

A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, a dense forest of trees with autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green in the middle ground, and dark mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The scene is framed by a decorative gold border.

Search The Scriptures

VOLUME 64 & 65

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

NAME _____

DISTRICT _____

REGION/GROUP _____

STATE _____

**A Publication Of
Deeper Christian Life Ministry
P.O. Box 59, University of Lagos P.O.
Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria
ISSN 0795-8994**

CONTENTS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES VOLUME 64

LESSON **PAGE**

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

820	Dedication Of The Temple	5
821	The Visit Of The Queen Of Sheba	12
822	Sin And Death Of Solomon	19
823	Division Of The Kingdom	26
824	Ministry Of The Young Prophet	33

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

825	Leadership Responsibility In The Church	40
826	Precepts For Godly Living	47
827	The Power of God's Grace	54
828	Exhortation To Good Works	61
829	Plea For Reconciliation And Restoration	68

SPECIAL STUDIES

830	Christ's Virgin Brith, Death And Ression	75
831	Total Freedom From Sin	83
832	Consistent Christian Living	90

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES VOLUME 65

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

833	Judgment on Jeroboam and Apostasy of Judah	98
834	Earlier Kings Of Judah and Israel	105
835	The Ministry of Elijah	113
836	Ahab Defeats The Syrians	120

837	Ahab's Covetousness And Punishment	127
-----	------------------------------------	-----

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

838	The Deity and Pre-Eminence of Christ	134
839	The Danger Of Neglecting God's Great Salvation	140
840	Christ's Incarnation and Sacrifice	147
841	The Superiority of Christ	154
842	Danger of Hardening The Heart	160

SPECIAL STUDIES

843	Total Depravity, Sinfulness and Guilt of All Men	167
844	Assurance of Salvation	173
845	The Surrendered Consecrated Life	181

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES VOLUME 64

BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

820
Lesson

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

MEMORY VERSE: “And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God” (2 Chronicles 7:5).

TEXT: 1 Kings 8 & 9; 2 Chronicles 5,6 & 7

The temple built by King Solomon was completed in the eighth month of the eleventh year of his reign, but the dedication was delayed until the seventh month of the following year (1 Kings 6:1,37,38; 8:1,2). According to the Jewish religious calendar, the seventh month of the year was considered most sacred because of major religious feasts such as Trumpets, Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles which take place in it (Leviticus 23:24,27,34). Perhaps, he reasoned that the dedication should coincide with Israel’s most holy month.

The construction of the building spanned a period of seven years and involved a lot of sacrifice before it was dedicated. Building a place of worship for the Almighty demands great sacrifice and determination. If we realize, like David, that the **“work is great: for the palace is not for man”**, but for the LORD God”, we would give generously for the building of our places of worship.

Question 1: What challenge does Solomon’s sacrifice in building the temple pose to present-day believers?

THE PROCEDURE FOR BRINGING THE ARK INTO THE TEMPLE (1 Kings 8:1-22; 2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 6:1-11; 2 Samuel 6:1-15; 1 Chronicles 13:1-14; 15:1-16,25-28; Psalm 100:1-4; Ephesians 5:19,20).

Before the temple was built, the ark of God was placed in a tent constructed for it by King David. But after its completion, Solomon arranged to move the ark to its permanent location in the Holy of holies, under the wings of the Cherubim. The priests carried the ark, while the Levites moved the tabernacle and the holy vessels to the temple in Jerusalem. At the time Solomon moved the ark, only the two tablets of stone containing the ten commandments were in it. There was nothing said about the other contents of the ark; that is, the pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded (Hebrews 9:4; 1 Kings 8:9).

In bringing the ark into the temple, Solomon avoided the mistake of his father, David. He ensured that the priests did their jobs as prescribed by the Lord (2 Samuel 6:3-7; 1 Chronicles 13:2,11 -15; 1 Kings 8:4-8; 2 Chronicles 5:7). He assembled all the elders, gathered the tribal heads, prominent men and judges from the cities to Jerusalem. He also provided countless sheep and oxen for sacrifice. The Levites were also on hand to sing praises as the temple was being dedicated.

Question 2: What can we learn from Solomon's spiritual priorities while dedicating the temple?

Bringing the ark into its rightful place was Solomon's first concern. He knew that the temple, regardless of its costly materials and magnificence would be worthless without the ark, which represented the presence of God. Architectural masterpieces, beautiful decorations and classic music can never replace divine presence. We must strive to bring back and retain the presence of God in our worship centers and in our lives through holy living and commitment to the undiluted word of God. Remember that believers are the temples of the living God (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

Another pointer to Solomon's spiritual priority was his choice of the seventh month. This resolved one major problem that would have occurred if the event had taken place at any other time of the year. High priests enter the Holy of holies once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Dedicating the temple at another time would have necessitated the priest to enter the Holy of holies more than once, contrary to God's commandment. Furthermore, the date chosen for dedication coincided with the period that all males gather in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. The dedication lasted a week and the Feast of Tabernacles came up the following week.

After the priests installed the ark in its place, God's Shekinah glory filled the house. Solomon immediately recognized this to mean that the Lord had come to dwell in the temple. He interpreted it as a literal fulfillment of God's promise to appear to Israel in the cloud upon the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:2). The cloud of glory filled the old tabernacle when Moses reared it up in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34,35) and it signified God's approval of the building and His presence. Believers should be sensitive in interpreting spiritual matters in the light of the Scripture.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND SOLOMON'S SACRIFICES (1 Kings 8:23-66; 2 Chronicles 6:12-40).

“And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart” (1 Kings 8:22,23).

The appearance of God's presence in the temple prompted Solomon to give praises and thanks to Him. He acknowledged His faithfulness in fulfilling the promises He had made to Israel and to David. Thereafter, Solomon entered into a prolonged supplication, the content of which leaves much for the believer to emulate. One, he worshipped and adored the Lord. Two, he confessed

their sins, repeated disobedience and thanked God for His mercy and faithfulness. Three, he appreciated God for keeping and fulfilling His promise to David (1 Kings 8:23-26). Four, he requested that the Lord would be ever present in the temple to accept the prayers of the people (verses 27-30). Five, he asked for justice to prevail so that difficult cases without conclusive evidences be divinely determined (verses 31,32). Six, he asked that if the people realized their folly and repented, God should forgive and send rain upon the land (verses 35,36). Seven, he prayed that God would deliver them in times of natural or other disasters (verses 37-40). Eight, that God would listen to the cry of pilgrims and proselytes who turn to Him in repentance (verse 41-43). Nine, that He would give them victory in battle whenever they went to war against their enemies (verses 44,45). Ten, he asked that God would grant them restoration from captivity if the people repented (verses 46-51). Finally, he pleaded that the temple would be a house of prayer where worshippers would receive answers (verses 52,53).

Question 3: Point out the key elements of Solomon's prayer and its similarities with the Lord's Prayer.

The pattern of Solomon's prayer bears some similarities to the one our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples in the sixth chapter of Matthew's gospel (Matthew 6:9-13). One, it is God-centered as it focuses on His promises, power and faithfulness. Two, it dwells on spiritual matters above the physical or mundane (1 Kings 8:57,58). Three, it is evangelical, seeking God's name to be known in all the earth (Matthew 6:10; 1 Kings 8:60). Four, it has prophetic elements, speaking of those who would come to know God from other nations as well as the judgment and captivity of Israel because of sin (1 Kings 8:46-51). Five, it realizes that man needs divine help in order to live right (1 Kings 8:59; Jeremiah 10:23; 17:19). Six, it reveals a proper perception of God that, though He cannot be confined to a house on earth, He could have regard to a house built for Him by His beloved children. Seven, it was a selfless prayer which included petition for strangers and people in general.

The posture of Solomon as he prayed is also worthy of note. At first, he stood; later he knelt with his hands stretched out (1 Kings 8:22,54). These postures indicated Solomon's humility, reverence and passion in prayer. Too often, believers maintain postures and attitudes in prayer that neither show humility nor fervency. As a matter of fact, certain postures encourage dozing off or losing focus in prayer. While it is true that God does not answer prayers on the basis of our posture, we should learn from the discipline of Solomon and other men of God like Elijah (1 Kings 18:42).

Solomon dedicated the temple with generous sacrifices as he offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. The brazen altar upon which the sacrifices were burnt, could not contain the animals; therefore, Solomon consecrated the middle of the outer court to burn the excess animals. It is very important to observe that there was no sin or trespass offering on this occasion; only peace offerings, burnt offerings and meat offerings.

THE PERIL OF IDOLATRY AND CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUED BLESSINGS (1 Kings 9:1-28; 2 Chronicles 8:1-18; Hebrews 3:14)

God appeared to Solomon again after the first experience at Gibeon. The purpose of the second encounter was to reassure him that his prayers were granted and the temple was accepted as God's house on earth. But God also warned him of the consequences of backsliding and going into idolatry.

Question 4: In view of God's warning to Solomon, on what conditions can believers continue to enjoy God's favor and blessings?

God promised Solomon that his descendants would continue to be kings in Israel, provided they obeyed His commandments. But if they became unfaithful and worshipped idols, then they would be conquered by their enemies and taken into exile. Even the temple which He had acknowledged and hallowed to be His habitation would be ruined and the world would be surprised at its desolation. God's promises are conditional: faith and

obedience are the basic requirements for enjoying them. Our salvation in Christ is based on our continued faith in Him and determination never to return to the old life of sin. The choices we make, either to obey or disobey God, will determine whether we shall spend eternity with God in heaven or with demons in hell. **“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”** (Hebrews 3:14).

King Solomon was very enterprising. He established a business link with Hiram, the king of Tyre, to run a joint naval outfit. Their ships traded in gold and other goods across the Mediterranean and Indian oceans. Solomon also undertook several construction works. Apart from the temple, the palace and special buildings for his numerous wives, he fortified some strategic cities (Hazor, Meggido and Gezer) for military and security purposes. He also built storehouses for grains as well as special cities for horses and chariots. Believers must be enterprising and wise in making profitable investments. No one should use Christian commitment or service as excuse for laziness and dullness in commerce.

Solomon’s use of forced labor and levies to sustain his numerous building programs became a burden to the people under his reign. He also took one hundred and twenty talents of gold from Hiram and attempted to pay back by offering him twenty cities of Galilee. But Hiram, displeased, rejected the cities and called them the land of Cabul (meaning rubbish, unpleasant, worthless or displeasing). King Solomon had to pay back through some other way (1 Kings 9:10-14; 2 Chronicles 8:2). Believers should not allow business links with people to encroach into their spiritual legacies. Those who have the privilege of ruling over others should not treat them harshly or overburden them but show regard for their welfare (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:13).

Question 5: Point out various lessons from Solomon’s physical and spiritual activities?

From the foregoing, we learn, one, that God deserves a befitting place of worship. Two, leaders, masters

and employers should invest in building people’s lives rather than place heavy yokes on them. Three, believers should dedicate their lives to God (Romans 12:1,2). Four, God desires to fulfil His promises to us, but the major hindrance to this is disobedience. Five, leaders must be Spirit-filled and full of wisdom to know what to do, when to do it, how to do it and who should do it. Six, we should be prudent in financial management and engage in profitable enterprises but be cautious to avoid unequal yoke with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). Seven, we must set our priorities right by focusing on spiritual matters and giving God first place in our projects. Eight, the prayer of Solomon contains necessary features of adoration, worship, reverence and posture for believers to emulate. Nine, giving sacrificially is a mark of genuine submission and devotion to God. Ten, God deserves the best. In offering our temples, talents and treasures to Him, we must give Him the best.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Exodus 34	Proverbs 29-30	
TUE	“ 35-36	“ 31	
WED	“ 37	Ecclesiastes 1-2	
THUR	“ 38	“ 3-4	
FRI	“ 39	“ 5-6	
SAT	“ 40	“ 7-8	
SUN	Leviticus 1-2	“ 9-10	

821 Lesson

THE VISIT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

MEMORY VERSE: “And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice” (1 Kings 10:6,9).

TEXT: 1 Kings 10:1-29; 2 Chronicles 9:1-31

God’s answer to Solomon’s request for wisdom began to manifest with the settlement of the dispute over the ownership of the living child among two harlots, the organization of his workforce, his growing wealth and the building of God’s temple and his own palace. Also, procurement of raw materials across the border of Israel for these construction works engendered international relations in trade and commerce which became the channel of dissemination of information about Solomon’s fame and great accomplishments. The queen of Sheba was one of the dignitaries who **“heard”** of his wisdom and exploits and sought to know more. Believers who have the privilege of transiting across national boundaries should take Christ’s gospel to their host communities, irrespective of the purpose of their journeys. When people hear about His death and resurrection for the redemption of humanity, they will seek Him.

Obviously, Solomon anticipated in his prayer at the dedication of the temple that people from afar would hear of God’s name and come to seek Him (1 Kings 8:41-43). Thus, this study focuses on the visit of the queen of Sheba, the exchange between them and the greatness of Solomon’s royalty.

SOLOMON'S UNCOMMON WISDOM SOUGHT BY A GENTILE QUEEN (1 Kings 10:1-10,13; 2 Chronicles 9:1-9,12; Matthew 12:42; Proverbs 8:1-36; 1 Kings 5:7; Psalm 72:2,10)

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions “ (1 Kings 10:1). Solomon’s wisdom, accomplishments and fame which the queen heard of were made possible by the name of God. He also revealed in his prayer that he built and dedicated the temple to His name (1 Kings 8:29,33,35,41-44,48). And his plea that God should put His name there was answered: **“I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there forever...”** (1 Kings 9:3). While the glory of God’s name should be our motive, the fear of it should guide our actions and inactions. **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”** (Colossians 3:17). The name of Jesus is the only means of salvation that sinners should hear, seek and call on today (Matthew 1:21; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13).

Question 1: What information prompted the Queen of Sheba’s visit and the lessons from it?

Historians say the queen of Sheba was a ruler from either Ethiopia or southern Arabia. Jesus called her the ‘queen of the south’ who came from **“the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon”** (Matthew 12:42). Her visit was based on the information she received from people who had access to her. Believers who are employees or who have access to people of high status in the society should use the privilege to serve as heralds of God and prayerfully and respectfully present the gospel to them. Naaman went to seek healing from Prophet Elisha in Israel because his maid, a Jewess, gave him information that his leprosy could be cured by God. Hearing the gospel is pivotal to seeking the Lord for its blessings (Romans 10:14).

The queen of Sheba was an example of an expectant and earnest inquirer who travelled a long distance to listen

to Solomon's words of wisdom and had all her questions answered. Christ reveals that those who hunger and thirst after true spiritual experiences are **"blessed"** because **"they shall be filled"** (Matthew 5:6). Spiritual apathy and self satisfaction cause many people to miss this blessedness of requisite revelation that deepens spiritual knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 8:17).

Moreover, entering God's kingdom and obtaining His righteousness should be the priority of every sincere seeker. This is what the Jewish people lacked (Isaiah 58:1,2). That was why Jesus presented the visit of the queen of Sheba as a pattern of conscientious seeking after the truth that should characterize everyone who wants to escape divine judgment. He expected the Jews of His day to seek and obtain true spiritual experience because **"a greater than Solomon" had come** (Matthew 12:42).

The queen came with her retinue to seek God. Her influence reminds us of the Samaritan woman who influenced the people in her city to meet with Christ. It also teaches that great position and wealth should not hinder a person from seeking God. Many noble women in Thessalonica embraced the gospel (Acts 17:4). Abraham was wealthy, yet he was a friend of God. Privileged believers are to reach out to people in their class as well as their subordinates with the gospel.

The Scripture affirms that **"she communed with him of all that was in her heart"** without regard to racial prejudice or gender difference, which would have hindered others.

Question 2: What should be the attitude of those who seek God?

Wiser than any mortal man in his time, Solomon was able to answer the queen's questions. All believers are encouraged to **"get wisdom"**, **"seek wisdom"**, **"know wisdom"**, **"find wisdom"** and **"understand wisdom"** (Proverbs 4:7; Ecclesiastes 7:25; Psalm 51:6; Proverbs 8:17,5). Possession of divine wisdom makes us ready to give an answer to everyone who asks about the hope

that is in us with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). Everyone - parents, children, employers, employees, literate, illiterate - needs God's wisdom to excel in life (Proverbs 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:8).

The queen was not only a listener but also a good observer. She was amazed at Solomon's wisdom, his palace, the meat of his table, the sitting of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, his ministers' apparels, cupbearers' comportment and the ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord. She observed the people, their pattern, procedures and presentation. She had not seen such glories before. This teaches that the comportment of God's ministers and workers should inspire holy awe in others. Unwholesome manner, language and shabby dressing do not befit the gospel of Christ.

“And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom” (1 Kings 10:6). Her confession validated the report she had heard about Solomon's wisdom. In fact, her initial unbelief and doubt gave way to affirmation of the truth that his **“wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame which I heard”**. She also observed that Solomon's servants were happy. Christ reveals what makes people happy (blessed) to include poverty of spirit, mournfulness for sin, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, purity of heart, peacemaking and suffering for righteousness, among others.

The queen also glorified God as the Source of Solomon's wisdom and wealth. The encounter brought her to know the Lord. We must acknowledge God as the Source of all good things and give Him all the glory.

Question 3: What effect did the encounter with Solomon have on the queen of Sheba?

The queen further said God's delight in choosing Solomon was a result of His love for Israel and for him **“to do judgment and justice”** as earlier revealed to David (2 Samuel 23:3). Her appraisal of Solomon's acts did not only show in words of gratitude but also in her

gifts as “. . . she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones...” (1 Kings 10:10). The gifts, which were costly, varied, unique and bountiful, were a fulfilment of an earlier prophecy (Psalms 72:15), and remind us of the Magi who presented unique gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to baby Jesus (Matthew 2:11). God expects all recipients of His grace to gratefully give to advance His cause in the world like the Macedonian churches gave abundantly despite their great trial and deep poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). He, however, demands that we first give our hearts in total surrender to Him (Proverbs 23:26).

Question 4: What should be the motive and pattern of giving to God by Christians?

Prior to the departure of the queen of Sheba, Solomon also **“gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire... So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.”** The timeless truth of Scripture to **“Give, and it shall be given unto you”** fulfilled here is still much relevant today (Luke 6:38) . Note, however, that all material gifts are ephemeral and gifts without salvation are of little worth.

SOLOMON’S SUPERABUNDANT WEALTH AND ENTERPRISE (1 Kings 10:11,12,14-26; 2 Chronicles 9:10,11,13-31; Ecclesiastes 5:18; 1:2; Psalm 62:10; 1 Timothy 6:17,18; 3 John 2; Luke 12:27).

The text gives a summary of Solomon’s wealth and commercial activities. His great wisdom manifested in various ways, including socio-economic, military and administrative facets of life. He had unceasing flow of income through gold brought to him annually from Ophir: a minimum of six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold yearly. Second, he had revenue in form of taxes from merchant men who traded in spices, the kings of Arabia and rulers of Israel. Third, he received presents from people who came to hear his wisdom. Fourth, he had a naval partnership with Hiram who brought gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks; he used the gold to

produce items like targets, shields, throne, drinking vessels and other pieces of furniture. He made provision for entertainment and gratification also.

Though Solomon became the wisest and richest in his own time, it was an irony that the Israelites under him complained of a heavy economic burden (1 Kings 12:4). His economic policies were not people-oriented as they were exploitative. The people paid annual levies and did forced labor. The indices of economic growth in the nation did not match the standard of living of the generality of the people because much resources were used to support the extravagant lifestyle of their king. This was actually foretold by Samuel when the Israelites insisted they wanted a king to rule them like other nations (1 Samuel 8:9-20). They rejected God's easy yoke and got stuck under the heavy yoke of their human kings.

In the New Testament, Jesus warned believers against the tendency to exploit and oppress others (Matthew 20:25-27). Wealth and honor come from God and it is appropriate to pray for God to **“send now prosperity”** (Psalm 118:25). He wants His children to prosper but not through oppression, cheating, bribery, occultism, robbery, fraud, gambling, and others. The love of money, the Scripture says, is the root of all evil. Prospered believers are warned not to make idols of wealth; they should do good and propagate the gospel with it.

SOLOMON'S GRADUAL DEVIATION FROM GOD'S COMMANDMENTS (1 Kings 10:26-29; 2 Chronicles 9:25; 1:14; Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 2 Chronicles 26:16; Deuteronomy 32:15; Romans 11:33)

Question 5: Explain the temptations that wealthy believers face and how they can overcome.

Solomon's wealth and fame affected his loyalty to God (Deuteronomy 17:16,17). Israel's kings had been warned not to **“multiply”** horses and wives, or **“greatly multiply”** silver and gold to avoid subtle dependence on them. In time of war, the heart of the king can trust

in horses for security instead of relying on the Lord (Proverbs 21:31; Psalm 33:17). Aside multiplying wives, the kings and indeed all Israelites, were forbidden from marrying strangers (Deuteronomy 7:3). All these Solomon did and forgot his prayer for contentment and moderation (Proverbs 30:8,9).

To avoid similar pitfalls, believers should abide in Christ, maintain unbroken communion with God and regular fellowship with other saints, engage in daily self-examination in the light of the Scriptures and live practical holy lives in view of the imminent return of our Lord.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Leviticus	3-4	Ecclesiastes	11-12
TUE	“	5-6	Song of Solomon	1-2
WED	“	7	“	3-4
THUR	“	8	“	5-6
FRI	“	9-10	“	7-8
SAT	“	11-12	Isaiah	1
SUN	“	13	“	2-3

822 Lesson

SIN AND DEATH OF SOLOMON

MEMORY VERSE: “And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice” (1 Kings 11:9).

TEXT: 1 Kings 11:1-43

Previous studies portrayed the era of King Solomon as the golden age of Israel. His father’s military exploits had contributed greatly to the protection of the kingdom against foreign invasion and establishment of the kingdom over surrounding nations. Without controversy, Solomon had been greatly favored by God, David his father, the nation of Israel and the world at large. His reign had been more peaceful and prosperous than that of his father.

Unfortunately, he was unable to manage his success and greatness, which led to his downfall. He started well as a pious king and was abundantly endowed with divine wisdom above his predecessors. But his sin brought him down. Although he was reputed and famed for wisdom and greatness, he is portrayed in this study as one who fell from grace to godlessness and caused the division of the kingdom. **“Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.”**

Like King Solomon, some people are unable to manage success and greatness in their religious and secular engagements. They were more faithful when they were little but as soon as the Lord blessed them, they fell from their steadfastness. The point here is that continuity and consummation of the Christian race is as important as its commencement. It is not enough for the believer to begin a walk with God; he or she must ensure to continue and end the race well. King Solomon’s sin and

its spiral effect on himself, his family and kingdom form the focus of this study.

Question 1: What lesson does Solomon's inconsistency teach Christians?

SOLOMON'S SIN AND DEVIATION FROM THE LORD
(1 Kings 11:1-8; 3:11-14; Deuteronomy 7:3,4; 17:17; Nehemiah 13:26; Exodus 34:16; 1 John 2:15-17)

At the beginning of Solomon's reign, God spoke to him on two occasions. On one of them, He promised to grant him great wisdom.

Thereafter, King Solomon built the temple and dedicated it to God with prayer (1 Kings 5-8). His piety was contagious, his reign a blessing to the kingdom and his wisdom attractive to foreign monarchs. But he went against God's specific instruction and incurred His wrath. **"But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love"** (1 Kings 11:1,2). As a result of his love for his numerous wives, he built shrines for their idols and also participated in idol worship. Thus, he contradicted God's command against idolatry (Exodus 20:1-4). That these idols were connected with detestable practices such as sacrifice of children or infants in their worship (as was the case of Chemosh and Molech) showed the depth he had sunk.

Solomon's descent into idolatry was a reflection of the sorry state of his spiritual life at the time. That a man who loved God at the commencement of his reign could be so void of grace is a lesson to contemporary believers. Once the love of the world and crave for pleasure had corrupted the heart, it begins to crave the things of the world imperceptibly. Solomon's fall was traceable to his love of **"many strange women"**. The fact that his **"wives**

turned away his heart after other gods” points to the danger of unequal yoke in marriage. The Scripture warns: **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”** (2 Corinthians 6:14). Therefore, those looking for marriage partners should depend on God and allow Him to guide them in making the right choice; while Christian couples should continue to watch and pray in order not to slide back from following the Lord.

Though polygamy was tolerated among the ancient Hebrews and people of the East, King Solomon took the practice to a record and extreme level. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. This sin was a direct violation of the law (Deuteronomy 17:17). It must be noted, however, that he did not backslide as a result of old age. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that many Bible characters served God till their old age. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, other patriarchs and prophets are good examples. Solomon’s fall in his old age is a reminder that there is no unconditional or eternal security. To make heaven, we must be consistent in our walk with God till the end.

Question 2: Why is the doctrine of eternal security false?

SOBERING WARNINGS FROM THE LORD TO SOLOMON (1 Kings 11:9-13; 6:12; 9:4-9; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 7:17-22; Deuteronomy 17:14-17; 31:16-18; Joshua 24:20; Isaiah 1:28; Hebrews 10:26-31)

Solomon had received sufficient warnings from his father, David and the Lord about the severe consequences of backsliding. **“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind... if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have**

commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever. . . But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them...” (1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Kings 9:4-7).

Having been warned, Solomon’s deviation from the truth and participation in idolatry was inexcusable. That he turned from the Lord who had appeared unto him twice (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2) showed his lack of gratitude. Although his disobedience was an affront to God’s clear commands, the revelation of what he should expect for his apostasy was to ensure he considered his sin and repent, but he did not. Believers are warned against backsliding and hardness of heart. **“ 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. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth... a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation...”** (Hebrews 4:1; 10:26,27). Of course, there would be no warning if there were no dangers.

Sadly, some believers act like Solomon. Though they had been greatly favored by God who redeemed their soul from eternal damnation and had given them the good things of life to enjoy, they easily yield to pressure and compromise their faith. Such people will not escape God’s judgment except they repent.

Question 3: What are the proofs of Solomon’s backsliding?

SOLOMON’S BACKSLIDING AND IT’S CONSEQUENCES
(1 Kings 11:14- 40; 1 Chronicles 5:26; Hosea 8:3; Leviticus 26:36; Deuteronomy 28:25; Lamentations 4:19; Hebrews 10:38,39; 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 89:30-32)

As a punishment for his backsliding, **“the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon”**. While he had a good relationship with God, all enemies were kept at bay, but after he sinned, they were permitted to cripple his revenue by stopping his lucrative traffic with Tadmor and the Euphrates. Besides these external enemies, there were also internal foes like Jeroboam. Backsliding is a terrible state of severance of relationship with God and removal of name from the book of life (Exodus 32:32,33). Indeed, backsliders are in worse spiritual condition than unconverted sinners who are ignorant of God’s commandments (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Question 4: Enumerate the dangers associated with backsliding.

Solomon’s life and that of people who fell from grace serve as a warning to contemporary believers. The cases of Balaam (Numbers 22:10-13,32), Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16:1,2,30-33), Saul (1 Chronicles 10:13,14), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), Demas (2 Timothy 4:10), etc. reveal the possibility of backsliding if we are not watchful. **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall...lest any man fail of the grace of God...”** (1 Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 12:15). Backsliders have the privilege of being restored if they repent genuinely and turn away from their sin.

SOLOMON’S DEATH AND SUNDRY LESSONS (1 Kings 11:41-43; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

The eventual end of King Solomon’s forty-year reign over Israel and his death remind us of the transient nature of human kingdoms and the brevity of life. Indeed, everything that has a beginning also has an end. Like every other mortal, King **“Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.”** So, everyone should prepare to meet God by obtaining salvation and living a holy life. Solomon’s actions and inactions, achievements and failures, glory and shame are instructive for believers today. The Bible says, **“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:**

and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Question 5: What can believers learn from the misdeeds of King Solomon?

One lesson that sticks out of this study is that backsliding is not a function of age, gender, race or profession. And the length of time a man has worshipped God is not a guarantee that he will not backslide if he does not abide in Christ. As long as believers **“give diligence to make [their] calling and election sure. .. [they] shall never fall”** (2 Peter 1:10). But negligence can cost a believer his or her salvation and precious inheritance in Christ.

Another lesson is that Solomon was unable to separate himself from the heathen. If a believer has no marked separation from the world, its principles and practices, he will soon lose the gem God deposited in him. The pull of worldliness is so strong that no believer should waste a moment to contemplate whether to part with it or not.

Yet, another lesson is that the believer must jealously guard against ungodly influence in making choices of a marriage partner, friends, business associates and places to live. The Lord Jesus Christ had warned His disciples to **“Watch and pray, that [they] enter not into temptation”** (Matthew 26:41). Although Solomon’s relationship with God was affected by his marriage, it must be emphasized that God honors marriages when His rules are followed (Hebrews 13:4).

Also, believers should do everything within the confines of righteousness to please their spouses and spice their marriages. While it is good to strive to please one’s spouse, such good approach to making a marriage work should not be at the detriment of one’s relationship with God. We must put God first in everything we do.

Finally, possession of great gifts such as wisdom is not sufficient to preserve us from falling into grievous errors. **“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall”** (2 Peter 1:10).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Leviticus	14	Isaiah	4-5
TUE	'	15	"	6-7
WED	"	16	"	8-9
THUR	"	17-18	"	10
FRI	"	19	"	11-12
SAT	"	20-21	"	13-14
SUN	"	22	"	15-16

823 Lesson

DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

MEMORY VERSE: "Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (1 Kings 12:15).

TEXT: 1 Kings 12:1-33; 2 Chronicles 10:1-19

This study deals with how the united kingdom of Israel broke up into two weaker nations. The monarchy, which began with the reign of Saul, was strengthened when David took over the kingdom. Solomon succeeded David and made the country prosperous through wisdom and prudent economic management.

Though there had always been rivalry among the tribes of Israel (Judges 8:1; 12:1-6; 2 Samuel 19:40- 42; 20:1,2,20-32) and even a division among the tribes for a short duration (2 Samuel 2:11-32; 15:1-19, 33; 20:1-26), the monarchy survived until the reign of Solomon, when all indices of a breakup manifested and occurred as soon as Rehoboam, his son, took over. The ten northern tribes seceded to form a new independent nation and retained the name Israel, while the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom known as Judah. This division highlights the need to avoid decisions, policies and actions that cause disaffection and disunity in the family, church and society.

In the texts, the unwise response of Rehoboam to the request of the elders of Israel, the role of Jeroboam and the prevailing socio political factors at the time of the revolt interplayed to fulfil the prediction of the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:9-13,26 -40).

We must be careful of our actions or inactions so negative prophecies are not fulfilled in our lives, family or community.

Question 1: How can believers avert the fulfilment of negative prophecies in their lives, family or nation?

THE REQUEST OF REHOBOAM FOR COUNSEL AND CAUSES OF THE DIVISION (1 Kings 12:1- 15; 2 Chronicles 10:1-14; Proverbs 11:14; 15:22,28; 24:6; Psalm 1:1)

Shechem, a city of Ephraim in the north, was chosen rather than Jerusalem, to coronate Rehoboam. The choice may also be Rehoboam's strategy to appease the aggrieved northern tribes and win their affection, or else it was part of the plot by the people to make secession easy. Furthermore, the northern tribes recalled Jeroboam from exile and appointed him their leader and spokesman. By appointing a man who opposed and attempted to overthrow Solomon's kingdom as their leader to face Rehoboam, the northern tribes showed they had ulterior motives in their approach (1 Kings 11:26,40; 12:2,3).

