

AT14t

The Story of God and
His People
(Part 2)

Teacher

TEACHER'S LESSONS

FOR

ADULTS

Year 1 Quarter 4- (Rewritten)

THE STORY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE (Part 2)

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Teacher's Guide

Lesson 1: Israel Divided

Background scripture: I Kings 12-16

Scriptures used in today's lesson: I Kings 12: 1-5, 12-20, 26-29.

Memory Verse: Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14:34

Central Truth: Righteousness is the sign of true greatness.

Teaching aim: To help my students want to live righteous lives.

Helps for the teacher: Write each of the following verses and questions on a small piece of paper. (See teaching plan.) 1.) Isaiah 3:10-How can we be more righteous at work? 2.) Matthew 13:43- How can we be more righteous at church? 3.) Psalms 92:12- How can we be more righteous in the way we treat our bodies?

Getting ready to teach:

Israel's new king- Read I Kings 12: 1-5, 12-15

Near the end of his life, King Solomon had begun to practise the religions of some of his pagan wives. He led his people to commit this sin, too. Even so, God still loved his people, Israel, and had a plan for them.

When Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam, expected to become king. He went up to Shechem to claim his kingdom. There, he met a delegation led by Jeroboam. Jeroboam had worked for King Solomon. He was a good worker who pleased the king and God, as well. Through Ahijah, the prophet, God told Jeroboam that he was the man chosen to be king of the ten Northern tribes of Israel after Solomon's death. Solomon heard of this and tried to kill Jeroboam. He escaped to Egypt and was safe there until Solomon's death. He had returned to Israel and led the group that met with Rehoboam. This delegation told him they would serve him as king only if he lightened their

load of work and reduced their taxes. Rehoboam wisely told them to come back after three days' time. He met with his father's old advisors who told him to agree to the delegation's terms. He also sought the advice of his young friends. They advised him to reject their proposals.

Rehoboam rejected the advice of the old men and listened to his peers. He told the people that he would increase their work and taxes. He would not listen to the people who wanted to serve him. His pride and youth prevented him from seeing that to be king he would have to please his people. But verse 15 tells us that all of this happened to fulfill the will of the Lord concerning Israel. He wanted to take the throne from David's descendants who had been unfaithful to him.

The Divided Kingdom- Read I Kings 12: 16-20

When the people heard his words, they became very angry. They immediately returned to their homes. When Rehoboam sent his officer to force the people to work for him, they killed him. They quickly made Jeroboam king over the northern tribes of Israel. Rehoboam was king over Judah only.

Rehoboam decided to try to fight to regain his whole kingdom. (verses 21-24). A prophet told him not to try. All that was happening was according to God's plan. Rehoboam gave up and went home.

Jeroboam's sin- Read I Kings 12: 26-29

God made Jeroboam king over ten tribes of Israel. God told him that if he would be faithful, his kingdom would last forever. He would protect him as he had David. Sadly, we read in these verses that Jeroboam did not believe God. He was afraid that when the people went to Jerusalem to worship, they would forget him and want Rehoboam as their king again. To solve this problem, he sought the advice of his counsellors.

On their advice, Jeroboam made two golden calves and told the people that they did not need to go to Jerusalem to worship anymore. They could worship at home. The people stopped worshipping God and began to worship these idols. Jeroboam appointed priests who were not chosen by God. He even set up a festival which was not pleasing to God. God sent prophets to Jeroboam to warn him, but he did not listen. Jeroboam's child died and later all the household of Jeroboam were killed. Jeroboam "did evil in the sight of the Lord." Later kings followed his example.

God's Plan for Israel- Read the memory verse

God chose men who were good leaders to be kings over Israel. He promised to be with each one. God planned for Israel to be the greatest nation on earth. He wanted to bless his children and make them happy. He would protect them if they obeyed him and walked in his ways. (See I Kings 11:38) But only David had done as God expected and was faithful to God. When later kings were not faithful to God, he took the throne from them and chose another man to be his leader. The nation suffered and became weak. The people were unhappy in their sin.

Today God expects his children to be righteous, to do what is right and just. He wants us to obey him and follow his leadership in our lives. Sin is a reproach, an embarrassment, a shame. It brings distrust, hurt, dishonour and division. God always wants what is best for his children so he asks for righteousness. He knows it will bring us the most happiness.

Teaching plan

Say: "We are continuing our study of the Story of God and His People which we began last quarter. In the weeks ahead, we will see how God will complete his plan for Israel and all the people of the world. Try not to miss a single week while we study these important lessons."

Review a bit with your class. Ask them to tell you about Israel's first King, David. Then discuss Solomon, his son. (See lessons 10-13 from last quarter.) Tell your class that Rehoboam, Solomon's son, wanted to become king after his death. Tell them that God had a different plan.

Ask a student to read I Kings 12:1-5. Using your background material (Israel's New King) explain to your class who Jeroboam was. Discuss the people's request. Ask: Was this a fair request? (ans: Yes, they had worked very hard for Solomon, and had given a lot of money to build the temple and his palace.) Ask: Why did Rehoboam ask the people to go away for three days? (ans: So he could consider their request and get advice.)

Ask a student to read I Kings 12:12-15. Ask: What was his reply? (ans: See verse 14.) Ask: Why did he give that reply? (ans: See verse 13-14a). Ask a student to read I Kings 12:16-20. Ask: What did the people's reply to Rehoboam mean (v. 16)? (ans: They refused him as king. They would go their way and he could go his.) Ask: Where did the people go then? (ans: To their homes.) Discuss the events in verses 18-19. Point out that this showed that the people would not follow Rehoboam as king. Ask: What did the Israelites do then? (ans: see verse 20) Use your background material (The Divided Kingdom), and tell your class of the events in verses 21-24. Using your background material (Jeroboam's sin), tell your class what Jeroboam did after he became king. Ask a student to read I Kings 12:25-29. Tell how God punished Jeroboam and his family.

Read your memory verse together. Read the section called God's Plan for Israel from your background material to your class.

Conclusion

Say: "God really does want his children to be happy. Satan tries to tell us that to be happy we should do just as we please. But God knows that true happiness comes from righteousness and obedience to him.

"Now, I would like for us to divide into three small groups. Each group will read a scripture verse about a particular topic. You will discuss that topic and decide on ways that you could be more obedient to God in that area of your life. We will do one together so that you see what to do." Read Deuteronomy 5:29. The topic is the family. Ask: "How can we be more righteous and more obedient to God in our families so that " all will go well for us and our children for ever?" Let your class briefly discuss this. Some answers might be: be more submissive to one another, love each other more, worship God together more. Let your class divide into groups. Give each group one of the verses and topics which you have written on a small piece of paper.(see Helps for the teacher) Let your students discuss these scriptures for a few minutes. Then ask each group to share some of the things they discovered. You can add some of your ideas if you like. Affirm each group in their work.

Say: "We will know God's greatest happiness when we are fully obedient to him. Let us close in prayer asking God to help us believe this and to be more obedient this week. Then everyone around us will know that we are God's children."

Lead in closing prayer.

To think about and do:

"Righteousness" is a difficult word for us to understand. Read the verses below to see how the Bible describes "righteousness." Write the words which describe it in the blank beside the reference.

1. 2 Chronicles 14:2 He did what was right and good
2. 2 Chronicles 31:20 He did what was good, right and faithful before the Lord
3. Job 1:1 He was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil.
4. Daniel 6:10 He prayed and gave thanks to God
5. Zephaniah 3:13 He does no wrong, speaks no lies, no deceit in his mouth
6. Luke 2:37 She worshipped fasted and prayed
7. John 1:47 He was not false
8. John 8:29 He did what pleased God
9. Acts 10:2 He was devout and God-fearing. He gave to the needy and prayed.
10. Acts 11:24 He was good, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He was a witness.

Ask God to help you develop each of these qualities of righteousness in your life. Ask him to help you to be more righteous and obedient before him.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: I Kings 16:29-33

Monday: I Kings 17:1-16

Tuesday: I Kings 17:17-24

Wednesday: I Kings 18:1-12, 15-16

Thursday: I Kings 18: 17-29

Friday: I Kings 18:31-46

Saturday- Read your Bible study lesson for this week

Lesson 2 The Lord God or Baal?

Teacher's Guide

Background scripture- I Kings 17-18

Scripture used in today's lesson- I Kings 18: 21, 30-39.

Memory verse- Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Central truth- God does not want a partial commitment to him; he wants to be our only God.

Teaching aim- To help my students to decide to give their complete loyalty to God.

Helps for the teacher- Small pieces of paper for scripture references. (See teaching plan.) A chalk board or a large piece of paper to write the list of activities.

Getting ready to teach

Elijah, God's prophet

King followed king and all did evil in the sight of God. None worshiped God or led the people of Israel to worship him. One of the worst was a man named Ahab. He married, Jezebel, the daughter of the King of Sidon. When she came to live in Israel, she brought with her 450 prophets of Baal. She also brought 400 prophets of Asherah. They were the gods of the people of Sidon. Ahab worshiped these gods and even built temples for them. Jezebel had most of God's prophets killed. Some had been hidden from the king. They were safe, but did not prophesy. Who would speak for God? Who would bring his people back to him?

Suddenly Elijah appeared. He was a true prophet of God. He was not afraid of Ahab or Jezebel and spoke boldly for God. He told Ahab that God would cause a drought in the land because of his sin. Then God hid him and

protected him during the years of drought. A widow cared for him and fed him. God showed his power to them by giving them food and raising her son from the dead. (See I Kings 17:8-24)

Finally, after three years of drought, God decided to send rain. He also planned to show his power to Ahab and Israel.

Elijah meets with Ahab

When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, "So it is you, you troublemaker!" Elijah answered boldly, "I am not the trouble maker. You are, because you have forsaken the Lord." Elijah then challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. Ahab agreed and all the people met together there.

The contest on Mount Carmel Read I Kings 18:21

When Elijah saw all the people, he explained the reason for the contest. He said that God was tired of their limping between two gods. Who would they choose? God or Baal? They needed to decide once and for all.

He told the prophets of Baal to prepare a bull for sacrifice. They would lay it on a pile of wood and ask their gods to consume it. Elijah would also prepare a bull and ask God to consume it. They began. The prophets of Baal cried, cut themselves and danced around the altar all morning and into the afternoon. There was no response. The bull lay there. The prophets were exhausted. Baal had not answered.

God or Baal? Read I Kings 18: 30-39

Elijah then called the people to come close. He carefully rebuilt the altar which had been destroyed. He used twelve stones to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. He dug a trench around the altar. He put the bull on the wood. Then he did a strange thing. He asked the people to bring four jars of water and pour it on the wood. He asked them to do it again. And yet again.

The wood was completely wet and the trench which he had dug was full of water. Surely nothing that wet could ever burn!

Elijah prayed asking God to show his power to the people of Israel. He prayed one short prayer. (see verses 36-37) He did not jump or shout or cut himself like the prophets of Baal. Immediately God answered. He sent fire which consumed the bull, the wood and all the water around the altar. The people fell on their faces before God. They knew now who was the one true God. The prophets of Baal were disgraced. Baal was powerless. God was Israel's God.

Complete Commitment-Read the memory verse

Israel had been taught by Moses that God is One. They had been led astray by their kings and false prophets. When they saw the display of his power they were forced to say, "The Lord, he is God." He is the only God. He is the God of power.

God will not tolerate his people having other gods. He demands total commitment to him. What are our other gods today? Perhaps, wealth, power, or desires. God calls us to total commitment today even as he called Israel in the time of Ahab. He will accept nothing less.

Teaching plan

Ask your class, "Who was Jeroboam?" (Ans. The first king of Israel, the northern kingdom) "What did he do after he became king?" (Ans. He made two golden calves for the people to worship. He led the people away from God.)

Say, "The evil which began during Jeroboam's reign continued with the kings who followed him." Tell your class about Ahab and the evil which came from his reign. Use Elijah, God's Prophet from your background materials.

