona Avenue (917) 238-2258
6. Spring Valley: 95 North Main street, Suite 1 (845) 709-6058



ACKNOWLEDGE
your sinfulness
PS 51:3-5

REPENT OF YOUR SIN
Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19

CONFESS them to God
(not to Priest) 1 John 1:9

FORSAKE all known sin
Is 55:7

BELIEVE that GOD is true to his
promise to forgive and clean
you Jn: 6:37 1 Jn 1:9

RECEIVE JESUS into your heart
Rev. 3:20 Jn 3:17



DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, USA

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DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

New Jersey	9:00 AM
Bronx/Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island	9:00 AM
Rockland County	10:30 AM

TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Bronx/Queens/New Jersey/Rockland/Co-op City and Staten Island	7:00 PM
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WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Brooklyn	7:00 PM
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FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

All the Church Locations	7:00 PM
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ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS

Bronx – First Friday of Every Month	7:00 PM
Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month	1:00 PM
Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
New Jersey – Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM

Pastor W.F. Kumuyi – General Superintendent
Your Spiritual Welfare is our Concern