The Israelites met Rehoboam and pledged their allegiance on condition that he would lessen the yoke Solomon placed on them during his reign. The yoke they referred to was the taxation and forced labor policies introduced by him (1 Kings 4:7-19; 5:13-18). They wanted Rehoboam to promise a reprieve before they would coronate him. But he requested that they give him three days to give his answer. It was a wise decision to ask for time before giving a response. **“The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things”** (Proverbs 15:28).

Question 2: Why is it necessary to seek counsel and what caution must one take while seeking counsel?

During the three days, Rehoboam sought counsel from the elders who were his father's counsellors. They advised him to serve the people, at least for a while and reduce their yokes in order to gain their allegiance. But Rehoboam rejected their counsel and adopted the advice of his contemporaries to be autocratic and threaten the people to submission. It is good and necessary to seek

counsel but we must reject a wrong counsel. **“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the of the ungodly...”** (Psalm 1:1). When we are faced with major decisions, there is safety in the multitude of Scripture-based counsels.

The elders’ counsel to Rehoboam would have solved the problem because **“a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”** (Proverbs 15:1). However, Rehoboam chose to act foolishly. He was the son of a wise father but manifested great folly. Indeed, Solomon expressed this fear while he was yet alive (Ecclesiastes 2:18,19). It appeared Solomon did not instruct his son, Rehoboam, as David his father had instructed him. A good leader should train other leaders and a worthy successor.

Question 3: What were the causes of division in the kingdom of Israel and the lessons from them?

Heavy taxation, forced labor policy and the siting of virtually all the building projects in Judah and its environs displeased the ten northern tribes (2 Kings 9:10,15-19). It appeared the northern tribes, though in the majority, were subjugated by the minority (Judah) where the ruling house of David belonged (2 Samuel 19:41-43; 20:1-5). There was also the lingering rivalry between the tribes and the resentment of Ephraim in particular to the dynasty of David. Recall that Joshua, the successor of Moses, was from Ephraim, and Shechem their capital was once a place of national gathering (Numbers 13:8; Joshua 21:21; 24:1). But Jerusalem in Judah became the capital of the entire nation with the temple located there. Therefore, all the tribes attending the annual feasts in Jerusalem three times a year brought prestige and economic prosperity to Judah. Besides, the ambition of Jeroboam to actualize the prophecy of Ahijah that he would be king over ten tribes of Israel was another factor (1 Kings 11:29-38). However, it was Rehoboam’s arrogant response to the people’s plea that sparked the division of the kingdom.

Division can be avoided among God’s people if we follow God’s word and remain true to Him. Rulers

should avoid injustice, inequity, partiality, tribalism, nepotism, vainglory or inordinate ambition. There is need for dialogue, wisdom and consideration for others in maintaining unity. Spiritual unity will strengthen physical unity; therefore, we must **“keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”** (Ephesians 4:3).

THE REVOLT OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEPARATION (1 Kings 12:16-24; 2 Chronicles 10:15-19; 13:1-19; Psalm 133:1-3; 11:1-4; James 3:16)

The representatives of Israel came to meet king Rehoboam after the three days appointed, but he spoke arrogantly and threatened to increase their yoke. In response, the ten northern tribes declared their independence and final separation from the royal house of David. By that declaration, they became a sovereign state and crowned Jeroboam as king. From that point onwards, the monarchy of one Israel came to an end and two nations - Israel and Judah - were born.

Despite their revolt, king Rehoboam made an attempt to enforce his authority over the northern tribes. He sent to them Adoram, an officer-in-charge of the forced labor, but they stoned him to death. This turn of events convinced Rehoboam that the rebellion of the northern tribes was real and his own life was in danger. He fled Shechem to Jerusalem and made a last attempt to unify the kingdom by gathering the army of Judah to fight Israel but God sent prophet Shemaiah to tell him that **“this thing is from me”** (1 Kings 12:24). The division of the kingdom was from God as a punishment for sin and departure from true worship. He used the foolishness of Rehoboam to fulfil His warning to Solomon (1 Kings 11:9-13).

Shortly after his coronation, Jeroboam took steps to secure his hold on power by all means. He felt the Israelites might not continue to be loyal to him so long as they attended the annual religious feasts in Jerusalem. Therefore, he set up two shrines - one in Bethel towards the south and the other in Dan towards the north - and

pretended that he did this for the convenience of the people, but in reality it was self-serving. He said, **“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”** (1 Kings 12:286). Let us avoid the evil motive, hypocrisy, unbelief, unfounded fear and deception of Jeroboam who used religion to secure personal gain and employed deceit to keep the throne, which was given to him by divine providence. We must be careful not to be deceived by any offer of a cheap and convenient alternative to true worship that excludes daily cross-bearing and consecration.

Question 4: Mention the consequences of division among believers today.

The division of the kingdom proved to be disastrous: Israel lost the twelve-tribe structure and began to experience spiritual, economic and political decline. The ten northern tribes were cut off from the temple in Jerusalem and voluntarily separated themselves from the royal line of David through which the Messiah would come. The people were so much concerned about political correctness and economic welfare that they were blinded to the spiritual implications of breaking away from the Davidic covenant. Israel and Judah became rival nations and often at the brink of war. Besides, one after the other, vassal nations rebelled and stopped paying tribute. Egypt attacked Judah and carried away her treasures (2 Chronicles 12:1- 3,11). Christians must strive to maintain unity and avoid divisions in the church (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25; Ephesians 4:3; John 17:21-23). Division weakens, opens the door for Satan to perpetrate his wicked devices and ultimately leads to destruction of souls in hell. It further limits our witness and diminishes the manifestation of God’s power. **“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”** and **“every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation...”** James 3:16; Matthew 12:25). Sinners and backsliders will find a hiding place, prayers will be hindered and the adversaries of the Lord will reproach the church.

THE RELAPSE OF JEROBOAM AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM INTO IDOLATRY (1 Kings 12:25-33; Exodus 32:1-6; 20:1-5; Judges 8:22-27,33,34; Hosea 4:12-17; 11:2; 13:1-4)

After the division of the kingdom, both Israel and Judah fared differently in religion and politics. Jeroboam built Shechem and Penuel as defense cities in Israel. He also led the nation into full scale idolatry. He set up the worship of the golden calf following the precedence of Aaron at Sinai (Exodus 32:1-6; 1 Kings 12:28-29). He claimed the golden calves were Israel's gods that brought them up out of the land of Egypt. Jeroboam introduced strange innovations and abominations to the religious life of Israel. He made idol temples on mountaintops or elevated lands (high places). He expelled the true priests and Levites, appointed priests who were not Levites and instituted a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. This feast was an idolatrous imitation of the authentic feast of Tabernacles which held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:32-34; Numbers 29:12). He assumed the position of a priest as he offered sacrifices and burnt incense. The religion of Jeroboam was counterfeit and had no ark of God or divine presence in it. Curiously, Israel seemed not to care at all. The influence of Jeroboam in misleading Israel into idolatry was so profound that it became a reference point in the Scripture (1 Kings 16:26; 21:22; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29; 13:2; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28; 23:15).

Question 5: From the case of Jeroboam with Israel, how can a believer avoid going into false religion?

Like Jeroboam, many professing Christian leaders deceive people by making idols for them; pretending to be working for their good and convenience by dissuading them from keeping to God-appointed order in worship which they term too burdensome. Unfortunately, like Israel, many accept this satanic ideology and wander into false religion. King Jeroboam set the pace for idolatry in Israel and every other king that reigned after him, without exception, followed in his footsteps. Eventually,

because of their persistent backsliding, Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

The case of Judah was a little better than Israel's because they were more united and some of their godly kings exerted a positive influence on the nation. Kings like Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash (Jehoash), Hezekiah and Josiah prolonged the time of true worship in Judah. But Judah also went into idolatry under the influence of bad kings and they were taken into captivity by the Babylonians long after Israel had been in captivity. Let us not be deceived, sin leads to captivity; and it starts in a little way.

God calls all sinners, including idol worshippers, to repentance to avoid being damned; He calls believers to **“flee from idolatry”** (1 Corinthians 10:14), live holy and maintain unity in the Body of Christ.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Leviticus	23	Isaiah	17-18
TUE	“	24-25	“	19-20
WED	“	26	“	21-22
THUR	“	27	“	23-24
FRI	Numbers	1	“	25-26
SAT	“	2	“	27-28
SUN	“	3	“	29

824 Lesson

MINISTRY OF THE YOUNG PROPHET

MEMORY VERSE: “And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him” (1 Kings 13:4).

TEXT: 1 Kings 13:1-34

The division of the kingdom of Israel and descent of Jeroboam with ten and half tribes into idolatry recorded in the preceding chapter, occasioned the ministry of the young prophet. In a bid to consolidate power and command the loyal followership of the tribes under him, he made idols for the people to worship, cast out the Levites who were divinely ordained to officiate as priests (2 Chronicles 11:14) and recruited people from different tribes into the priests’ office. God’s usual response in times of backsliding and apostasy among His people had been to send his prophets to declare His displeasure and attendant consequences so they would repent. Thus, this study focuses on a man of God, often referred to as the young prophet from Judah, who had a successful outing and a tragic end. His shortened life and ministry remain a sad commentary from which every believer and minister of God must learn useful lessons in order to make a successful pilgrimage to heaven.

PROPHECY AGAINST THE ALTAR AND CONFIRMATION OF THE PROPHET’S MINISTRY (1 Kings 13:1-6; 2 Kings 23:17,18; Isaiah 58:1; 54:17; Jeremiah 1:8; Ezekiel 3:16-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

The spiritual eclipse that engulfed the nation of Israel under Jeroboam led to the emergence of “**a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel**” (1 Kings 13:1). God has always responded in moments of crisis by raising His servants through different epochs

of human history to warn, rebuke, chastise, judge and intervene in their affairs. In the text, He sent the young prophet with a specific message to deal with the case of idolatry (Exodus 20:3-5). God hates and condemns sin anywhere anytime.

On arrival at Bethel, the young prophet from Judah met Jeroboam where he was set to offer sacrifice upon the altars he had dedicated to idols. He condemned the idolatry in the land and gave three prophecies with a sign and a miracle of healing to validate their fulfilment. One, **“Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name”**; two, **“upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee”** and three, **“men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee”**. These prophecies came 322 years before Josiah was born and 348 years before their fulfilment (2 Kings 23:17,18). The desecration of the true worship in the midst of God’s people cannot continue forever, as God will not always allow His glory to be trampled under feet in the name of idol worship and other ungodly practices. So, all heaven-bound saints should awake to their God-given responsibility of preaching the gospel which is the divine solution to the spread of sin and evil.

Question 1: What should be the believer’s attitude to idol worship?

The prophet’s sign that **“the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out”** (1 Kings 13:3) was met with resistance from Jeroboam. He defiantly stretched out his hand and called for the arrest of the **“man of God”**. Rather than humble himself, he tried to resist God, His minister and word. God protected his messenger by causing Jeroboam’s outstretched arm to become paralyzed, **“so that he could not pull it in again to him.”** **“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!... who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?”** (Isaiah 45:9; Job 23:13). This instant judgment serves as a warning to all deviants to refrain from seeking to harm God’s messengers. It also reveals divine displeasure with all those who make and worship idols of any kind in addition to serving as a precursor of judgment to come. Besides, God who says,

“Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm” will always protect His faithful servants from being hurt by the enemy (Psalm 105:15; Isaiah 54:17; Psalm 46:7).

Having encountered the irresistible God, Jeroboam realized there was a higher power than his and pleaded with the man of God to pray for his healing. This incident validates the truths of Scripture: one, the evil shall bow before the good (Proverbs 14:19); two, that light dispels darkness (John 1:5); three, no one can successfully fight against God’s will and word (Isaiah 43:13); four, that the divine presence is with His faithful servants (Matthew 28: 20); five, that His promises of protection and preservation are sure (Luke 10:19); six, that God-sent ministers will always succeed as they deliver the exact message He gives them (Luke 10:17; Acts 2:37-41); and seven, that obedience to divine commission and errand is the key to unlocking heaven for divine affirmation and confirmation of message and ministry (Mark 16:20).

Question 2: What can believers learn from the failure of Jeroboam to resist the word of God?

Obviously, the three notable miracles that took place at Bethel confirm the ministry of the young prophet. These include the drying up of Jeroboam’s hand, rending of the altar and the healing of Jeroboam’s withered hand. Like the prophet, it is when we arise as believers and cry to God against all altars and forms of ungodly practices in our communities and preach the gospel to the unsaved that conversion, signs and wonders will follow our obedience (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20).

THE POWER OF THE FLESH AND FALSEHOOD (1 Kings 13:7-22; Numbers 22:1-13,15-35; Genesis 39:7-12; 1 Peter 5:8-10; Luke 22:31,32; Matthew 4:1-11; 26:41; 1 Corinthians 9:27)

“And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give

thee a reward “ (1 Kings 13:7). The king invited the Man of God to his home for rest, refreshment and a reward for restoring his arm. It was customary in those days to offer a prophet a gift or reward if he performed something requested of him (1 Samuel 9:7-8; 1 Kings 14:3; 2 Kings 5:5; 8:9). Jeroboam’s offer could have been intended to buy the prophet over as there was no sign of repentance. But the man of God reaffirmed the divine imperative that: **“For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou earnest”** (1 Kings 13:8,9). And he took off through another route, **“So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel”** (1 Kings 13:10). Obviously, he had a strong determination to obey God’s instruction to the letter. But it was this declaration relayed to the old prophet that he used to entice and entrap him. God wants prompt and complete obedience to all His revealed will and word. And believers must be careful not to supply the enemy the information with which to undo them.

“Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king...” (1 Kings 13:11,12). From the report given to the old prophet, it was obvious that his sons were part of the crowd with Jeroboam to offer incense to the golden calf. They also saw the route the man of God took. When his sons told him about the incident, he did not rebuke them for their involvement in idol worship but instructed them to prepare him an ass for the devious trip. **“And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak...”** (1 Kings 13:14).

The prophet’s flesh could not fully comply with the divine imperative as it continually nudged him for rest and repose. God knew he could go and return successfully but the quest for ease at the wrong place coincided with the opportunity to fully satisfy its craving for food and rest through the artful fabrication of lies by the old prophet who was as deceitful as the old serpent.

The man of God was resting under an oak tree when the old prophet caught up with him. A Christian song writer cautions: “Christian, seek not yet repose, Hear thy gracious Savior say; Thou art in the midst of foes: Watch and pray.” It was when David was resting **“at the time when kings go forth to battle “** (2 Samuel 11:1) that he fell into the sin of adultery. The devil always watches for careless and unguarded moment of ease to strike: **“your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5: 8). Procrastination and delay sometimes gives opportunity for the tempter to overtake his target.

Question 3: How can we resist temptation to compromise our Christian conviction?

The old prophet realized that Jeroboam’s approach did not work; so, he determined to deceive him with outright lies. He said, **I am a prophet also as thou art**” (verse 18) and as a proof, claimed that **“an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD. But he lied unto him”** (verse 18). He had no shame that God had to raise another prophet from Judah for an assignment in Bethel where he lived. It was unfortunate that the young prophet believed his lies though he knew what God had commanded as confirmed in verses 8,9,16 and 17. Having swallowed the deceit of the old prophet, he went back to Bethel contrary to the divine command and **“did eat bread in his house, and drank water”** (1 Kings 13:19). What Jeroboam could not achieve with force, the old prophet achieved by appealing to the religious sentiment of the young prophet. The deceit of false prophets and teachers is deadlier than persecution from unbelievers. Believers are instructed to reject false prophets or teachers and their errors (Titus 3:10).

Question 4: How should believers handle strange revelations that contradict the sound teaching of the Scripture?

As they were eating, God used the old prophet to declare judgment on the young prophet: **“...thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulcher of thy fathers”** (1 Kings 13:21,22). The man of God left Bethel, this time,

with divine displeasure. It is also unfortunate there was no record of his repentance. **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12).

THE PROPHET’S DEATH AND WARNING FOR END-TIME SAINTS AND MINISTERS (1 Kings 13:23-34; 1 Peter 5:8-10; Luke 22:31,32; Matthew 26:41; Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 2:10)

A bright future in prophetic ministry just came to an abrupt end due to compromise. Though the reason the old prophet decided to ensnare the man of God is not stated, it is clear from Scripture that Satan does not want anyone to obey and serve God consistently and make heaven (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8). No doubt, his motive and inspiration for bringing down the minister of God came from the old serpent.

As the young prophet left Bethel, **“a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcass was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass”** (1 Kings 13:24). The lion only killed the young prophet and neither attacked the ass nor passersby.

This lion was on a special mission of fulfilling God’s judgment on His erring servant. The report came to the old prophet in Bethel and he immediately realized it must be the man of God from Judah. He went to bring his carcass for burial in Bethel, mourned his demise and instructed his children to bury him beside his grave (1 Kings 13:30-32).

The tragic end of this rising prophet serves as a warning to all pilgrims to be consistent in their obedience to the revealed word and will of God. We must reject any new word contrary to His word and will (Galatians 1:6- 9; Isaiah 8:20) . Flesh, falsehood and friendship were responsible for his fall. For others, the devil uses famine, fear and fame; women, wealth and worldliness; gold, goods and games; men, materialism and money; power, partnership and pleasure; and poverty, pain and

pursuit. Samson, Balaam, Amnon, Jehoshaphat, the young prophet, Judas Iscariot and Demas are examples (Judges 14:1- 3; 16:1-3,4-21; Numbers 22:1-34; 31:8; 2 Samuel 13:1-5; 2 Chronicles 18:1; 19:2; 20:35-37; 1 Kings 13:19-24; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Luke 22:3,47,48; 2 Timothy 4:10).

Question 5: What do believers learn from the tragic end of the young prophet?

In spite of all that happened, Jeroboam continued in his obstinacy and idolatry despite the supernatural signs he witnessed from the visiting man of God (1 Kings 13:33,34). Sinners and backsliders should not harden their hearts against God but repent of sin and falsehood to avoid divine judgment here and hereafter. And believers must be consistent in obedience, watchfulness, prayer and holy living to serve God acceptably in order to make heaven.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Numbers	4	Isaiah	30
TUE	“	5-6	“	31-33
WED	“	7	“	34-35
THUR	“	8-9	“	36
FRI	“	10	“	37
SAT	“	11	“	38-39
SUN	“	12-13	“	40

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

825 Lesson

LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHURCH

MEMORY VERSE: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

TEXT: Titus 1:1-16

Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote this pastoral epistle to Titus as a guide to effective Christian leadership. The epistle gives insight into the problems that confronted the fledgling Cretian church and the Apostle’s recommended leadership response and attitude to them. The need to maintain centrality of God’s word in doctrine and Christian conduct, the attributes and qualifications for leadership in the church and the danger posed by false teachers and false doctrines are highlighted by the Apostle in this epistle. He affirmed that **“in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”** (1 Timothy 4:16). Thus, leadership responsibility in today’s church consists in teaching and preserving sound doctrines of Christ once delivered to the saints.

Question 1: Highlight the major subjects Apostle Paul discussed in this chapter.

PAUL’S SALUTATION AND INTRODUCTION (Titus 1:1-4; Ephesians 6:6; Romans 6:16; Titus 2:12; Genesis 3:15)

In the introductory part of his epistle to Titus, Apostle Paul betrayed some of his personal attributes worthy of emulation. He expressed important foundational truths which every Christian leader must appreciate.

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the

acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (verse 1). By describing himself as a “servant of God”, the apostle implied, first, that the highest officer in the church is but a servant of God and of His church. Therefore, in conduct and character, leaders in the church must act only as it is consistent with the demands and interests of God’s kingdom and will. They must serve, **“Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart”** (Ephesians 6:6). A servant’s will and interests are subsumed under his master’s.

Second, the elects are those who have obtained salvation by the grace of God and have hope of eternal life in Christ. All the elects of God in whatever age are united by a common faith in Christ. Third, the truth of God’s word properly taught and understood tends to godliness. Godliness is synonymous with holiness. Grace teaches us **“that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”** (Titus 2:12). Fourth, the ultimate aim of the gospel is to show people how to obtain eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. **“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”** (verse 2). It is the believer’s greatest comfort that the hope of eternal life is anchored on the infallible promise of God, which was made thousands of years ago, when sin gained entrance (Genesis 3:15). God did not only promise salvation, **“But hath in due times manifested his word (promise) through preaching”** of the gospel **“which is committed unto me”** and true believers.

Question 2: Mention vital lessons in Paul’s salutation and introduction in this epistle?

**LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES AND
QUALIFICATIONS** (Titus 1:5-9; Acts 9:15,17; 1
Corinthians 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy
3:1-7)

Leadership in the church is appointed by God just as Paul was called **“according to the commandment of**

God our Savior” when he encountered Christ on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:15,17). A true call to ministry and leadership ought to come from the Spirit of God and Spirit-led leadership in the church. All who would be called to leadership must have first encountered Christ personally and had a genuine experience of salvation. Without the approval of God who inclines the heart, authorizes and gives support to church leadership, taking the honor of spiritual leadership leads to frustration, barrenness and failure. It behoves the appointing minister also to prayerfully secure the Spirit’s approval before making appointments in the church.

The purpose and objective of leadership in the church should be clearly defined in the leader’s mind and made always the focus of his prayer. **“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee”** (verse 5). The urgent nature and expansiveness of the work of the gospel often demand that a leader may have to consolidate or build upon what has been started by another. Paul the apostle said, **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase”** (1 Corinthians 3:6). Thus, Titus was commissioned to attend to those issues in the Cretian church which the Apostle could not have time to deal with.

A good leader should not only be willing to engage other hands in what God had used him to start, he must ensure that such delegation is committed to faithful and capable hands to carry on. In the case of new converts, those to be entrusted with the precious souls must have the heart of a pastor and are as dedicated as **“a nurse cherisheth her children.”**

Apostle Paul’s humility as a leader is instructive. He never scorned the contribution of others who were of lower spiritual rank to the work of the ministry. Again, although Titus was below the Apostle in spiritual ranking, he undoubtedly had grown and risen above those elders he was to appoint. The Scripture enjoins all believers and particularly church leaders to **“study**

(make deliberate efforts in study and prayer) **to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**". Knowledge comes with study and spiritual growth with obedience to God's words and prayers of consecration. These will place leaders ahead and make them capable of helping the congregation, repairing what is amiss and supplying what is lacking.

In his valedictory exhortation to the church leaders at Troas, the Apostle summarized the basic responsibilities of church leadership thus: **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28).

<p>Question 3: Mention some of the duties and responsibilities of leadership in the church.</p>
--

Apostle Paul did not only point out responsibilities, he also outlined clearly the qualifications and manners of life of those to be appointed as ministers, elders and leaders. First, **"if any be blameless"**. A leader must have a good reputation both within and without the church so that he will not bring reproach to the high and holy office of church leadership. Second, **"the husband of one wife"**. This implies that he must not have divorced his wife and remarried. Also, the minister must eschew polygamy and be married to only one wife at a time. Third, **"having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly"**. The minister's children must be properly brought up according to the standard of the gospel.

Fourth, **"not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine"**. A leader must not always insist on his own opinion or be given to tempers. The sin of drunkenness is a reproach to the exalted office of church leadership. The exhortation to all believers is, **"Be not drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit"** (Ephesians 5:18). Five, **"no striker"**. A person with quarrelsome or vengeful spirit cannot effectively lead the flock of Christ. Six, **"not given to filthy lucre"**. Church leaders

must never make monetary gains or material comfort their driving interest. Seven, **“a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate”**. The minister must be of such temperament in order to cheerfully receive visitors and support those in need or distress. He should be inclined to identify with good men even if they are poor. He should be able to control and govern his appetites and passions. Besides, he must hold **“fast the faithful word as he hath been taught”**. He must be firm in his belief of the Christian faith and be faithful to the gospel which he preaches.

Question 4: What are some of the necessary qualifications and attributes of a Christian leader?

VIGILANCE AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINES AND TEACHERS (Titus 1:10-16; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 1 Timothy 1:3,4; Hebrews 10:1-4; 8:7-9).

Apostle Paul was definite on the need for church leadership to be on guard in order to keep away false teachers and doctrines from the sacred portals of church leadership. **“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake”** (verses 10, 11). During Titus’ day, many of such persons were Jews who would want to mingle Christianity with Old Testament rituals, ceremonial laws and Jewish fables. But a Christian writer properly puts it thus: “The performance of the ordinances of the law as a way of acceptance with God is now (under the gospel dispensation) superseded in as much as those ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation were but the types and shadows of which Christ is the fulfilment and substance.” Today, false teachers still seek to mix the gospel with **“commandments of men, that turn from the truth”**. They water down the salvation message but concentrate on church duties, performance of certain rites and obligations. They mix the gospel with cultic rituals and blood sacrifices. They also engage in other forms of syncretism. But Titus was to be determined **“not to know anything among the Cretians “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”** (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Questions 5: Mention some of the present-day false teachings and practices on the essentials of salvation.

Apostle Paul warned that the mouths of false teachers must be stopped, not by the use of physical force but by the force of scriptural truth. Where the peddlers of false doctrines are obstinate and pose a danger of infecting the church by spreading their pernicious influences, then necessary and adequate censures must be applied to preserve the purity of gospel truth in the church. This, according to the Scripture, is an important responsibility of church leadership. To Timothy, the Apostle also directed, **“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus. . . that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine... so do”** (1 Timothy 1 :3,4). False teachers are often driven by worldly interests especially, the love of money, popularity and acceptance.

Question 6: How can the danger of false teachers and doctrines be contained in the church today?

Paul’s concern was the preservation of **“the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”** (Galatians 5:1). Under the gospel dispensation, the believer is freed from the legalism of dietary restrictions and ceremonial observances. **“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”** By this assertion, the Apostle certainly did not mean that any one should use this as excuse to justify sinful actions. He was only referring to the notion of clean and unclean foods and meats. Under the dispensation of grace, moral purity is not of foods and diets but of heart purity, righteousness and good conscience.

As Paul the apostle concluded the epistle, he stated that although false prophets and teachers **“profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”** Truly, the lifestyle and actions of false teachers and sinners contradict their claim to

the knowledge of God. However, the best antidote to falsehood is the knowledge of the truth. Thus, we must make the undiluted word of God our priority in ministry.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Numbers	14	Isaiah	41
TUE	“	15	“	42-43
WED	“	16	“	44
THUR	“	17-18	“	45-46
FRI	“	19-20	“	47-48
SAT	“	21	“	49
SUN	“	22	“	50-51

826 Lesson

PRECEPTS FOR GODLY LIVING

MEMORY VERSE: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:7,8).

TEXT: Titus 2:1-10

Apostle Paul was always denouncing false doctrine and their peddlers. He spared no space for people who were sold to do the devil’s bidding through teachings that destroy and damn the soul. Writing to the Galatian Christians **“because of false brethren unawares brought in... “** he said, **“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”** (Galatians 2:5). Unlike those who peddle false **“doctrines that turn men from the truth”**, the Apostle admonished Titus to teach **“things which become sound doctrine”**, that profit the soul rather than please the flesh.

Although sound doctrine ministers godliness to everyone in the church, it finds specific application to different classes of persons according to age, gender and status. Titus was to discharge this pastoral duty faithfully and effectively by applying sound biblical doctrines to particular classes of people in the church - older men and women, young men and women, and servants. This will allow the grace of God to impact people’s lives and bridge the generational, gender and social gaps among them.

Question 1: Mention the categories of people in the church who can profit from sound doctrine.

THE COMMAND TO TEACH SOUND DOCTRINE (Titus 2:1; 1:9; Deuteronomy 32:2; Proverbs 4:2; 1 Timothy 4:6).

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). In the previous chapter, Paul the apostle had sensitized Titus of the presence of **“many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers...”** His verdict was that their **“mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not...”** If this was to be done, Titus, as a preacher, teacher and pastor, must **“speak”** things suitable and agreeable with sound doctrine. Here, the Apostle seeks to embolden him to stand up to his responsibility, **“holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”** (Titus 1:9). He wanted Titus to silence false teachers and preserve the pure gospel which consists in righteousness through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, holiness and purity of true believers, non-conformity with the world, and living the risen life.

Apostle Paul was compelled to command Titus to be committed to preaching and teaching sound doctrine because of the pervasive influence of false doctrine which seeks to destroy the spiritual fabric of God’s people in every generation. When bearers of the torch of truth fail to proclaim the **“good doctrine”**, the dark shadows of falsehood tend to take over. As pastors, we must not shirk our obligation of preaching the full-orbed truth; we must be courageously committed to it.

The consequences of the failure to uphold sound doctrines are grave. One, false doctrine gives false security and hope to its peddlers and those who embrace it. Two, it corrupts the pure word of God and the people it seeks to save. Three, it damns souls in an eternity without Christ. Every true minister of Christ therefore must avoid falsehood like a plague and pledge their allegiance and loyalty to preaching and teaching **“the things which become sound doctrine”**.

<p>Question 2: Mention some false teachings which contradict the word of God.</p>
--

COUNSELS TO DIFFERENT GROUPS OF BELIEVERS

(Titus 2:2-6,9-11; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 12:9; 1 Timothy 3:3; Ephesians 5:22-25; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 2:18,19; Mathew 25:14-28; Luke 16:13)

Titus was exhorted to teach **“that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience”**. Godliness of older men and women is important for the profit of their own souls and serves as an example that induce the younger people to righteousness. Ungodliness in their lives will seduce them to corruption. For the Christian, age does not excuse any intemperate or sinful behavior. In particular, aged men must be, one, **“sober”**. Soberness of mind helps to develop habits that promote both spiritual and physical health in all, but particularly in the aged. Two, they must be **“grave”** in speech and comportment. In older persons, it produces greater respect which in turn confers authority on them.

Three, **“temperance”** is synonymous with self-control, self-restraint, sobriety and prudence. It is the opposite of licentiousness and excess. The health and good example required of older men compels the virtue of temperance. Four, **“sound in faith, in charity, in patience”**. It is to be expected that older saints should be as full of grace as they are full of years. As the outer man depreciates, the inner man ought to be renewed more and more. Faith, love and patience are graces that lead to perfection. Love for the brethren must be without pretense, while patience is called for when it is necessary to endure evil or some unpleasant situation. Older men should be part of those **“who through faith and patience inherit the promise”** (Hebrews 6:12).

Titus’ pastoral exhortations must also warn older women to always **“be in behavior as becometh holiness”**. It must be stated that the older women are not exempted from virtues of sobriety, gravity, temperance, soundness in faith, charity and patience recommended to older men. They should, in addition, behave always in a manner that befits holy people. Older women are expected to be holy and maintain godly decency and moderation in

their clothing, gestures, looks, speech and deportment. Holiness of heart must reflect in all outward conducts.

Second, they should not be **“false accusers”** who spread lies, calumny or gossip - sins that are common among ungodly women. Third, **“not given to much wine”**. Drunkenness is debasing and unbecoming of all persons, especially older women, being more odious to their gender, age and calling. Fourth, they should be **“teachers of good things”**. Godly women who are experienced are usually very good teachers to younger women. Such aged women have better access than men or even ministers, to teach young women profitably, being of the same gender.

Question 3: Mention some virtues which are expected of older men and women in the church.

The Apostle goes further to state that older women should **“teach the young women to be sober, to love their own husbands, to love their children...”** The aged women are expected to teach the younger women to, one, be **“sober”**. Sobriety in young women will find expression in their judgment and behaviors. It will prevent the vanity and worldliness that characterize their ungodly counterparts. Two, **“to love their husbands”**. Where love exists, the question of obedience and submission presents no problem. The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church. If therefore, like Christ to the church, the husband loves, secures and provides for the wife according to his ability, the wife’s love, obedience and submission will be secure.