Divide your class into three groups. Give each one a small piece of paper on which is written one of these scriptures: 1.) I Kings 18: 1-2, 17-19; 2.) I Kings 18: 20-24; 3.) I Kings 18: 25-29. Ask each to read the passage and prepare to tell the group what it says. Give them 10 minutes to do this.

After each group has reported, ask a student to read I Kings 18: 21. Let your class discuss this verse. Emphasize that God would not allow the people to continue to serve two gods. They had to choose- God or Baal?

Say, "We have heard the report of the group that Baal's prophets were unsuccessful in calling down fire from Baal. Now let's read and see what happened when Elijah tried it." Ask a student to read I Kings 18: 30-35. Discuss the events in this passage. Point out that Elijah had to rebuild the altar because it had been torn down.

Ask a student to read I Kings 18: 36-39. Ask, "How did Elijah's prayer compare with the prayers of the prophets of Baal?" (see verses 26-29 and 36-37) Ask: "How did the answer to the prayer compare? (see verses 29 and 38) Ask: "What did the people do in verse 39? (They recognized God's power and worshipped him.)

Say, "After this great miracle, God sent the rain on the dry country. Once they acknowledged his power, he could bless them again."

Conclusion

Repeat your memory verse together. Say, "Even today, this is a very important verse to the Jews. It states the fact that there is only one God. People of other countries did not believe that. The Sidonites had at least two gods, Baal, the male god and Asherah, the female god. But the Israelites were different from other people. The one true God had saved them, protected them and showed them his power over and over again. Even today, we are tempted to have more than one God. Oh, if we are Christians

we would agree that there is only one God. But many times we serve other gods." Ask, "What are some of the other gods we serve?" Let your class discuss this. Some possible answers are: money, work, family, friends, material possessions, our desires, education, power, etc. Ask, "How can we defeat these false gods in our lives?" Let your class discuss this. They should realize that God's power is enough to defeat them if we ask for his help. He can remove them if we really want him to. Say: "We must want to acknowledge that "the Lord our God is ONE. When we realize that and really want it in our lives, we will want to serve him. If we are involved in serving the true God, and are asking for his protection daily, we will be less likely to become involved with the false gods we mentioned." Ask, "What are some ways that we can serve God every day?" Let your class discuss this. Write the list on the board. Some examples are: Bible study in our homes, having family worship, clean the church, visit the sick, witness to neighbours, pick up trash and cut the grass in the church yard, attend classes offered at the church. Ask each member to commit himself to do one of these this week. When each member has chosen one to do, say, "Next week we will want to hear how doing this helped you to be strong in the Lord this week. Be ready to tell us about it."

In conclusion say, "God expected Israel to be faithful to him in their worship and lives. He expects the same of us today. We cannot limp between God and things or God and our family commitments. We must choose. Which God will we serve? False gods made by man? Or the one true God of creation? Remember what Joshua said? "Choose this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" May this be our prayer as we close." Lead your class in a closing prayer.

To think about and do

You would think that after so great a show of power that Elijah would trust God completely. But read the following passages to see what happened next.

1. Read I Kings 18: 40. What did Elijah do after God burned up the bull?

He killed all the prophets of Baal

2. Read I Kings 19:1-2. What was Jezebel's reaction? She told Elijah

that she would kill him as he had killed the prophets of Baal

3. Read I Kings 19: 3-4. How did Elijah react to this? He ran away

4. Read I Kings 19: 5-8. How did God minister to Elijah? He fed him and

let him rest Where did he tell him to go? To Mt. Horeb

5. Read I Kings 19: 9-13. What did God do here? He appeared to him in a

whisper..What did this mean? That although God is powerful (like the

wind, earthquakes and fire), he is also gentle and kind

6. Read I Kings 19: 14-18. What do these verses mean? Elijah's work

was finished and he had done well. Now God would use Elisha.

This passage is very important because it shows man's weakness and lack of faith. If Elijah ran away, what would you and I do? But God appeared to him gently and affirmed him in the work he had done. He will do the same for us even when we fail him. His love never fails.

Scriptures to read this week

Sunday-Hosea 6:4-7

Monday- Hosea 4:1-3, 6-9

Tuesday- Hosea 5:8-15

Wednesday- Amos 7:7-15

Thursday- 2 Kings 17: 6-18

Friday- 2 Kings 17:24-29, 32-34

Saturday- Read your Bible Study lesson for this week

Lesson 3- God's Judgment on Israel

Teacher's Guide

Background scripture- Hosea 4:1-5:14; Amos 7-8; 2 Kings 17.

Scripture used in today's lesson- 2 Kings 17:1-18

Memory verse- Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and statutes...which I sent you by my servants, the prophets. 2 Kings 17:13b

Central truth- God still calls man to repent and punishes him for his sins.

Teaching aim- To help my students listen to God's call to repentance and follow it.

Helps for the teacher- Chalk and board.

Getting ready to teachWarnings from Hosea

Hosea was a prophet who preached to the northern tribes of Israel. He lived at the same time as Isaiah and Micah. He spoke harshly to the people and leaders, telling them of God's coming judgement. He compared them to an unfaithful wife who had left her husband to live with other men. He told them that although God loved them, he was tired of their sin. He was ready to withdraw his protection from them. The people had broken all God's commandments. The leaders and priests had not tried to bring them back to God. All had failed and rejected God. Even so, God did not want to destroy Israel. But because the people failed to repent, the time had come. Israel would fall. God would judge Israel and she would be conquered.

Warnings from Amos

Amos was a shepherd and farmer before God called him to be his prophet. Despite his humble origins, Amos spoke God's message to Israel with boldness. He said, "This is what the Lord says," again and again before he preached. He spoke with authority given by God. He told the people of their great sin before God. He reminded them that they were God's chosen

people so they should be faithful to him. He reminded them of his laws ~~that~~ protect the poor which they had forgotten. He reminded them of their responsibilities in worship which they had corrupted by worshipping other gods. Their offerings and sacrifices were hateful to God. He could not accept them because of Israel's evil practices. But his harsh message was full of love, too. "Seek good and not evil that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you," Amos told them. God was still willing to show mercy if the people would repent of their sin.

Amos told the people of visions he had received from God. These told him that although God had been merciful in the past, he would be no longer. Judgement was coming to Israel. Although Amos' life was threatened by the king and priests, he continued to preach. He warned Israel of the coming destruction.

Israel falls- Read 2 Kings 17:1-6

Israel had always had the protection of God against their enemies. They were a strong nation and their kings were honored. But because of their sin, God removed his protection from them. The last king of Israel, Hoshea, was forced to pay "tribute" (a tax) to the King of Assyria to ensure Israel's safety. When Hoshea refused to pay him the king of Assyria imprisoned him and invaded Israel. He forced the Israelites to leave their land and move far away. They were no longer a nation at all.

Israel's sin and God's judgment- Read 2 Kings 17:7-18

Again, we read an account of all the sins of Israel. We see that they followed the customs of other nations, they built and worshipped idols, they did not obey God's commandments, they burned their children as sacrifices, they used witchcraft and sorcery and did all kinds of evil acts. Finally, God had enough. He allowed them to be conquered and he "removed them out of

his sight." He banished them from the Promised Land altogether. After experiencing God's mercy and care for hundreds of years, now Israel would experience his judgement.

Teaching the Lesson

Ask your class to report on the tasks they chose to do this week. Ask: "Did being busy doing the Lord's work help you be stronger in your daily life for him?" Let members discuss this.

Say, "For many weeks now, we have studied about the unfaithfulness of Israel. We have seen how they sinned before God. He showed his power and love to them many times, but they always returned to their sin. Finally God was tired of their sin. He sent his judgement upon them. Let's read about what happened in 2 Kings 17: 1-6."

Ask a student to read these verses and then ask: "What was 'tribute'?" (Ans. A tax paid in order to have the protection of a nation.) Ask: "Why did Israel have to pay this?" (Ans. Because they had lost God's protection and were afraid of the nations around them.) Discuss the events which followed Hoshea's refusal to pay in verses 4-6.

Ask, "Do you think God was harsh for punishing Israel in this way?" Let your class discuss this. Some may think that he was. Others may not. To illustrate God's mercy on Israel, remind them of last week's lesson and how God showed his power to them. Then use your background material to tell them about the prophets Hosea and Amos. Emphasize how God always said that he would give them another chance if they would repent. Then ask the question again, "Was God too harsh?"

Have 2 Kings 17: 7-17, read verse by verse. One student can read or you can read "around the circle," each student reading one verse. Pause after each verse to write the sins mentioned on the chalk board. The sins

mentioned are: v.7- sinned against God, feared other gods; v.8- followed sinful customs from other nations; v.9- tried to hide from God, built watchtowers and fortified cities (did not trust God's protection); v.10- set up pillars to false gods; v.11- burned incense to false gods, did wicked things; v.12-served idols; v.13-14- did not listen to the prophets who warned them, were stubborn, did not believe in God; v.15- despised his law and covenant, despised his warnings, went after false gods, became false themselves, followed the evil ways of nations around them; v.16- forgot God's commandments, made idols, worshipped many false gods, served Baal; v.17- burned their children as sacrifices, used witchcraft and sorcery, became completely evil ("sold themselves"). Read verse 18, emphasizing the word "Therefore" Ask again, "Now do you think God was too harsh in his judgement? When we see all these sins, I do not think anyone can think he was. We must remember that all this had gone on for more than 250 years!"

Say the memory verse together. Say, "God warned the Israelites many times to repent and turn to him. In the same way God is calling people today to repent and turn from their evil ways. God is using pastors, evangelists and Bible teachers to call people back to faithfulness to him. God wants people today to obey him. He wants our faithfulness just as he wanted Israel's." Repeat the memory verse again.

Say, "Many times our children think that we are trying to prevent them from having fun when we warn them about a particular sin. Satan tries to convince us all that sin is more fun than righteousness. But when we read about the Israelites sacrificing their own children to these false gods, we see how bad following Satan can be.

Ask: How is our nation today like Israel before God's judgement? Let your class discuss this. They may mention: dishonesty in business, not

caring for the poor and weak, idol worship, adultery, fornication, witchcraft, false worship of God, trying to hide our sins, forgetting God's commandments, following customs of the world, building armies to protect us, etc. Ask, "What can we do to improve things in our country?" (Ans. Live righteous lives ourselves, speak the truth about sins we see, care for the poor, worship God faithfully.)

Say, "God wants us to be faithful to him so that our lives will be happy and fulfilling. He doesn't want us to experience the sorrow of sin. When we sin, he calls us to repent. If we do, "he forgives us and cleanses us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) But if we don't, we will pay the price for our sin. (Read Romans 6:23.) God calls us today to "turn from our evil ways and keep his commandments." If you have not acknowledged your sin, repented and accepted Christ as your personal Savior, I invite you to do so today. If you want to, stay after our closing prayer and I will explain how to do that. If you are a Christian, but know that you have unconfessed sin in your life, confess it as we pray. Be free from sin and live righteously before God. Let us pray."

Lead your class in a prayer of confession and repentance. Ask for God's help in living obedient lives.

To think about and do

The writer of Proverbs tells us, "Bring up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Hosea and Amos told the Israelites that they had failed to teach their children the ways of God. Read the following passages to see what the Bible says to parents and elders about teaching children.

Deuteronomy 6: 6-7 Teach them diligently to obey his commands

Ephesians 6:4 Don't make them angry; teach them about God

I Timothy 3:4 Teach them to be submissive and respectful

Proverbs 19:18 Discipline them (teach them)

I Timothy 5:8 Provide for them

Titus 2: 3-5 Train the young women to love, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive.

Titus 2:6-8 Teach the young men self-control, integrity, gravity and sound speech

It is not God's plan that we leave our children alone to decide for themselves what they believe about God. We are to teach them the truth. We are to guide them. We are to help them find God's salvation themselves. This is the responsibility of every parent and of the church.