Three, **“to love their children”**. It is a natural instinct for mothers to love their children. The love here emphasized must be moderated by the word of God and not the indulgent one that excludes necessary reproof, correction and discipline. Motherly Christian love should take care of both their spiritual and temporal welfare.

Four, **“to be discreet, chaste”**. Being discreet and chaste are important virtues in young women. These are products of spiritual discipline which the older godly

women have as an advantage to instill in the younger ones. Five, **“keepers at home”**: the young women in the church should be taught to care for their nuclear family while avoiding excessive love of merriment and company that run against chastity and home building. Six, they must be **“good”** and kind to their biological children, neighbors or servants.

Again, the result of manifesting the aforementioned virtues is **“that the word of God be not blasphemed”**. Failure to express the glory of the gospel by virtuous living empowers the enemies of the gospel to speak reproachfully against the Christian faith.

“Young men like wise exhort to be sober minded” (verse 6). Titus’ exhortation must harp on the importance of sobriety for young men because unconverted young men tend to be thoughtless, proud and vain in their pursuits. Sobriety and thoughtfulness will make them purposeful and productive in life.

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters and to please them well in all things, not answering again” (Titus 2:9). What applies to servants and slaves in the days of Titus also applies to all employees, domestic servants and trade apprentices today. Christian servants should respect and remain loyal to their masters, whether such are gentle or froward (1 Peter 2:18).

However, pleasing the master **“in all things”** must be understood to include only those things in which he has legal authority and things that do not violate the word and will of God, the supreme Master. Where the master’s will conflicts with God’s, the servant or employee is to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).

Pleasing God in all things should take priority over pleasing the master. A servant is admonished to **“Not answering again”**; not contradicting or disputing with his master or be disrespectful by the use of provocative language. This does not exclude turning away the master’s wrath with a soft answer when it is reasonable to do so (Proverbs 15:1). Second, **“not purloining but**

showing all good fidelity". It is an important mark of a Christian servant, employee or apprentice to be transparent and honest. He should never convert to his own use what is his master's or employer's. He must be careful not to waste his master's goods entrusted into his care. That the master is hard, stingy or strict, and hardly makes enough provision and allowance for his servants does not justify self-help or theft to 'right' their master's wrong. Christian servants in such a situation must bear their lot, committing their situation to the almighty God who is able to right every wrong and provide for His own.

Third, **"but showing all good fidelity"**. A servant must improve his master's business and promote his prosperity to the best of his ability. The servant who did not increase his master's one talent was accused of unfaithfulness, even though he neither stole nor embezzled it (Matthew 25:14-28). A servant's faithfulness is expressed in his readiness, punctuality and thoroughness in the execution of his duties. As servants thus **"adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things"**, blessings will flow into their lives from God and men.

Question 4: Explain how the servant's precepts can be related to the believer's attitude to the great commission.

COMMITMENT TO A SAINTLY DISPOSITION (Titus 2:7,8; 1 Peter 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:12,16; Romans 2:21-24)

Titus, though a pastor, should show himself in all things as **"a pattern of good works. . ."** He could not expect to successfully teach others if he failed to live by the same doctrine (Romans 2:21). The lifestyle, disposition and conduct of a minister of the gospel matter a lot to the success of his ministry. The congregation of saints are willing to hear, imbibe and live by the message of Christ-like preachers and despise those who are false and sinful.

The pattern or model a preacher is called to be must be

all-round - doctrine or disposition. That is, the source and quality of his message must be scripture-based. Two, he must not be corrupted whether in morals or money matters. Three, he must be grave, serious and sober, not given to frivolities. Four, he does not live a dishonest life but is sincere and truthful. Five, there must be **“sound speech that cannot be condemned”**, whether on the pulpit or outside of it (verse 8). It must be apparent that the purpose of his preaching is entirely to honor God and advance His Kingdom and spiritual welfare of souls, and not the display of mere human oratory. Scripture language is best for expressing its truths.

The reason for these precepts is, **“...so that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”** The minister must not give occasion to the enemies of the gospel to speak reproachfully against it, but **“with well doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”** (1 Peter 2:15). By so doing, the world would be left with no excuse on the Day of Judgment, having witnessed the gospel that was preached and practiced.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Numbers	23-24	Isaiah	52-53
TUE	“	25	“	54-55
WED	“	26	“	56-57
THUR	“	27-28	“	58-59
FRI	“	29	“	60-61
SAT	“	30	“	62-63
SUN	“	31	“	64-65

827 Lesson

THE POWER OF GOD'S GRACE

MEMORY VERSE: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).

TEXT: Titus 2:11-15

God's grace is His unmerited favor and infinite mercy to the undeserving. This truth, revealed from the beginning to the end of the Bible (Genesis 6:8; Revelation 22:21), is the only reasonable explanation for our creation, redemption, preservation and glorification. God's grace comes through Jesus who incarnated, died and rose again to "**save his people from their sins**" (Matthew 1:21). It is simply spelt **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. It is of inestimable value to all - both sinners and saints. Interestingly, this undeserved gift of grace and mercy, "**hath appeared to all men**" to transform as well as enrich us. Ignorance of this truth robs both sinners and believers of the benefits of the many-sided or "**manifold grace of God**" (1 Peter 4:10). Saved by grace, we are sanctified, sustained and strengthened by it. To trust in God to be saved by grace and relying on self-effort to live righteously is impossible and suicidal (Galatians 3:3). We also live and serve God by grace.

Question 1: Explain the meaning of God's grace.

GOD'S PROVISION OF GRACE FOR THE SALVATION OF ALL PEOPLE: (Titus 2:11,12; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; 2 Peter 3:9; Psalm 86:5; Romans 3:23,24; 5:6-21; 6:1-12, 18,21;10:8-13; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1:7,12; Titus 3:5-7)

The grace of God that brings salvation has been revealed to all classes of people - old and young, master and servant, king and subject, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. None is excluded from its offer of salvation because "**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**". God desires to save all people from sin

so they will not perish. Every sin committed against God is a great debt owed and innumerable sins have been committed against Him (Psalm 40:12). And the unchanging penalty, which no sinner can pay and still live, is death. Worse still, no one can pay for another since all have sinned and are indebted. Though God is **“ready to forgive”**, He demands that justice be done. Someone must pay the penalty for past sins to be blotted out. And here comes the good news to all people of all races: that Christ, the sinless Son of God, became Man to take our place, pay the penalty and release us from our sin-debts. Obtaining this freedom from condemnation and death for past sins through the undeserved and unmerited mercy and favor God is at the immeasurable price of the blood and life of Christ.

Question 2: What can the grace of God do in the life of the sinner?

Salvation from the penalty, pollution, power, propensity and presence of sin and the prince of sinners is all by grace. Though many people who struggle with sin think it is impossible to be saved from it, the truth is that **“the grace of God that bringeth salvation”** liberates and transforms life. Grace leads us to the truth in Christ. The truth is that the sinner, who wholeheartedly repents, forsakes sin, accepts Christ’s death for him, asks for forgiveness, believes in His resurrection for justification and receives Him as Lord and Savior, will be saved.

Just as grace produces or results in salvation, the effect of salvation in our hearts is righteousness in our lives. **“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Romans 10:10). The true believer receives **“righteousness from the God of his salvation”** and testifies that **“God hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness”** (Psalm 24:5; Isaiah 61:10; Psalms 71:15; 98:2; Isaiah 45:8; 56:1; 59:17; 62:1). It follows that recipients of God’s grace are empowered to stop sinning and live righteously. Sin and grace cannot co-exist in any life. Or, is ungodly living

the proof of grace? **“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”** (Romans 6:1,2). Any teaching which claims that recipients of God’s grace and salvation can be unrighteous in lifestyle is devilish and damning.

Question 3: What are the proofs that a person has experienced the grace of God?

The Apostle clarifies that God’s grace does not stop at salvation; it sustains converted believers in the Kingdom; **“Teaching [enabling] us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”** God’s grace does not only transform hearts and lives but also produce a desire to live like God as revealed in Christ. Besides, it creates an aversion or deep dislike for anything ungodly or unrighteous. The desire for sensual indulgence or worldly pleasure is replaced with the love for God and righteousness. Saved from sin, we are made free from the gross passion and pursuit of worldly-minded sinners around us. The fleshly enjoyments of those who do not know God hold no interest for those who have tasted the grace and goodness of God in salvation. Everyone who is saved by grace through faith in Christ desires as well as lives **“soberly”** with all passions and propensities under due restraint; **“righteously”** to always please God in all things; and **“godly”**, acting and conducting ourselves as true children of God who possess His nature. The place to live a godly lifestyle is **“this present evil world”** (Galatians 1:4) because heaven and its inhabitants are holy. It is the height of self-deceit for anyone who lives in sin on earth to hope to live a godly life in heaven; no sinful soul can enter there!

PREPARATION AND EXPECTATION OF THE SAINTS (Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 -18; Philippians 3:20,21; John 14:1-3; 1 Peter 1:7,13; Colossians 3:1-4; Acts 24:15,16; Hebrews 9:27,28; 1 John 3:1- 3; 2 Peter 3:12-14)

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Paul the apostle here highlights the ultimate end of the power and effects of God’s grace which should be the expectation of all saints. God’s design in recreating us to be like Him, live for and serve Him is so we can live with Him in heaven forever. To deny ungodliness and worldly lust and not get to heaven serves no purpose and to live soberly, righteously and godly with no desire for heaven is worthless. Heaven is the singular goal, pursuit and hope of the godly. With faith in Christ’s unfailing promise of Second Coming, he loathes the filth and evil prevalent in this world. Believers have no continuing city on earth; they look for the glories of another world where they will soon transit to, either through death or rapture of the saints. The blessed hope of Christians, therefore, is the final happy re-union with the Lord in heaven.

Question 4: What assurance do believers have from the Scripture that Christ is coming again and how should sinners and believers prepare for it?

God calls sinners and believers to prepare for heaven as nobody will get there by accident but by conscious appropriation of the full benefits and experience of the His grace. Apostle Peter reiterates Christ’s teaching on the certain and terrible destruction of this sinful world by fire to instruct that believers should pursue as well as endeavor to live in holiness and watchfulness lest they become prey (2 Peter 3:11). Heaven is a holy place for holy people; current experience of saving and sustaining grace are the indispensable qualifications for admission into it (Colossians 1:12).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again as predicted in Scripture. There are over 660 general prophecies, 333 of them about Christ. 109 were fulfilled at His First Coming, 224 are still to be fulfilled at His Second Coming. There are over 1,500 Old Testament passages that refer to the Second Coming of Christ. 1 out of every 25 New Testament verses directly refers to the Second Coming of Christ. Every time the Bible mentions the

First Coming of Christ, it mentions His Second Coming 8 times. Jesus refers to His Second Coming 21 times and over 50 times, we are told to be ready for His return. Christ's Second Coming is a major theme in the word of God. Christ's unfailing promise, the guarantee of the Holy Spirit, His program for the Church, the nations and Israel, His crucifixion and future reign and expectation of the saints all demand He returns (John 14:1-3; Luke 19:11-13; John 16:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Acts 15:14-18; James 5:7,8; Joel 3:2,9-12; Isaiah 59:20,21; Jeremiah 23:5,6; Matthew 26:63-68; 1 Corinthians 15:19,52; Titus 2:11-13). To avoid being damned, believers must live and serve in the consciousness of Christ's imminent return. Death or rapture is once: there will be no second chance.

PURITY AND SERVICE OF CHRIST'S PECULIAR SERVANTS (Titus 2:14,15; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 9:13,14; Psalm 24:3,4; 51:6-10; Acts 15:9; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; 1 Peter 1:13-22; 2:9; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Timothy 5:20-22; 4:12-16).

Christ's sacrifice is for our sanctification. He **“gave himself for us [believers]”** on purpose. Aside the fact that He gave Himself **“a ransom”** for our salvation (1 Timothy 2:4-6), the Scripture affirms He gave Himself for the Church **“that he might deliver us from this present evil world”**; that we might be **“crucified with Christ”**; **“that he might sanctify and cleanse”** us; and **“that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”** (Galatians 1:4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:25-27; Titus 2:14). From these Bible references, it is clear that to be sanctified is to be made free from sin, cleansed from moral pollution, redeemed from all iniquity, set free from the power of sin, made holy without spot, blemish or wrinkle, purified and entirely consecrated unto Christ and zealous of good works. Purification supposes the presence of inner uncleanness (Hebrews 9:14). While salvation deals with cessation of outward sins, sanctification frees the believers from inbred/inward sins.

Question 5: Why did Christ give Himself for us?

Saved and sanctified by His blood, we no longer belong to ourselves; we become Christ's peculiar possession purchased by His blood. We live afterwards only for God's glory and Christ's exaltation and revelation to all around us. Purified believers are the peculiar people of God who are possessed by the Spirit of Christ with zeal for good works. Christ expects that all His redeemed should live for His glory (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

The Apostle closes the chapter with a directive to Titus which present-day ministers should follow. "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority." Having learned the truths about salvation, sanctification, rapture, the second coming of Christ, Christian conduct and service, the onus lies on believers to dutifully and effectively communicate same to others for their benefits. The Apostle repeatedly enjoined Titus to commit himself to these "**sound doctrine**" or "**sound speech**" (Titus 2:1,8) and not Jewish fables or traditions. The believer is enjoined to teach sound doctrine, refute error, reform lives, and uphold righteous standards (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Question 6: Mention the duties of gospel ministers highlighted by Apostle Paul in the text.

Ministers of God who teach and uphold unadulterated doctrines of Christ without fear or favor will not be appreciated by all. That was why the Apostle admonished Titus to "**Let no man despise thee**".

The negative attitude of the ignorant and rebellious should not dissuade Christian ministers from preaching the truth. God's grace is strengthening, sustaining, surpassing, superlative, supernatural, super abounding and sufficient (1 Corinthians 3:10; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9,1-10; 1 Peter 4:10-16; Acts 4:29-33; 20:19-24; Hebrews 12:28; 4:16). As the challenges and demands of ministry increase, so will the grace to serve and minister. God gives sufficient grace to accomplish whatever task or duty He has assigned each of us. Paul labored more than other apostles under the most oppressive, difficult, dangerous and challenging conditions all by the grace of God. This same grace is still available for every servant of His.

We should, as believers, imbibe the unadulterated teachings of our leaders, respect their persons, support them in their function and further their endeavors for the honor of God and salvation of souls (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13). We must avoid the error and damnation of those who **“turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness”** (Jude 4,5). Thus, we are exhorted not to receive **“the grace of God in vain”** (2 Corinthians 6:1).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Numbers	32	Isaiah	66
TUE	“	33	Jeremiah	1-2
WED	“	34	“	3-4
THUR	“	35-36	“	5
FRI	Deuteronomy	1	“	6
SAT	“	2	“	7
SUN	“	3	“	8-9

828 Lesson

EXHORTATION TO GOOD WORKS

MEMORY VERSE: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3:1).

TEXT: Titus 3:1-15

This chapter reveals what the true believer’s character and conduct should be in his community, society and country. Every believer has dual citizenship: he or she is a citizen of God’s kingdom and also of an earthly country where they live. Conflicts of interest and allegiance to both were of great concern in the early Church. Having pledged supreme allegiance to Christ as Savior, Lord, King, Sovereign and Judge, what kind of allegiance could they render to earthly magistrates, principalities and powers without making them rivals of Christ? Moreover, the laws of earthly kingdoms were enacted by pagans and were the basis of great persecutions of Christians and their believing relatives. It was against this backdrop that Apostle Paul charged Titus to teach and remind believers of God’s word, will and wisdom on the matter. As ambassadors of Christ, our lives should reflect His nature and point others to Him.

Question 1: Why should believers be submissive to civil authorities?

THE BELIEVER’S RESPONSIBILITIES AND CALL TO GOOD WORKS (Titus 3:1-8,14; Romans 13:1; 1 Exodus 22:28; 1 Peter 2:17; Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Hebrews 13:20,21).

Paul the apostle was incisive in his charge to Titus. **“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates.”** Christian ministers are to teach believers to be law-abiding and yield to the authority of governments over them. The institution of

human government is appointed and established by God. We honor God by honoring the arrangement which He has instituted for the government of mankind. By God's permission, appointment or arrangement of His providence, those in office obtain their power (Psalm 75:7; Daniel 2:21; 4:17,25; Romans 13:1,2). Therefore, we should not seek to overthrow established authorities and governments or lend any support to law-breakers or anyone inciting violence in the society.

However, believers are not bound to obey ungodly laws or decrees that favor the worship of idols or flout God's express command. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Elijah, etc., resisted such and were commended by heaven. Rejection of such ungodly propositions should be with Christ-like virtues of tenderness and meekness.

Titus was also instructed to teach believers **"To speak evil of no man"**. Speaking evil of an absent person comes in various forms - backbiting, tale-bearing, whispering, slander, defamation, calumny, etc. The true believer lives by the golden rule: doing unto others as he desires others to do to him and not doing unto others what he hates, fears or detests. We should refrain from using our tongues to inflict emotional injury on people or uttering words we know are false about them. To misinterpret somebody's words, conduct or create a wrong impression about them is evil. Even when we are called to state what we know about someone's character, we should do it with pure motive, never to take pleasure in hurting anyone.

Evil speaking shows the presence of a malignant spirit: an evidence of carnality and spiritual destitution. So, believers must guard their tongues to ensure they only minister grace to hearers and edify the body of Christ. **"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"** (Colossians 4:6). Converted and filled with grace, we are expected to **be no brawlers, but gentle showing all meekness unto all men"** When others speak evil of us or hurt us in any way, we should bear, portray and serve them the rich, ripe fruit of the Spirit.

It is a gracious life of the fruit of the Spirit that shows the difference between our present life in Christ and the former in sin (Titus 3:3) . But their lives were transformed by the kindness, love and grace of God manifested through the gospel (Romans 5:7,8; 2 Peter 3:9). And this **“kindness and love of God”** is not restricted or limited to a select, favored few. Forgiveness, cleansing, conversion, new life and adoption into God’s family, fellowship with God here and in eternity are all ours through His unmerited grace and goodness.

The Apostle further instructed Titus to constantly teach believers to show proofs of their conversion; **“that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men”** (Titus 3:8). Here the Apostle sets forth the duty of all believers earlier mentioned in Titus 2:7. Apostle Paul, here, teaches the necessity of practical Christian living that follows Christian doctrine. The doctrines are the true fountain from which all good works flow.

Good works spring from supreme love to the Creator. It is not every work that looks good outwardly that is truly good. Teaching on love, the Apostle says: **“ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing”** (1 Corinthians 13:3). So, good works are the literal manifestations of Christ-like life of love and goodness for the benefits of others with pure motive. To maintain good works is to excel in right deeds with right motives for the general good of men. It is to live the life of love in all places, with all men, under all circumstances and for the good of all. This is real Christ-likeness. Since it is so vital and life-giving in its effect, we must therefore be zealous of them. Those who profess faith in Christ must declare it by the character, conduct and conversation they show forth. Dorcas was a model of good works in the early church (Acts 9:36,39).

Question 2: In what ways can a believer show good works?

All believers are commanded to show good works because these are the proofs Christ is dwelling in them;

they are the fruits others see and know that we belong to Him. Two, God is glorified through good works. **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (.Matthew 5:16). Three, good works draw others to Christ to taste more of His goodness. Four, Christian good works minister comfort and relief to those in critical situations of life. Five, doing good works increase our reward with God. **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:9,10). Godly deeds of the liberal, loving and upright bring divine blessings here and hereafter (1 Timothy 4:8; Psalm 112:3). The possessors of good works enjoy the light of God’s presence and the supplication of beneficiaries.

The Apostle revisited this subject in his closing remarks that Cretian brethren be fruitful in every good work because of its importance. **“And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful”** (verse 14). The believer is here pictured as a tree of righteousness bearing all manner of fruits. It is only when Christians accept that the very essence of the Christian faith is unconditional love and kindness, shown in unselfish acts and a readiness to help whenever necessary, that the church will be Christ’s true witness on earth.

Question 3: Why should believers maintain good works?

AVOIDANCE OF FRIVOLOUS TEACHERS AND PEOPLE (Titus 3:9-11; 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:4,20; Romans 16:17).

“But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” The questions and genealogies referred to here are mentioned in the Apostle’s epistle to Timothy. **“Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do”** (1 Timothy 1:4).

The Jews relish the thought of their genealogies. It was their old, strong and entrenched habit to concern themselves with their ancestry. If this was allowed in the church, the apostle knew it would put a stop to the growth of gentile Christendom. How instructive this is! Shepherds of God's flock and teachers of Christ's disciples should be careful to keep all matters extraneous to salvation and the eternal welfare of the people of God out of the orbit of their lessons. Rather, they should concentrate on the Word which gives abundant life. All peculiarities of class, age, nationality, should be spared our labor. All distractions, disturbances and energy-dissipating activities must be discouraged and jettisoned.

Besides the genealogies, there was also the **“contentions, and strivings about the law.”** Here, Paul the apostle draws our attention to those contentious issues that were generally raised by the Pharisees of Christ's day and Judaists of the early Church (Colossians 2:16,17; Galatians 4:10). They must be avoided because they do not minister godliness and holiness; they frustrate the grace of God to save sinners; they turn the heart of the preacher away from the weightier matters of eternal significance and they are divisive and diversionary. Also, the people involved must be rejected if they do not accept correction. **“A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”** (verses 10,11). Titus was not to discuss with them on account of their awful frivolousness (Romans 16:17,18).

Question 4: How should the church deal with contentious brethren?

DEPENDABLE COMPANIONSHIP IN MINISTRY (Titus 3:12,13,15; Philippians 2:18-23)

“When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.” Apostle Paul, out of sheer mutual confidence in his relationship with Titus, gave some directions. This was without any recourse to

Titus' preference, convenience or viewpoint. Titus, on his part, was implicitly obedient. Paul was to send some other trusted servants, Artemas or Tychicus to Crete and Titus must receive them in love. However, Titus himself was to leave Crete for Nicopolis.

This suggests some affinity or affection between Titus and the Apostle. Indeed, Titus was a son in the faith to Paul. He had confidence in him just as he had in Timothy. And because of the attitude of Titus towards him, the Apostle looked forward to the fellowship with him. Generally, the diligence, commitment to righteousness, faithfulness, submission and courage of workers in the church encourage shepherds and overseers. Faithfulness endears Christian workers to the hearts of their leaders (Philippians 2:22,23).

Besides the request for Titus' presence in Nicopolis, Apostle Paul also wanted Zenas the lawyer and Apollos to be brought down to him too. These brethren, certainly, had been laboring faithfully in Crete. Zenas the lawyer was a Jewish scribe who was converted to the Christian faith. Apollos was the eloquent preacher of Alexandria. The submissiveness of Apollos and Paul's appreciation of his ministry in the regions of Achaia and Corinth (Acts 19:1; 3:6) and now in Crete are commendable. Thus, we see that Apollos was Paul's fellow laborer.

<p>Question 5: What do we learn from Apostle Paul's relationship with Titus, Apollos and Zenas?</p>
--

Paul the apostle ended the epistle with an apostolic benediction. **“All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.”** Here, we see the epistle that begins with the faith of God's elect ends with grace and love. The unity of the family of God is here underscored. It is one holy, happy, wholesome family held together by the bond of love though widely scattered over many regions. They are known by the gracious life, **“love and good works”** (Hebrews 10:24).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Deuteronomy	4	Jeremiah	10-12
TUE	“	5	“	12-13
WED	“	6-7	“	14-15
THUR	“	8-9	“	16-17
FRI	“	10-11	“	18-19
SAT	“	12	“	20-21
SUN	“	13-14	“	22

829 Lesson

PLEA FOR RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION

MEMORY VERSE: “If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account” (Philemon 17,18).

TEXT: Philemon 1-25

The book of Philemon is often referred to as one of the prison epistles of Apostle Paul written from Rome to Philemon and the church in his house. The letter deals with a matter of reconciliation between Onesimus, a slave or servant and Philemon, his master. Fear of consequences for his misdeeds made Onesimus flee from his master to Rome where he had contact with Paul and became converted to the Lord. Saved, Onesimus needed to make amend for his past misdeeds so as to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men (Acts 24:16). Thus, this one-chapter epistle reveals the need for reconciliation and peace-making among believers - friends, master and servant, employer and employee, parent and children or business associates. Heads of families, organizations, assemblies and families have much to learn from it in order to forestall or fix many conflicts that culminates in litigations among brethren which Paul frowned at (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

Question 1: Why is restitution and reconciliation necessary after conversion?

The letter conveys so much love, brotherliness, trust, trustworthiness, hope, care, friendship, mutual respect and mediation that should prevail amongst God’s people. Thus, Onesimus’ flight to and conversion in Rome, his expected reconciliation or restitution as proof of genuine conversion and Paul’s peace-making and appeal to Philemon to receive him as a brother in Christ form the focus of this lesson.

INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION OF THE APOSTLE

(Philemon 1-3; Ephesians 1:1-3; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:3)

Paul introduces himself in the text as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He was imprisoned for the sake and cause of Christ but that his incarceration did not dampen his spirit, as to prevent him from preaching the gospel and writing epistles such as this, is worthy of emulation. Interestingly, it was during imprisonment he preached to and won Onesimus to the Lord which led to the writing of this epistle. He affectionately mentions Timothy as his associate in the work of God.

The Apostle highlights the attributes of the main addressee, Philemon, **“our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer”**. Besides, he mentions Apphia as **“beloved”** and Archippus as a **“fellow soldier”**. Believers who live and serve God will be known and addressed by their contributions to the well-being and growth of the body of Christ. The church in Philemon’s house is also mentioned. This reveals the balanced life of Philemon. He was a master in the secular and a minister in the spiritual. He and his family gave their house for the work of God. Leaders should, therefore learn such manner of communication that acknowledges, appreciates and encourages other believers in the service of the Lord.

Paul the apostle always began his epistles with a peculiar form of salutation and invocation of **“grace”** and **“peace”** from no other source than **“God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”**. Paul acknowledges the power and indispensability of God’s grace. Having been saved and chosen to be an apostle by grace, he ministers by the same grace that converts souls and sustains them in the Kingdom. He is a living witness to the possibilities of grace of God. If anything, the writing of this epistle was underpinned by the work of grace wrought in the life of Onesimus who must be reconciled by grace to his master, Philemon. Peace is the outcome of the accomplishment of God’s grace in the soul. Here, the Apostle desires and invokes more grace and peace in the life of Philemon. Believers must realize that God

desires that they have and live the abundant life of grace and peace (John 10:10; Romans 5:17).

Question 2: What can Christian leaders learn from Paul's manner of salutation?

Though he wrote the epistle purposely to make an appeal to Philemon for reconciliation with his run-away slave/ servant, he could not gloss over the matter of grace, peace and prayer which were indispensable to peace-making.

THANKSGIVING, PRAYER AND CONSOLATION FROM PHILEMON'S EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN CHARACTER
(Philemon 4-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-9; Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4,5)

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints ..." (verse 4).

Paul the apostle expressed sincere gratitude to God for the testimony of Philemon's love and faith toward Christ and all saints. Those who profess love for Christ cannot but love His redeemed people (Matthew 25:35-45). Love and faith are fruits of the Spirit apparent in Philemon's life that benefitted others. Paul identifies him simply as a **"fellow-laborer"**. He was also a man of integrity that could be depended upon to carry out instructions from his spiritual leader. Such Christian integrity and purity draw sinners to Christ, challenge other believers to exemplary living and bring glory to God. This is the kind of life Christ admonishes all who profess faith in Him to live (Matthew 5:16). Believers need to place priority on Christian conduct that qualifies for heaven above other concerns. Note however that it was not Philemon who blew his own trumpet of praise as many professing Christian praise-seekers do today.

Question 3: Why is exemplary Christian character indispensable in the body of Christ?

The believers' message will not be effective and believable if they do not possess the Christ-like character that proves the power of God's grace. The Thessalonian Christians **were "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" to the extent that "in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing"** (1 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

Saved by faith, Philemon demonstrated living faith by the corresponding good works witnessed and reported by beneficiaries. Faith alone is the basis and ground for justification, salvation and redemption. But anyone who claims to be born again by faith in Christ must show it by their works. Faith and works are two sides of a coin. Love and faith are not dormant; they are the outworking of the Spirit dwelling in the believer; they are proofs that the believer is abiding in Christ. For this proof of Philemon's Christ-like love and faith through which **"the bowels of the saints are refreshed"**, he gave thanks and also prayed always **"That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus"**. The Apostle interceded for him to grow more in these graces so the benefits can continue to be enjoyed by more saints. Practical life of love and faith will edify saints and bring great joy and consolation to the body of Christ.

Apostle Paul, being older and more mature than Philemon could have instructed him on what to do but thought it wise to plead with him for love's sake. Believers learn from the Apostle here that good communication skills are indispensable in settling disputes. Though Paul is known to be very blunt most of the time, he considered that the use of his apostolic authority in rolling out directives might be counter-productive in achieving reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon.

PAUL'S PLEA FOR ONESIMUS (Philemon 10-25; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:28)

"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to

thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him,... Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it..." (verses 10-12,16-19).

The Apostle appeals to Philemon's reputation for kindness and compassion and provides him with a perfect opportunity to live up to his reputation. What could be more tactful than that! Christian leaders must learn the art of mediation so as to settle misunderstanding and quarrels that can snowball into court cases and tear the church apart. Christian mediators must not fan the embers of misunderstanding they seek to settle with their offensive use of language, choice of words and manner of expression.

Question 4: Highlight the biblical qualities of Christian peacemakers.

The exemplary role played by Paul the apostle between Philemon and Onesimus is legendary. It follows therefore that mature believers should use their wealth of experience to make peace among believers. Paul's plea should not be misconstrued as coercion or pressure on Philemon to go against his will or violation of the principles of settling disputes stipulated by Christ in Matthew 18:15-18 as Onesimus had committed the offence before his conversion and needed to make amend thereafter. Paul had no personal pecuniary gain from the reconciliation between the two. He was sure of Onesimus' conversion before writing the epistle and Christian leaders should write letters of recommendation and attestation for genuinely converted believers who would live up to their Christian profession. Though the Apostle needed Onesimus more than Philemon, he decided that the right thing must be done, hence the restitution.

Restitution is required of all believers as proof of their genuine repentance. Although Onesimus had repented, he needed to make restitution for the wrongs he had done against his master. No doubt, he had deprived his master of his services while he was away. Besides, one can only imagine how much of his character might have been defamed as people could insinuate that he ran away because Philemon was a cruel master. The fact that he had contact with the great Apostle and was now converted did not exonerate him from making restitution so he could have a clear conscience.

Question 5: What is restitution and why should believers do it?

Christian leaders should learn tact which Paul employed in this process of reconciliation. He did not stand aloof but got involved just to ensure that peace reigned. Hence, he made effort to smoothen Onesimus' relationship with his master just as Christ spared no effort on our relationship with God. Paul laid aside his rights and apostolic authority and interceded for Onesimus. Aside praying, writing and pleading, the Apostle also offered to bear the cost of reconciliation between the two. Christian leaders should be ready to pay any price to reconcile and restore peace and fellowship among believers. While sinners need to reconcile with God, believers who are at variance with their neighbors, colleagues, spouses, parents and children should obey the command of God to **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** and also delight in peace making. For, **“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”** (Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:9).

It is clear in the text that Philemon had been accustomed to showing kindness to the saints. This underpinned Paul's request that Philemon **“prepare [him] also a lodging”** in the hope that he would be released in answer to the prayers of the church. God calls every believer to a life of practical love and obedience to leadership.

In conclusion, strained relationships can be mended through genuine conversion, wholehearted restitution

and prayerful mediation. Commitment to promptly obey God and all His commands will make for ease of settlement of disagreements among believers. Paul’s appeal was based on his anticipated willingness and readiness of Philemon to obey God’s word. We should therefore awake to our responsibilities of reconciling sinners to God through gospel preaching and ensuring peace among brethren for biblical unity and fellowship, which attract divine blessings.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Deuteronomy	15-16	Jeremiah	23
TUE	“	17	“	24-25
WED	“	18-19	“	26-27
THUR	“	20-21	“	28
FRI	“	22	“	29
SAT	“	23-24	“	30
SUN	“	25-26	“	31

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

830 Lesson

CHRIST'S VIRGIN BIRTH, DEATH AND RESURRECTION

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

TEXT: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4

After the Fall, God planned man's salvation through the Seed of the woman which was designed to be a sign to Israel and other nations. Thus, the Holy Spirit prophesied through Isaiah that **"a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"** One of the most important facts concerning Jesus Christ is that He was born of a virgin. The virgin birth confirms His Deity and distinguishes Him as the only sinless Man conceived without adamic depravity.

Question 1: Why do some people doubt the virgin birth of Jesus?

Some people have refused to accept the revelation of Scripture on Christ's virgin birth because it is beyond scientific experiment or intellectual reasoning. Others could not comprehend the possibility of God having an only Son as claimed by Christians. But they **"err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God"** (Matthew 22:29).

God is omnipotent and can do all things. Even the Virgin Mary wondered how she was going to conceive without knowing any man. But the angel of God told her, **"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"** (Luke 1:35).

The virgin birth is thus an essential doctrinal truth which must be upheld because of its significance in God's redemptive program and its necessity for the salvation of mankind. Disputing this cardinal doctrine is, by implication, faulting Scripture's claim and denying Christ's Deity and distinctive sinless-ness that qualified Him as the "**Lamb of God**" who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Christ is the spotless Lamb of God found in fashion as a man. His incarnation through the virgin birth is God's divine design which finite minds cannot comprehend (Isaiah 55:9). To receive and believe Scripture's claim about Christ's birth by a virgin-mother is to settle the question of the mystery and omnipotence of God.

THE PECULIARITY OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION THROUGH THE VIRGIN BIRTH (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-7).

Question 2: What makes Christ's birth unique, and why?

God was the first to unveil the virgin birth of Christ when He referred to Him as the "**seed of the woman**". This was His allusion to the fact that Christ would be conceived by a woman who had never known any man. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "**Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son...**" (Isaiah 7:14). The word 'virgin' as used in this reference means a woman that has not had carnal knowledge of any man. Luke, in his gospel, recorded that angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph saying, "**behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...**" Matthew, another gospel writer, revealed that Mary was found with a child by the Holy Ghost before she came together with Joseph, her espoused husband. While Joseph thought of putting her away secretly, "**the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying,... fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name**

JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

“ He further recorded that Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first born Son, and he called his name JESUS (Matthew 1:25).

Apart from the direct involvement of God the Father, the Holy Ghost and angels, Jesus, during His earthly ministry, sometimes referred to others as His mother, brothers, sisters, but never called any mortal man His father - not even Joseph (Matthew 12:49,50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). He always referred to God as His Father and this is another proof of His deity and divinity.

The Bible says that Joseph was a just man (Matthew 1:19). If Joseph had had carnal knowledge of Mary before Christ was conceived, he would not have thought of putting her away, and would not be qualified to be referred to as a **“just man”**. On the other hand, if Mary as an espoused virgin had conceived through a man before her marriage, it would have been right for Joseph to put her away (Deuteronomy 22:13-21; Matthew 19:9). In fact, the angel of God bore witness that the seed conceived in Mary was by the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35).

Question 3: State why Christ is different from other descendants of Adam.

God bears witness to His approved ministers in various ways. Some of the signs that were recorded concerning Christ were also recorded concerning a few other messengers of God. A voice from heaven witnessed to the ministry of Christ, but that was not as unique as the virgin birth because a similar witness was recorded in the ministry of Moses (Numbers 12:5-8; Matthew 17:5). An angel announced the conception of Christ, but we also know that the birth of Samson and John the Baptist were announced by angels (Judges 13:2-5; Luke 1:11-15,26-33). However, Moses, Samson and John the Baptist had earthly fathers. They were all descendants of Adam's fallen race. The virgin birth is therefore a unique sign from God, conferred on Christ alone. No other living soul had ever or will ever be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Christ was born in Bethlehem. Angels announced His birth to shepherds and wise-men travelled a great distance to worship Him in the manger. As He grew up, He entered into public ministry to fulfil the purpose of His birth. He traversed the land, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing those that were oppressed of the devil. But many people did not believe and receive Him despite His invitation to all. At the appointed time, He went to the cross to die for humanity.

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION, DEATH AND BURIAL (Genesis 3:14,15; Psalm 22:6-8,16,18; Isaiah 53:3-6; Matthew 16:21-28; 20:17-19; 27:57-66; Mark 8:31-38; 9:1; 15:24-47; Luke 9:22-27; 18:31-34; 23:33-56; John 19:18-30; Hebrews 2:9).

The virgin birth is not the only historical event that confirms the deity of Christ; His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection from the dead state even more. The Old Testament is replete with prophecies concerning Christ's crucifixion. And these prophecies found fulfilment in the event on the cross. Christ also foretold His crucifixion and death while He was yet with His disciples.

Christ was despised and rejected of men. As He hung on the cross, passers-by railed on Him and wagged their tongues. Even His supposed friends forsook and abandoned Him at the darkest hour of His life. A crown of thorns was plaited and placed on His head; stripes from barbed whips were laid on His back. His crucifiers drove long spikes through his hands and feet and pierced His side; He was wounded all over, all because of our transgressions. Apostle Peter confirmed the verity of Christ's crucifixion in His defense before some religious bigots (Acts 4:5-10). He told the audience, made up of the high priest and his kindred that the impotent man got healed through **“the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead”**. Apostle Paul also said the same things (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Christ's crucifixion opens the floodgate to temporal and eternal blessings for man. Through it, we have access to God's rich blessings. Believers in Christ are made inheritors of heaven's inexhaustible riches. Through His death, Christ purchased for us forgiveness and full salvation (Luke 23:33,34), sanctification and holiness (Hebrews 13:12), a home in heaven (Luke 23:43), healing for all (Isaiah 53:5), deliverance and victory over principalities and powers (Colossians 2:14,15), cancellation of all curses (Galatians 3:13), full and perfect redemption (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

To be Christ-like, believers must reckon themselves to be crucified with Christ and live a new life of righteousness and complete separation from the world (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14).

Question 4: What is the purpose of Christ's death and the blessings we can enjoy from it?

Jesus Christ, the Pascal Lamb of God, hung on the cross at Calvary until He gave up the ghost. Soldiers on guard certified Him dead before His body was released to Simon of Arimathea for burial. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses witnessed His burial in a sepulcher that had been prepared for that purpose. His death became a reference point for the past, present and future events. In history, reference is made to BC (Before Christ) and AD (After the Death of Christ).

PROOFS OF CHRIST'S BODILY RESURRECTION
(Matthew 28:2-15; 27:66; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12,39; John 20:1-18; Acts 1:3; 2:23,24; 10:39-41; Romans 1:4)

Following the great earthquake and descent of the angel that rolled back the stone from the mouth of the grave, soldiers on guard **"became as dead men"**. And Jesus Christ arose! Forces of death and hell could not hold Him; powers on earth, underneath the earth and in heaven were incapable of preventing the King of kings from resurrecting as He had prophesied (Matthew 20:19; Luke 24:7). To the women who visited the graveyard

early the third day, the angel said, **“He is not here: for he is risen...”** (Matthew 28:6,9).

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

The bodily resurrection of Christ is mentioned 104 times in the New Testament. What are the proofs? First, soldiers who were detailed to watch the tomb for fear that the disciples might **“come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead”** (Matthew 27:64) knew that Christ’s resurrection was a physical reality. Second, the Jews knew that the resurrection was not a concocted story. It cost them a great deal of money to conceal the miracle and stop the soldiers from spreading the news (Matthew 28:11-15). Third, for several years, the apostles proclaimed the resurrection in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead after three days. The story of the resurrection has since the historic event spread unchallenged. Speaking to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, **“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses”** (Acts 2:32) and nobody rose to challenge him. Fourth, in Mark’s gospel, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene who went and told Peter and others (Mark 16:10,11). Again, Jesus appeared to two of the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31). By far, the greatest proof of Christ’s resurrection was His bodily appearance to His disciples at different times. This puts to rest the erroneous doctrine of so-called spiritual resurrection.

Jesus is incomparably greater than any other prophet either before or after Him. If His teaching was the only thing that made Him the Son of God, He would not be different. Founders of other religions taught good human principles as well. If ascetic life, miracles, wonders and signs were the only things that made Thomas to call Jesus, **“My Lord and my God,”** founders of other religions would also be qualified to be called “Lord” because they too lived ascetic lives and worked signs and wonders. But, no; the virgin birth and resurrection made all the difference. Christ is **“declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of**

holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). He is not only the Son of God but also the Savior and Judge of the whole world, of the living and the dead, Jews and Gentiles, Barbarians and Greeks, Hindus and traditional worshippers. Whoever therefore shall call upon Him today shall be saved.

PARTAKING OF CHRIST’S REDEMPTIVE BENEFITS (1 John 4:2,3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; John 3:16; Romans 10:9,10; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 14:4).

The doctrine of Christ’s virgin birth, crucifixion, death, burial and bodily resurrection is the foundation of our Christian faith and hope of spending eternity with God. Rejection of this truth disqualifies the unbeliever from partaking in the redemptive benefits which Christ has procured for us. **“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God...”** (1 John 4:3). Similarly, nobody gets saved and blessed by arguing with God on the tenets of Christ’s crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. **“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel... 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”** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

<p>Question 6: How can sinners and believers partake of Christ’s redemptive benefits?</p>
--

To partake of the redemptive benefits in Christ, sinners must repent of their sins, believe that Jesus is the Son of God and receive Him as Savior and Lord. **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”** (Romans 10:9). Saved, the believer needs to henceforth live in the consciousness, comfort and assurance of His divine presence revealed by His name - Immanuel. The church as well as the individual believer is required to live a holy lifestyle.

Obviously, Christ’s crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection accomplished our salvation and made God’s grace available and obtainable. Apart from getting saved and living a holy life based on God’s precepts, every believer is required to proclaim this saving truth for others to be saved and established in the truth.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Deuteronomy	27	Jeremiah	32
TUE	“	28	“	33
WED	“	29-30	“	34-35
THUR	“	31	“	36
FRI	“	32	“	37-38
SAT	“	33-34	“	39-40
SUN	Joshua	1-2	“	41-42

831 Lesson

TOTAL FREEDOM FROM SIN

MEMORY VERSE: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9).

TEXT: 1 John 3:1-10

John the beloved, in our text, celebrates the glorious freedom everyone who is saved enjoys in Christ. It amazes him that God takes the initiative to forgive sinners who are by nature given to wicked works. Considering the justice of God which stipulates death penalty for every sin man commits, nobody on earth - as long as he is conceived and born by a woman - would escape His judgment. But His supreme love chose to punish sin in the sinner’s substitute, thereby giving opportunity for man to enjoy His salvation. Love made Jesus to accept this divine verdict of suffering death penalty for the sins of mankind. Truly, there is no **“greater love”** than this: the righteous dying for the unrighteous. Love is strong as death.

Question 1: Describe the wonder of God’s love in your life, family or in the life of a fellow believer.

For love, He bore the pains of crucifixion and died to rescue us from present and eternal doom. He also rose to give us strength to live a life of total freedom from sin. **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not”** (1 John 3:1).

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH GOD’S LOVE (1 John 3:1-3; John 3:16; 1:12; Romans 5:5-8; Galatians 3:26; 4:6; Romans 8:15; 2 Peter 1:4; John 8:36; Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1).

The word **“behold”** summons our attention to the gracious work God’s love has wrought in us, by reason of which we are now distinct in character and lifestyle from the people of the world. God’s love is so deep that we cannot fathom it. It was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us. Every one of us would have been banished to hell forever were it not for the mercy and love of God.

Question 2: What are the steps a sinner/backslider needs to take to be set free from sin?

Though the scripture declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and that the wages of sin is death, God planned man’s salvation even while the sinner is still relishing his sinful pleasures. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). Jesus suffered, died and rose again so as to forgive, cleanse and save every sinner from sin and make him a son of God. This gracious transformation God does in the lives of people happens when the sinner/backslider acknowledges the great love and sacrifice of Christ, prays for forgiveness and cleansing in His shed blood and receives Him as Lord and Savior. **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”** (John 1:12). The words, **‘become the sons of God’**, reveal that all are not children of God (Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6; Luke 15:11-24) but are, at the point of repentance, transformed from who and what they were to another spiritual state of newness of life and character. **“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”**.

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF GOD’S CHILDREN (1 John 3:2-10; Psalm 86:5; 1 John 1:9; Romans 8:16; 6:1,2,18,20,22; Titus 2:11,12; John 8:32; Galatians 5:1)

The major identifying mark of every child of God is total freedom from sin. So, the greatest title anyone can obtain

in this world is to be called a child of the Most High God. Many religious people do not have the assurance of total freedom from sin and being called children of God; they cannot boldly declare that **“Beloved, now are we the sons of God”**. Incidentally, it is this assurance that births the hope of seeing Christ at His coming, that **“we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”**.

Question 3: How may one know that he/she has become a child of God?

Assurance of salvation is a function of faith in God’s truthfulness and power to do whatever He says. He cannot lie. When He declared in the Scriptures that He is **“ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon [Him]”, that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”**, He fulfils His part in the lives of those who do their part by genuinely repenting of their sins. And when we humbly pray to Him, He answers because He delights in our freedom from sin. We know this from His word, not from our feelings or the whispers of the devil, the liar, who seeks to confuse us.

Besides, God sends the Spirit of His Son into the heart of everyone who is converted to assure him that he is now His child. Those who do not have this initial deposit of the Spirit of God that **“beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God”** do not belong to Christ. It is this same Spirit that kindles holy passion and love for God, His word and people in the heart of the believer. By His operation, the believer who is set free from sin hungers to know more of God through regular fellowship attendance and constant reading, studying or listening, meditating and praying-in the word of God. As a child of God, he finds the Spirit helping him in prayer, calling **“Abba, Father”**. As a new creature, God hears and answers his prayer of faith as this is the only communication line through which he can receive more grace for abundant and victorious Christian living. Thus set free from sin, the believer is to seek to fit into the mold

of Christ, to be conformed to His life of righteousness as the express image of the Almighty God.

Question 4: Mention any erroneous belief that encourage loose living by professing believers.

God does not have any sinning child. Those who are not free from sin are not His children. In the days of John the beloved, the Gnostics taught that conduct is not important to the spiritual man and that whatever actions he puts forth he can never be defiled. There is modern-day Gnostics. Preachers who teach that we can live anyhow we like as long as we believe in Jesus are **“forgers of lies”**. It is not only what we believe, how we behave also matters. If anything, the grace of God teaches us that **“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”**. The Apostle Paul affirms that everyone who receives God’s grace is free from sin. He says, **“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”** False doctrine of eternal security makes people live in sin among the choristers, ushers, ministers, workers, and still feel comfortable that they are children of God. Sin is **“the transgression of the law”** of God or lawlessness. A saint cannot engage in illicit affairs or impregnate another man’s daughter, tell lies, steal, curse, fight or kill.

The uniform testimony of scripture is that, it is not possible to be a sinner and a saint at the same time. **“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness... For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness... But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life”** (Romans 6:18,20,22). Those who really abide in Christ do not sin. Abiding in Christ is not only evidence that the believer is totally free from sin but it is also an antidote to falling into sin and be lost. **“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him . . . Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ... he**

cannot sin, because he is born of God". It is dreadful to be given this portion to read at the gate of heaven as reason for disqualification from entering in. But the truth is that you cannot claim ignorance of it anymore. If it were not possible to be free from sin, Christ would not have declared **"sin no more"** and **"go and sin no more"** to those who received forgiveness from Him before His crucifixion (John 5:14; 8:11). Obviously, His death and resurrection place us on a higher spiritual responsibility to live a life of complete freedom from sin.

It is a terrible thing to be ensnared into sin. Sin stings like scorpion and injects poison into the spiritual life-blood of compromisers. It should not be once named among us **"as becometh saints"**. Sin grieves God, annoys the Spirit of God and displeases the Savior. Sin is deadly: it spreads and kills with reckless speed. It is better for a believer to die than to taste the bitter dregs of sin. So, the believer should hate sin and steer clear of it. Those who toy with sin and promise themselves to repent later are only gambling with their chances of seeing Him on the last day because they may never return. Therefore, to yield to the seductions of sin is to secure accommodation in eternal hell.

Today many people are playing religion by loving outward show but lacking true freedom from sin. Such people may make loud professions, shout Hallelujah a thousand times and attend every Christian conference but do not have any testimony of conversion. True Christianity is centered on entire freedom from sin. That is why the Bible has given us a clear yardstick for determining false and true profession: **"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."** It is important we examine ourselves today lest any of us should become lost through the deceitfulness of sin.

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE (1 John 3:5,7-9; 2 Peter 1:3; Deuteronomy 30:6; 1 Peter 1:15,16; Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

From our text, Christ **“is pure”, “in him is no sin” and “he is righteous”**. The uniform testimony of the Scriptures is that He lived a sinless life. He once enquired from His critics, **“which of you convinceth me of sin?”** His enemies confessed that they could find no sin in Him. Pilate said: **“I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man “**. We are saved to pattern our lives after Christ who is our perfect Example.

Question 5: Mention the benefits sinners and saints can enjoy from Christ’s sacrifice.

Christ was **“manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”** Jesus Christ came to the world to save sinners. His entire mission was opposed to sin. To sin is to render the death of Jesus useless, to run counter to His holy nature and to prove that we do not know Him (1 John 3:8,9). Those who sin belong to the devil. A true believer **“doth not commit sin”**. A true child of God cannot sin; **“He cannot sin because he is born of God”**. He has been **“renewed... after the image of him that created him in true holiness “**. He is so filled with the nature of God that he cannot sin. Therefore, those who sin do not belong to God.

Christ died to take away, not only our outward sins but also our inbred sins. Doing good works and loving our brother with pure motive can only happen when we are sanctified. At sanctification, He destroys the rock-nature of inward sin and implants His nature of righteousness that makes us obey and love Him perfectly. God sanctifies the believer who hungers and prays earnestly by faith for this experience.

Questions 6: Why is sanctification an indispensable experience every believer must possess?

Christ says, **“the pure in heart”** are blessed because it is only they that can see God. Where, then, is the blessedness of your Christian profession if you cannot see God at the end of life? How do you hope to get to heaven if you do not have and live in **“holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord?”** Hearts that

brew hatred, malice, lusts, evil thoughts and devices, etc. disqualify from seeing the Lord. Right Christian comportment and decorum covering anger, jealousy, and stubbornness struggling for pre-eminence in the heart shows you may not be there to answer the roll call in heaven. God has a holy intelligence that decodes actions and motives behind them. He knows those who are His, those whom He has cleansed from outward and inward sins.

Believers who are totally free from sin and hope to see the Lord on the last day watch, pray, examine and purify themselves in preparedness for the imminent return of our Lord so as to be found worthy to enjoy the promised inheritance of saints in heaven. **“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure... dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (1 John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Joshua	3-4	Jeremiah	43-44
TUE	“	5-6	“	45-46
WED	“	7	“	47-48
THUR	“	8	“	49
FRI	“	9	“	50
SAT	“	10	“	51
SUN	“	11-12	“	52

832 Lesson

CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING

MEMORY VERSE: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

TEXT: Genesis 5:22-24; 17:1; Ephesians 6: 10-18.

One of the negative end-time prophecies of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is that the love of many Christians shall wax cold. Its fulfilment, as the Christendom is presently witnessing, spells grave consequences. It is obvious now that many who were once zealous and committed to the Lord are losing their first love and enthusiasm with which they served God. This is because the god of this world has enticed them with materialism, injected them with spiritual sleep and sown tares of discord, misfortune and sickness into their lives. Manipulated by the enemy, these Christians lose their conviction as their fellowship with God and His people become irregular. They have consequently become unstable and unpredictable in character, and unfaithful to God and His Church. Outright backsliding has become rampant. With this development, Christ, the ever-living One, charges fervent believers and the church to wake up to their responsibility of reviving despondent, weak, lukewarm and inconsistent believers (Revelation 3:2,3). Saved from sin or restored from backsliding, the believer needs to maintain a consistent righteous life to qualify for heaven.

THE CHARACTER OF HEAVEN-BOUND PILGRIMS
(Genesis 5:22-24; 17:1; Hebrews 11:5,6,13-16; Philippians 3:20)

Question 1: State the indispensable step to a consistent Christian living.

Enoch, son of Jared and father of Methuselah, is mentioned in our text as one who maintained a consistent,

God-pleasing lifestyle throughout his lifetime. According to Scripture account, he knew God at the age of 65 and walked with Him for 300 years. That he lived in the Old Testament period before the cross strips inconsistent believers of excuses they give for rising and falling in the Christian faith. Enoch lived in this same wicked world infested with demons as we do today. Moreover, with the death and resurrection of Christ at Calvary, every earnest seeker can live a consistent Christian life. If it is not possible to live a righteous life, God would not have called Abraham to it (Genesis 17:1). However, the call to salvation precedes the call to consistent Christian living and perfection. Abraham had first responded to the call to come out of sin unto salvation and separation before this time. None is on pilgrimage to heaven until he/she is genuinely saved from sin. Pilgrimages to holy lands and engagement in religious rites/duties do not set the religionist free from sin. Every sinner and backslider need to repent of their sins and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior to be free from sin.

Question 2: How can the omnipresence and omniscience of God help the believer live a consistent Christian life?

Set free from sin that binds and inhibits spiritual progress, the believer begins to live a life of victory over sin, the flesh, self, the world and the devil. He is careful to **“walk with God”** and **“walk before God”** in righteousness. These phrases suggest that the believer consciously walks side by side with, lives and does everything under the watchful, never-blinking eyes of God (Psalm 139:1-12). As sane human beings do not want to expose their nakedness before the camera, so also the believer would not want to do evil while the omniscient and omnipresent God watches. These attributes of God, together with the fact He is the final Judge who knows every detail of our lives, should instil holy fear in the believer and enable him to live a consistent Christian life.

Besides, maintaining a consistent Christian life requires courage and faith. The heroes of faith grouped with Enoch and Abraham in Hebrews chapter 11 also

regarded as **“strangers and pilgrims on earth”** all had their problems, difficulties, temptations, trials and challenges. Rather than give in, they exercised their faith in God and were victorious. The challenges we face as believers will not last; we will continue to overcome if we lean on the Lord.

CAUSES OF INCONSISTENCY AND BACKSLIDING (Matthew 24:12; Genesis 19:26; 2 Timothy 4:10; 2:16-18; Zephaniah 1:12; 1 Timothy 6:9,10)

Question 3: What are the causes of inconsistency of believers in the faith?

The heroes of faith focused their desire and attention on the city of God. **“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city”** (Hebrews 11:16). Just as they did not allow their challenges to overcome them, they were not divided in heart and aspirations like Lot’s wife. They forgot the sinful world and lifestyle that existed in it when they came out. To this end, Paul the Apostle exhorted believers to set their affections on things above where Christ is. Demas returned to the world because he loved it just like some believers who have not burned the bridge that linked them with the world. They want to enjoy the best of two worlds. But Christ says no one can serve two masters and fervently love both at the same time. Therefore, those who seek to maintain a consistent life of holiness with God must be crucified to the world.

False doctrines are deadly to the spiritual health of a Christian. Beliefs in purgatory, unconditional security of saved souls, continuing to live on earth without any hope of going to heaven, etc. engender licentious, careless living. The antidote to being poisoned by false doctrines is diligence in acquiring the word of God in both personal and congregational study of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15-18).

The devil may allow a man to start the journey to heaven but he will do all he can to obstruct him from making

heaven. In these last days, he uses scoffers to dissuade believers from continuing on the path of righteousness (2 Peter 3:3-11). The global economic recession is another factor that can divert the attention of the heaven-bound pilgrim. Some would even dare to deny the faith in an attempt to survive in these last days. But the Bible warns **“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). Men are apt to forget God during promotion and prosperity (2 Chronicles 25:14). It is possible for a fervent believer to grow cold gradually until he loses all the good virtues he once had. Other causes of inconsistency in Christian living are fear of men (1 Samuel 15:24), evil association (1 Kings 11:4), stony hearts (Luke 8:13), spiritual laziness and emptiness (Zechariah 1:12), unbelief (John 6:64,66), love of the world (2 Timothy 4:10), lust of the flesh (Proverbs 7:6-27) and quest for materialism (1 Timothy 6:10).

CALL TO CONSISTENCY AND CONTINUITY IN HOLINESS (Genesis 17:1; Matthew 5:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:15,16; Luke 1:74,75; Acts 11:23; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 4:14; Philippians 1:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Peter 3:17; Hebrews 12:14; 13:12,13)

Question 4: Why is it necessary for believers to respond to God’s call to consistent holy living?

God’s demand for holy living cuts across generations. As He called Abraham to lead a perfect life, so has He called every believer to this same experience. **“Be ye therefore perfect”**, Christ demands of every Christian, **“even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”** (Matthew 5:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). God’s call to perfection or holy living is not limited to a particular day, week, month or period of time in our lives; we are to walk **“in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life”** (Luke 1:75). You can experience this holiness, sanctification or purity of heart through prayer and faith in the blood of Christ.

Question 5: How then can a believer maintain a consistent walk with the Lord?

Our text gives us the antidote to backsliding. **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might”** (Ephesians 6:10). The believer is in constant warfare with the devil and his agents who are at work night and day trying to entrap, enslave and ruin the careless. The breastplate of holiness or righteousness is a great and indispensable weapon in spiritual warfare without which the believer cannot walk consistently with God (Ephesians 6:12).

The feet of the consistent Christian must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Soul-winning is an important weapon as far as victorious Christian living is concerned. Also, you need to make use of the shield of faith as none can live the consistent Christian life without it. So also is prayer. The believer who prays **“always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit...”** will be able to **“stand”** unconquered by the enemy. He must avoid gluttony, talkativeness and much sleep that lead to spiritual poverty. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. And the believer who adds fasting to prayer of faith will be able to abide in the will and word of God and do exploits for Him. After all, the goal of consistent Christian living is to bear fruits of righteousness and soul-winning to the glory of God.

THE REWARD FOR CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING (Exodus 19:5; Matthew 5:8; Numbers 32:12; Joshua 14:12-14; Numbers 23:21-24; Daniel 1:8,19,20; Ruth 1:16; 4:13-22; Philippians 3:7,8; Psalm 103:17,18; Matthew 24:13)

Believers who maintain a consistent lifestyle of purity will be peculiar treasures unto the Lord and experience increased divine presence. The pure in heart shall see God and shall receive divine interventions and answers to prayers. They shall see the move of God in their lives and ministry on earth and live with God in heaven.

Consistent Christian living demands that the believer wholeheartedly follows the Lord, constantly examines his life and conduct to make sure they are scripture-based, sincerely renews his vow to walk with and serve the Lord. He must be ready to deny self, carry his cross and forego even legitimate things that inhibit his entire consecration to the Lord and his holy pilgrimage to heaven. Joshua, Daniel, Ruth, Paul the apostle, etc. were consistent and faithful in their walk with God and they were blessed and used for His glory. So also were Enoch and Abraham in our text. Enoch in particular was translated to glory without seeing death, giving hope of eternal bliss in heaven to every believer who lives a consistent holy life. It is obvious that those who do not maintain a consistent holy lifestyle will be denied entry to heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). But the believer who is steadfast and faithful in God’s service will be blessed on earth and rewarded in heaven by the Lord.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Joshua	13	Lamentations	1-2
TUE	“	14	“	3
WED	“	15	“	4-5
THUR	“	16-17	Ezekiel	1-2
FRI	“	18	“	3-4
SAT	“	19	“	5-6
SUN	“	20-21	“	7-8

END OF SPECIAL STUDIES

**END OF
SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES
VOLUME 64 STUDIES**



SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 65

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

833 *Lesson*

JUDGMENT ON JEROBOAM AND APOSTASY OF JUDAH

MEMORY VERSE: “And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 14: 16).

TEXT: 1 Kings 14:1-31

Jeroboam incurred the wrath and judgment of God for his failure to truly repent, fully return and faithfully redirect the nation to the path of true godliness. He had had a foretaste of divine displeasure when his hands withered in the temple and was restored through mercy (1 Kings 13:1-6), but his obduracy would not allow him to tread the path of genuine repentance. Instead, he continued in idolatry and goaded the whole nation into it. The Lord who would not condone evil or accept the person of men - whether they are princes or peasants - warned Jeroboam, but he would not hear. His conniving household and compromising citizenry eventually fell to the judgment.

This is a clear warning that ungodliness is dangerous, deadly and destructive. Mere profession or outward observance of religious rites is not as important as obedience and commitment to the truth. God would punish any sinful individual, household or nation regardless of whether such had had a record of recognition or acceptance of Him at any time or not. Anyone who deliberately chooses to snub the laws of God like Jeroboam or condescend into syncretism like the people of Judah will not be spared in time of divine judgment. It makes no sense to think otherwise or try to hide anything from Him because He sees everything (1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 139:11,12; Hebrews 4:13).

Question 1: What can we learn from God’s perception of idolatry?

THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF DISGUISED SINNERS (1 Kings 14:1-6; Job 5:13; 20:5; Psalm 44:20,21; Jeremiah 23:24; Ezekiel 14:3-8; Acts 5:3,4; Hebrews 4:11-13; Revelation 2:23)

Judgment against Jeroboam's idolatrous reign began with his son becoming sick of an undisclosed but obviously incurable ailment. **"At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick"** (1 Kings 14:1). As it is typical with most parents, the monarch was desperate for the recovery of his son. But having led the people away from the worship of the true God to serve idols, Jeroboam did not want his people to know that he sought a true prophet of God. However, like most deluded individuals, he knew within himself that there was no solution to his problem elsewhere. Also, he could not confidently approach the godly prophet for the desired divine revelation directly because he had violated the terms of his appointment (1 Kings 11:37,38). **"And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age"** (1 Kings 14:2-4). It is noteworthy that this was the first and only record of Jeroboam seeking a godly prophet. Like him, many hypocrites recourse to the Lord Jesus only when they are in dire need of personal, physical, material, health or any other benefits. Otherwise, they do not give heed to God's word, way or will. Unfortunately, attempting to bribe God with fasting, almsgiving or other religious deeds always results in divine displeasure, discipline and damnation (Job 21:13-18; Matthew 7:21- 23; Mark 7:6,7).

Despite the poor sight of the aged prophet, Jeroboam's deception did not sail through. Those who disguise in their dealings with the Lord, His servants or others find

that they cannot fool God but are soon disappointed (Genesis 27:19-32; Joshua 9:3-17; Acts 5:1-11). **“And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman”** (1 Kings 14:5). This episode underscores the fact that attempting to deceive God’s true ministers is as futile as assaying to hoodwink Him who Himself **“knoweth the secrets of the heart”** and is **“a revealer of secrets”** (Psalm 44:21; Daniel 2:47).