Scriptures to read this week

Sunday- 2 Chronicles 28:19-27

Monday- 2 Kings 18:1-8

Tuesday- 2 Kings 19:14-20

Wednesday- 2 Kings 22:1-7

Thursday- 2 Kings 22:8-13

Friday 2 Chronicles 34:29-33

Saturday- Read your Bible Study lesson for this week

Lesson 4- Reforms Among God's PeopleTeacher's GuideBackground Scripture- 2 Kings 18:1-8; 22-23; Jeremiah 25: 1-7Scripture used in today's lesson: 2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Kings 23: 21-25Memory Verse: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, for he will have mercy on him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7.Central truth-God wants a changed, obedient heart and life, not an external show of religion.Teaching aim- To help my students identify evidences of a changed life and to ask God to help them to show these characteristics in their lives.Helps for the teacher- Write at the top of a piece of paper: 2 Kings 18:1-8 and 2 Chronicles 29: 3,5,15 and 30: 1,6-9. On another write: 2 Kings 22:1-2,4-6 and 23: 1-3,21-25.Getting ready to teachHezekiah- A Righteous King in Judah-Read 2 Kings 18:1-8

At the time of Israel's fall, Hezekiah was king in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord." He trusted in the Lord like no other king had since David. He was faithful to Moses' laws and "held fast to the Lord." Why was Judah so different from Israel at this time?

There were four main reasons for their faithfulness to God. 1.) The history of David and his reign was better remembered in Judah than in Israel. 2.) The Temple helped remind the people to worship God. 3.) Some kings of the South were more faithful to God than those of the North. 4.) Isaiah never stopped preaching God's message, reminding the people to be faithful.

Hezekiah's reforms

Hezekiah saw there were many practices in Judah which were unacceptable to God. He began immediately to change this. He opened the doors of the Temple, cleaned it and got it ready for worship. He celebrated the Feast of Passover which had not been done since Solomon's time. The people helped him remove the high places, used for sacrifice and worship of Baal. They broke down the pillars and poles used in the worship of Asherah. Hezekiah even broke *Nehushtan*, the bronze snake which Moses had made in the wilderness which the people had been worshipping. He removed all the signs of worship of other gods to help the people be faithful to God.

God blessed Hezekiah for his faithfulness. Like David, he protected him and made him prosper in all that he did.

Josiah- Another Righteous King-

After Hezekiah's death, the people returned to their old ways. They worshipped false gods and forgot the Lord. The kings who came after Hezekiah were more wicked than any before.

One more righteous king, Josiah, served in Judah. He was only eight years old when he became king. He sought the advice of God-fearing men. He learned God's laws and followed them. Although he was still young, he led Judah to follow God.

Josiah's Reforms- Read 2 Kings 23: 21-25

Josiah tore down all the idols and sacred places of Baal worship. He reinstated the priests of God and ordered the Temple to be cleaned. There, an old scroll was found. It was the Law of Moses! The head priest took the scroll to Josiah and read it to him. Josiah was horrified to hear of how God's people had failed him. He read the law to the people and urged them to promise to keep it faithfully.

Josiah led the people to celebrate the Passover Feast. He gave the lambs and other animals needed from his own flocks. He "turned to the Lord with all his heart, soul and might." He was the last faithful king.

God wants a changed heart- Read the memory verse

The people of Judah had removed idolatry from their country. They had cleaned the temple and had begun to worship there again. They even promised to keep God's law. But these changes were only outward changes. The people had not truly repented of their sins. As soon as the righteous kings died, the people went back to their old ways. They were not really changed.

Isaiah told the people that in order to be forgiven they had to forsake their old ways and thoughts. When Israel did not do this, God's mercy was withheld. God could not pardon them because they had not repented. He could not protect them because they refused to acknowledge him as their God. Their disobedience would lead to their destruction.

Teaching plan

Remind your class of how Israel was conquered by Assyria. Say: "The Southern Kingdom of Judah was more blessed than the Northern Kingdom of Israel. They had not been conquered by another nation. God's protection was still with them." Share the four reasons for this from your background material, "Hezekiah-A Righteous king in Judah."

Divide your class into two groups with a good reader in each group. Give each group a pencil and a piece of paper on which you have written the verses listed in Helps for the Teacher. Group one will read about King Hezekiah and group two about King Josiah. Ask each to choose a secretary who will record what they learn. Ask each group to choose one or two persons to report to the class after the study period. After 15 minutes, ask

them to share what they learned about each king and his reforms. Give any members who want an opportunity to share. Fill in any important facts which they might miss.

Conclusion

Say: "When Hezekiah died, his son became king. Do you think that he followed God as his father had? No, he did not. Nor did his son, who was Josiah's father. That is why Josiah found so much sin and idol worship when he became king. These two did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. The people followed their example. When Josiah became king, he led them back to God. As soon as he died, however, the people returned to their old ways. Why do you think that happened?" Let your class discuss this. It is important that they understand that the people had not repented of their sin and evil ways. They were merely following the king. Their hearts had not changed.

When your students have discussed this, say, "God knew that the people's hearts had not changed. He told them, 'I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants because they have forsaken me.' (2 Kings 22: 16-17) Judah was spared until now for the sake of these two faithful kings, Hezekiah and Josiah."

Say your memory verse together. Point out that these are the words of Isaiah, the prophet who tried to bring Judah back to God. He was telling them the conditions for their salvation. Ask: "What were the conditions for salvation mentioned in these verses? (Ans: forsake wicked ways, forsake unrighteous thoughts, return to the Lord.) Ask: "What will God do if these conditions are met?" (Ans: He will have mercy and abundantly pardon.) Say: "God was always willing to forgive his people if they would repent.

But if they would not repent, his judgement was sure. God says the same to us today. If we are truly sorry for our sins and change our hearts, he will forgive us and show us mercy."

Ask: "How can we know if a person has truly repented of his sin and changed his heart?" Let your class discuss this. They should mention that his life will be changed. He will no longer do the sinful things that he did before. He will read the Bible to learn all that he can about Jesus. He will try to do what Jesus did. He will delight in serving the Lord. He will want to be with other Christians. He will want to share his material blessings with his church and others in need. He will be filled with joy, peace, love and other fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). They may think of others. Let them discuss this fully.

Then ask: "If a person's life does not have these characteristics, has his heart truly changed?" Let your class discuss this. Point out that while we all sin and fall short of God's glory, if we have invited Jesus into our hearts and the Holy Spirit is living within us, we should change. There should be evidence of our changed hearts. If there is no change, then we should question whether or not we have truly been saved.

Say: "God expects us to obey him and follow his leading. He doesn't want our worship, songs, or prayers if our hearts aren't changed. Each one of us must examine himself to know for sure if he is changed. We have no right to judge one another. God is the only judge. But we each need to ask ourselves today, "Have I changed since I accepted Jesus as my Savior?" If his Spirit is in control, you should have changed. Let us pray now and ask God to help us be truly repentant more like Jesus every day." Pray silently for several minutes. Then lead in a short closing prayer.

To think about and do

1. Read Titus 3: 5. Why did God save us? because he is merciful

How did he save us? regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit

Have you been saved?

2. Read Ephesians 4:24. What are the characteristics of the new nature?

righteousness and holiness

Do you have evidence of the "new nature" in your life?

3. Read Colossians 3: 1, 9-10. If we have been born again, what will we

seek? things that are above. What will we have if we have the

"new nature"? renewal of our knowledge in God's image

4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What is the result of becoming a "new creation"?

the old has passed away and the new has come

According to these criteria, are you a "new creation"?

5. Read Romans 12:1-2. How should we present our bodies to God? a.) as a

living sacrifice b.) holy c.) acceptable to God Why

should we be transformed? So we can know the will of God in our lives

If we have been saved, we will be a new creation and have a new nature.

We will want to do what is pleasing to God. We can become more like him as

we use the power of his Holy Spirit to help us. Ask for this help now.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Jeremiah 7:3-16

Monday: Jeremiah 7:17-28

Tuesday: Jeremiah 26:1-7

Wednesday: Jeremiah 26:8-15

Thursday: Jeremiah 26:16-19,24

Friday: Jeremiah 52:4-16

Saturday: Read you Bible Study lesson for this week.

Lesson 5- God's Judgement on Judah

Teacher's Guide

Background scripture: Jeremiah 7; 26; 52.Scripture used in today's lesson: Jeremiah 26:1-6; 52:12-16.Memory Verse: Amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord your God and the Lord will repent of the evil which he has pronounced against you. Jeremiah 26:13Central truth: If we rebel against God's law, judgement is certain.Teaching aim: To help students choose to follow God's plan for their lives, thus experiencing his mercy and goodness.Helps for the teacher: NoneGetting ready to teachJudah's sin

Judah, like the northern kingdom of Israel failed to obey and worship God. Even good kings like Hezekiah and Josiah could not help the people remain faithful. They used God and the Temple like a good luck charm. Whenever they were in trouble, they would run to the Temple and say, "Now we are safe." It was as if the Temple itself could protect them against their enemies and problems. This angered God as much as their worship of false gods. They did not take him seriously. They ran to and fro-serving first Baal and then God, as was convenient to them. God had had enough. The time for judgement had come.

Jeremiah-Prophet of Judgement-Read Jeremiah 26:1-6.

As always, God had a messenger to warn the people of his coming judgement. His last prophet in Judah was Jeremiah. Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet." He was very sad as he told the people of the coming fall of Judah. He was obedient to God, however, and preached everything God told him to preach.

In these verses we read his famous "Temple Sermon." (see also Jeremiah 7.) Here, for the last time, God gave the people an opportunity to repent. If they had done, he would have spared them. But they were stubborn and hard hearted. They tried to kill Jeremiah. They did not want to acknowledge their sin or repent.

Jeremiah told them they did not worship God in truth. He was tired of their meaningless ritual and repetitious prayers. He told them the Temple^uWhich they depended on would be destroyed. The Temple officials and priests would be punished for allowing false worship to go on in the Temple. The city of Jerusalem would be destroyed as completely as the city of Shiloh in Israel.

He told them God was disgusted with their false worship. He was tired of seeing the shame they brought on themselves when they offered sacrifices to other gods. He was tired of them offering the same sacrifices to him the following day. He was sickened by their burning of their children to the god Moloch. God told those who had offered their children to him that he didn't want such sacrifices. He had never even thought of such a horrible thing!

The people and priests did not want to hear this! They wanted to seize Jeremiah and kill him. Perhaps killing him would make his words powerless. He boldly told them to kill him. He would speak every word that the Lord told him. If they killed him they would pay the price for his innocent blood. They became frightened and left him alone.

Judah Falls- Read Jeremiah 52:12-16

The fall of Judah was slow and painful. In 605 B.C. Babylon made Judah a part of its kingdom and deported some of its inhabitants. More captives were taken in 597 B.C. Finally in 586 B.C. the Babylonians

destroyed Jerusalem. They burned the Temple, the palace and all the homes of important people. They broke down the wall around the city. They took many captives to work as their slaves. They left a few poor farmers to work the land and vineyards.

All that Jeremiah had told them had come to pass. Judah was a conquered nation. Jerusalem was in ruins. The Temple was destroyed. God had judged his unfaithful people.

Amend Your Ways- Read the Memory Verse

God was not unfair to the people of Judah for he had been patient with them. Up to the end he warned them to repent. If they had, he would have spared them, as he had done during Hezekiah's and Josiah's reigns. God had warned them again and again that their evil ways would lead to destruction. They refused to listen. Sin had its natural consequence. God removed his protective hand from Judah. They were conquered. They had to live with the results of their sin and disobedience. They had no one to blame but themselves. It was too late for mercy. They had made their choice.

Teaching the lesson:

Ask your students to read the Memory Verse together. Ask: "Who was speaking these words of the Lord?" (Ans: Jeremiah) Ask: "To whom was he speaking?" (Ans: The people of Judah?) Ask: "Why do you think he needed to say this?" (Ans: The people were sinning and disobeying God.) Read the section called "Judah's Sin" in your background material to your students. Ask your students to recall and discuss the incidents which led to the fall of Israel. (See Lesson 3 for details). Tell them that now Judah has fallen into the same sins. Say: "God spared them before because of their faithful kings, Hezekiah and Josiah. They were dead and evil kings ruled.

The people were doing horrible things in their worship of false gods. God was tired of it. He sent Jeremiah to give them one more chance to repent."

Ask your students to turn to Jeremiah 26: 1-6. Ask a student to read verse 1. Ask: "Who was king?" (Ans: Jehoiakim). Ask: "Who was his father?" (Ans: Josiah) Say: "Jehoiakim had not followed the example of his father Josiah. He had built altars to false gods again and encouraged the people to worship them."

Ask a student to read verse 2. Ask: "Where was Jeremiah to speak the word of the Lord?" (Ans: in the court of the Temple) Ask: "Why do you think he was told to preach there?" (Ans: Because many people would hear him there as they came to "worship" God, the priests would hear, the word would be more forceful because it was spoken in God's Temple) Ask: "Why do you think God told him not to "hold back any word?" (Ans: Because he would likely be tempted to do so. The words he was told to speak were harsh and difficult. The people would not like to hear them. It would be easier if he could "soften" them. God did not want him to do this.)

Ask a student to read verse 3. Ask: "Did God want to bring his judgement on Judah?" (Ans: No. He was sending Jeremiah to warn them. He hoped that the warning would help them to repent of their evil ways. Then he would not have to bring punishment upon them.)

Ask a student to read verses 4-6. Ask: "How did God say that the people had failed him?" (Ans: They had not listened to him, obeyed his laws or listened to the prophets he had sent.) Ask: "If the people did not listen to God now , what would he do?" (Ans: He would destroy them like he had Shiloh in the northern kingdom of Israel) Say: "Shiloh was the first place of worship that the Israelites established when they entered Canaan. It was where God spoke to Samuel, the famous priest we studied about last quarter.

It had been completely destroyed by this time.”

Ask, “How do you think the people responded to this word from the Lord? Let your students give their ideas. Then tell them what the people said and did. (Use your background material “Jeremiah, Prophet of Judgement”)

Say: “Even though Jeremiah warned the people again and again, they did not repent. God set in motion the series of events which led to Judah’s destruction. Everything happened just as God had warned them.” Ask a student to read Jeremiah 52:12-16. Discuss these verses briefly to be sure all understand what happened.

Conclusion

Say: “God did not want the people of Judah to be destroyed. Remember our memory verse? God wanted them to repent so he would not have to judge them. He wanted to show them his mercy and love. He wants the same for us today. The Bible tells us that God is not willing that even one should die without him. He wants all people to find the joy of his salvation.

“We see one truth plainly in the histories of Israel and Judah: Rebellion against God leads to destruction. It is the same today. If we continually rebel against God we will experience his judgement and the consequences of our sin. His plan is for us to follow and obey him. He knows that following his laws will bring us a happy and fruitful life. Do you believe that is true?”

Encourage your students to respond honestly and openly. Give a short testimony about how your obedience to him has brought you joy. Then say: “Believe him when he says that obedience to him is the path to true joy.”

Lead in closing prayer

Things to think about and do:

We read and hear a lot about the love of God. That is fitting, for God is Love. But, God is not only love. He is also justice. He has laws that he expects us to follow. If we do not follow them, judgement is as sure for us as it was for Israel and Judah.

Read Hebrews 9:27. What is sure? death and judgement

Read Jude 14-15 and 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Who will be the judge? Jesus

Who will be judged? everyone Who will be convicted? The ungodly sinners those who don't know God or obey the gospel of Christ.....

According to Revelation 20:12, how will all the dead be judged? by their works

Read Matthew 25: 31-46. How will we be judged? according to what we do for others. How can we show our love for God? by showing our love for his children

Believe this: we will all be judged according to our actions here on earth. God judged the Israelites because they didn't love and obey him. God commands us to take care of each other. He commands us to love one another. When we do, we show that we love him. Meditate on the verses above. Ask God to help you serve him better by serving others and show your love for him by loving his children.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Romans 11:1-5

Monday: Lamentations 3:19-24

Tuesday: Lamentations 3:25-33

Wednesday: Lamentations 3:34-40

Thursday: Ezekial 18:1-4,19-24

Friday: Ezekial 18:25-32

Saturday: Read your Bible Study lesson for this week.

Lesson 6- The Faith of God's Remnant

Teacher's Guide

Background Scripture- Lamentations 3: 19-40; Ezekial 18Scripture Used in Today's Lesson-Lamentations 3:19-26; Ezekiel 18:2,20-24Memory Verse The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23.Central Truth- Each person is responsible for his own actions.Teaching aim- 1. To lead each student to accept responsibility for his own actions. 2. To help my students understand the mercy of God.Helps for the teacher- NoneGetting ready to teachEzekiel:-God's Prophet in Exile

Ezekiel, the son of a priest, was taken into captivity with thousands of others after the fall of Judah. God called him to be his prophet to Israel, "a nation of rebels, impudent and stubborn" people. He told Ezekiel to preface his sermons with the words, "Thus says the Lord God." He did not have great hope that they would listen to him or heed his words, even with the authority of these words. But he wanted Ezekiel to try to bring his rebellious people back to him. He wanted them to acknowledge their sin and repent.

Israel's Complaint- Read Ezekiel 18:2

Most of the people to whom Ezekiel preached reacted just as God had expected. They did not accept the responsibility for their own sins and unrighteous acts. They blamed their ancestors for their present conditions. They used the proverb quoted in this verse. It meant that although it was the fathers who had done wrong, the children were paying the penalty. They were saying, "We have done nothing wrong. It was our fathers who

disobeyed God. God is making us suffer because of their sin." God rejected their reasoning. He used Ezekiel to answer their complaint.

Responsible to God -Read Ezekiel 18:20-24

Ezekiel gave the history of a family. The father was a righteous man. He was rewarded for his righteousness. His son was wicked. He was not rewarded for his father's righteousness but punished for his own wickedness. This man's son saw his father's wickedness and its consequences. He was righteous. He was not punished for the sins of his father, but rewarded for his own goodness. Each was rewarded or punished according to his own actions, not those of his father or grandfather. It would be the same for all men. God emphasized that he has no joy in the death or punishment of anyone. His will was that all repent and live. He cried, "Why will you die, O house of Israel? Turn and live!" (v. 31-32)

God would not let the people of Israel deny their sin. He said each man was responsible to God for his own actions. Each would be rewarded or punished according to his actions.

The Hope of the Faithful- Read Lamentations 3:19-26

Many Bible scholars believe that Lamentations was written by Jeremiah after the fall of Judah. It was written by someone who cared deeply for Judah and had seen her downfall. The writer was aware that Judah fell because of her sin and that captivity was punishment for their sin. He did not think Judah had the right to complain against God.

A "lament" is a funeral song. In this song, the writer laments over Judah, the ruin of Jerusalem and the misery of the exiles. He recounts former glory of Israel. He reminds the people of God's wonderful care and contrasts this with their present misery. He reminds them that their present condition is the natural result of their sin and disobedience.

In chapter 3, he points out that although they are disgraced, they are not destroyed. He points to the hope of the future because God loves them. He is assured that if he is faithful to the Lord, the Lord will be good to him. If he seeks God, he will answer and bring hope. He calls them to return to God in repentance.

God's Mercy-Read the Memory Verse

As always, there were a few faithful righteous people amongst the many unbelieving unrepentent Israelites. These were God's "remnant"-his faithful few. They were able to say with the writer of Lamentations that God's love was steadfast, his mercy everlasting. They acknowledged, "Great is his faithfulness." Through them, God would return his people to Canaan. Through them he would rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. These were those whom God would reward for their faithfulness-even in captivity.

Teaching the Lesson

Ask a student to read Lamentations 1: 1-3. Explain what a lament is and tell the class about the book using your background material "The Hope of the Faithful."

Tell this story: "There was once a man sitting in a cell of a prison. He said to his cellmate, "I am here because my father broke the law. He was a thief all his life. He was never caught so they put me here because of my father's thievery."

His cellmate responded, "Didn't you ever break the law?"

"No," he said, "I am here because my father was a thief."

"But surely you are here because they caught you doing something wrong," his cellmate countered.

"No, I am a good man who has never broken the law. I am here because of my father," he insisted.

Say: "This story sounds ridiculous to us. Of course the man would not be put in jail for his father's crimes. If he had lived a good life and obeyed the law, it would not have mattered what his father did. Unless he was caught breaking the law, he would not be put into jail."

Continue: "As ridiculous as this sounds, this was Israel's response to the preaching of Ezekiel, God's prophet to his people in exile. God used him to ask his people to repent so that he could restore their country to them."

Tell your class about Ezekiel. Use your background material "Ezekiel-God's Prophet in Exile"

Say: "I want us to read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 18 this morning. It is a beautiful chapter which comes to us from God through this prophet. It will help us see and understand God's wonderful mercy toward his children."

Ask one or several students to read this chapter, pausing for discussion or questions after each of these divisions: verses 1-4, 5-9, 10-13, 14-19. Pause after reading these verses to be sure that all have understood what God is saying.

Then continue by reading verses 20-24. Ask: "What happens if a sinful man repents?" (Ans: He shall live, none of his sins will be remembered, only his righteousness will be remembered.) Ask: "What will happen if a man who is raised in a good home and taught what is good and right turns from righteousness and sins and does not repent?" (Ans: His former righteousness will not be remembered, only his sin. He shall die.) Ask: "What does all this mean?" (Ans: Unless we repent of our sinful ways we cannot be saved. We cannot depend upon the goodness of our parents or grandparents. Each man is responsible for his own actions and will be held accountable for them.) Ask: "Does God enjoy killing the sinner?" (Ans: See verse 23.)

Read verses 25-29. Ask: "Whom does God say is just?" (Ans: He is just) Ask: "Whom does God say is unjust?" (Ans: The Israelites.) Ask: "Do you agree?" Let your class discuss this. Point out to them God's justice as described in verses 26-28.

Read verse 30a. Ask: "How will God judge Israel?" (Ans: According to their ways)

Finally read verses 30b-32. Ask: "What does God call on them to do?" (Ans: Repent, turn from their evil, throw away their sinfulness, get a new heart and spirit.) Ask: "Why does he tell them to do this?" (Ans: Because he does not want them to die. He wants them to live)

Conclusion

Say: "God's mercy is still active today. He still wants his children to live. He loves us. He created us to have fellowship with him. He cannot have that if we are sinful. God, in his great mercy, made a way of escape. He sent his son, Jesus, to save us from our sin. If we accept him as Savior and Lord of our lives, we can have fellowship with God. We will not die, but have eternal life with him. This is God's plan for his children."

Invite your class members to examine their lives. Ask them to remember the proverb the Israelites used to excuse themselves from God's judgement. (Ez 18:2) Ask: "Are you blaming others for your sins? God has said that each of us is responsible for our own sins. We will not pay for anyone else's sin and no one can pay for our sins. Each person must come before God as he is, confess his sins and be forgiven." Invite your students to do that now. Have a time of silent prayer. Ask a member to lead in closing prayer.

Things to think about and do

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is their faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23.

Read the following scriptures and meditate on the faithfulness of God:

Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 36:5; I Corinthians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3;

Hebrews 10:23.

How wonderful to think that since the creation of man, God has never changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever more. We can believe all his promises. We can trust in his mercy and goodness and protection.

We can say with the writer of Lamentations: "Great is thy faithfulness!"

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Jeremiah 31:1-10

Monday: Jeremiah 31:12-20

Tuesday: Jeremiah 31:27-34

Wednesday: Isaiah 40:1-11

Thursday: Isaiah 40: 27-31

Friday: Psalm 126

Saturday: Read your Bible Study lesson for this week

Lesson 7- The Promise of Return

Teacher's Guide

Background Scriptures- Isaiah 40; 49:5-13; 51: 1-16; Jeremiah 31; Psalms 126.