Question 2: Explain why Jeroboam tried to conceal the identity of his wife. Why is it unwise to act like him?

Contemporary people should live in daily consciousness of the fact that God does not change with time or season: He is still the same today as He was then. **“For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves”** (Job 34:21,22; Jeremiah 16:17,18).

THE DECLARATION OF DEATH ON JEROBOAM’S HOUSEHOLD (1 Kings 14:7-20; 15:25-30; 2 Kings 18:9-12; Romans 1:18)

As soon as Jeroboam’s wife came in, the prophet began to declare God’s message of judgment on her household. **“Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back”** (1 Kings 14:7-9). The basis of the heavy sentence on Jeroboam was because he violated the divine

conditions on which he was anointed king and serve the true God. Failure to use our God-given privileges for His glory amounts to utter ingratitude and folly. The reference to David challenges us to pattern our lives and commitment after divinely accredited godly characters (Philippians 3:17; 4:9; Hebrews 13:7). For failing to follow the worthy example of David, Jeroboam did “ . . . **evil above all that were before... and made... other gods, and molten images, to provoke (God) to anger...**” (1 Kings 14:9).

Prophet Ahijah’s declaration of judgment indicated that Jeroboam’s heir to the throne would die, the promise of his dynasty would be discontinued and his relatives were to be exterminated (1 Kings 14:10,11). Besides, Israel was to lose her sovereignty, be conquered and scattered because they neglected the Lord to follow their idolatrous and self-serving king. These prophecies were fulfilled (1 Kings 14:17,18; 15:25-31; 2 Kings 17:6,7).

Question 3: Briefly explain the consequence of missing out on God’s purpose.

That God will judge sinners is evident from Scripture records, His zero-tolerance for sin and His holy nature. Though iniquity presently abounds, it is wise to desist from anything that will bring the judgment of God on us or cause a negative prophecy to be fulfilled in our lives. As it was of old, the Lord will punish whoever initiates or consents to practice sin “**with everlasting destruction...**” (2 Thessalonians 1:9) except they repent. Believers must therefore resolutely fight against any incursion of sin into their lives. “**For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries** (Hebrews 10:26-31).

God’s distinctive commentary on Abijah, Jeroboam’s son, is worthy of note. “**...Because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam**” (1 Kings 14:12,13). The

good thing in reference is indicative of his piety, God's grace and non involvement with the defining idolatrous practices in Israel. This challenges us that in the midst of mostly ungodly individuals, family or clergy, we can be positively different, truly righteous and heavenly accredited (Genesis 6:9; 7:1; Philippians 2:15).

Question 4: Comment on the distinctive qualities of Abijah.

THE DEEDS AND DEATH OF REHOBOAM (1 Kings 14:21-31; 2 Chronicles 12:1-10; Deuteronomy 32:21-23; Ezekiel 18:30; Hosea 8:3; Matthew 3:10)

While a solitary Abijah in Jeroboam's idolatrous household was worthy of commendation, the Jews that inhabited Jerusalem, the city peculiarly chosen by God were unfortunately wayward and ungodly. Their backsliding began when they took the groves and images as emblems of true worship, a practice which had been forbidden by the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:15-18). **“And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done”** (1 Kings 14:21,22).

Many factors could be responsible for this ugly trend: **one**, the evil influence of the king's mother. The Scripture typically mentions an individual's mother to signify the kind of influence they had on them (Leviticus 24:11; 1 Kings 11:26; 14:21; 15:2; 22:42; 2 Kings 8:26). Parents should ensure they wield a godly influence on their offspring so that the heritage of faith can be sustained. **Two**, the increasing impact of idolatrous permissiveness since the time of Solomon. **Three**, negative influence from foreign contacts, diplomatic exigencies and more importantly, Satan's ceaseless efforts to infiltrate the camp of the godly through various wiles and temptations.

However, the fact remains that each individual is responsible for how they handle life's challenges. In the light of Israel's magnificent temple, covenant history, ordinances and solemn feasts, their apostasy was avoidable and most condemnable. Even though the full judgment of Judah came at a later date, they had a foretaste through the Egyptians. **"And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made"** (1 Kings 14:25,26). Like the Israelites, the Lord is not pleased with multitudes of worshippers who **"profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient..."** (Titus 1:16). Though reprobates often counterfeit the Christian character with damning alternatives like almsgiving, church attendance, kind deeds, decent dressing, or ministerial accolades, they are open to satanic attack as well as divine condemnation.

Question 5: How can one escape the wrath and judgment of God?

To avoid Israel and Judah's ugly experience, believers should conscientiously obey God in all things. This can be enhanced by paying attention to the study and practice of His word. Besides, each Christian congregation must avoid any inclination to represent the invisible God with visible objects like carvings of saints or Christ, the crucifix, pictures, rosaries, etc. in worship. We must realize that any sinful practice in any Christian circle is as loathsome to God as it was in Jeroboam's time. The Lord is consistently **"...angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death..."** (Psalm 7:11-13). A reprobate is condemned unless and until he or she genuinely repents; otherwise divine retribution is unavoidable. The true believer must watch and warn other people of the risk of God's wrath against hypocrites in His fold. Moreover, genuine Christians must put on the whole armour of God in order to withstand any

distracting allurements of Satan and his agents. We must resist and overcome their onslaught in order to keep evil away from the midst of God’s congregation (Ephesians 4:7; 6:10-18; James 4:7).

Lastly, we must be rapture-conscious and ready always (Matthew 25: 13; Luke 12:40; Revelation 3:11).

Scripture records as well as experience have shown that warning often precedes God’s judgment. He is not as interested in punishing sinners as He is in pardoning them. Therefore, there is no need to wait for the axe of divine judgment to fall before going to God in repentance. Except a person spurns His offer, God is ready to spare whoever chooses life by seeking reconciliation through genuine repentance.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Joshua 22	Ezekiel	9-10
TUE	“ 23-24	“	11-12
WED	Judges 1	“	13-14
THUR	“ 2-3	“	15-16
FRI	“ 4-5	“	17-18
SAT	“ 6	“	19-20
SUN	“ 7-8	“	21

834 Lesson

EARLIER KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you” (2 Chronicles 15: 1,2).

TEXT: 1 Kings 15 & 16; 2 Chronicles 13, 14, 15 & 16

The golden era of united Israel ended with the division of the nation into two opposing kingdoms. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon was the first king of Judah while Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was the pioneer ruler of new Israel. This study, which focuses on the next two kings of Judah who reigned after Rehoboam and six kings of Israel after Jeroboam shows the importance and influence of leadership in any group, society or nation. When good kings ruled, the people were brought closer to God, but when evil kings reigned, they led the people away from Him. Therefore, we should always pray for our leaders to be God-fearing and righteous.

Question 1: What is the place of good leadership and why should believers pray for their leaders?

POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF GODLY HERITAGE IN JUDAH (1 Kings 15:1-24; 2 Chronicles 13:1-22; 14:1-15; 15:1-19; 16:1-14)

Judah maintained the ruling house of David throughout its entire existence. That was in contrast to the northern kingdom of Israel which had several ruling houses within a short duration. As a result, the kingdom of Judah was more stable and it experienced considerable time of spiritual revival under the influence of some godly kings. It is also remarkable that God’s covenant with

David continued to resonate in the kingdom of Judah for a long time. The lesson here is, God is faithful in keeping covenants with His people (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 89:34; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2).

After the death of Rehoboam, Abijah his son reigned over Judah. Though he was not the first son, his father made him king because he was the son of Maachah, his favorite wife (2 Chronicles 11:18-22). In doing this, Rehoboam contravened God's command against favoritism and injustice in the family (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Though there are cases in Scripture where God exalted the younger above the elder, the case of Abijah's choice was partiality. The Scripture warns against preferential treatment, favoritism, partiality, tribalism, ethnicity, racism and discrimination.

During the reign of Abijah (also called Abijam), the lingering cold war between Judah and Israel broke into open conflict. Before the war, Abijah warned Jeroboam and Israel that it was foolish for them to continue in rebellion against the house of David and to forsake the true God. He said, **"...ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods. But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him... O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper"** (2 Chronicles 13:4,8,10,12). Meanwhile, Israel's army had secretly surrounded the army of Judah while Abijah was still speaking. When Judah realised their desperate condition, they cried unto God, and He gave them a decisive victory over Israel. Judah destroyed more than half of Israel's army and annexed some of their conquered cities. The victory of Judah was because they trusted in the Lord; **"They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever"** (Psalm 125: 1). It is disastrous to depend on the arm of flesh (Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm 118:8,9; 146:3,4). We must trust God at all times and never lean on our own understanding or experience.

Question 2: Point out the dangers of trusting the arm of flesh.

It is sad, however, that despite the military success God gave Abijah, he turned out to be an evil king. He went into idolatry and did evil in God's sight. Though he spoke well about God, His power and covenant, he lacked the commitment to obey His commandments. It is worthless to know and teach Bible doctrines well but live contrary and practice the vices we condemn in others. Many people, like Abijah, call upon God when they are desperately in need but turn from Him after obtaining their desire.

Abijah was succeeded by Asa, his son. Asa reigned in Judah for forty-one years and he was one of the good kings who ruled the southern kingdom. Asa inherited the throne, the peace and military success won by his father but rejected his evil practices. The fact that he turned out to be a good king, despite the evil influence of his father and grandmother, Maachah, proved we can overcome every negative circumstance if we truly want to serve God.

During the period of peace, King Asa initiated a far reaching religious reform in Judah. He also built defense cities in anticipation of any attack from hostile neighbours. After ten years of relative peace, the Ethiopians attacked Judah with a multitude of soldiers. **“And Asa cried unto the LORD his God... So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled...”** (2 Chronicles 14:11,12). Asa defeated them because he trusted in God and received spectacular divine intervention.

After defeating the Ethiopians, Prophet Azariah brought a solemn message of conditional security of believers to King Asa and Judah: **“The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you”** (2 Chronicles 15:2). He encouraged him to be strong in serving God for his work would be rewarded. Consequently, the king consolidated his religious

reforms. He prohibited idolatry, destroyed strange altars, images and groves in the whole of Judah. He purged immorality by proscribing the temple of prostitutes and sodomites. Even Maachah, his mother, who occupied the position of Queen was deposed because of her idolatry. By this act, Asa the king proved that genuine reforms must begin in the leader's life and household for it to succeed.

The reform of Asa was not just about dealing with the negative: he commanded the people to seek the Lord God and obey His words. He led the people to renew their covenant with God. **“And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman... and the LORD gave them rest round about”** (2 Chronicles 15:12,13,15). True worship was restored and all the temple vessels were re-consecrated. Then, Asa stipulated a grave penalty against anyone who refused to worship the true God.

Question 3: What are the pointers to a true spiritual reform?

The reforms of Asa yielded fruits: the people returned to God wholeheartedly, all enemies were subdued, there was peace and prosperity in the land and several Israelites from the northern kingdom migrated to Judah. No doubt, the religious reforms by Asa offended those who made profit from the idolatrous reign of previous kings, but it attracted genuine seekers after God from far and near. It takes courage to return to and remain on the old path or to insist on biblical standards; but it is the only way to bring lasting fruits in God's kingdom.

Towards the end of his reign, Asa stained his glorious testimony. He manifested unbelief and dependence on the arms of flesh when Baasha, the king of Israel built a blockade against Judah. Asa removed the treasures of God's temple and those in his palace, and sent them as a bribe to buy over the king of Syria. Though the strategy worked, God was displeased with him. Prophet Hanani

was sent to rebuke him but he responded negatively. King Asa imprisoned the prophet and oppressed the people. Even when he had a disease in his feet, he depended on carnal help rather than on the living God.

The life of Asa teaches us several lessons. One, we must use our positions and privileges to influence others to serve God. Two, we should not use things that are dedicated to God for ignoble ends. Asa used treasures of God's house to bribe a heathen king. Three, we should learn to receive correction, warning or rebuke with a good heart. Remember, God sends warning before judgment. Four, we should not see God's messengers as enemies or critics, especially when they point out our mistakes or offences. Instead, we should avoid the common mistake of rulers who oppress preachers of righteousness (2 Chronicles 18:7; Jeremiah 32:3; Matthew 14:3). Five, avoid ending up a good life on a bad note. Six, see the best of men as liable to making mistakes. Though Asa had a good heart, he was still susceptible to fall. Seven, we should trust God at all times and put His will above healing or any other temporal benefit. Asa wanted healing so much that he did not mind depending on physicians, who probably used ungodly means.

POLLUTION OF IDOLATRY THROUGH UNGODLY KINGS OF ISRAEL (1 Kings 15:1-8; 25-34; 16:1-34; Exodus 20:25; 1 John 5:21)

The kings of Israel continued to build on the foundation of idolatry laid by Jeroboam. Nadab the son of Jeroboam reigned for only two years and walked in the sins of his father before Baasha the son of Ahijah from the tribe of Issachar assassinated and succeeded him. So, Nadab was the first king of Israel to be murdered in office, while Baasha was the first in the northern kingdom to ascend the throne through a bloody coup. Having seized power, Baasha also continued in idolatry until he died and Elah his son took over the kingdom. Elah was equally evil and was identified with drunkenness. He was killed and succeeded by Zimri, his royal troop commander. Zimri reigned for a record of seven days and within that period, he killed all the descendants of Baasha.

But when Zimri realised he had been trapped in the palace by the army led by Omri, he committed suicide by burning the palace upon himself. Self-murder is not excusable whatever the challenges one may face.

After the death of Zimri, there was a brief division in Israel. Some people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, while the majority followed Omri. At the end, Omri prevailed and ruled Israel for twelve years. It was Omri that moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria. He was an evil king like his predecessor and his son, Ahab, ruled after him.

Ahab was notorious for promoting the worship of Baal in Israel. He married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. Ahab built worship centers for Baal and did more to provoke God above all the kings before him. The story of the kings of Israel and their idolatry shows the terrible consequences of bad examples from leaders. It also shows that children have a way of perpetuating and increasing the evil they copy from their parents.

PROVIDENCE AND DIVINE INTERVENTION IN JUDAH AND ISRAEL (1 Kings 16:1-7; 2 Chronicles 16:7-10)

Despite the poor spiritual state of Israel and Judah under the reign of their evil kings, it is important to see the providence of God and His intervention in their affairs. For instance, God said He exalted Baasha and made him king over His people Israel (1 Kings 16:2). Now, we know Baasha seized power by killing king Nadab, how then could it be said that God exalted or made him ruler? Here is a case of divine sovereignty and human responsibility at work. Baasha was responsible for his wicked decision to murder the king, but God overruled and used it to achieve His own purpose. If Baasha had repented and walk according to God's word, he would have received divine approval. But he did not.

It is also significant to note the prophetic ministries of Hanani and his son, Jehu, both in Judah and Israel at this time. Hanani was sent to warn king Asa, while

Jehu spoke against Baasha the king of Israel (1 Kings 16:1-4; 2 Chronicles 16:7-10). This family, like a lily in the mire, challenges present-day believers to pass the torch of faith from one generation to the next, despite the increasing corruption and evil in the land.

Question 4: What challenge does the ministry of Hanani and Jehu his son pose to believers living in a decadent society?

The power and veracity of God's word are also confirmed in the way the evil kings of Israel were judged. The prophecies of divine judgment were spoken against Jeroboam through Ahijah the prophet, and against Baasha through Jehu the son of Hanani. These prophecies were fulfilled to the letter (1 Kings 15:25-30; 16:1-13). Azariah the son of Oded was also used by God to minister the truth about the believer's conditional security, encouragement and promise of reward for untiring faithful service to Asa. There was also the fulfilment of Joshua's prophecy against the person who would rise to rebuild Jericho. In the days of Ahab, Hiel the Bethelite dared to rebuild the old ruined city. When he laid the foundation, Abiram his first son died, and when he finished and set up the gates, Segub his youngest son died (Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34). God is ever faithful to His word.

The consequences of violating God's laws are grave. The kings of Judah and Israel went into idolatry, some practiced polygamy, multiplying horses, struggling for prominence and power, and the like. However, God, in His faithfulness, sent genuine prophets to warn them, but they would not listen. He still sends His servants to warn sinners today. He expects everyone to repent, forsake their sins and obtain mercy and forgiveness. Those who refuse to repent will face His judgment.

Question 5: What are the consequences of rejecting God's warnings?

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Judges	9	Ezekiel	22
TUE	“	10-11	“	23
WED	“	12-13	“	24-25
THUR	“	14-15	“	26-27
FRI	“	16	“	28-29
SAT	“	17-18	“	30-31
SUN	“	19	“	32

835 Lesson

THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God” (1 Kings 18:38,39).

TEXT: 1 Kings 17, 18 & 19

This study focuses on the ministry of one of the notable prophets in the Bible. Though he lived thousands of years ago with relatively short duration of ministry, the impact of his ministry on backslidden Israel still resonates the world over. The narrative in this study provides succor for different categories of ministry: those who think their place of ministry is hard, harsh and hostile; those who feel they are lonely in godliness and service; those who had toiled much with perceived little outcome, and the discouraged fishermen in the ministry who are about to give up and wash their nets. It also poses a great challenge to those who feel greatly anointed, to awake and realize that there is still much ground to cover. Believers would understand in this lesson, the need and essence of standing for God in an era of unbelief and apostasy.

SPIRITUAL DECLENSION OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL (1 Kings 17:1; 18:5,6,17,18; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 6:24; James 4:4)

At the time of Elijah’s ministry, seven wicked kings had occupied the throne of Israel in successions. These included Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-33); Nadab (1 Kings 15:25,26); Baasha (1 Kings 15:27,28); Elah (1 Kings 16:8,9); Zimri (1 Kings 16:20); Omri (1 Kings 16:25,26) and Ahab (1 Kings 16:28-33). Evil leadership would often produce evil followership. The spiritual degeneration at this time was somewhat unprecedented, climaxing in the overwhelming acts of idolatry of Ahab and his

adulterous, wicked wife, Jezebel, who was a symbol of false religion and immorality.

Baal worship at this time had become the religion of the nation. Few adherents of the true religion were in hiding as a result of fear. The spiritual condition was hostile to the worship of the true God as the prophets of the Lord were being slaughtered by Jezebel (1 Kings 18:13). The people were not just worshipers of Baal: they attempted to serve the true God and Baal at the same time. This depicts the condition of end-time Christianity which attempts to combine the worship of God with money, men, wealth, fame and power. Jesus denounced this saying, **“No man can serve two masters”** as it amounts to committing spiritual adultery (Matthew 6:24; James 4:4).

Question 1: Mention some actions of Ahab which showed that he was recalcitrant despite divine chastening.

Despite repeated divine chastisement, Israel as a nation was recalcitrant and unrepentant. They should have learnt that divine displeasure is not irreversible if greeted with an attitude of repentance. They must have read in the prayers of Solomon, among other Scriptures, that **“If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”** (2 Chronicles 7:13,14). Yet, this had no effect on their personal and national lives. Ahab was more content to treat the effects rather than the cause of the national afflictions. For example, he was mindful of his beasts and made efforts to seek grass for them, which was hardly available, due to the drought, but was unwilling to attend to the cause: their repeated backsliding (1 Kings 18:5,6). This is still largely the case with sinners today, who would fast and pray for healing and deliverance but would care less about their salvation. Rather than heed the rebuke of Elijah, Ahab sent his servants into neighboring countries to effect his arrest.

Question 2: What should people do when they discover that they are under affliction?

SUPERNATURAL MESSAGES OF ELIJAH, THE NATIONAL PROPHET (1 Kings 17:1; 18:5-18; Leviticus 26:1-5; 18:21-24; Ephesians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Elijah's appearance on the scene of prophetic ministry was sudden. That nothing was said of his life before First Kings chapter seventeen suggests that he was out of public glare for preparation for ministry. Waiting time in ministry is not wasted time. Concerning John the Baptist, the Scripture says, **"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel"** (Luke 1:80). Those who rush into the ministry without waiting for their time of manifestation risk missing the plan of God for their lives. As premature birth of a child is dangerous, so it is with the spiritual. Working outside of divine timing can be spiritually catastrophic.

Elijah came on stage with a judgmental message of three years draught. **"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word"** (1 Kings 17:1). Baal worshippers believed and did propagate that Baal was the giver of rain. To refute this belief, Elijah had to prove that it is God who rules nature. Thereafter, he challenged the people on Mount Camel to take a decision on who to follow - the God of Israel or Baalim.

Sin - personal or national - is at the root of many problems. Therefore, preachers should denounce it by preaching repentance and genuine conversion as the antidote to most troubles.

Question 3: Why was drought brought upon Israel?

As we review the messages of this great prophet, we see the following: one, his fearlessness in declaring the mind of God. Ahab as a king had the power to kill and to spare, yet Elijah courageously expressed the mind

of God, not considering his reaction. Two, his messages were given with the sole aim of restoring the people to God. Three, he spoke clearly without leaving the people in doubt as regards what must be done.

The church today occupies the same position in declaring the message of reconciliation with God to men. Ministers of the gospel should be unsparing in condemning sin as well as societal evils borne out of zeal for righteousness and the glory of God.

SPECTACULAR MANIFESTATIONS OF POWER IN ELIJAH'S MINISTRY (1 Kings 17:1-24; 18:19-46; 19:121; 1 Corinthians 2:4)

Elijah's ministry was approved by God with signs and wonders. He prayed and shut heaven against rain. He prayed again and it rained. The fact that the period of drought was as specific as prophesied and that the rain fell as he declared showed the extent of Elijah's power with God (1 Kings 17:1-6; James 5:16,18). The effect of the dry heaven was drought throughout Israel. But God, wanting to show His might and power, fed Elijah using the ravens. His providence decided to use a small creature to supply the need of His servant. Today, God can use any means or medium to meet the needs of His people so that in all things, the glory of His power might be revealed.

God is at the center of all that happens in the life and ministry of His children, and He allows them for a purpose. When supply failed from the ravens and the brooks dried up, the Lord directed Elijah to the house of the widow of Zarephath to continue the miracle of supply for himself and sustenance and surplus for the widow throughout the period of famine. The widow was rewarded for her hospitality: apart from the supply of her needs, her dead son was raised back to life. The need to honour and show hospitality towards God's servant cannot be over-emphasized. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, said, **"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name**

of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:41).

Question 4: Mention some of the instances of God's manifestation of power in Elijah's ministry.

In declaring the miracle of provision in the widow's house, Elijah prophesied, **"For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth"** (1 Kings 17:14). It is worthy of note that Elijah was a true prophet of God. In the New Testament, knowing a true prophet goes beyond foretelling or mere accuracy of prediction; it also has to do with the life of the prophet as well as the consistency of his prophecy with the Scripture (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 John 4:1-6).

The showdown on Mount Carmel where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest was the climax of his ministry. One, the incident altered the spiritual atmosphere of Israel, which is the major essence of every sign and wonder. For the first time after many years, the people confessed that the Lord, He is God. Two, Elijah alone faced four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and another four hundred prophets of the grooves at the same time. Three, he prayed and fire came down. This earned him the name, the prophet of fire.

Today, manifestations of God's power through signs and wonders do happen to confirm the word of God so that unbelievers can come to the light of the gospel. It also happens so that the oppressed can be delivered and enjoy the full provision of redemption. Moreover, signs and wonders bring glory to God.

A number of attributes in Elijah's life qualified him as a chosen vessel and led to the manifestation of God's power in his ministry. First, he stood far from sin and maintained his purity even in the house of the widow of Zarephath. Second, he obeyed every instruction from God even at the seeming peril of his life. Third, Elijah was a man of fervent prayers. The account in the house

of the widow of Zarephath, where he prayed and her son was raised back to life as well as that of intercession for rain on Mount Carmel lend credence to this. Fourth, he had an unwavering faith in God and His word.

Question 5: What are the major reasons for signs and wonders in a believer's ministry?

However, a low point in the ministry of Elijah was when he fled as a result of Jezebel's threat (1 Kings 19: 1-4). Ministers of God also have their periods of discouragement. Discouragement after success is a fact of life. Elijah should have known that the same God who proved Himself before the false prophets was still around to defend him. Part of the reasons for his discouragement was because he felt he was the only prophet fighting the cause of the Lord. Reasons for discouragement in ministry vary but include wrong perception of success in ministry, having the feeling of failure whereas God judges us to be successful. Ministers could also feel discouraged when sowing appears not to be commensurate with reaping. Persecution and pressure constitute another source of discouragement. Lack of needed resources could also dampen the enthusiasm of ministers of God. But God who knows the plight and condition of His servants spoke comfortably to Elijah in the language he understood. The time of discouragement is the best time to listen to God who is the source of true comfort (1 Kings 19:5-14). The Lord did not only comfort Elijah but strengthened him by sending an angel to feed him. He also reassured him and gave him a new direction towards total eradication of idolatry in Israel. This would be accomplished by anointing Jehu as king over Israel. God has the solution to every confronting situation in life and ministry. All we need is to pray and cast our burden upon Him.

From the exploits of Elijah and the effect on Israel, we learn that the task of end-time evangelization and ministry would amount to nothing unless the Holy Ghost works with and within us. Convincing men in an era of gross backsliding and apostasy becomes a daunting task that mere preaching cannot accomplish. Though the number of false prophets and preachers of

errors far outnumber the preachers of the truth today, the Holy Spirit is the One who makes the difference by approving and backing His true servants (1 Corinthians 2:4).

The study ends with a successor plan as we witness the call of Elisha into the ministry. Ministers should know that they have but a dispensation to serve. Thus, they should develop those who will carry the baton and continue with the work when they leave the stage as there is no success without a successor.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Judges	20	Ezekiel	33
TUE	“	21	“	34-35
WED	Ruth	1-2	“	36
THUR	“	3-4	“	37-38
FRI	1 Samuel	1-2	“	39
SAT	“	3-4	“	40
SUN	“	5-6	“	41-42

836 Lesson

AHAB DEFEATS THE SYRIANS

MEMORY VERSE: “And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD” (1 Kings 20: 13).

TEXT: 1 Kings 20:1-43

The text continues the story of Ahab, the king of Israel who had sold himself to do wickedly under the evil influence of Jezebel, his wife. Ahab and Israel witnessed the encounter at Mount Carmel where God sent down fire and reversed the judgment of drought at Elijah’s prayer. They had also confessed that the Lord, He is God, and consented to the slaying of the 450 prophets of Baal. However, with the passage of time, these supernatural awakenings were forgotten and Israel went back to the worship of multiple gods.

This chapter shows how God gave Ahab and the entire people of Israel another chance to return to the true and living God (1 Kings 20:13,28). The two victories he had over Syria were undeserved because he had already resigned to fate and surrendered shamefully to Benhadad. But God decided to defend Israel, honour His own name and fulfil the covenant He made with their fathers. This reveals that God is never hindered by the limitations of men and reassures us that He is the sovereign One who rules in human affairs. The passage also teaches us that God is angry with wicked and would punish them accordingly (Psalm 7:11; Proverbs 11:21).

Question 1: Why did God defend Israel in spite of Ahab’s wicked reign?

THE DEGENERATE CONDITION OF BENHADAD AND HIS CRUEL DEMAND (1 Kings 20:1-12,16; Psalms 10:2-4; 52:1; 59:12; Isaiah 16:6; 28:1,3; Jeremiah 48:29; Zephaniah 2:10)

“And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it” (1 Kings 20:1). Benhadad was a proud, profane, blasphemous and boastful king whose pastime lied in revelry and drunkenness. Twice he was mentioned as drinking even in war time (1 Kings 20:12,16) - a habit unbefitting of a king (Proverbs 31:4,5). He had a false understanding of the God of Israel and equated Him with the heathen gods which are limited by seasons, space and situations. He treated the covenant people of God with disdain and boasted that he would overrun the entire nation. But he failed to recognize that the God of Israel is omnipotent, supreme and His authority incomparable.

Out of greed, selfishness and a desire to subject the children of Israel to servitude, Benhadad demanded that Ahab surrender the dearest things in his kingdom. **“And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Benhadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine”** (1 Kings 20:2,3). His demand was cruel, inhuman and insensible, and designed to humiliate Israel. Christians must understand that the devil will stop at nothing to humiliate and destroy the saints. The Bible commands us not to give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27) because giving him an inch will make him to demand a mile. The pride of Benhadad and his trust in the arm of flesh set him against God and prepared him for utter destruction.

Question 2: What do we learn from Ahab's inability to reject the humiliating demands of Benhadad?

Ahab had sold himself to practice wickedness under the influence of his overbearing wife who ensured that he turned his allegiance from the God of Israel to Baal. His powerless surrender is indicative of the weakening effect of sin in a person's life. Sinners have no power or courage to stand before their enemies. A sinning believer is a contradiction in terms and cannot stand before the devil (Joshua 7:13). Someone has said, “a rebel to God is a slave to everything else”. Ahab had

sentenced himself to fear and slavery and was ready to surrender his wives, children, materials and money to the enemy because his life was not right with God. If believers would enjoy the victorious life in Christ, they must steer clear of sin and live the holy life.

DIVINE INTERVENTION AND ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER THE SYRIANS (1 Kings 20:13-30; 2 Samuel 10:18; Joshua 10:11; 1 Samuel 7:10; 14:6; Judges 7:1-7; Psalm 46:1-11; Romans 8:31)

As a response to the humiliating demand from Benhadad, the Lord intervened through His prophet to protect Israel and preserve the honour of His name. **“And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD”** (1 Kings 20:13).

God stepped in despite Ahab's hopeless and hapless disposition occasioned by his reign of wickedness. Neither he nor Israel was worthy of God's assistance at this time of national crisis because they had turned their back on God. He, however, was jealous for His name and concerned about the preservation of His covenant people. He offered to rescue Israel from shame and defeat: an intervention occasioned by mercy. People who enjoy divine protection and provision today in spite of their wayward lives should not take the patience of God for granted. Such people must realize that the goodness of God is to lead them to repentance. **“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”** (Romans 2:4). God requires total turning away from sin, renunciation of the old life and implicit faith in Christ.

The Syrian army was a great multitude but the army of Israel was made up of 232 inexperienced young men who were in the forefront and 7,000 soldiers who followed behind. It is not always a battle of numbers when God is involved. He does not need a great multitude of people to win any battle. When we learn to submit our will,

knowledge and skills to Him, we are sure to be on the victory side.

On hearing of the scanty number of youths approaching the battle front, Benhadad ordered that they be captured alive. But his presumption wreaked havoc and defeat in the camp of the Syrians. The bold, courageous attack by these young men followed by the seven thousand soldiers behind sent panic and confusion into the Syrian camp and God gave Israel the victory.

Question 3: How should believers view spiritual warfare?

After the first victory, God sent His prophet to Ahab to prepare for another attack from the Syrians who would simply not accept defeat. Though they were defeated and disgraced and Benhadad escaped death narrowly, they did not give up. Winning a single battle of faith is not enough for believers to let down their guard because our adversary does not give up easily. We are engaged in a lifelong battle against sin, Satan, the flesh and the world, for our souls and for the souls of others. One victory over sin, one escape from a snare, one deliverance from discouragement; and the battle continues. Therefore, we must be sober, vigilant, watchful and prayerful (1 Peter 4:7; 5:8; Matthew 26:41). “Each victory will help you some others to win”.

Though the Syrians ignorantly associated the victory of Israel to the location of the battle, they failed to realize that Israel’s God was not like their god who is limited by place, space or landscape. Apparently recalling the recent encounter on Mount Carmel where God answered Elijah and sent down fire from heaven, the Syrians thought they would defeat Israel in the valley. Believers in Jesus must realize that either on the mountaintop of life or in the valley of uncertainty, on a bright sunny day or the dark cloudy night, our God remains the same (Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6) and the believer is destined to win every battle by faith. The confidence we have is that He that watches over us neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4). God’s purpose and power is unchanging, unchangeable and unchallengeable.

Syria's second defeat was more devastating and total with a loss of 127,000 lives. On this occasion of victory for Israel, we learn that God's motive was to convince Ahab that He is the true God and a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). Two, that He is the God of the universe who knows the end from the beginning and rules in the affairs of men (Isaiah 46:10). Three, God was jealous for His name, hence He must defend it, declare His omnipotence and preserve the people of His covenant. Four, that the entire nation of Israel might know and acknowledge Him **"that I am the LORD"** (1 Kings 20:13,28) and turn back to serve Him with all their hearts.

Question 4: Why did God give Israel victory in spite of their backslidden state?

Knowing God is a central theme in His plan of salvation. This leads to freedom from sin and its consequences, deliverance and dominion over the powers of darkness, sanctification and purity of heart and power for Kingdom exploits. The counsel for believers in Christ today is to "follow on" to know the Lord so as to enjoy His continuous presence and power (Hosea 6:3).

DIVINE JUDGMENT FOR DISOBEDIENCE AND UNGODLY ASSOCIATION (1 Kings 20:31-43; Deuteronomy 7:1,2; 17:10-20; 20:10-13; James 4:4)

The battle was over, the victory was glorious, Benhadad, the once boastful and blasphemous commander of the Syrian army sought a place to hide in shame and utter humiliation but he found none. He was therefore advised to seek clemency from Ahab. With an advanced party, he promised to restore all that he and his fathers had taken from Israel. **"And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria..."** (1 Kings 20:34).

This was an opportunity for Ahab to obey the law of God concerning His enemies and totally destroy him (Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:17; Joshua 11:20; 1 Samuel

15:18). Sadly, he did not seek to fulfil the purpose for which God gave him victory in battle. He forgot the error of king Saul who spared Agag to his own destruction. God is still angry with the wicked every day; it is only the blood of Jesus that can atone for sin and reconcile men to God.

At the beginning of the war, Ahab had feared Benhadad more than God, but He turned the table against Israel's adversaries in fulfilment of His promise that **"...the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors"** (Isaiah 14:2).

Consequently, Ahab did not only incur divine judgment by sparing Benhadad, he also made an unequal alliance with him. By this treaty, he simply turned himself to an enemy of the God of Israel (James 4:4). Ahab referred to this captive as 'my brother' and made him to ride in his chariot. Believers must beware of the danger of giving room to old sinful partners or evil habits that they had renounced (Galatians 5:1). Moreover, God forbids intimate association of believers with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

The fourth appearance of God's prophet to Ahab in this text was to deliver His judgment. In a bid to disguise so he could properly deliver God's message without being recognized, the prophet (thought to be Micaiah), turned to his neighbor to smite him but the man refused. His refusal was considered an utter disobedience to the word of the Lord and he was promptly judged. **"A lion found him, and slew him"** (1 Kings 20:36). Some may wonder why this instant judgment? The man in question was not an ordinary Israelite, but one of the sons of the prophets who should understand the severity of divine commands (1 Kings 20:35).

Question 5: What is the danger of unequal yoke with unbelievers?

The prophet eventually employed a parable to elicit self judgment from Ahab. This parable has a timeless

instruction for every believer. We have been given a divine assignment to preach the gospel (Matthew 28:18, 19; Mark 16:15). Every believer is responsible for rescuing the perishing in their generation. If we occupy ourselves with other things and neglect the great commission, we have disobeyed the Lord. Therefore, we must seize every opportunity being lost daily on the altar of business pursuits, religious activities, societal ceremonies and other secular engagements and do the bidding of the Master. We must not be **“busy here and there”** and allow sinners to perish and go to hell.

Ahab’s life eventually went for Benhadad’s life as prophesied (1 Kings 22:31-40). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God. As believers, let us gird up our loins and be ready to obey the word of God and rescue those that are appointed to death.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Samuel	7-8	Ezekiel	43-44
TUE	“	9-10	“	45-46
WED	“	11-12	“	47-48
THUR	“	13	Daniel	1-2
FRI	“	14	“	3
SAT	“	15	“	4
SUN	“	16	“	5

837 Lesson

AHAB'S COVETOUSNESS AND PUNISHMENT

MEMORY VERSE: “And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee” (1 Kings 21:3).

TEXT: 1 Kings 21:1-29

Covetousness, a strong desire or yearning to possess something that lawfully belongs to another person, is condemned in the Scriptures. God forbids every unholy desire borne out of selfishness, greed, envy or lack of contentment. **“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s”** (Exodus 20:17). It was in violation of this command that **“Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or , if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money”** (1 Kings 21:2). This lesson details what transpired between Ahab and Naboth, the murder of the latter by Jezebel and her co-conspirators, Ahab’s audacious attempt to possess the deceased’s vineyard and the accompanying divine judgment.

Question 1: Why is covetousness sinful?

COVETOUSNESS AND CRUELTY OF AHAB AND JEZEBEL (1 Kings 21:1-16; Exodus 20:17; Jeremiah 6:13; Ezekiel 33:31; Micah 2:2; Ephesians 5:3)

It is obvious from Ahab’s request for Naboth’s vineyard that he had a better one or the equivalent of it in monetary value. Thus, covetousness is not borne out of want or lack of wealth but an expression of man’s corrupt nature. **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness...”** (Mark 7:21-23).

By virtue of his throne and status, Ahab was a wealthy man who had all things that should make him comfortable as a king. However, he was not contented with what he had. This is the usual lifestyle of sinners who **“covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage”** (Micah 2:2). Naboth’s reply, **“The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee”** (1 Kings 21:3) drove Ahab to despondency that he could not eat (1 Kings 21:5).

Jezebel, Ahab’s wicked wife, was enraged by Naboth’s refusal. Her question to Ahab - “Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?” - revealed that she had a wrong understanding of governance and took authority for impunity. She hatched a plot to forcefully take over Naboth’s vineyard. She wrote letters bearing Ahab’s name and seal to the elders and nobles to proclaim a fast, set Naboth up, call two false witnesses to allege that he blasphemed, in order to stone him to death.

Question 2: How should believers respond to suggestions to do evil?

Rather than decline the order of the king like the servants of Saul (1 Samuel 22:17), the elders and nobles went ahead to raise false witnesses against Naboth and stoned him. Believers are warned not to allow anyone, no matter how powerful, to influence them to sin against God. They should also beware of the wicked who can hatch evil devices and go to any length to get whatever they want. God does not spare those who have pleasure in sin, strengthen the hands of evildoers, conspire or give evil counsel and partake of the sins of others. God is holy; He hates **“ . . . hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies...”** (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Bearing false witness breaks the commandment of God. Christ affirmed this command - **“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”** - in the New Testament in connection with obtaining and retaining eternal life (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20; Matthew

19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20). In the build-up to His crucifixion, **the chief priests, the elders and the Jewish council “sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death”** (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:56,57). Those who delight in bearing false witness for pecuniary and other reasons should know that **“A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish...the wages of sin is death”** (Proverbs 19:9; Romans 6:23). In the text, covetousness led to the evil plot that produced false witnesses leading to the murder of an innocent soul. One sinner does much evil indeed.

Question 3: What can believers learn from the attitude of Ahab, Jezebel, the elders and nobles in Israel?

The response and conviction of Naboth concerning his vineyard are worthy of emulation in relation to our spiritual inheritance (1 Kings 21:2-4,6; Jude 3; Romans 8:35-39). While Ahab premised his request on proximity of the landed property to his palace, Naboth anchored his objection on the fact that it was **“...the inheritance of [his] fathers... “**The Law of Moses forbade the sale of landed property, except in extreme destitution; even then, it would always return to the original owners in the year of release (Leviticus 25:23-27). So, Naboth was right in his refusal to part with his inheritance.

Like Naboth’s vineyard, the believers’ salvation, sanctification and other spiritual experiences are priceless and should not be exchanged for other things. The life-saving doctrines of divine inspiration of the Scripture, the virgin birth, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, repentance, restitution, rapture, heaven, hell, etc. are the inheritance of the saints and must not be mortgaged for any reason. We must, like the Apostles and other contemporary saints, **“...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 1:3). If we faithfully serve God till death or rapture, we have **“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]”** (1 Peter 1:4).

Question 4: What can believers learn from Naboth’s refusal to part with his father’s inheritance?

CONDEMNATION AND JUDGMENT OF THE COVETOUS AND THE CRUEL (1 Kings 21:17-26; Habakkuk 2:9; Joshua 7:16-26; Judges 1:6,7; 9:23,24; 2 Samuel 18:9,14-17; 1 Kings 2:31,32,34; 2 Kings 9:30-37)

Prior to killing Naboth, Jezebel made a promise to Ahab: “. . . **I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite**” (1 Kings 21:7). Ahab and Jezebel accomplished their goal and Ahab went to possess the vineyard, but God, the omniscient Judge of all, sent Elijah to proclaim judgment on him and his household. **“Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah...The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat”** (1 Kings 21:21-24).

Elijah the prophet demonstrated the required virtues of a faithful servant of God. He was not afraid to deliver God’s message to Ahab. Same way, Christians should be fearless in preaching the gospel to sinners without adding or subtracting from it. The complete gospel message about Christ’s death, burial and resurrection is the only message that saves and takes to heaven.

Question 5: From the text, what should be the attribute of a true servant of God?

It is encouraging that God’s faithfulness to His righteous and faithful servants continues even after their demise. He has said vengeance is mine. For His hapless, oppressed and downtrodden children like Abel, Uriah and Naboth who could not square up to their powerful oppressors, God fought for them. No oppressor of God’s children will go unpunished.

God has declared His judgment upon all categories of sinners, irrespective of gender, social status, religious

affiliation, racial or ethnic background. Anyone who fails to repent will spend eternity in hell. Achan, Saul and Judas Iscariot were all caught in the web of covetous practices and incurred God's wrath (Joshua 7:21; 1 Samuel 15:9; Matthew 26:14,15). God also visited Jezebel with severe judgment according to the pronouncement of Elijah (1 Kings 21:17-19). The wages of sin is death. The only remedy is genuine repentance and holy living till the end. It is important to note the influence of an unrighteous spouse from the text. Jezebel **"stirred up"** Ahab to do evil. Unequal yoke in choice of a marriage partner will sooner or later drive the believer to the path of divine judgment. So, believers should follow Scripture guidelines in marriage and other areas of life.

CONTRITION OF AHAB AND ANTIDOTES TO COVETOUSNESS (1 Kings 21:27-29; 2 Chronicles 33:10-19; Jonah 3:4-10; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Acts 17:30; 1 John 1:9; Matthew 16:26; Luke 12:15; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Matthew 4:8-10; Acts 8:9-24).

"And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." God does not delight in judgment but in mercy. He expects everyone who hears the declaration of judgment upon the sinful to humble themselves, repent and forsake their evil ways the same way Ahab, Manasseh and the Ninevites did. Contrition or repentance, a complete turning away and forsaking of all sins, is required by God before He grants forgiveness. Everyone who repents will obtain His forgiveness. The fact that Ahab later died at Ramoth Gilead and dogs licked his blood according to the prophecy of Elijah should serve as a deterrent to the careless who takes God's grace and mercy for granted (1 Kings 22:34-38). God judges the poor and the rich, the religious and the royal who are sinful, except they repent.

Question 6: How can a sinner escape God's judgment?

God's prescribed antidotes to covetousness and related tendencies are genuine salvation and sanctification

experiences. Two, absolute consecration and surrender will make us give God the first place in our lives, families and ministries. Three, since greed is also a product of esteeming material possession above spiritual things as seen in the cases of Balaam, Gehazi and Demas (2 Peter 2:14-16; 2 Kings 5:20-27; 2 Timothy 4:10), the believer should reset his affection on things above. Four, there should be contentment and appreciation of what God has given to us because we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we shall take nothing out (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Five, daily self-crucifixion will make us overcome the ungodly pulls of covetousness.

Six, we must constantly grow our faith in the God of all possibilities whose promises never fail. Seven, regular intake of God's word and obeying them will make our conversation devoid of covetousness. Ahab's failure to obey the word of God as required of every king in Israel (Deuteronomy 17:15-20) was his undoing. Eight, believers must be careful not to befriend or join the assembly of those who consciously peddle erroneous teachings with **"feigned words"** and **"fair speeches"** to make merchandise of unsuspecting victims for **"filthy lucre's sake"** (2 Peter 2:3; Romans 16:18; Titus 1:11; 1 Peter 5:2). We must reject all offers from Satan and his cohorts like Christ and the apostles did (Matthew 4:8-10; Acts 8:9-23). Nine, we must constantly examine our lives to ensure inordinate desires do not blossom in our hearts.

Earthly treasures will pass away; the real and lasting treasures are in heaven. Of what profit shall it be if we gain the whole world but lose our souls and our eternal inheritance in heaven? So, **"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).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Samuel	17	Daniel	6
TUE	“	18-19	“	7-8
WED	“	20	“	9
THUR	“	21-22	“	10
FRI	“	23-24	“	11-12
SAT	“	25	Hoseal	1-2
SUN	“	26-27	“	3-4

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

838 Lesson

THE DEITY AND PRE EMINENCE OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8).

TEXT: Hebrews 1:1-14

The book of Hebrews graphically brings to the fore the deity and pre-eminence of Christ more than any other book in the Scriptures. It is a book that lays the groundwork for fundamental truths and calls the believer to responsibility or action in view of the knowledge revealed. It also underscores the importance of practical commitment to God’s word since it is not enough to have knowledge of the Word without practicing it. At a time many are professors rather than possessors of the virtues taught in the Bible, **“we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip”** (Hebrews 2:1).

Question 1: How should believers respond to God’s revealed word?

The exposition on the deity of Christ, His exaltation, pre-eminence and eternal existence and permanence of His throne form the focus of this study.

EXPOSITION ON THE DEITY OF CHRIST (Hebrews 1:1-3; Psalm 45:6,7; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 9:6,7; Revelation 1:8)

The book of Hebrews opens with **“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...”** In the Old Testament dispensation, God employed various methods in

communicating His will. He did it through prophecies, proverbs, acts and actions, direct communication, dreams or visions. The series of revelations began, as recorded by Moses, with Adam and terminated with Malachi - a period of more than 3500 years. From Malachi to the time of Christ, there was no recorded divine communication.

God's complete revelation awaited the coming of His Son and remained incomplete until the New Testament was finished; to add to or subtract anything from the New Testament is blasphemous. Anyone who does so will incur divine displeasure (Revelation 22: 18, 19).

Jesus Christ is the supreme and final revelation. His personality has never been a subject of contention to the Church. This chapter reveals more about His personality beyond what the Old Testament prophets had known. He is revealed as the Son of God. Thus, He is the Heir of all things that God possesses. An heir is one who inherits something from its possessor, usually the father. As Son of God, Christ is the possessor or Lord of all things (John 16: 15). Two, He is the Creator, the Agent through whom God created the world. Ability to create belongs to God alone and the fact that Jesus creates indicates that He is God. Three, Christ is the brightness of God's glory. The word "**brightness**" means radiance. He is the glorious light of God shining into the hearts of men.

Four, Christ is the express image of God. He is His exact resemblance. During His earthly ministry, the Lord taught, spoke and acted like God. Five, Christ is the One who sustains the universe. He upholds all things - men, mountains, seas, animals, the universe and all distant worlds - by the word of His power. Six, He is the perfect sacrifice for sin. He died to save our souls and sanctify our hearts and put an end to animal sacrifices that cannot take away sins. Jesus Christ dealt with the sin problem once and for all. If we turn away from all our sins and believe in Him as our Savior, He will wash away our sins and give us grace to live right. Seven, Christ is the exalted High Priest and King, after "**He**

had by himself purged our sins”, now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for those who believe in Him (Romans 8:34).

Question 2: Mention some of the attributes of Christ as revealed in our text.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Christ Himself is the Truth (John 14:6). He is God because He has all the qualities and might of God. His power, personality, pre-eminence, permanence, purity and presence are unquestionably divine.

The Hebrew writer thus signifies that if God punished those who did not heed His message which was sent by the prophets of old, then a sorer punishment awaits those who neglect the message from Christ the Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:18,19). Unbelief in Christ's deity and the message of salvation that He brought will result in eternal punishment in hell. Thus, we should believe the deity of Christ and reveal Him to sinners as the Savior of the world.

Question 3: Why did the writer of the book of Hebrews teach about the deity of Christ?

EXALTATION AND PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST: (Hebrews 1:4-7,13,14; 12:2; Colossians 1:15-20; Psalm 110:1; Philippians 2:5-11).

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to Jewish believers to emphasize the truth that the New Covenant is better than the Old and that Christ is the better Priest and Mediator who gave His life as a final sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The Old Covenant was brought to Israel and maintained mostly through angelic mediation (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Psalm 68:17; Hebrews 2:2,3). Consequently, Old Testament saints had a high regard for angels. If the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews would successfully persuade the Jews that Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant than that given through Moses, he had to show, among other things, that Christ is greater than the angels. In

Hebrews 1:4-14, seven Old Testament passages are quoted to establish this truth.

One theme that runs virtually through the entire book of Hebrews is the exaltation and pre-eminence of Christ. Jesus Christ is proclaimed as being **“so much better than the angels”**. Some cults and religions teach that Christ is no greater than an angel. But He cannot be compared with the greatest of angels. He is greater because **“angels and authorities and powers [are] subject unto him”** (1 Peter 3:22). Angels are servants of God and of the Church but Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Head of the Church. **“He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they”**. He is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high; greater than Moses the servant of God because He is the house Builder; better than Joshua because He gives rest to the believer; greater than earthly priests because He is sinless; greater than Aaron because His high priesthood is everlasting; greater than Melchisedec whose kingly priesthood is limited to the earth; better than the patriarchs because He is their Savior; a better Mediator because of a better covenant founded upon His sacrifice via His sinless blood, which was (and still is) better than the blood of bulls and goats that can never take away sin; better than Samson, Gideon, Barak and others in the hall of fame as faith heroes because He is **“the author and finisher of our faith”** (Hebrews 12:2).

Question 4: Why should Christ not be compared with angels?

What then is the import of this account by the writer of the book of Hebrews? It is to show that Christ has and will always be greater and better than the angels. He is greater in name, existence, ministry and exaltation. He is the first and the last. He is greater and cannot be compared with any prophet, church founder, philosopher, prophet, scientist, statesman or any political office holder. He is divine and eternal, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.

These days, many are wont to cite authorities in philosophy, science, and others in order to discredit the

word of God. Some give heed to messages they say are given to them by angels, while some value testimonies given by those who say they died and went to heaven and later came back to life. But we need to know that Christ and His word is the final authority. Therefore, where the teaching or pronouncement of any of these contradict the word of God, we are to discountenance them and obey the Lord “ **rather than men**” (Acts 5:29). As believers, we should be wary of false prophets and false christs who show great signs and wonders in order to deceive the very elect (Matthew 24:24). We must understand that our sure word of prophecy is the word of Christ.

Question 5: What should believers do where the word of men contradict the word of God?

ETERNAL EXISTENCE OF CHRIST AND PERMANENCE OF HIS THRONE (Hebrews 1:8-12; Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 48:12,13; Psalm 90:2; Hebrews 13:8; Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34-36; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27)

“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8). Here, God Almighty Himself addresses the Son. He refers to Him as God. The Son, His throne, rule or dominion will be forever and ever. This Scripture is only applicable to the Messiah and cannot be applied to any man - past, present or future. **“A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”** A sceptre is a staff usually made of wood, sometimes of ivory and borne by kings as an emblem of authority and power. Christ’s power and authority are exercised in righteousness, equity and justice. **“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”** Justice and equity will characterize the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His Kingdom, righteousness will prevail. Being a righteous God, He will judge the world in righteousness.

Question 6: Compare and contrast between Christ’s Kingdom and earthly kingdoms.

Many Scriptures which are addressed to God are equally addressed to Christ. His attributes are the same as those of God, showing beyond any shadow of doubt that He is God. Christ is revealed as the One who **“laid the foundation of the earth”, “the heavens are the works of thine hands”**. He lives forever, **“Thy years shall not fail”** and His eternal seat is on the right hand of God.

Christ is divine, immutable and Creator of all things. The writer’s purpose and conclusion is clear: Christ is better than the angels because He exists eternally. If Jesus was there in the beginning to create, He must have existed before the beginning and therefore be without beginning. One day, the earth and its elements, the heavens and the planets will perish but Christ will remain eternally. Men come and go; worlds exist and vanish; stars appear and disappear; kingdoms rise and wane, but our Lord Jesus Christ lives for ever and ever and can never change.

Knowledge of the deity, exaltation, pre-eminence and eternal existence of Christ should compel every believer to give Him due honour and reverence. It should also make us hold firm to the faith till the end so that we will partake in His eternal Kingdom and reign.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Samuel	28-29	Hosea	5-7
TUE	“	30-31	“	8-9
WED	2 Samuel	1-2	“	10-11
THUR	“	3	“	12-13
FRI	“	4-5	Joel	1-2
SAT	“	6-7	“	3
SUN	“	8-9	Amos	1-2

839 Lesson

THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING GOD'S GREAT SALVATION

MEMORY VERSE: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3).

TEXT: Hebrews 2:1-8

The first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews sets before us the glory of Christ, the Son of God, through whom God has spoken in these last days. In the chapter under study, His humanity and humiliation are unfolded. The writer emphatically sounds a note of warning about the dangers of neglecting God's great salvation. Believers are urged to be diligent, not being forgetful hearers and not allowing the word they hear to slip. **"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"** (Hebrews 2: 1).

There would be no warning if there were no dangers. That the Scripture warns us to give more earnest heed to its message presupposes that any form of careless or frivolous handling of the eternal Word would be fatal. As everything galvanizes towards a very sure end, this warning becomes very crucial for the believer to be on guard, the careless, carefree Christian to return to their first love and the lingering sinner to embrace the gospel of salvation through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. More importantly, however, it is obligatory for every believer to warn all sinners within their reach about the impending doom that awaits those who reject the gospel of salvation.

The gospel of repentance unto salvation in Christ is the only hope of mankind. All who shun it will end up in hell. Christ says, **"...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6). Peter, the apostle echoes the same truth in

Acts 4:12: **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”**. No one can be innocent for shunning Christ’s invitation to escape the wrath that is to come upon unrepentant sinners.

Question 1: What should the sinner do to escape the impending judgment of God?

THE DESCRIPTION OF “SO GREAT SALVATION” (Hebrews 2:1-3; Matthew 1:21; John 1:29; 3:16,17; Acts 13:39; Romans 4:11; 10:9,10; 1 Timothy 4:10).

The Fall brought humanity into the bondage of sin and eternal condemnation. Man lost the glory of God and the benefits of grace and sentenced himself to a lost eternity; the result is eternal death and separation from God (Romans 3:23). But God planned our salvation so that we can be delivered from sin and its penal consequences. Salvation therefore is the redemption of lost humanity from the bondage and power of sin and restoration into the grace of God. It is the deliverance of man from the guilt, corruption and condemnation of sin through the sacrifice of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the author of this eternal salvation which He purchased for us through His vicarious death on the cross at Calvary (Acts 20:28b). **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”** (Ephesians 1:7). He gave His life as a ransom to offset the debt humanity owed. Referred to as the Lamb of God (John 1:29), Christ suffered, bled and died and gave His life to bring us back to God. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Roman 8:3) and took on the human nature (but without sin) to be the sacrificial lamb in order to take away our sins.

Salvation is accounted great because of the huge price Christ paid to secure it. Consider, one, that salvation was initiated by the great God of heaven (John 3:16). Two, it is the greatest gift from God to humanity (Romans 6:23) because it brings eternal life. Three, it involves a

gracious exchange - man's sin and sinfulness for Christ's salvation, redemption and freedom (1 Peter 2:24). Four, Jesus went through a gruesome pain and suffering to obtain pardon for us (Isaiah 53:3-6). He was opposed, abused and accused falsely by the religious community of His day. He was mocked, flogged and judged in the hands of Pontius Pilate, Herod and Caiaphas, though sinless. Judas Iscariot betrayed Him, Peter denied Him and the Roman soldiers scourged and pierced His side. He felt abandoned by God at the darkest hour, **“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** (Matthew 27:46). Eventually, He paid the supreme price.

Five, salvation brings a glorious freedom to all who embrace Christ (John 8:36). Six, it is coming from the greatest Emancipator (Isaiah 45:22). Seven, it cannot be paid for or bought with any price (Psalm 49:7,8; 1 Peter 1:18,19).

Salvation is available to everyone who believes in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, repents of every known sin, believes that Jesus died to save us (Acts 13:39), appropriates the promise of forgiveness (Romans 4:11), and confesses the possibility of justification and freedom from sin (Romans 10:9,10; 1 Timothy 4:10).

Question 2: Explain why salvation is so great?

THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING GOD'S OFFER OF SALVATION (Hebrews 2:3,4; Genesis 7:21-24; 1 Peter 3:20; Hebrews 9:27; 10:29; 2 Timothy 4:10; Luke 16:23; Jude 7)

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...” (Hebrews 2:3). God has made His offer of salvation to all humanity and our individual response to this offer will determine which consequence follows. Those who accept it will experience its power to save and the benefits of eternal inheritance in Christ; those who reject it will be condemned and suffer eternal loss. It is reasonable that rejecting “so great salvation” would attract so great danger considering the price Christ paid

for it. No one should embrace the idea that rejecting the gospel would bring no serious repercussions. John 3:18 says, **“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”**

To neglect God’s salvation is to reject Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross for all humanity (Matthew 26:28; John 1:29). Second, it means to believe that there are other ways of getting to heaven without Christ (John 14:6; 8:24; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 3:11). Third, it amounts to a deliberate rejection of God’s love and mercy. During the time of Prophet Jeremiah, the people said, **“As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee...”** (Jeremiah 44:16). Fourth, it is to deny Christ and His atonement (2 Peter 2:1; Hebrews 10:29). Fifth, it is to trust in one’s own righteousness to qualify for heaven (Isaiah 64:6). Sixth, those who continue to live in sin ignore the truth of the Scripture.

Instances abound in the Bible of people who neglected the call to salvation to the peril of their souls. People of Noah’s day who spurned his call to enter the ark perished in the great deluge (Genesis 7:21-24). Lot’s wife refused to escape God’s judgment on Sodom; she became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). King Agrippa rejected the persuasion to embrace Christianity (Acts 26:28) and the Scripture has no record of his repentance. Demas had believed and was a partner with Paul the apostle in the business of soul-winning but backslid because of the love of this world (2 Timothy 4:10).

The suffering that awaits those who ignore the call to salvation is gruesome and unimaginable. The scoffers should be prepared to face the wrath of God that would be poured out without mixture at the end of their lives (Hebrews 9:27; Jude 7; Revelation 14:10); they should be ready to spend eternity in hell where they will be tormented day and night. **“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”** (Matthew 25:41). Hell, originally created for

the devil and his angels, will be abode of sinners and backsliders. All the people who by choice continue in unbelief, wickedness and other forms of sin have opted to spend eternity with the devils in that place of torment. Anyone who ends up in hell fire will find no escape or place of repentance, but restlessness, regret, torment, suffering and gnashing of teeth (Isaiah 66:24; Luke 16:23,24).

In view of the certainty of judgment on everyone who rejects God's offer of salvation, believers have a duty to preach the gospel and warn the people of the impending doom. **"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand"** (Ezekiel 3:17,18).

Question 3: What are the consequences of neglecting God's great salvation?

God is not willing that anyone should perish; that is why He made the way of escape through His Son. **"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).

Question 4: How can a sinner escape God's judgment?

DOMINION OF SAINTS THROUGH THE SAVIOR
{Hebrews 2:5-7; Psalm 8:3-8; Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 16:20}

The writer to the Hebrews resumes here his assertion of the supremacy of Christ over men, angels and all of God's creations. Christ is the beginning and the end, the first Cause and the Originator of all things, the Author and Finisher of our faith. At the same time, the writer highlights the dominion and exaltation of man

which can only be fully realised by Christians through Christ. **“But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands”** (Hebrews 2:6, 7). The context of this Scripture has a double application and takes us back to the Old Testament where the quote was lifted (Psalm 8:3-6).

Man’s inferiority to angels is only temporary. In the resurrection, angels will no longer be greater than man in strength and power (2 Peter 2:11). The resurrection and exaltation of the suffering Savior is the promise and pledge that He will elevate all His redeemed people into a place of dominion and power. Great privileges await all who give their lives to Jesus Christ who is coming soon to reign in the fullness of power. The ultimate cause of all the kindness God shows to men in giving Christ for our salvation is to have dominion over sin, self and Satan. God has done wonderful things for the heirs of salvation.

Question 5: Explain the concept of the believer’s dominion.

It is very dangerous for sinners and backsliders to linger in sin. It is equally dangerous for the believer to foot-drag in reaching out to the dying world at this dying hour. Christ has paid the necessary price for the redemption of the whole world. To ignore His call to salvation is to seal a personal destiny to perish and live through an eternity of doom.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Samuel	10-11	Amos	3-4
TUE	“	12	“	5-6
WED	“	13	“	7-9
THUR	“	14	Obadiah	1
FRI	“	15	Jonah	1-2
SAT	“	16-17	“	3-4
SUN	“	18	Micah	1-2

840 Lesson

CHRIST'S INCARNATION AND SACRIFICE

MEMORY VERSE: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

TEXT: Hebrews 2:9-18

The original plan of God for creating man (Adam) was for him to have dominion over all His creation (Genesis 1:27). For this divine purpose to be accomplished, He created man in His likeness and image. Notwithstanding, man was a little lower than the angels at creation. Unfortunately, man fell into sin and lost his God-given image, likeness and dominion. And the penalty for sin is death, which must be paid by the sinner or his substitute. Payment by the sinner requires that he be cast into hell forever while payment by a substitute requires that the person paying must be a ‘man’ who is ‘sinless’.

Since no human being was worthy - for all have sinned and come short of God’s glory, image and likeness - Jesus, the second Person in the Godhead, had to condescend so low to become a man, **“made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death...”** (Hebrews 2:9). This refers to His incarnation through the virgin birth and sacrifice (John 1: 1,2, 14; Matthew 1:23). The incarnation of Christ is a mystery that the natural man cannot fully comprehend. This truth can only be received by faith.

Question 1: Why is Christ described as being made a little lower than the angels?

CHRIST’S INCARNATION AND SAVING SACRIFICE (Hebrews 2:9,10; Psalms 8:5,6; 22:6; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 53:3; Luke 13:32; 24:46; John 3:16; Romans 8:34; 11:36; Hebrews 1:3; 12:2; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2)

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). Christ humbly came to the earth and took upon Him the nature of man, **“lower than the angels”** which He created. His incarnation, predicted by the Old Testament prophets (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14), came to pass. **“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”** (Matthew 1:21-23).

Question 2: What did Jesus do in order to restore man back to his original place in creation?

The humanity or incarnation of Christ shows His humility and condescension; love and compassion for us; grace and passion; perfection through suffering (Luke 24:46; Hebrews 2:10); and our need of Christ-Like humility.

Christ incarnated for a purpose: to take our position of being lower than the angels, albeit temporarily, so that He might bear the penalty for our sins and make us regain the glory, image and likeness of God which we had lost. Thus, He endured untold suffering and died a shameful death on the cross to redeem mankind; **“for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust...”** (1 Peter 3:18).

Paul’s exposition reveals that the dignity which Adam forfeited through sin was regained and realised through the humble submission of the Son to sacrifice His life for the sin of man.