Scripture Used in Today's Lesson- Isaiah 40:1-5,9-11; 49:5-6; Jeremiah 31:23-25, 31-34.

Memory Verse-The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Isaiah 40:8

Central Truth- God's righteous judgement is followed by an outflowing of his mercy if we turn to him in repentance and love.

Teaching aim- To help my students understand that God's goodness, mercy and redemption are eternal and will be victorious.

Helps for the teacher- Write Isaiah 40:9-11 and Jeremiah 31:23-25 on one piece of paper. Write Isaiah 49:5-6 and Jeremiah 31:31-34 on another.

Getting ready to teach

Comfort for God's People- Read Isaiah 40:1-2

When Isaiah and Jeremiah, God's prophets to Israel and Judah were warning the people of the coming judgement, they also spoke words of comfort to the people. God had said, even in his warnings that if the judgement came, salvation would follow if they repented.

When Israel and Judah were in captivity in Babylon, many of them repented of their sins and returned to God. They worshipped God there and encouraged each other in their faith. They actually became stronger in the Lord in their captivity than in their freedom! They were fortunate that the leaders of Babylon gave them freedom to worship as they liked. They were able to be faithful to God there.

God wanted to comfort his repentant people. He called them "my people" and reminded them that he was "their God." He spoke tenderly to

them for they had paid the price for their sins. They were forgiven and the Lord was ready to bless them. He would still use them in his plan to save all mankind from their sins.

Preparing the Way-Read Isaiah 40:3-5

God wanted to restore his people to the Promised Land from which they had been exiled. He wanted to reward his people for their faithfulness to him. He told them to prepare a straight road for him, to live a "straight" life, to continue being faithful to him. If they did this, he would prepare the way home for them. He himself would come and deliver them from their miserable condition. He wanted the whole world to see his coming and his redemption of his people.

This passage also has a prophetic meaning which refers to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Here God shows us his symbolic use of Israel in his plan to redeem man. They were his example of how he would treat all of mankind. He would love and care for them. He would punish them when they sinned against him, but he would always redeem them and bring them back to himself. He would be their caretaker, father, judge and redeemer.

Goods News for Israel- Read Isaiah 40:9-11; Jeremiah 31:23-25.

The prophet brought them the good news of salvation. They were not to hide the news. It should be shouted! Upon their return to Judah, all the world would see their God and his might. They would see his mercy to Israel, his people. He would feed his people like a gentle shepherd. He would gather them to him and carry them close to his heart.

Again, we see a picture of the coming of Jesus, who would remind the Israelites of this prophecy when he called himself the "Good Shepherd." He would be the final expression of God's love and mercy to all men.

Through Jeremiah, God told the people that they would truly live in Judah again. Their joy would be restored. Their wealth and cities would be rebuilt. They would be refreshed and satisfied with all that God would give them. They would be "at home" in Judah once more.

Good News for the World-Read Isaiah 49:5-6 and Jeremiah 31:31-34.

In these passages, we see the full reason for the restoration of Israel. God had always planned to use Israel as his vehicle for salvation for all mankind. In these passages, we "Gentiles" can rejoice along with the Jews for God tells of *our* salvation. He tells Israel clearly that he does not intend to save only them. His plan is for his salvation to reach "to the end of the earth." Israel will be his light to spread this good news. Through them all men will come to know the love and mercy of God.

God reminds them that his covenant with Israel included his plan to save all mankind. Now God says he will make a new covenant which will be for all people. He will write this covenant on each heart. All will have the opportunity to know God because he will be within their hearts. Their sins will be forgiven and remembered no more. He will be their God and they will be his people.

God, the Victor -Read the Memory Verse

Isaiah states that although everything around them has a short life, God's word and promises last forever. Their homeland did not last forever. Their homes and wealth were all destroyed. Their Temple did not even last forever. Only God's word lasts forever. We can rely on this truth. What God says is true. What God foretells will come to pass. What a glorious hope we have in the Lord God!

Teaching Plan

Read Psalms 126 aloud to your class. Say: "This Psalm shows us how much the people of Israel wanted to return to their homeland. They wanted God to show the world his greatness and mercy. They wanted to see that he had forgiven them for their sins."

Ask a student to read Isaiah 40:1-5. Talk about these verses with your students. Use your background material, "Comfort for God's People," and "Preparing the Way." Be sure to emphasize that God planned for the peoples' salvation when he planned for their punishment. Say: "God wanted to be merciful to the Israelites. He begged them to repent so that he would not have to judge them. As soon as they repented, he planned to save them."

Divide your class into two groups. The first group will study Isaiah 40:9-11 and Jeremiah 31:23-25. They will report to the class the good news that God had for the Israelites. The second group will study Isaiah 49: 5-6 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. They will report to the class the good news that God had for the world. Let the groups work on this for about 15 minutes and then report. You can add to their reports from your background material, "Good news for Israel," and "Good News for the World."

Conclusion

Say: "Even though Israel was God's chosen people, they were not the only ones he planned to save. They were his chosen instrument. He planned from the beginning to use them for the salvation of all the people in the world. Do you remember when we studied his covenant with Israel last quarter? He said they would be "his own possession among all people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." He wanted them to be special to him and holy (or righteous) so that they could be his priests. Their job was to show the whole world who the one true God was. They often forgot this.

They not only failed to show the rest of the world who God was, but they failed to worship him faithfully themselves. They worshipped other gods and broke all of God's laws. But God constantly reminded them that they were his people and he was their God. He told them that through them all the world would find salvation. This is good news for us!"

Continue: "Satan does not want us to believe that God has a plan for our salvation. He wants us to believe that we are doomed. But let's look at our memory verse together. What does it say? Let's look at Isaiah 40:6-8." Read these verses. Emphasize that although everything else will wither and die, the word of the Lord is forever. God does not lie. Everything that he has said will happen. God will be victorious over evil and sin. God will conquer Satan.

Say: "As these verses show us, everything will fade and wither and die- everything except the word of the Lord. God asks us to put our faith in him because he is eternal. He is the only thing that is. Everything else will die. Let each of us be sure that we have put our faith in something that is eternal. If we are putting our faith in material things, or education or in another person like our parents or spouse we will be disappointed. They will all fade and wither and die. If we put our faith in God, we will never be disappointed." Say the memory verse together.

Ask: "Have you put your faith in the eternal God?" Lead your class in a closing prayer.

Things to think about and do-

God promises to comfort us in our times of trouble. He promises that we will be victorious over Satan and evil. Read the verses which follow and answer the questions.

1. Psalm 27:5 When will God keep us safe? in the day of trouble
2. Psalm 34:7 Who does God use to help him protect us? his angels
3. Psalm 91:4 What animal will God be like? a mother bird
4. Isaiah 46:4 What will God do for us? carry, sustain and rescue us
5. John 14:1-4 What has God promised us? a place for eternity, his return
6. John 14:27 What did he leave with us? his peace
7. Hebrews 13:6 Why are we not afraid? the Lord is our helper
8. I John 5:4 What will overcome the world? our faith
9. John 16:33 Who has overcome the world? Jesus Christ
10. I Corinthians 15:54-57 Who is victorious over death? Jesus Christ

WE are victorious over death when we put our trust in Jesus. We have overcome the world because he has won the victory. Praise his name!

Scriptures to read this week

Sunday: Jeremiah 29:10-14

Monday: Ezra 1:1-6

Tuesday: Ezra 3:8-13

Wednesday: Ezra 6:3-5,14-16

Thursday: Nehemiah 4:15-23

Friday: Nehemiah 6:10-16

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson for this week

Lesson 8- God's People Rebuild

Teacher's Guide

Background Scriptures- Ezra 1; 3; 6; Nehemiah 1; 2; 4; 6:15-16.

Scriptures Used in Today's Lesson- Ezra 1:1-4; Nehemiah 4:15-20; 6:15-16

Memory Verse- O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant...give success to your servant today and grant him mercy.

Nehemiah 1:11

Central Truth- God can use any willing person to accomplish his will.

Teaching Aim- To help my students decide to be God's instruments for change in the world.

Helps for the teacher- Chalk board or paper.

God Uses King Cyrus-Read Ezra 1:1-4

God allowed King Cyrus of Persia to conquer Babylon, where the Jews lived in exile. He wanted to use Cyrus to help his remnant return to Judah. God was working in the world to bring his salvation to all people.

Isaiah prophesied that King Cyrus would be the one to return the people to the promised land. (See Isaiah 45:1-5) It was a part of God's plan. Isaiah indicates that Cyrus was not a believer. But he was obedient to God and somehow understood that he had a special task to do for him. Are you surprised that God would use an unbeliever to do his work? God is at work in all of history, he is in control of all the world. God uses anyone who is willing to obey to accomplish his task of salvation.

In Ezra, we read Cyrus' proclamation, written down so that it would not be forgotten. He stated that God had chosen him to rebuild his Temple in Jerusalem. Any Jews who wanted to help were free to go and begin the work. He asked the people to give offerings to pay for it.

A Remnant Returns to Israel-

King Cyrus allowed a group of exiles to return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C.

They went with offerings from the people and king. Cyrus even returned the gold and silver articles which had been removed from the Temple at the time of conquest.

When the exiles arrived in Jerusalem, they began to rebuild the altar and the Temple. It was not an easy task. They were opposed by the people who lived around them. They ran out of money. When Cyrus died, there was a time of confusion before the new king, Darius, found the proclamation Cyrus had written. When he found it, he sent money to Jerusalem so the Temple could be finished. He ordered that no one interfere with this work, on penalty of death.

God Uses King Artaxerxes

Later when King Artaxerxes ruled Persia, the enemies of the Jews asked him to stop all building. They told him that the Jews had historically been a rebellious nation. When Artaxerxes studied their history, he saw that what they said was true. He read how powerful the nation of Israel had once been. But he must have read, too, about their powerful God. Artaxerxes allowed Ezra to take a group of exiles to Judah to verify that the first group was following the laws of God faithfully. He sent money to buy animals to sacrifice to God. He made many laws to protect the Jews and their priests. It is hard to understand exactly why these things would concern Artaxerxes, a man who did not worship God. He seemed to understand the goodness of God and he knew that keeping his laws was very important. God used Artaxerxes to fulfill his plan for his people.

Nehemiah, a faithful Jewish layman was the king's cupbearer. He waited on Artaxerxes and served him. The king loved Nehemiah because he was a good man and faithful servant. Nehemiah was very concerned for his fellow countrymen who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.

He had heard they were having a drought. They were not able to live in the rubble of the destroyed city. They had no wall to protect them as they worked to clear the city and rebuild. This made Nehemiah very sad. As he came into the king's presence, the king could see that he was unhappy. When Nehemiah told him why he was sad, the king allowed him to go to Jerusalem to help his countrymen rebuild the wall around the city.

Nehemiah's Work- Read Nehemiah 4:15-20 and 6:15-16

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he surveyed the walls which had been destroyed during the war. He made a list of the things that needed to be done. He calculated what materials they would need. After he had done this, he made himself known to the Jewish leaders. He convinced them to join him in rebuilding the walls so their town and Temple would be secure. All agreed with Nehemiah. Work began immediately.

Their enemies did not like what they saw. They harassed and mocked the Jews as they worked. They threatened to kill them and end the work. Nehemiah divided his men in half. Half guarded while the other half worked. All workers carried weapons, working with one hand, holding his weapon in the other. They prayed diligently for God to protect them. They posted a guard with a trumpet to warn them if he saw the enemy advancing. In spite of the threats and trouble, they worked on.

Finally, after 52 days of work, the wall was completed. All the nations around had been confounded. They saw that the Israelite's powerful God had helped them to succeed. God had used a pagan king and a faithful layman to do his work in Jerusalem.