God the Father gave Christ to be our Substitute and Savior at a great price. Jesus also paid the supreme price. He went through unimaginable suffering and agony in order to pay the great price of man’s redemption.

He was made perfect through sufferings in order to bring us into eternal glory. For His humble submission and implicit obedience, God exalted and glorified Him (Philippians 2:9-11).

Christ has done all that is necessary for man's salvation through His sacrifice. He is the Author of our salvation. Redemption is now available for everyone to obtain through Him because God does not want anyone to perish; He wants **"all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth"** (1 Timothy 2:4). Christ will guide those who are saved to glory through His expiatory and vicarious death. For this reason, a sinner does not need to seek salvation elsewhere; **"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).

So, a sinner must acknowledge his sinfulness, believe that Jesus died for his sins, confess, forsake them and accept Christ as Lord and Savior (Romans 3:23; 8:34; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:7-9; John 1:12).

Question 3: How can a sinner be saved today?

CHRIST'S POWER TO SANCTIFY AND DELIVER (Hebrews 2:11-15; Psalms 18:2; 22:22-24; Isaiah 8:18; Matthew 28:10; Luke 1:74; Romans 8:31,15,29; 1 Corinthians 15:54,55; 2 Timothy 1:7; 2:21; Hebrews 2:14,15; 12:14; 13:12,13).

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Hebrews 2:11-13).

Jesus is our Sanctifier. **"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate"** (Hebrews 13:12). Christ

shed His precious blood to sanctify every saved person to be as pure as He is. This sanctification experience, the second work of grace, truly makes one Christ-like and united with Him in life, purpose and service, and qualifies us to live with Him eternally in heaven. God is holy and can make us holy. We must, therefore, consecrate ourselves, hunger and pray to be made holy in heart, life, motive and character (2 Timothy 2:21). There will be unity, pure and practical love for God and fellow men, absolute obedience and wholehearted service for God and assurance of heaven for every believer who is sanctified and living holy. We are commanded to **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14). Salvation of the believer is like passport while sanctification experience is like visa to heaven.

Question 4: Why is sanctification an indispensable Christian experience for every believer?

The phrase, “... **not ashamed to call them brethren**” in Hebrews 2:11 expresses the superiority of Christ to man; only that He condescended to come to the world to deliver and set us free. Hence, He is not ashamed to identify with us. The Apostle quotes three Old Testament passages (Psalms 18:2; 22:22-25; Isaiah 8:18) to emphasize the union that exists between Christ and the redeemed. He is proud of them and identifies with them everywhere. Christ’s affirmed during His earthly ministry that everyone who is saved and doing the will of God is His brother, sister and mother (Matthew 12:50). He trusts God for their lives and He and His children are joint-heirs in the Kingdom. If Christ, the Creator of man, is not ashamed to be identified with the redeemed by proudly calling us His brethren, it then becomes a mark of ingratitude for any believer to be ashamed to publicly identify with Him, either through personal confession, witnessing or water baptism. He says that whosoever is ashamed of Him in this world, will He also deny before His Father and His angels in heaven (Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8,9).

Christ does not only save and sanctify, He also delivers. His incarnation and death fulfil this purpose. Jesus volunteered to die so that **“...he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”** (Hebrews 2:14,15). He has also destroyed the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Now, everyone who comes to Him with faith and in prayer can be set free from demonic afflictions and bondage. Jesus is our Deliverer. The true believer does not fear death. Even though death itself remains, its power and sting are gone. Death no more has power on the believer because he will still rise on the resurrection day. Death is vanquished for us. **“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Question 5: Apart from salvation and sanctification, what other benefits can believers enjoy through Christ's death?

CHRIST'S MINISTRY OF MEDIATION AND PRESERVATION (Hebrews 2: 16-18; John 14:30; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Philippians 2:7; Colossians 2:18; Hebrews 4:14,15; 5:1,2; 7:25; 1 John 2:2,6; 3:1,9; 4:10)

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16). In His humanity, Jesus voluntarily **“took on him”** the nature of man in order to redeem us. It should have been far easier for Him to condescend to the level of angels who are higher than man in strength, splendour and glory. But He chose to condescend lower in order to atone for man's sins. We did not merit this mercy and gracious work of our Lord. It is astonishing that Christ passed by myriads of fallen celestial beings to redeem and raise us up to be seated in the heavenly places in Him, much higher than the angels. As the children of the king are higher than the servants, we occupy a superior position to those of angels. **“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together”** (Roman 8:17). It was this glorious

position and privilege of man that made Apostle John to exclaim. **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...”** (1 John 3:1).

Fallen angels can neither redeem themselves nor receive redemption through Christ because He never planned to be their Savior. Therefore, He did not put on their nature. It is utterly abhorrent for men to worship or seek redemption or help from fallen angels (Colossians 2:18). Everyone who is saved has a status or position that is higher than the angels. Apostle Paul highlighted this truth when he enquired from the Corinthian believers: **“Know ye not that we shall judge angels?...”** (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Christ knew what He must suffer in our nature and stead to redeem us; yet He readily took it upon Himself because of the sympathy He had for the sorry state of the fallen man who would have remained eternally separated from God. He is indeed **“a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”**. This atonement and sacrifice made way for our redemption and deliverance from bondage to sin and Satan. Those who dread death or Satan or who are still suffering in the enemy’s hands should not expect help from the world, fallen angels or fellow mortals but should seek Christ for pardon, peace, purity, grace, deliverance and hope of heaven by faith.

As Man, Christ was tempted and He overcame all temptations. There was no record of compromise or sin during His temptations and trials. **“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 2:22,23). He also testified: **“...for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”** (John 14:30). This is a challenge as well as a pattern for believers to follow. We also receive consolation from His readiness and ability to help us overcome during temptation that we can make it to

heaven as we depend on Him. **“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”** (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15,16).

Question 6: What challenge and consolation do believers receive from Christ’s victory over temptation?

The great provision of salvation, sanctification, deliverance, higher spiritual status, preservation and access to God’s throne through Christ’s incarnation and sacrifice demands gratitude, reciprocal love, unbroken communion with Him, holy living and sacrificial service for Him till the end. While sinners should repent and be saved, believers must abide in Christ till the end to make heaven as there is no eternal security for a sinning soul.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Samuel	19	Micah	3-4
TUE	“	20-21	“	5-6
WED	“	22	“	7
THUR	“	23	Nahum	1-2
FRI	“	24	“	3
SAT	1 Kings	1	Habakkuk	1-2
SUN	“	2	“	3

841 Lesson

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house” (Hebrews 3:3).

TEXT: Hebrews 3:1-6

This study focuses on the supremacy of Jesus Christ and His ministry. As an Apostle, He was sent by the Father to preach the gospel, work miracles and fulfil the will of God. He came to obtain eternal redemption for as many as will believe on Him throughout the world. As a Priest, He came as a Mediator between God and man reconciling men to God. All who believe in Him are called holy brethren. This is because they have the same Father, belonged to the same family and are adopted sons of God. They are made “**holy**”, not by church sacraments, but through sanctification of the Spirit.

Moses, a highly esteemed prophet by the Jews was regarded as a faithful servant, yet his faithfulness was a type of Christ to come. Christ is the Builder and Master of His house, the Church, as well as their Maker. As the eternal Son of God, He is the rightful Owner and Sovereign Ruler of the Church. As an Apostle, He pleads the cause of God with us (2 Corinthians 5: 19); as a High Priest, He pleads our cause with God (Hebrews 7:25). He is the preferred One. As we come to God through Jesus Christ the Savior, we should be steadfast and hold on to the profession of our faith to the end.

Question 1: Give reasons Jesus Christ is superior to Moses.

THE PREDETERMINED PURPOSE OF CHRIST
(Hebrews 3:1; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15,16; Luke 1:74,75)

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly

calling...". The eternal purpose of God for all who will come to Him through Jesus Christ is to make them holy and righteous. Holiness experience is not optional, it is mandatory for all who want to live abundant, victorious Christian life on earth and spend eternity with God in heaven. Jesus said, **"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"** (Matthew 5:8).

Believers are called out of sin to salvation. They are cleansed by the blood of Jesus and preserved in holiness. Therefore, those who constantly engage in repentance and confession of sins under feigned humility and slavish fear cannot enjoy the true liberty that Jesus Christ brings. It is either such people lack definite experience of salvation or they do not have a blessed assurance that their sins are forgiven. Thus, they live in doubt and confusion. They labor for their own salvation instead of genuine repentance and real faith in the finished work of Christ at Calvary. Religious duties such as payment of tithes and offerings, alms giving, financial contributions to church projects and evangelistic outreaches cannot be a substitute for holiness. Only those who are holy will be partakers of the kingdom of heaven.

Question 2: Why is it difficult for some people to enjoy total freedom from sin?

Saintliness is not limited to the twelve apostles as it is widely believed in some Christian assemblies. All believers are referred to as saints in both Testaments and are expected to live a holy life (Psalms 50:5; 116:15; Proverbs 2:8; Romans 12:13; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 13:13; Philippians 1:1; Hebrews 13:24; Colossians 1:1,2). We are called to be saints, called unto holiness, called to live righteously and godly in this present world. **"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"** (1 Thessalonians 4:7). In the Old Testament, the Israelites were referred to as holy nation. **"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation..."** (Exodus 19:6). Also, the New Testament believers are called holy nation. **"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,**

an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). Therefore, Christians should not doubt the possibility of complete deliverance from sin. Jesus saves and sanctifies entirely, because total deliverance from sin is the ultimate purpose of His sacrifice on the cross (Titus 2:11-15).

The promise and provision for sanctification experience is not concealed in the Bible. Believe in its possibility and ask in faith. **“Holy brethren”** refers to all the children of God who are inwardly pure and are living the victorious life over sin, self and Satan. Their stony heart has been removed and replaced with the heart of flesh that is submissive to the will and word of God. As a result, they **“follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14). However, for our hearts to be purged, there must first be a definite separation and withdrawal from all sins and appearances of evil, immorality and all unclean things (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:21). Second, there must be absolute surrender and entire consecration to God. Third, we must desire it (Mark 11:24), and ask in faith with a genuine burning desire.

Only believers who have been made holy and partakers of the heavenly calling will also take part in the **“inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven...”**

<p>Question 3: Why is holiness experience compulsory for all who desire to see God on the last day?</p>
--

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST (Hebrews 3:2-5; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5; Hebrews 2:17; 4:14; 6:20; Zechariah 6:12).

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. But Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the new and better covenant. **“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises”** (Hebrews 8:6). When the ministry of Jesus is juxtaposed with that of Moses, it is evident that that of

Christ is superior in all ways. One, the man Moses was faithful as a servant while Jesus was faithful as Son. Two, the ministry of Moses was temporal and terminated at his death but the ministry of Jesus Christ is eternal. Three, Moses was only a prophet. He was never called a high priest. Jesus is a Prophet, Priest and King. Four, the ministry of Moses was limited to the nation of Israel, but the ministry of Christ is to the whole world and for all generations. Five, the glory of Moses was done away with but the glory of Jesus Christ remains and abides forever (2 Corinthians 3:7,11). Six, the institution of Moses was engraved on the stones but that of Jesus Christ is engraved in the heart. Seven, the law tended to condemnation and death but the gospel of Jesus Christ brings freedom from guilt and condemnation and gives eternal life. Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ deserves greater honour. Through the inspiration of the Spirit, Moses wrote concerning the supremacy of Jesus Christ. **“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him”** (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18).

Question 4: Give reasons why the ministry of Jesus surpasses that of Moses

The Bible uses the house as a metaphor for God’s people, the Church (1 Timothy 3: 15). The Church includes both old covenant (Acts 7:38) and new covenant believers. As mediator of the old covenant, Moses represents the house itself. Jesus, however, is the Builder of the house of which Moses himself is part. He has more glory than Moses because the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself (Hebrews 3:3). As such, He deserves greater honour. It has been foretold of old that the Messiah will build God’s house (Zechariah 6:12), and Jesus is that Messiah. Moses was never referred to as an high priest but Jesus Christ as the great High Priest offered Himself for our sins once for all (Hebrews 9:26; 10:10, 12). Through His sacrifice, we

are saved, sanctified and set apart for Him. By entering God's presence on our behalf, Christ obtained "**eternal redemption**" for us and became the only Mediator between God and man. "**For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Question 5: Explain the faithfulness of Moses in relation to that of Jesus Christ.

PRECONDITION FOR CHRISTIANS ETERNAL GLORIFICATION: (Hebrews 3:6; Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 3:14; 6:11; 10:35; Revelation 2:25; 3:11)

The concluding verse in our study refutes the doctrines of predestination and unconditional security of believers. Some people erroneously teach that those who will be saved will be saved by all means because they are foreordained and those who will be lost have been so destined for perdition even if they are saved now. This fallacy is not taught in the Scripture as some people erroneously believe. God is willing that all should be saved. But we are only secure as long as "**... we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end**" (Hebrews 3:6). The word of God teaches conditional security for all believers. Our final salvation (eternal happiness) is not automatic. It depends on our continual obedience to the word of God. A believer is no longer secure if he backslides and reverts back to the old life of sin. Such a person will be damned with unrepentant sinners unless he repents and returns to the Lord. "**But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul**" (Hebrews 10:39).

Question 6: Explain what guarantees the believer a place in the kingdom of God.

We must not give up our faith, consecration, loyalty and faithfulness in times of temptation and persecution. Only those who endure to the end shall be saved. "**Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things**

before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness”
 (2 Peter 3:17).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	3-4	Zephaniah	1-2
TUE	“	5-6	“	3
WED	“	7	Haggai	1-2
THUR	“	8	Zechariah	1-2
FRI	“	9-10	“	3-5
SAT	“	11	“	6-7
SUN	“	12	“	8-9

842 Lesson

DANGER OF HARDENING THE HEART.

MEMORY VERSE: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

TEXT: Hebrews 3:7-19

The preceding verses to the text reveal Christ’s superiority to Moses. Though Moses was faithful, he was a mortal who was created by Jesus, Creator and Owner of all things. While Moses was found faithful in His generation despite all the challenges he faced, Christ is presented to us as our Model. Through His example and enablement, New Testament believers can live to please God till the end. While following Christ, we are enjoined to learn truths on steadfastness from past negative and positive biblical events. Thus, the writer alludes to Israel’s past inglorious state to illustrate his exhortation against hardening the heart and unbelief that can make the hope of heaven a mirage. **“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”** (1 Corinthians 10:11). This lesson warns believers of the possibility of backsliding and its consequences as seen in Israel’s case and presents ways of preventing it.

Question 1: Why are believers warned against hardness of heart?

THE SPIRIT’S MESSAGE TO UNBELIEVING HEARERS (Hebrews 3:7-11; Psalm 95:7-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Exodus 17:2-7; 32:8-10; Numbers 11:1-3; 13:25-33)

“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (Hebrews 3:7,8).

Apostle Paul, believed to be the writer of the book of Hebrews, here makes allusion to the history of the children of Israel. He re-echoes the Psalmist's warning to the Israelites of his day to the Hebrew Christians, **“holy brethren”, “partakers of the heavenly calling”, “partakers of Christ”** (Hebrews 3:1,12,14) to prevent a re-enactment of negative, damning trend of backsliding and apostasy through unbelief and hardening of heart to God's word. In spite of God's wondrous favors upon them, the children of Israel hardened their hearts, grieved Him, provoked Him to wrath and were denied entry into His rest. Past and present cases of backsliding ought to make all heaven-bound seekers to be sober, watchful and prayerful so that they will not forfeit their privileges in Christ here and hereafter.

Applying the message in the present continuous tense - **“as the Holy Ghost saith”** - reveals the all-time relevance of it. God's word is an ever-present, living message to God's people in each succeeding generation. Prior to this, the Father and the Son had spoken in this epistle (Hebrews 1:1; 2:3) and this confirms the unity of the Godhead as well as the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. **“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”** (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Ghost has spoken and still speaks today through His redeemed, holy and faithful servants. The believer who claims to have the Spirit of God in him/ her must speak the word of life to win sinners to the Lord as well as warn believers against sin and backsliding. **“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...”** (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

As the Spirit warns of possible danger to our faith, He exhorts us to avoid negative attitude to the **“voice”** or word of God. Other negative attitudes highlighted by the Spirit to avoid so as to have and enjoy the full benefits of hearing, reading, studying, internalizing and meditating on the Word include forgetful hearing, worldliness,

adding and subtracting from the Word, holding human traditions above God's word, holding the truth in unrighteousness, hatred for the truth, unwillingness to obey God, scoffing, embracing or peddling errors which kill the appetite for truth, preventing the truth from being preached or distracting others from receiving it, mutilating or destroying Bibles or preventing and withholding it from reaching others, unbelief, etc. (James 1:25; Mark 4:19; Proverbs 30:6; Mark 7:9,13; Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; Matthew 7:24-27; 2 Peter 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:18; Galatians 1:7; Acts 13:10; Jeremiah 36:22,23; Hebrews 4:2). Each time we hear God's word, we must be tender and receptive, for it to transform our lives, situations and circumstances. **"Today"** or now is the right time to heed this warning and exhortation to avoid hardening the heart.

Question 2: Aside hardening the heart, what are other negative attitudes that rob people of the full benefits of the Scripture?

Israel's faithless behaviour in the wilderness was ascribed to their hardness of heart. A Christian writer described hardness of heart as "a heart where truth makes no impression; where no religious effect is produced by affliction; where the mind is unaffected by the appeals of friends". The heart can become hardened through repeated acts of compromise, deceitfulness of sin and riches, delayed repentance, lack of truthful self examination, carelessness, excuse-making or justifying sin, incomplete or partial obedience to the Word, failure to take God's word seriously, pursuit of the mundane above the spiritual, neglect of true worship, grieving the Holy Spirit and failure to obtain and keep the sanctification experience, among others. When the heart is hardened, it becomes impermeable and resistant to God's word; it is bereft of the needed impression of the Word and it becomes insensitive to the Spirit and Shepherd's voice and admonition.

Thus hardened, the Israelites provoked God in the wilderness on many occasions. These include, murmuring for lack of water at Mara and Massa and Meribah (Exodus 15:23-24; 17:29); two, making of the

golden calf (Exodus 32:1-10); three, complaining at Taberah; four, lusting for flesh at Kibroth-hottaval; five, refusal to go to Canaan (Numbers 13:26-33).

Question 3: What are the causes and manifestations of hardness of heart?

Every act of sin provokes and grieves God. Righteous and holy, He hates sin and punishes sinners. The wilderness wandering for forty years during which all the sinful perished was the just recompense for their rebellion. It was obvious they obtained redemption from Egyptian captivity, witnessed the manifestation of God's power and received the commandments of God to help them please God but they **"do always err in their heart"**. **"For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them"** (Acts 28:27). Anyone characterized with such spiritual destitution can be redeemed today through repentance and faith in Christ's sacrifice. Failure to obtain and retain these Christian experiences will make any so-called believer suffer a similar fate with the children of Israel. They were denied entry into God's rest; the unbelieving, backslidden and hardened in heart today cannot enter heaven.

PREVENTION OF POSSIBLE HARDNESS OF HEART (Hebrews 3:12-15; 6:4-6; 10:25,26; Luke 21:34; Matthew 24:13).

The Apostle's warning to **"Take heed"** is addressed to believers or "brethren", people who have been saved and are living by the grace of God (Hebrews 3:12; 2:11,12; 3:1; 10:19; 13:22). He highlighted the great privileges of a **"better covenant"**, **"better sacrifices"**, **"better things"**, **"better promises"**, **"better hope"**, **"better resurrection"** and **"better country"** (Hebrews 8:6; 9:23; 12:24; 7:19; 10:34; 11:16) the believer has in Christ which superseded those enjoyed by the Israelites. Lest they pride themselves in these privileges and become

frivolous, the Apostle aptly reveals the possibility of a true child of God “**departing from the living God**”.

The Israelites were saved, redeemed and delivered; they sang songs of praise to God and even once consecrated to serve and obey God (Exodus 15:2,16; 19:5,8). Yet, many of them backslid and perished in the wilderness because they were “**hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**”. Sin is deceptive; it appears as an attractive alternative to God’s word and will. The Scripture warns against “**deceitful lusts**”, “**the deceitfulness of riches**” and the “**deceivableness of unrighteousness**” (Ephesians 4:22; Matthew 13:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:10). Every believer must beware lest their hearts be hardened (2 Chronicles 36:12,13; Proverbs 28:14; 29:1).

The antidote to hardness of heart is to first heed the warning before extending the warning to other believers, regardless of status. To take heed is to watch, be upon your guard against the enemies within and without or be circumspect. Not taking heed was the bane of Ephraim who did not know when strangers devoured his strength (Hosea 7:8,9). Refusal to heed warning against danger made Hophni and Phinehas, Samson, Solomon, Balaam, Judas Iscariot and Demas suffer terrible consequences.

Second, we must believe God. The Apostle warns believers against “**evil heart of unbelief**”. Unbelief defiles the conscience, hardens the heart, renders God’s word unprofitable and makes men unstable. Whatever is not of faith is sin. Believers are enjoined to have faith in God because without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Mark 11:22; Hebrews 11:6). For “**...If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established**” (Isaiah 7:9). Third, the Apostle points out that believers should daily exhort one another to continuity in the faith. While ministers are to exhort the flock, all believers are to exhort one another with the Word during visitation and fellowship. The weekly meetings of the church afford all serious-minded believers to be exhorted. The prevalent indifference to the weekly meetings and absenteeism leaves much to be desired.

Fourth, there must be personal consecration and determination to endure till the end. The unalterable truth of Scripture that there is no eternal security for saved souls who are careless is highlighted by the Apostle as the goal of his entire message: **“we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end”**. He calls attention of the Christians to their final expectation. Jesus had earlier affirmed that he that endures to the end shall be saved (Matthew 24:13). Persecution, afflictions and hardship that dot the path to heaven should not be allowed to either weaken our confidence in Christ or dissuade us from continuing in the Lord. God who has prepared heaven is more than willing to take us there. It is only those who have current experience of salvation, holy living and faith that will be partakers of Christ’s glory, rest and eternal rewards.

Question 4: How can a believer ensure the heart does not become hardened?

PUNISHMENT FOR PERPETUAL HARDNESS OF HEART (Hebrews 3:16-19; Numbers 14:2,22,23,28-30; 1 Corinthians 10:5; Jude 5)

Out of more than six hundred thousand men who left Egypt, only two of them (Caleb and Joshua) entered the Promised Land. Why? They heard the voice or word of God; after they had heard, they did provoke God by their unbelief; their hearts were hardened; and their rebellion, disobedience and unbelief brought destruction upon them. We must, therefore, take heed that we **“fall not after the same example of unbelief”** (Hebrews 4:11). We are saved through faith and lost through unbelief. The heart is purified by faith and hardened by unbelief. While faith reconciles us to God, unbelief separates us from Him. Anyone who dies without repentance and faith in Christ’s sacrifice is eternally separated from God. **“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief”** (Hebrews 3:19). They were denied entry, not because God was unwilling or unable to bring them in, but because their own unbelief cut them off. Unbelief and disobedience are two sides of the same coin. Backsliders and apostates forfeit eternal life by their unbelief and

disobedience. To avoid divine judgment, sinners and backsliders must repent, confess and forsake their sin, believe in Christ’s death and resurrection for their salvation, ask for forgiveness and cleansing by His blood and receive Jesus as personal Lord and Savior.

Question 5: How can a sinner and backslider escape the judgment of God?

Believers are to abide in holiness and seek God with faith in their hearts. God is just and will not punish the righteous with the unrighteous. It is only those who provoked Him that were destroyed. The Lord expects all believers to learn from the Israelites and walk consistently with Him by faith till the end.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	13	Zechariah	10-12
TUE	“	14	“	13-14
WED	“	15	Malachi	1-2
THUR	“	16	“	3-4
FRI	“	17	Matthew	1-2
SAT	“	18	“	3-4
SUN	“	19	“	5

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

843 Lesson

TOTAL DEPRAVITY, SINFULNESS AND GUILT OF ALL MEN

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).

TEXT: Psalm 51:1-5; Job 14:4; Romans 3:10-23

Man was created in the image of God, holy and righteous. He was the highpoint and crown of God’s marvellous creation and was granted dominion over all the works of His hands (Genesis 1:26,27; Psalm 8:4-8). Nothing could compare to man’s exaltation and place in the Garden of Eden which he was commissioned **“to dress and to keep.”** But through voluntary disobedience and transgression, man fell into sin and lost his original position with God. There was nothing left in the natural man that was not affected by this fall. Man became depraved and the glory and beauty of God’s holiness departed from him.

Question 1: Describe the extent and impact of man’s fall.

THE SINFULNESS OF ALL MEN (Psalm 51:1-5; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 3:10-18,23; 7:14-21; 5:12-17; Job 14:4; Isaiah 48:8)

Adam and Eve committed the first act of sin when they disobeyed God in the Garden. God had **“commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it...”** (Genesis 2:16,17). Unfortunately, they yielded to temptation and transgressed this commandment. The Lord was displeased, pronounced judgment on them and drove them out of the Garden. This singular act of disobedience by Adam and Eve became the undoing of mankind. All men born through our first parents

became transgressors through inheritance of the sin nature. By extension, everyone born through a man and a woman became sinners, shaped in iniquity and utterly devoid of grace and the holiness of God. Man became totally inclined to evil. **“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5). All generations of men became sinful, a people laden with iniquity, seed of evildoers and corrupt children. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no moral soundness because sin has corrupted man’s nature.

Question 2: What is sin?

Sin is the transgression of the law of God. God has given us commandments to regulate our lives and conduct. Any departure from them amounts to a violation of His law. Every deed or act contrary to God’s command is a challenge to His authority. All acts of immorality, adultery, fornication, murder, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, and a host of others violate God’s laws and amount to sin. Also, sin goes beyond commission of evil against God and includes failure to do what is right according to the truth of God’s word (James 4: 17). God will hold anyone who transgresses His word guilty.

Sin altered the course of man and made him every other thing that God did not make him. His fallen nature began to manifest in various forms which the Bible illustrates in various terms. Jesus Christ referred to sinners as swine and dogs. **“Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine...”** (Matthew 7:6). He also referred to them as goats (Matthew 25:33). In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul warned them to beware of evil workers which he termed dogs (Philippians 3:2). In Romans chapter three, he referred to this fallen nature of man by saying that, **“there is none righteous, no, not one”, “they are together become unprofitable”, “their throat is an open sepulcher”, “whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”** (Romans 3:10-18). Jesus and John the Baptist described men as vipers (Matthew 3:7; 12:34).

The unregenerate man is also characterized with a reprobate mind filled with all unrighteousness (Romans 1:28-32); he is treacherous, violent and destructive (Isaiah 48:8; 59:5-8), cunning and crafty, full of wickedness, blind, foolish, with darkened understanding, children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3; 4:14). The heart devises wicked imaginations and it is a factory that generates all manner of evil acts. By whatever measure - nature, habit, character, disposition - man is a sinner.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND CORRUPTION (Psalm 51:1-4; Romans 3:23; 5:17,19)

The consequence of the fall is that man became totally depraved and devoid of any moral ability. He lost the glory of God and the power to resist and overcome sin. His depravity made him corrupt, immoral and degenerate. Sin polluted and poisoned the fountain of life in man so that his entire being was corrupted. He became a servant to sin, totally sold out to do evil. His entire nature - mental, physical, moral, spiritual - has been affected by sin. The testimony of the Scripture is that the image of God in man has been seriously marred by this great fall. All men have become enslaved to sin. **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way...”** (Isaiah 53:6).

Question 3: What is the effect of man's depravity?

The immediate effect of man's sin was his separation from the holy God and the curse upon Adam and his descendants (Genesis 3:1-6,14-19,23,24; Romans 5:12; 8:22). God's judgment also came upon all men: **“for the wages of sin is death”** (Romans 6:23). The total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men render all sinners subject to God's wrath and condemnation. **“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished...”** (Proverbs 11:21).

THE SAVIOR'S WORK OF ATONEMENT (Leviticus 17:11; Romans 5:11; 6:23; Isaiah 53:4-8; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Acts 8:32-35; I Peter 1:18-21; 2:24).

As a result of the fall and nature of sin inherited, man became totally separated from the perfect, holy and pure God. This separation is the cause of man's sorrow, shame, fear, heartaches and manifold problems, both spiritual and mental. Man became a transgressor and brought under the wrath and condemnation of God. "... **The soul that sinneth it shall die**" (Ezekiel 18:4). There is nothing we can do on our own to absolve ourselves of this verdict. No amount of sacrifice can commend us to a righteous and holy God. There is nothing the natural man, fallen away from grace, can offer to appease God in order to escape His righteous judgment.

But supreme love constrained the holy God to plan man's redemption in order to fulfil the demand of justice. Therefore, He undertook the redemption work by sending Jesus Christ to die for him. He became the divine provision of a perfect Substitute and Sin-bearer (Genesis 22:7,8,14; Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 1:21). By the perfect sacrifice of His blood, man has complete protection from the eternal consequences of the fall and from the curse of the broken law (Exodus 12:13; Galatians 3:13). Through His blood also there is complete removal of the guilt and condemnation for sin and full redemption by faith (Isaiah 53:4-8; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:24).

Question 4: Explain Christ's atonement in the light of Old Testament sacrifices.

The atonement is the reconciliation of sinful, fallen man to God made possible through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His vicarious death is the substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of all sinners. Just as it was required in the Old Testament that men make atonement for their transgressions through the sacrifice of animals, Christ undertook to be our perfect and final sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27; 9:28). The prime purpose of this is the full redemption of fallen mankind. Through this "mercy-seat", sinners are reconciled to God. The power of sin over the natural man can only be broken by the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Romans 5:17-19). **"For as by one man's disobedience, many**

were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

However, God demands repentance from all sinners to avail themselves of the provision of this redemption through Jesus Christ (John 3:14,15; 1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:12; 3:18,36). Repentance is the change which takes place in the penitent’s attitude towards sin and causes him to turn to God.

Question 5: How can a sinner benefit from Christ’s work of atonement?

Sincere and total repentance with godly sorrow for sin through the agency of the Holy Spirit is an important pre-requisite for salvation. Repentance is the deep inward experience which makes the sinner turn from sin to God. Therefore, God demands repentance from all men (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3,5; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). When a sinner hears the gospel, he must acknowledge and manifest deep, godly sorrow for his sins. He must also confess them to God and ask for forgiveness on the merit of the atonement made by Jesus Christ through His vicarious death, accepting the sacrifice as a substitute for the punishment of his sins. On the basis of this genuine repentance, the sinner asks for forgiveness and pardon based on the promises of God in the Scriptures (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:6,7; 1 John 1:9; Ezekiel 18:21,22). As the sinner repents genuinely through the agency of the Holy Spirit, he receives forgiveness and pardon.

Question 6: Why is the believer in Christ described as a new creature?

Genuine repentance is followed by transformation of heart and life. Sin’s guilt and condemnation are taken away and the peace of God floods the heart (Romans 5:1; 8:1). The believer begins to live a new life of righteousness, godliness and holiness which was hitherto impossible because of his fallen nature. He lives as though he had never sinned before; old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). His passion and aspiration now will

be to live and please God all the days of his life. This is the miracle of the transformation of a once-guilty sinner now turned saint.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Kings	20	Matthew	6-7
TUE	“	21	“	8-9
WED	“	22	“	10
THUR	2 Kings	1-2	“	11
FRI	“	3	“	12
SAT	“	4	“	13
SUN	“	5	“	14-15

844 Lesson

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

MEMORY VERSE: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

TEXT: Matthew 1:21; Romans 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:8,9

Salvation is so vital that the whole Bible is full of plain teachings on the subject. Events recorded in the Bible all point to the very fact of salvation through the grace of God. The Jewish history shows God’s plan of salvation. The prophets in the Old Testament had the same truth to emphasize and to remind the children of Israel. Jesus Christ, the Son of God during His ministry, explained and taught, both in plain language and in parables, salvation through grace. The epistles are taken up with the same theme. If salvation is so important that it occupies almost every page of the sacred writings, it becomes necessary to study the subject in-depth so as to know what to do to have the plan of God fulfilled in our lives.