Can God use you?- Read the Memory Verse

God has used many people over the years to help him complete his plan to save his people. They were all people who knew who God was and

understood his power. They were willing to be used by him. God can use anyone who is willing to serve him. Nehemiah prayed the words of our memory verse. He asked God to use him and make him successful for his sake. He knew that only with God's help they would be able to succeed. His mercy would enable them to do the task they had been given to do.

Teaching the Lesson:

Think about the central truth and teaching aim as you teach this lesson. You want your students to realize that God wants to use them to change the world. He wants to use them to bring others to him.

In order to lead your students to understand this, you will want to look at the five people whom God used in today's lesson: King Cyrus, Ezra, King Darius, King Artaxerxes and Nehemiah. You will need to supply a lot of the information about each of these men because the stories in the Bible are long and you will not have time to read them. Write each name on the board or on a large piece of paper. Ask a student to read Ezra 1:1-4. Use your background material "God Uses King Cyrus," "A Remnant Returns to Israel" and "God Uses King Artaxerxes" and discuss these verses with your students. Emphasize the role of Cyrus, Ezra, Darius, and Artaxerxes in God's plan to rebuild the Temple. Point out how Artaxerxes allowed Ezra to take a second group of exiles home so he could be sure that all were following God's laws. Ask: "Why do you think Artaxerxes cared if the people kept the law or not?" Let your class discuss this.

Ask a student to read Nehemiah 4:15-20. Use your background material "God Uses King Artaxerxes" and "Nehemiah's Work" to discuss the work of Nehemiah. Ask: "Why was it important to rebuild the wall?" (Ans: So that the Temple could be protected and so that they could safely rebuild the city.) Explain Artaxerxes' role in this work.

Conclusion

Look at the memory verse together. Ask: "Who said these words?" (Ans: Nehemiah) Ask: "What was Nehemiah's job?" (Ans: He was a servant of the king) Say: "Today, we have seen how God used three pagan kings, a priest and a servant to help him do his work on earth. God can use anyone who is willing and obedient. Are you willing to be used by God?"

Divide your class into three groups. Each group will identify two things they can do to follow God's plan in their lives or ways they can serve and obey him. One group will identify things they can do in their church, another in their homes, and another in their community. These can be physical things, like cutting the grass at the church or cleaning their village. They can be spiritual things, like leading someone to Christ or starting a Bible study group in their home. Ask each group to be ready to share their ideas after 5 or 6 minutes. Write their ideas on the board.

After each group has reported, ask if the class would like to choose one of the tasks identified and try to do it together in the coming week. If they do, plan a time when you can do it. If they cannot, ask each one to choose a task to do individually this week. Ask them to be ready to report their experiences next week.

Say your memory verse together. Say: "If we are following the will of God, we will be successful. Won't you do his will this week?"

Lead in closing prayer.

To think about and do

Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Every Christian should want to see God's will come on earth. Every Christian should be willing for God to use him to bring his will to pass on earth. Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." Can you say that with Christ? Do you want to do his will more than anything else in the world?

How can we know his will for our lives? We need to read his Word daily and talk with him daily in prayer. Read one of these verses each day this week: Romans 12:2; I Peter 3:9; Ephesians 5:18; John 13:35; Ephesians 4:13; James 1:4. Meditate on God's will for your life. Seek to be more like Jesus in your desire to follow his plan for you.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Nehemiah 8:1-3,5-8

Monday: Nehemiah 8:9-18

Tuesday: Nehemiah 9:1-3

Wednesday: Nehemiah 9:7-17

Thursday: Nehemiah 9:32-38

Friday: Psalms 119:89-96

Saturday: Read your Bible Study lesson for this week

Lesson 9- God's Law Reaffirmed

Teacher's Guide

Background Scriptures-Nehemiah 8-9Scriptures Used in today s Lesson- Nehemiah 8:1-3,5-6,8-12

Memory Verse- Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law and observe it with my whole heart. Psalm 119:34

Central Truth- Christians can become obedient followers of God when they study and understand the Bible.

Teaching Aim-To help my students want to study the Bible more so they can obey it.

Helps for the teacher- None

Getting Ready to TeachEzra-Priest and Teacher- Read Nehemiah 8:1-3

We remember from last week's lesson that the priest, Ezra, was allowed to return to Jerusalem with a group of faithful Jews. King Artaxerxes let him go to teach the Jews who had gone earlier to rebuild the Temple. He wanted to be sure that they were following God's laws. Ezra, too, was concerned that without a teacher and priest, the people would return to their old habits of idol worship and sin.

Just as Ezra expected, he found the men were already marrying women of pagan nations. This had led to their downfall before. After marrying them, they copied their ways of worship. They were unfaithful to God and he punished them. Ezra could see that the same thing was happening again. He was sad when he saw this and didn't know what to do.

After the wall was completed, Ezra decided to read the law to all who were old enough to understand its meaning. Nehemiah, who had led in the rebuilding of the wall and was now governor, agreed with him. Since the Temple and the wall around Jerusalem were rebuilt, he was anxious for the Jews to live as God intended. He knew God would bless them if they did.

Ezra called a big meeting and read to them from the law of Moses- what is today the first five books of the Old Testament. As he read the law to the people, they listened eagerly. His assistants read, too, and explained the meaning of the laws. They helped the people understand that their God was great and had a wonderful plan for them.

The Revival Begins- Read Nehemiah 8:5-6,8

As Ezra and the other priests read and explained the law to them, the people were touched by the power of God. They heard Ezra bless the Lord. They all raised their hands in worship. They bowed their heads before him and were humbled before the Lord, their God. They saw his great power and love for them. They were ready to repent of their sins and return to God.

Repentance-Read Nehemiah 8:9-11

As the people sensed the greatness of God, they saw clearly how they had failed him. They saw their sinfulness and were ashamed. They all wept openly and mourned their disobedience and rebellion.

Ezra and Nehemiah saw that the repentance of the people was genuine. They were happy that the people had understood the Word of the Lord and were ready to follow it. But they did not want the people to go on weeping forever. Since they had truly repented, it was time for rejoicing! They encouraged them to go home, prepare good food and share it with those who had none. Sharing their blessings with their fellowmen would be evidence of their changed hearts.

The priests quieted the people and told them to celebrate this day as a holy day. They should not be sad any longer. They had reason to rejoice!

The Joy of the Lord-Read Nehemiah 8:12

The people did as they were told. They went home, prepared food for a feast, sent portions to the poor and rejoiced. They were happy that they had heard the word of the Lord and understood it. They had seen their sinfulness and repented. Now they were ready to follow God's laws and be his people. No doubt, there was rejoicing in Heaven over this wonderful event. God had waited a long time for his children to return. Now they were his again and he could bless them.

Give me Understanding-Read the Memory Verse.

The people of Israel had rebelled against God for many years. They had worshipped other gods and were unfaithful to God. But when this group, heard the Word of the Lord read, they understood what God wanted of them. If they had not heard it, they would not have understood it. The Word of the Lord, our Bible, is powerful. If we read it and ask the Holy Spirit to help us, we can understand it and know God's plan for our lives. We will see how Jesus lived and can begin to follow his example. If we do not read ^{or hear} his Word, we will never be able to follow him. If we really want to obey him, we need to understand the Bible.

Teaching the Lesson

Ask your students to report on the projects which they did to serve the Lord this week. Praise them for their good work. Encourage them to do something again this week. If any forgot to do their project, encourage them to do it this week. Maybe they would like to plan to do some activity of service regularly. Give them the support they need to follow through with their plans.

Briefly review with your class the events which we studied last week. Remind them that some Jews had been allowed to return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon. They had rebuilt the Temple and later the protective

wall around the city. Two men, Ezra and Nehemiah, played an important role in the lives of the people in Jerusalem. Tell your class that we will learn more about how they helped the people in today's lesson.

Say: 'Ezra was a priest who was allowed to return to Jerusalem to see that the people were properly following God's laws. When he arrived he found that the people were already beginning to stray from God's plan. He needed to do something to bring them back to God as soon as he could.'

Ask a student to read Nehemiah 8:1-3. Ask: "What did Ezra do?"

(Ans: He called all the people together and read from the law of Moses)

Ask: "Where were the laws of Moses found?" (Ans: In the Pentateuch-which are the first five books of our Bible today.) Ask: "To whom did he read?"

(Ans: See verse 2) Ask: "How long did he read?" (Ans: See verse 3) Ask:

"Did the people like what they heard?" (Ans: The Bible says that their ears were attentive to the reading-they listened carefully.)

Read verses 5-6 and 8 and discuss how the people responded to the reading. Point out that it made them want to worship God. Point out that Ezra and the other priests explained all that they read so that the people understood it.

Ask a student to read verse 9. Ask: "What did the people do when the reading was over?" (Ans: They wept and mourned.) Ask: "Why did they do that?" (Ans: They were sorry for their sins.) Have someone read verses 10-11. Ask: "What did Nehemiah and Ezra tell the people to do?" (Ans: They were to stop weeping and go and celebrate.) Ask: "Why did they tell them to do this?" Let your students discuss this. They should understand that the people had repented of their sins, therefore God had forgiven them. There was no reason to go on mourning. Now they could experience God's strength in joy. (see 10b) Point out that they told the

people to share their food with the poor. This would show that their repentance was real. Read verse 12 to see what the people did.

Say: "Because the people's repentance was real, their sins had been forgiven. They could go home, celebrate and rejoice. They had reason to rejoice! They had been reconciled to their God. They were his children again."

Conclusion

Ask your class to read the memory verse together. Say: "After reading the law, the people understood what God expected of them. They were ready to obey and observe the law with their whole hearts. That is what God wanted of them all along. ¹⁵It's what he wants of us, too."

Ask: "How can we know God's laws so that we can obey them?" (Ans: By reading the Bible, his Word) Say: "When the Word of God was read, it led to repentance of sin. After their sins were forgiven, they were able to rejoice."

"God wants us to live in a state of joy. We can live in his joy if we are in fellowship with him. We cannot do that if we have unforgiven sin in our lives. God wants our obedience. We need to know what he wants us to do in order to obey. We can do that by reading his word, the Bible." Ask: "How many of you read the Bible each day at home?" Let your class respond. Say: "It is important that we do this if we want to grow." Go over with them some of the suggestions for a Bible study plan mentioned in "To think about and do" for this week. Help your students to commit themselves to try to read the Bible each day this week. Ask those who read to help those who do not read. Ask them to be ready to talk about their experiences next week.

To think about and do

A Christian should read the Bible every day to grow strong in the Lord and in his faith. Do you have a Bible study plan for your life? Do you meet regularly with other Christians to study God's Word? If you want to grow, it is important to do so.

You should choose a plan and follow it. It is not good to begin reading Genesis and read straight through to the Revelation. You should begin reading a book which will help you in your Christian life. You might want to begin with a Gospel, to learn more about Jesus' life. Then read a letter to one of the early churches or study the work of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. Don't neglect the Old Testament! You may not find all the books interesting, but if you like history, you will enjoy reading Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Psalms and Proverbs are very helpful. Ruth, Esther, Daniel and some of the prophets are exciting. You might want to first read a Gospel, then a letter, then a book from the Old Testament. Then repeat the cycle. Many people are blessed by reading a Psalm everyday, too. Whatever plan you choose, it is important to read the Bible every day. If you have trouble understanding it, ask your spouse or a friend to read with you. The Holy Spirit will show you the truth if you seek it. God will bless you and help you grow if you read his Word.

Scriptures to Read This Week

Sunday: Isaiah 9:2-7

Monday: Isaiah 11:1-10

Tuesday: Isaiah 52:1-10

Wednesday: Isaiah 52:13-53:6

Thursday: Isaiah 53:7-12

Friday: Isaiah 61:1-3; Micah 4:11-12, 5:2-4

Saturday: Read your Bible Study lesson for this week

Lesson 10- The Promise of the Messiah Teacher's Guide

Background Scripture- Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 52:13-53:12; Micah 5:2-4

Scripture Used in today's Lesson- Isaiah 52:13- 53:1-12

Memory Verse- For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given...his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6.

Central truth- From the beginning of time, God planned to send Jesus to redeem his people from their sin.

Teaching aim- To help my students understand Jesus' suffering on their account and to decide to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.

Helps for the teacher-Chalk board or paper

Getting Ready to Teach

Messiah-The Promised One-Read Isaiah 52:13

Isaiah spoke to Israel about captivity in Babylon and about their return to Canaan. They understood the verses which we will study today as prophecies related to their return. Bible scholars can explain them in that way, certainly. But we who know God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, also see him in Isaiah's words.

God planned to provide an escape from sin for his people. He knew they could not be righteous by themselves. He planned to send a Saviour to pay the price for sin once and for all. The passages from Isaiah 9 and 11 describe the Messiah who would reign. He would come from the line of David, Jesse's son. He would be righteous, just and peaceful. God's Spirit would be upon him and his kingdom would have no end.

Micah declared that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem from the house of David. He was described as a shepherd who would rule his

people with love and care. He would rule the world and restore Israel to her place of leadership in the world.

When the Jews did not gain their freedom, they began to look for the Messiah who would save Israel from the shame of occupation. They wanted their mighty leader to conquer the people around them. They longed for the day when their fame would be restored.

Messiah-The Suffering Servant- Read Isaiah 53:1-3

Isaiah described Messiah as a "man of sorrows." At first he would be "exalted and lifted up." Later he would be "despised and rejected." The Jews expected a warrior king like David had been. They were looking for a Saviour from their oppressors to restore the great Kingdom of Israel. God told them clearly that the one who came would be hated and ignored. He would not be recognized as the Saviour of Israel.

Messiah- The Saviour of Man-Read Isaiah 53:4-12

Isaiah explained why he would be so deformed and ugly. He would bear our griefs and carry our sorrow. He would be wounded and bruised for our sins. Through his suffering we would be made whole. His reward would be death.

In verse 6, we see the reason for the Messiah's suffering. We have each turned to his own way and followed his own passions. We rejected the laws of God and must pay the price for our sins. But God's great plan was that his Messiah would pay the price once for all men for all time.

Verses 7-9 say he went willingly to his death. He was killed in a violent and horrible way with wicked men and was buried with the rich. Finally, we read that he was innocent of all blame. He had done nothing wrong himself, but was suffering in our place. He died willingly for his "sheep." We can see Jesus in these verses as we think about his death.

In the final verses of this chapter, we see all of this was the plan of God. He allowed it to happen so man could finally be "righteous" in his eyes. Because the Messiah willingly "poured out his soul unto death," he would be rewarded by God. Jesus will reign with God in Heaven forever.

Messiah-Prince of Peace-Read the Memory Verse

The Jews were looking for a King to restore their former greatness. They did not see that their real need was for a Saviour. God promised them a king who would be Messiah, "God's Anointed One." He would save them-but not from their earthly oppressors. He would save them from the evil one who deceived them and led them away from God. He would be a Wonderful Counsellor and give them good advice and warnings. As Mighty God, he would protect and lead them. The Everlasting Father would love and care for them. The Prince of Peace would bring peace to their hearts and with God forever.

What a great plan God had. What a wonderful promise he gave to his people. What a wonderful opportunity we have to know this Prince of Peace as our personal Saviour-Jesus Christ the Lord.

Teaching the Lesson

Let your students share their experiences of reading the Bible each day this week. You share, too, and encourage them to keep reading.

Say: "Even when the people of Israel were rebellious and sinful, God loved them and wanted to protect them. He didn't want them to worship false gods and pay the consequences of their immoral living. But he hated their sin and what it was doing to them. He knew if he punished them, they would come back to him. Last week, we saw how the Israelites finally repented of their sin and returned to God.

"Even though the people had repented, they could not save themselves by righteous living. They would sin and grow rebellious again. So God had another plan by which to save his people from their sin once and for always.

"Although Isaiah told them this plan, the Israelites did not understand him. Probably Isaiah himself did not understand all that God told him. But we can see today that Isaiah was telling the people about the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God's Anointed One."

Ask one student to read Isaiah 9:7 and another to read Isaiah 11:1. Explain that this tells us that the Messiah would come from the family of David. Jesus was from this family.

Ask a student to read Micah 5:2. Explain that this prophet said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Ask: "Where was Jesus born?" (Ans: Bethlehem)

Ask a student to read Isaiah 52:13. Say: "This verse gave the Jews hope because they were told that the Messiah would be lifted up and well known. He would be famous and well regarded by all nations."

Divide your class into three small groups. Ask one group to read Isaiah 53:1-3, another to read 4-6, another to read 7-9. Ask each to list the words which describe the Messiah who was to come. Allow your students time to complete this and to report their findings. Write their answers on the board. Ask: "What kind of person would this Messiah be?" Let your class discuss this. (He was a person who would be willing to suffer for the sake of others.) Say: "The Messiah is often described as a "suffering servant." He was willing to obey God and suffer for the sake of man."

Read Isaiah 53:6 aloud. Ask: "For whom would this Messiah suffer? Whose sins would he pay for?" (Ans: All of us. Every one.) Ask each

student: "Did the Messiah suffer because of your sins?" (Ans: Yes, he died for all people.)

Ask one student to read verses 10-12 of this chapter. Ask the rest to listen for the answers to this question: "Why did the Messiah have to suffer?" (Ans: Because it was the plan of God so the righteous servant would make all men righteous.) Ask: "Do you think the Messiah was unhappy about having to do this? (Ans: No, because he would have the knowledge that his sacrifice allowed all men to be saved.)

Conclusion

Ask your students to say the Memory Verse together. Ask what each of the characteristics listed here means. See your background material for some ideas. Say: "Jesus is all of these things and more. He guides us, protects us, loves and cares for us. He brings us peace that can only come when we have a good relationship with God. Jesus was the Messiah promised by God. Many of the Jews did not recognize him. He was despised and killed by them. He was bruised and wounded and killed for our sins. He did it all willingly so that we could be called "righteous" before God.

Ask: "Have you ever had to suffer for the sake of Christ? Perhaps you have. Perhaps your family has objected to your being a Christian. Perhaps the people with whom you work mock you for your faith and righteous living. Perhaps you have never suffered for his sake. Perhaps you have even been ashamed of your faith and your Saviour. Perhaps you have tried to hide the fact that you are a Christian.

"Jesus suffered willingly for you. He died so that you could have life. Are you willing openly ^{to} confess him? Are you willing to suffer for his sake? Let's pray, asking God to give us the courage to stand for Jesus this week.

Let's not be ashamed of the "man of sorrows" who suffered so much for our sakes."

Lead in closing prayer.

To think about and do

Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah of God, the one he sent to save us from sin and death. We believe that because the prophecies given about him in the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus. Read each of the prophecies on the left and the verse about Jesus on the right. Don't you agree that Jesus is God's Anointed One-the Messiah who was promised by God?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Isaiah 9:7 | Matthew 1:1-17 |
| 2. Micah 5:2 | Luke 2: 1-7 |
| 3. Isaiah 7:14 | Luke 1: 26-33 |
| 4. Hosea 11:1 | Matthew 2:14 |
| 5. Isaiah 53: 3 | John 1:11 |
| 6. Isaiah 11:2 | Luke 2:52 |
| 7. Isaiah 53:7 | Matthew 27:12-14 |
| 8. Isaiah 50: 6 | Mark 14:65 |
| 9. Isaiah 53:12 | Matthew 27:38 |
| 10. Psalm 16:10 | Luke 24:36-48 |

Scriptures to read this week

Sunday: Psalm 119:1-8

Monday: Psalm 119:9-16

Tuesday: Psalm 1:1-6

Wednesday: Psalm 130:1-8

Thursday: Luke 1:5-14

Friday: Luke 2:1-7

Saturday: Read your Bible Study lesson for this week.

Lesson 11- Between the Old and New Testaments Teacher's Guide

Background Scriptures- Psalm 119:1-16; Luke 1:57-2:3

Scripture Used in Today's Lesson- Psalm 119:1-8; Luke 2:1-3

Memory Verse- I have laid up thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119:11

Central Truth- God's law is a guide for our lives and shows us how to live a happy life.

Teaching Aim- To help my students believe that God is always working in their lives even when they cannot visibly see him. To help my students commit themselves to following God's laws and leading.

Helps for the teacher- Chalk board or large paper

Getting Ready to Teach

World Events

The story of God and his people continued from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Because we have no written record of God's dealings with Israel for more than 400 years, we must look to other sources for our information. History, literature and other writings tell us how God continued to care for his people during this time.

After the time of Nehemiah, Judea was ruled by Persia until 332 B.C. when Alexander the Great, a Greek, ruled most of the civilized world. After his death, Israel was ruled by Egypt. The Jews were allowed to worship God as they chose until about 200 B.C., when Judea came under Syria's rule. This was a terrible time of persecution for the Jews. They revolted under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus and were independent from 142 B.C. until 63 B.C. Judas' family of priests ruled Israel. When the powerful Romans captured Jerusalem, they had trouble keeping the Israelites under control. They appointed Herod, who was a Jew, to serve as king in Israel. He was

wicked and the Jews did not like him. They looked for their Messiah to save them.

The Power of Rome-Read Luke 2:1-3

Rome ruled much of the world, including Israel, at the time of Jesus' birth. They had the power to call for a census and to tax the people. Their soldiers lived in Palestine and kept the peace. Their courts judged civil crimes and their rulers had authority. They built good roads. Most people used Greek and Latin as well as their own Hebrew language. The world into which Jesus was born was well-organized for the spread of the gospel. Travel was easy and safe. Peaceful conditions prevailed. God planned the time of his arrival well.

Religious Developments.

Since the time of Ezra, the people placed more emphasis on the law. They observed the Sabbath and other Temple rituals with great faithfulness. They separated themselves from the people around them and were proud of their religion and nationality. They put great importance on being "children of Abraham" and saw Gentiles as inferior in every way.

Two religious groups developed at this time: the Pharisees and the Saducees. The Pharisees were middle class men who were totally committed to keeping the law. They also interpreted God's law for the people, making changes as culture and times changed. The Saducees were wealthier than the Pharisees. They emphasized Temple worship above all else and many were priests. They believed the Mosaic law was supreme and that no additions or changes should be made.

Scribes collected and edited all religious writings during this time. Many of the books which now are part of the Old Testament were preserved by them. They also wrote books to interpret God's laws to the common man.

The Jews emphasized the Messianic prophecies and looked forward to the day when the Messiah would come and save them from their oppressors.

Devotion to the Law- Read Psalm 119:1-8

The Jews developed a devotion to the Law during this time in their history. God had been asking them to do this since David's time. Their new-found devotion did not please God completely, however. Though they kept the law, they forgot his plan to save all mankind. They separated themselves from others and were proud. They believed that God was for them alone. They had forgotten that he had asked them to be his priests to all nations.

In this passage, the Psalmist tells the reader that to be happy (or blessed) they should walk in God's law. They should realize its meaning for their whole lives and remember it every day. They should see it as a means for finding God. They should realize that he has given it to them as a guide for life. Keeping it would keep them from shameful living. It would make them upright. It would make them suitable vessels^e for God to live with and use.

The Jews did not understand all the reasons for obeying God's laws. Some of them obeyed because they loved the attention they got. They loved thinking they were righteous. They did not see that keeping the law was a way to serve God. They did not see that they should ~~to~~ bring others to him. They only thought of how others saw them. They had failed to save themselves by obeying his law.

Teaching Plan

Ask your students to name some rules their parents made for them while they were growing up. List these on the chalk board or paper.

Ask: "Why did they make these rules?" They should say that they were made to protect them and help them grow to be good people.

Ask them to name some rules they had at school. Discuss why they had them. Finally, ask them to think about the laws their government has made. Why did they make them? They should realize that they exist for their physical protection and to protect the rights of all people of their society.

Say: "As we know, God made laws for us to follow. He made them so we can live safe and happy lives. If we obey them, we can know him, worship him and experience his love."