Question 1: Why is salvation such an all-important subject?

Salvation is so basic and so profound an experience that without it, all religious activities will be eternally worthless. But while some have unshakable assurance of salvation, there are others who are not so sure they are saved from sin. The Scripture is so clear about the meaning, significance and assurance of salvation that no one needs remain in darkness or confusion. False assurance is deceptive and will eventually damn the soul whereas true witness of the Spirit of God and of the Scripture will produce an abiding assurance in the soul.

How can one know whether he or she is saved from sin or not? Can we confirm the assurance from the

scriptures? If a person doubts whether he or she is saved or not, how can we help them? How can one overcome the attempt by the devil to confuse him? If, on the other hand, a person has false assurance, how can we help him from the word of God?

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCES (1 Corinthians 3:11; Psalm 62:7; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 6:1,2; 2 Timothy 2:19)

Salvation is the foundation of all other Christian experiences. It is the first experience one must have in order to be called a Christian. Whatever we have, do or receive from God, if we do not have salvation, we are of all men the most miserable. The churchgoer or religious person must not be satisfied until he understands, appropriates and claims salvation through grace. To be healed and not be saved is to go to hell eventually. To have dreams that are continually being fulfilled, to have special revelations that come to pass without salvation is to live on earth with no tangible purpose. To read the Bible and to memorize its verses without the experience of salvation through grace is to live on earth as if one never really read the Bible.

If God counts salvation so important, then preachers ought to spend more time examining the word of God to be able to preach the message of salvation clearly. The very reason the Lord preserved the events recorded in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is to make us understand that we can only be saved through grace. It is not enough to understand how to cast out devils, deliver the oppressed, heal the sick or bring fire from heaven, if we do not understand salvation. It is the foundation and the pillar of Christian teaching.

Salvation from sin is made possible through the grace and love of God. We cannot get saved from sin through our works but by exercising faith in what Christ has done to redeem us. The thief on the cross could not do anything except to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE MEANING OF SALVATION (Luke 1:71, 77; 19:9; Philippians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; Romans 1:16; Acts 15:6-11; Matthew 24:12,13; Romans 10:1,9; Matthew 1:21; Titus 2:11-14; Acts 4:12)

Salvation can be defined as forgiveness of sin, deliverance from sin and reconciliation with God which comes as a result of repentance from sin and faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the Cross.

Salvation is different from healing, joining a church, renouncing idol worship or changing name. Salvation from sin is so essential that one must be sure to have it to avoid being disappointed on the last day. We are not saved by feeling but by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Outward moral change alone cannot substitute for salvation. It includes freedom from the guilt of sin, the power of sin and the consequence of sin.

Salvation is aimed not to make us turn a new leaf but to make us live a new life. The grace of God teaches us to deny all ungodly acts or behaviour and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11). Salvation makes it possible to live a godly life in the face of temptation, corruption and evil.

Some religious people try to preach salvation through human merits like prolonged fasting, animal sacrifices, religious festivities and pilgrimages, almsgiving to the less-privileged. They try to work their way through to salvation. But there is no salvation in any other except Christ (Acts 4:12).

Question 2: What is the difference between genuine salvation and other religious experiences?

FAITH'S INDISPENSABILITY TO SALVATION (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 10:13; Revelation 22:17; James 4:6; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Acts 4:33; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 4:15; 9:14)

Salvation is not dependent upon regular attendance to church or doing the best we can. **“By grace are ye**

saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

God’s offer of salvation is by grace. Faith is the spiritual mechanism through which man receives salvation. Through faith, we access the grace of God that brings salvation. Grace means the favour of God which we receive without any merit or work. It is the provision of God for mankind. Someone said, grace is *God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense*. Right attitude to the grace of God makes us receive the salvation He provides. In other words, salvation is the object of grace.

We do not have to feel good or better to receive salvation. No one earns forgiveness and remission of sins by anything he does, any rule he keeps or by belonging to a religious assembly. Salvation is not obtained by keeping the Law of Moses. Someone rightly said, ‘grace is the provision of God for mankind who are so fallen that they cannot help themselves, so corrupt that they cannot change their nature, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that they cannot see Him, so deaf that they cannot hear Him, so dead that He Himself must open their graves and bring them to life.’

There are physical traits we inherited from our parents such as height, facial appearance, complexion, colour of the eyes, etc., but salvation does not flow in the blood. We do not become saved because we are the son or daughter of a pastor or because our father is born again or our mother is the leader of the women fellowship in the church. It cannot be passed from husband to wife, from wife to husband, from parents to children or from children to their parents.

To benefit experientially from what Christ has done for us on the cross at Calvary, we need to acknowledge and repent of our sin; two, renounce Satan and all his activities; three, receive Christ as Savior and put our faith in His atoning work, not our good morals or works; four, rely on God to live a victorious life. It is only Christ that can make one a new creature. This brings

the inward assurance that a transformation has taken place. Then there is a change of character and conduct.

Question 3: Why is faith required in benefitting from the atoning sacrifice of Christ at Calvary?

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION (John 5:24,39; 3:36,15-19; 6:47; Acts 10:43; 13:39; Romans 10:9,10; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-5; 3:10,14; 4:15; 5:1,10-13)

Many people unfortunately have not been able to enjoy the Christian life because they lack assurance of salvation. Many struggle with the flesh and sin, rising and falling and are unable to live the victorious life because of their inability to appropriate grace to conquer through faith. **“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”** (1 John 5:4).

Assurance of salvation basically means a firm and confident understanding that one’s sins are forgiven. It means to be sure that one is born again and is a child of God. Christ came into the world and died to save sinners, but many are not able to have the joy of salvation because they lack the assurance that their sins are forgiven and their names written in the Book of Life. Anyone that lacks this assurance cannot overcome sin, Satan, the world and temptations. Assurance of salvation is like a title deed. A man who does not have a title deed to a property cannot make a sure claim to the property.

The reason many people confess sin every day is because they lack assurance of salvation. Others form the habit of answering the altar call every time because they are not very sure that their sins have been forgiven. To them, the Christian life becomes difficult and laborious.

The problem with people who lack assurance of salvation is that they place their confidence on feeling rather than on faith. Many think, to be sure, one must have a certain kind of feeling. Others feel they must be happy always. Others believe in working their way to salvation through human self-effort like shedding of tears or a

great deal of prayer. While genuine salvation experience could produce some of these experiences, they are only the outcomes, not the basis or condition.

Salvation is not by feeling but by faith in the atoning work of Christ. It is based on genuine repentance. John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles and even the Old Testament prophets all preached it. Salvation becomes ours when we repent of our sins and receive pardon, power and grace that Christ gives to those who believe in Him (John 1:12). We must believe that He is the Son of God sent to die for our sins. We must confess with our mouth what we believe in our hearts. If we do, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

It is noteworthy that the Bible does not base that forgiveness and cleansing from unrighteousness on crying, rolling on the ground or feeling happy. There must be express faith in the word of God (John 5:24; Romans 8:1; 1 John 5:11,12). By way of analogy, the evidence of the ownership of a property is not one who feels he is but one that has the title deeds, written and sealed with the seal of authority. So is faith in regard to the assurance of salvation. But it is not a dormant, inactive faith but a dynamic faith which produces not only assurance of salvation in our hearts but also fruits of righteousness in our lives.

Question 4: What is assurance of salvation and how can one have it?

FRUITS OF SALVATION (Matthew 3:8; Philippians 1:11; 2 Timothy 2:6; Galatians 5:22,23; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:9; Ephesians 4:17)

The first fruit expected of a truly born again Christian is the fruit of repentance. **“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”** We show that we have been saved from sin by dispensing with ungodly habits. The places of sin we used to visit, we do not go there anymore; the dresses that expose our nakedness which we used to wear, we get rid of them; the indecent and obscene

words we used to speak no longer come out from our mouth. We begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (self-control) (Galatians 5:22,23). There is also the fruit of righteousness and holiness. A real child of God will not continue to live in sin.

Just as you cannot see the root of a tree because it is buried beneath the surface of the earth, so also your experience may be hidden beneath the soil of time and date. People will eventually come to know it through the fruits of your salvation.

Question 5: How can a believer bear the fruit of righteousness?

THE TRAGEDY OF NEGLECTING “SO GREAT SALVATION” (Hebrews 2:2,3; 10:28,29; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Jude 5; Hebrews 4:1,11; 1 Timothy 4:14)

There is great danger in sinners neglecting **“so great salvation.”** The believer is, likewise in great danger if he neglects to give diligent heed to make his calling and election sure. Our loss will be incalculable and unbearable if we neglect the message of full salvation preached by Christ and by those who received it directly from Him. One can know all there is to know about Jesus Christ and still go to hell if they do not receive Him as Savior and experience the moral transformation that faith in Him brings.

We should guard against letting God’s word slip from us whether in times of suffering, deprivations, poverty, sickness, oppression and persecution or joy, progress, prosperity and sound health. If we allow our souls to be driven by circumstances, we will not be able to stay on course.

To reject Christ is to reject salvation and, to reject salvation is to reject everlasting fellowship with God in eternity. We need to be careful that we do not allow anything to hinder us from believing the totality of the word of God. To neglect to watch and pray is to stand

in danger of losing those things we have got from the Lord. There are some who claim to be saved but who neglect the warnings of the Scripture to watch, pray, resist temptation, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Others forsake the **“assembling of ourselves together”** while some neglect God’s provisions for Christian growth and maturity. Through neglect, our souls can be lost and there can be serious cracks in our spiritual walls. We may become weak and even backslide. We need to watch.

Fierce punishment and judgment await the unsaved and backslidden. Sinners and backsliders who die neglecting the blazing light of the gospel will suffer greatly in hell. Hell belongs to those who have rejected the gift of eternal life.

Question 6: State the consequences of neglecting the great salvation of God offered through Christ.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Kings	6	Matthew	16-17
TUE	“	7-8	“	18
WED	“	9	“	19
THUR	“	10	“	20
FRI	“	11-12	“	21
SAT	“	13	“	22
SUN	“	14	“	23

845 Lesson

THE SURRENDERED CONSECRATED LIFE

MEMORY VERSE: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12: 1).

TEXT: Romans 12:1,2; Colossians 3:5-10; Numbers 6:1-8

The subject of consecration is central to the Christian life and walk. It determines to what extent a believer will go in his relationship and fellowship with God. Whether or not he would attain the status of a “friend of God” like Abraham or “a man after my own heart” like David is predicated on the level of his consecration and surrender to the Lord. Abraham did not earn this title only because God loves him but also because he demonstrated uncommon surrender, obedience and consecration (Genesis 22:1-18). Moses had the privilege of leading Israel out of a bondage of 400 years, not because he was the most educated, but perhaps because he chose **“rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt...”** (Hebrews 11:25,26). Paul got revelations and visions, reached the third heavens because of his relationship and devotion to God (Philippians 3:7-15).

Many believers manage to tread the periphery of the ocean of God’s grace, power and revelation because they are unwilling to go the extra mile with Him. Yet, the purpose of our call is that we **“may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God”** (Ephesians 3:18,19). Many believers scarcely know **“what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,**

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power” (Ephesians 1:18,19).

Question 1: Why are some believers not effective in their ministries?

Consecration lifts believers from the realm of the ordinary to the sublime. It releases us from the spoils of pleasure and sets us apart for God’s use and service. A believer who is set apart for God attains greater heights and deeper depths.

Consecration begins as an act of separating from a common to a sacred use, or of devoting and dedicating a person or thing to the service and worship of God. Consecration does not necessarily make a person or a thing holy, but makes him/it to be set apart, and devoted to God or to divine service like the consecration of the priests among the Israelites and of the vessels used in the temple (Exodus 29:9; Leviticus 8:12; Numbers 3:3; Joshua 6:19; Acts 6:6; 13:3).

CALL TO CONSECRATION AND TOTAL SURRENDER
(Romans 12:1; Colossians 3:1-5; Exodus 32:29; Numbers 32:12; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 15:15)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Paul here calls the children of God to the supreme act of surrender, consecration and devotion to the Lord. This he does with the tenderness of a father and consciousness of a fellow heir. He admonishes, implores and pleads, rather than command believers, to yield wholly to the Lord. Paul’s plea is against the background of the foundational stones of teachings he had laid in the preceding chapters on the grace of God, propitiation for sin, justification by faith, possibility of reconciliation, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the covenant of God with the children of Israel.

The thought of the Apostle here zeros in on two things: the fact that we are called brethren implies that before

dedication and consecration can be meaningful, the new birth must have occurred; and since we have received the mercies of God, the only logical consequence of our gratitude is that we will now give our bodies unto the Lord as a living sacrifice.

Question 2: Who are those called to offer themselves as living sacrifices?

The Apostle opines that there are those who are cleansed, and had become children of God. It is this bracket of people who have come into a dynamic living relationship with Jesus that are called to offer themselves unto God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him. And this is God's demand on everyone who professes the new birth. Those who are dead to sins and trespasses and the rudiments of this world are called to set their affections on heavenly things (Colossians 3:1-5).

When God called Abraham, He summoned him to a higher, more perfect walk (Genesis 17:1). To Solomon, He said, **“if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days”** (1 Kings 3:14). Again, He challenged Israel as a nation to separate from sin and idolatry. **“For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord... that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day”** (Exodus 32:29). God does not accept a half hearted service nor does He demand any relationship that falls short of entire consecration. Those who must know and receive of His best must be willing to lay themselves on the altar of sacrifice.

Further examples abound of individuals and groups of people who entirely served the Lord and reaped the reward of obedience. Caleb and Joshua were singled out for special blessing because they went beyond the run-of-the-mill devotion to carve a niche in God's heart. While thousands of their colleagues died in the wilderness, **“Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: [were spared] for they have wholly followed the LORD”** (Numbers 32:12). They

determined to go the extra mile with God when others settled for the easy walk. In like manner, Judah (at different times) under Josiah and Asa, covenanted to serve the Lord with their whole heart all their life (2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 15:15).

The highest example of consecration and absolute surrender is found in our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His all for the redemption of the world. Love drove Him from the bliss of heaven, the praises of angels and the fellowship of His Father, to trudge the poor neighborhoods of Jerusalem in search of the lost.

REASONS FOR THE BELIEVER'S CONSECRATION
(Romans 12:1; Nehemiah 9:19-21; Psalm 103:1-5; Micah 7:18; Ephesians 2:4,5; Titus 3:5; Psalm 116:12; Philemon 8-10)

God's call to consecration is not without basis. He has been gracious to mankind. His love to us is without measure knowing that none of His creatures enjoys as much benevolence as man that is created in His own image. He causes His sun to rise on the just and unjust and sends His rain upon the grass to give us our meal. More importantly, the believer owes God a greater debt of gratitude, first, for His saving grace that delivered us from sin and power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). Now we are called "**brethren**" - people washed in the blood of Jesus, justified and adopted into His Kingdom. We were brought from the depth of sin to sit with Christ in heavenly places and have been made heirs of the grace of God.

Second, we must be grateful to God for His manifold mercies. No one qualifies for the mercy of God based on his own merit; it is His free gift to us. His bowels yearns for the care and welfare of His creatures. Prophet Jeremiah captures it this way: "**It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not**" (Lamentations 3:22). A personal voluntary presentation of the believer to the Lord as a sacrifice follows the manifold grace and blessing he has

received from God. This is the response that articulates our gratitude for the showers of blessing God has poured upon us.

Israel on the other hand, did a lot to provoke the Lord to anger both in the wilderness and in Canaan. **“Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go”** (Nehemiah 9:19).

The manifold mercies of God guarantee His presence in our lives. Reconciliation, the breaking down of the wall of partition between us and God, is by His mercies. The leading of the Spirit of God in the life and ministry of a believer is also a manifestation of the mercies of God (Romans 8:14). The psalmist also shows how God manifested His mercy towards him (Psalm 103:1-5). In response, he asked: **“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”** (Psalm 116:12). With the psalmist then and all the redeemed of the Lord today, it is **“the multitude of thy tender mercies”** that blot out our sins and gives us life more abundantly.

Question 3: What can the believer render unto the Lord for all His benefits?

Having enjoyed such mercies, Apostle Paul says affirmatively that the only reasonable service we can offer to the Lord is to present ourselves unto Him, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. This is the only acceptable sacrifice that could express our gratitude for the mercies the Lord made manifest in our life through salvation, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism, healing, deliverance, provision, grace and the promise of heaven.

Another reason for presenting **“our bodies a living sacrifice”** to God is hinged on the sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing equals the price He paid for us at Calvary. He suffered like no other to bear our grief and carry our sorrows.

Finally, the benefit of total consecration compels us to throw our lives unreservedly to the Lord. When we do, we shall become vessels of honour reserved for the Master's use (2 Timothy 2:21) and He will reveal secrets and mysteries of the Kingdom to us (Genesis 18:17).

THE REASONABLE SERVICE OF SURRENDERED BELIEVERS (Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 8:3-5; Proverbs 23:26; Romans 6:12,13,19; 1 Corinthians 6:13,19,20; 1 Peter 3:10; Psalm 24:3,4)

“...That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). To “present” is to yield and surrender, or give as offering. And what we are to present, surrender or give to God as offering here is our body. The heart is the most important of all the parts of our body. It is the first thing we give to God. God makes a special demand of it. **“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways”** (Proverbs 23:26). When our hearts are given to the Lord, we are cleansed and purged. Without this, consecration will be worthless and unprofitable.

Also all members of the believer's body must be daily and continually presented to the Lord in a definite act of consecration. Members of our body include the eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, etc. We should not employ our eyes to gaze upon objects of temptation. Rather, we are to concentrate on things that sponsor and promote holiness in our thoughts and actions. **“I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”** (Job 31:1). Here, Job consecrated his eyes for the glory of God and the promotion of holiness in his life. Also, we should not use our mouths or lips to crack indecent jokes or give our ears to hearing things that can inflame our thoughts. If we consecrate members of our body to the Lord, we will do things that please Him.

OUR HOLY AND EXALTED PRIESTHOOD (Numbers 6:1-8; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Philippians 2:17; Luke 9:23)

In the Old Testament, priests were commissioned to offer daily, continual sacrifices unto the Lord. Nobody was a priest who did not offer sacrifice to the Lord. These people were commanded to sanctify themselves by virtue of their hallowed service. They were to distinguish themselves from others and separate from every form of defilements because they were persons that draw nigh to God in the performance of religious duties. And as long as they officiated in this capacity, they were required to be consecrated.

The Nazarites (Jews who professed extraordinary purity of life and devotion) of the Old Testament dispensation were expected to abstain from everything that defiles as long as the vow of separation was upon them (Numbers 6:1-8). Such were obliged to strict and close devotion to the Lord than others. They will rather be held in derision by others than break their vows to be separate to the Lord. In the same vein, all true members of the body of Christ today, as priests, are to individually on a daily, continual basis **“offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 2:5). We are not to bring animal sacrifice to the Lord any more but to present our bodies a living sacrifice. A sacrifice is something you dedicate to the Lord. A Christian therefore, hands his life to God unconditionally, unreservedly and wholeheartedly. He presents himself to God to do His will only. **“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God”** (Hebrews 10:7).

Question 4: How can the members of a believer’s body be offered as sacrifice to the Lord?

Strictly, the sacrifice we offer to the Lord must include our time, talents, resources and endowments. For instance, Dorcas spent her time and resources making dresses and giving to the poor. It might even be our voice employed in singing and ministering. The feet might be presented to the Lord in going from one place to another witnessing for Christ.

Paul the apostle spoke of the sacrificial giving of the churches in Macedonia for the cause of the gospel. They dug into the very sustenance of life and almost gave their very blood. But before they did that, they first gave themselves unto the Lord. Our souls must first experience God's love and receive His mercy before we can present ourselves to the Lord.

Question 5: How can a Christian bear his cross daily?

Again as a sacrifice, the believer must daily bear his cross and deny self. The sacrifice of Christ led Him to bear the cross. When we patiently bear reproach, ridicule and persecution for Christ's sake, it is part of the sacrificial life. **“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”** (Luke 9:23).

THE CHRISTIAN'S NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD (Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:4 6:14; James 1:27; 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 John 2:15).

Our service to God cannot be acceptable if we are still unequally yoked together with the world. The true believer is wholly given to God so that he will not be conformed to the spirit of this age. The spirit of the age manifests itself in pride, ego, sinful entertainment or sensual pleasure. Worldliness pervades the society through devilish music, movies, fashion, inordinate ambition and ungodly pursuits. The believer is delivered from the present evil world never to be friendly with or conformed to it. **“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 6:14). We must of necessity keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

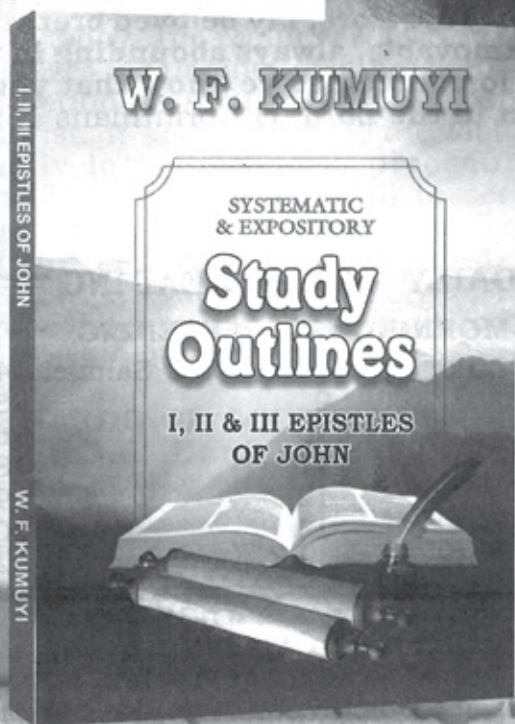
Question 6: What is the Christian's position in relation to the world?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Kings	15	Matthew	24
TUE	“	16	“	25
WED	“	17	“	26
THUR	“	18	“	27
FRI	“	19	“	28
SAT	“	20-21	Mark	1
SUN	“	22	“	2-3

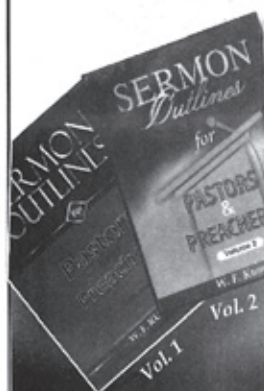
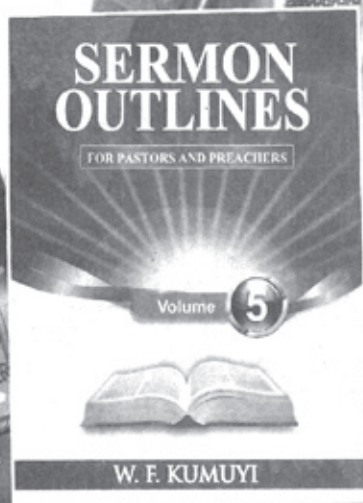
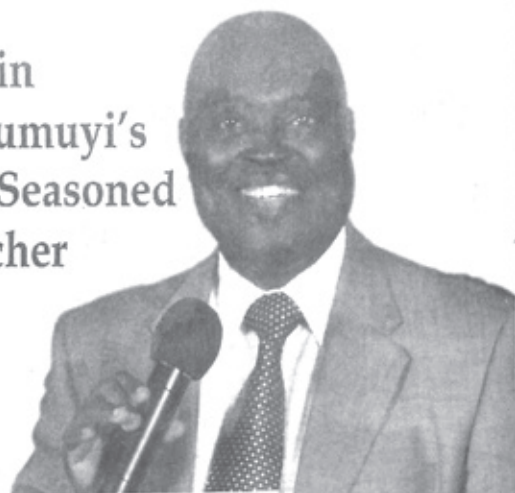
THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANYTIME). THEREFORE, ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.

Enrich Your Life
and
Ministry
with



Copies Available at
Life Press Bookstores Nationwide
e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

SHARE in
Pastor W. F. Kumuyi's
Experience as a Seasoned
Bible Teacher
with...



Vol. 5

...and
Give Your Ministry a Lift!

*Copies available at Life Press Sales outlet or
Contact: 08158190068, 08158190073, 08158190075*

What
VALUE
do you place
on **Life?**



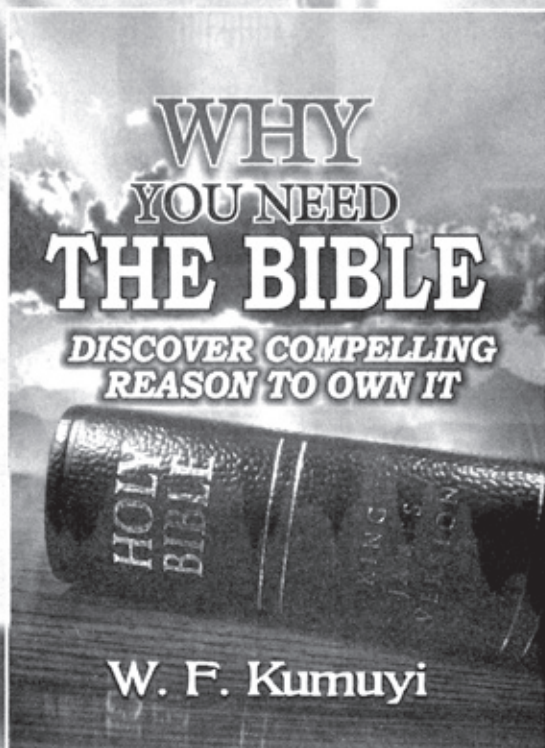
It's
Priceless

Read *Life*, Invest in your Life!

Copies Available at
Life Press Bookstores
Nationwide

e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

Discover!

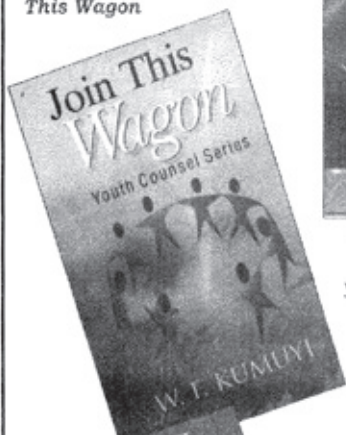


**Copies Available at
Life Press Bookstores
Nationwide**

e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

MOVE the Youth UP the Ladder of Greatness with...

The quality of association a youth keeps is indispensable to the attainment of his life's goals. Discover how in *Join This Wagon*



Self-discovery is a necessity for any youth who aspires to be great in life. Discover how in *Know Yourself*.

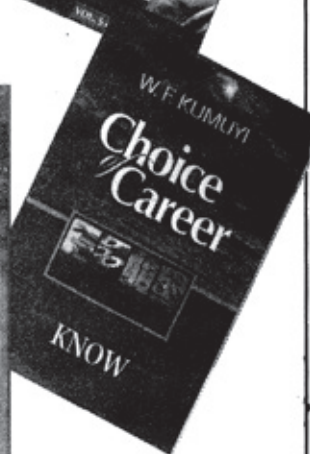
Life is only lived to the fullest when it is lived to fulfil the purpose of God. Discover the secrets in *Live for Christ*.



The youth world is plagued with dangerous signs. *Watch these signs* will help young minds escape such dangers.



Learning from the mistakes of others is what distinguishes wise youths from others. *Learn from These*.

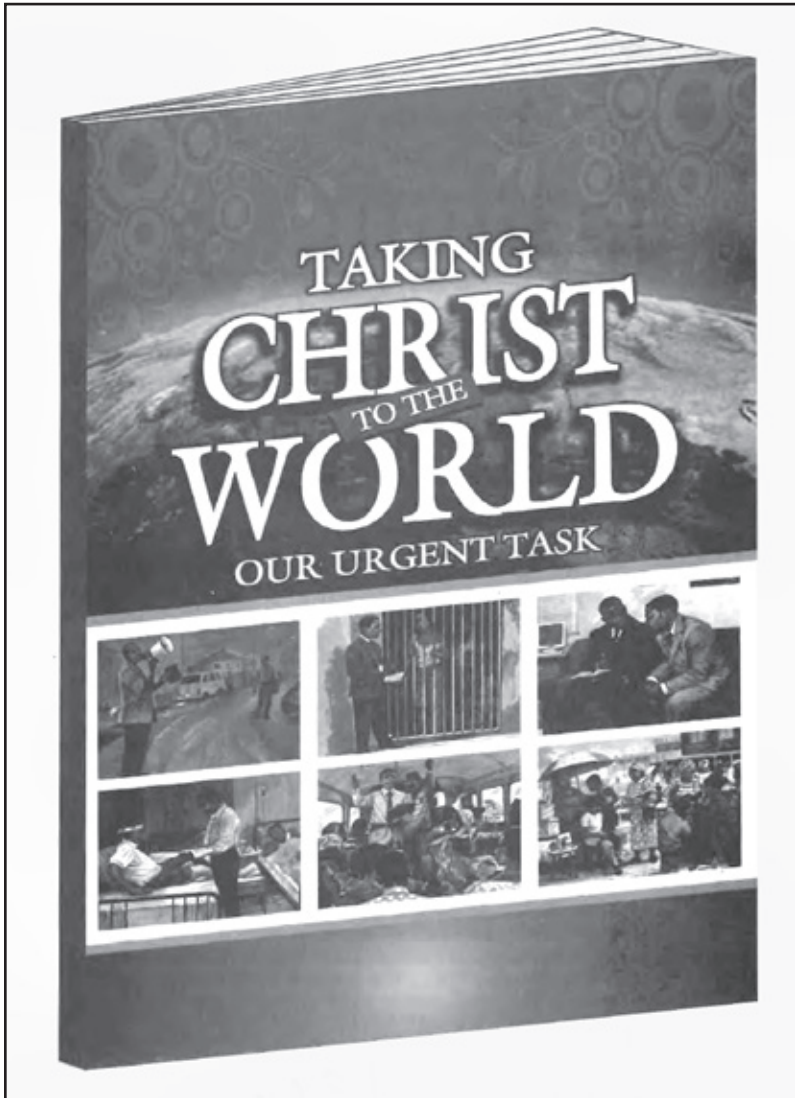


People who excel in their career get proper advice and guidance. To achieve excellence, read *Choice of Career*.

Copies Available at Life Press Bookstores Nationwide
e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

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 11412 (347) 200-3301**
- 4. New Jersey: 23-39 South 20 Street, Irvington (973) 202-3989**
- 5. Staten Island: 144-146 Morningstar Road, Staten Island, NY 10303 (917) 238-2258**
- 6. Spring Valley: 95 North Main street, Suite 1 (845) 709-6058**





DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, USA

www.dclm.org

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

MONDAY BIBLE STUDY

Rockland County	7:00 PM
-----------------	---------

TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY

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

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Brooklyn	7:00 PM
----------	---------

THURSDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

Rockland County	7:00 PM
-----------------	---------

FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

All the Church Locations except Rockland County	7:00 PM
---	---------

ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS

Bronx – First Friday of Every Month	7:00 PM
Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month	11:00 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