Review with your class the events of lesson 9. Remind them how the people heard the law, repented and promised to obey God.

Say: "After this time, the people really did seek to obey God. They worshipped him faithfully. There were no Biblical writers for a long time. The Jews did not hear from God directly through his prophets. But God was still working in their lives and planning their salvation."

Ask: "Have any of you ever seen God?" (Ans: No) Ask: "Then how do you know that he exists?" Let your class discuss this thoroughly. They should realize that God is a spirit and we can hear him speak to us in our souls. We can see the evidence of his work in our lives and feel his love.

Say: "The Jews of this time had no direct word from God, but they believed he existed. They worshipped and served him and he cared for them. We have learned about what happened during this time from

historians and other writers." Tell your class about what happened using your background material, "World Events."

Ask a student to read Luke 2:1-3. Let them discuss the power that Rome had over the people. Emphasize the good things that Roman rule brought. Use your background material, "The Power of Rome."

Tell your class about the religious developments of the time. Use your background material, "Religious Developments."

Read Psalms 119:1-8 verse by verse. Discuss the following questions after each verse. Suggested answers are given, but encourage the students to think and share their ideas. Give them time to do this. Affirm their ideas.

v.1- What does "blessed" mean? What does it mean to "walk in the law of the Lord?" (Happy; obeying his law in our lives daily)

v2-3-What are his "testimonies?" How do we seek God with our whole heart? (His communication with us; pray, make him first in our lives, read his word, obey him, love him, etc.)

v4-5-What are "precepts?" What are "statutes?" (other words for law)

v6- How will keeping God's law keep us from "shame?" (we will live righteously and purely)

v7- How will learning God's righteous ordinances help us praise him? (we will see his goodness and love because our lives will be happier)

v8- Will God forsake us if we do not keep his laws? (what does the history of Israel show?)

Conclusion

Say: "God gave Israel laws to protect them and to ensure their happy lives. He gives us laws for the same reason-just like our parents, teachers and governments do. If we obey them, we will be happy. But God wants more than just our mindless obedience. He wants us to share his plan for

living with people around us. He wants everyone to know his joy and peace. In the weeks ahead, we will talk more about this and learn how to witness to others. In the meantime, look at your life and see how you measure up. Do you obey God? Do you keep his laws? That is what he wants from each of us. Will you promise to try to obey him this week? He is ready to help you and lead you. Will you listen to him?"

Lead in closing prayer. Ask God to help each one be more obedient.

To think about and do

1. What reward did Jesus say would be given to those who obey him? John 14:23 _____
2. What is the evidence of obedience? John 15:10 _____
3. How are the obedient like the "wise man?" Matthew 7:24 _____

Jesus was the most obedient of all men. He is our example in this as in all things. Read the following scriptures about his obedience. Then pray and ask him to help you follow his example. Read: John 14:31; Matthew 26:36-39,42; Romans 5:19; Philippians 2:5-11.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Matthew 1:1-17

Monday: Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday: Luke 2:8-20

Wednesday: Matthew 2:1-11

Thursday: Matthew 2:12-23

Friday: John 1:1-14

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson for this week.

Lesson 12- God With Us

Teacher's Guide

Background Scripture: Matthew 1

Scripture Used in Today's Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25

Memory Verse-: She will bear a Son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Central Truth: God's greatest gift to man is Jesus.

Teaching Aim: To help students understand how Jesus' coming fulfilled God's plan for man's salvation.

Helps for the teacher: Large paper or chalk board. 4 pieces of paper and pencils.

Getting Ready to Teach

The Genealogy^a- Read Matthew 1:1-17

It may seem strange for Matthew to begin his book with a list of the names of the ancestors of Jesus. To the Jews who read this book, it was not strange at all. It was usual for a man to list his forefathers to prove that he was a true Jew, worthy of respect. Jesus' line was a great one. All Jews who read it would be impressed with the fact that he could trace his ancestors back to Abraham and David.

Matthew divided the ancestors into three groups of 14 so the names could be memorized more easily. He divided them into periods-the first was the time of Israel's greatness, from Abraham to David. This was the time when God was building the nation Israel and protecting it. It was powerful, rich and well-known. The second group began with Solomon-the beginning of the downfall of Israel. It included the names of all the kings who followed him-good and bad alike-up to the time of the exile. The final group contained the names of his ancestors from the time of the exile until the fulfillment of God's plan for man's salvation-the coming of Jesus into the

world. We see that Jesus had the right to be called a Son of Abraham, a Son of David and finally the Son of Man, God's Messiah.

The Engagement of Mary and Joseph-Read Matthew 1:18-19

In these verses we read that Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Later we read that her "husband" was going to "divorce" her. Was he her betrothed or was he her husband? According to Jewish tradition, marriage had three stages. The first was *engagement*, a verbal agreement between the parents of the couple. It could take place when the two were still children. When the second stage, the *betrothal* took place, they were formally promised to each other and the agreement was final. They were married, but they did not yet live together as man and wife. They were not physically wed until the third stage, *marriage* which took place one year later. Then the "husband" came to claim his wife and take her to his home. They could live together and have children.

If the wife was unfaithful to her husband during the betrothal time, he could divorce her. In fact, he could have her stoned to death under Jewish law. Joseph did not want to do this to Mary. He planned to divorce her "quietly" so as not to bring more shame upon her. Before he could do this, God spoke to him.

God Settles the Problem-Read Matthew 1:20-21

God appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary as his wife. He assured him that the child she would bear was the child of the Holy Spirit. God gave him the child's name-Jesus or Joshua which means "Salvation is from the Lord" or "God is salvation." His name told what he would do for people-he would "save them from their sins."

Undoubtedly Joseph was somewhat confused by this, but being a devout man, he did as he was told. We do not know if he understood that

this child would be the Messiah or not. But he surely knew that the child was a miracle of God. He would be a part of the fulfillment of God's plan to save all men from their sins.

Fulfillment of Prophecy-Read Matthew 1:22-23

Matthew added a parenthetical note here, saying that all of this took place to fulfill prophecy concerning the Messiah. Matthew's purpose was to convince the Jews that Jesus really was the Promised One of God. He reminded them that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. He told them that this child would be Emmanuel, "God with us."

That was who Jesus was! He was God in the flesh, the God-man. Through the birth of Jesus, God himself entered the world and identified with man in every way. He did this to fulfill his plan to save man, knowing that this sacrifice alone could do it. Being both human and divine, he could act for man and for God. He could be the perfect sacrifice *and* be the one who forgave sins. He brought God to man in order to bring man back to God.

God's Greatest Gift-Read Matthew 1: 24-25

Joseph obeyed God and took Mary as his wife. He protected her and cared for her. He did not take her as his wife physically until after she had given birth to a son, whom they called Jesus.

In the birth of Jesus, we see that God was willing to do anything to save man from his sin and weakness. Jesus was God's greatest gift to mankind. He was truly God, the child of his Spirit. He was truly man the child of a virgin woman. This human and divine Jesus brought God's truth and salvation to man. He showed God's true nature to man. Through him, man can see that God is Love. Through him, man can receive the free gift of salvation and eternal life.

Salvation from sin-Read the Memory Verse

Even in Jesus' genealogy we see that man could not save himself. Despite his great beginnings, sin soon controlled him. Sin led to his downfall and exile. Even keeping the law was not enough. Man could not be righteous himself. So the God of creation became a man in the person of his Son, Jesus, so that he could redeem man. God was with us. He was one of us. And Jesus promised before he left the earth, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world." We have that assurance. Emmanuel-God with us-then, now and forever!

Teaching the Lesson

Make a list of the names of Jesus' ancestors on a large piece of paper or on the chalk board. Ask your class to name the ones whom they know something about. Point out how Matthew divided the names into three groups of 14 and what each group might mean. (See your background material-The Genealogy).

Divide your class into four small groups. Let each group read to themselves two verses, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 24-25. Give each a piece of paper. Let them write down all the questions which come to their minds concerning these verses. After they have spent about 10 minutes on this, ask each group to read their questions. Let the group discuss them. You can add any material which you think is important from your background material. Be sure that you tell your students that Jesus was both man and God. Emphasize that he was the fulfillment of God's plan to save man from his sin.

Say: "When we think about Christmas time, we usually think about gifts. It has become traditional to give gifts to those we love at Christmas

time. Why do you think we do this?" (Ans: Because God gave the greatest gift to man-Jesus Christ. We remember his gift by giving gifts to others.)

Ask: Do you like to receive gifts? Let your class answer as they like.

Say: "Most people like to receive gifts. God sent a gift to man when he sent Jesus into the world. It was not like other gifts. Other gifts wear out or break. If you get a gift of an article of clothing-shirt or dress-this year, next year it will probably be worn out. You will need a new one. But God's gift never wears out. It never gets old. In fact, the more you use it, the better and newer it becomes! This is the gift of salvation and eternal life. God wants all men to receive his gift. If you haven't yet received it, won't you do so today? There is nothing you can do to earn it. You just need to receive it from him. If you want to accept his gift, won't you stay after class and talk with me about it?"

Continue by saying: "I like to give gifts as well as receive them. It is fun to see someone enjoy something I have made or bought for him. If you have already received God's gift of salvation, you can give it away to others! Think about your family members and friends. Have all of them received the great gift of salvation from God? You can tell them about it. Won't you decide right now to share this gift with someone you know? It will be the best thing you have ever done for him."

Say: Let's close in prayer asking God to help us receive his gift and then to share it with our friends and family." Lead in closing prayer.

To think about and do

King David said: "How great you are, O Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you and there is no God but you..." 2 Samuel 7:22

Truly our God is great. He is our God in every situation and at all times. Read each of the verses which follow and write a word which tells what God is.

1. Nehemiah 9:6 creator of all things
2. Exodus 15:11 Holy, glorious and wonderful
3. Psalm 24:10 King of glory
4. Deuteronomy 33:27 our dwelling place (refuge)
5. Isaiah 48:17 redeemer, teacher
6. Hebrews 13:6 helper
7. Psalm 96:13 righteous judge
8. I John 1:5 light
9. John 4:24 Spirit
10. Isaiah 12:2 salvation, strength, song

WHAT A GREAT GOD WE HAVE!!

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Malachi 3:1-4

Monday: Luke 1:5-25

Tuesday: Luke 1:57-66

Wednesday: Luke 1:67-80

Thursday: Matthew 3:1-17

Friday: Matthew 11:7-15

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson for this week

Lesson 13-God's Messenger

Teacher's Guide

Background Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4; Matthew 3:1-12; 11:7-10

Scripture Used in Today's Lesson: Matthew 3:1-12

Memory Verse: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Matthew 3:3

Central Truth: God still needs messengers to proclaim his salvation to man.

Teaching Aim: To lead members to decide to share the message of salvation with someone this week.

Helps for the teacher: Four pieces of paper on which you have written verses and questions. (see teaching plan.)

Getting Ready to Teach

John the Baptist- Read Matthew 3:1,3 and 4

John the Baptist provided a link between the Old and New Testaments. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, we read of a messenger who would come to prepare the way of the Lord. (Malachi 3:1) Malachi 4:5 says that *Elijah* would precede the "day of the Lord."

Each Gospel writer reported that John's voice cried, "Prepare the way of the Lord." Matthew mentioned him after the events of Jesus' birth. Mark began his book with him. Luke mentioned him after the account of Jesus' birth and childhood. John followed his description of the Word becoming flesh with news of John.

Other than the details of his birth in Luke 1, we hear nothing of him until he suddenly appeared. He led a solitary life in the dessert where God prepared him to be his messenger. He wore the same kind of clothes which *Elijah* wore when he prophesied to Israel. (2 Kings 1:8) He preached a message of repentance in the wilderness of Judea. All recognized him as a man of God. He preached like a prophet, proclaiming God's message

without fear or hesitation. Many people came to hear him speak and became his disciples.

His message of Repentance- Read Matthew 3:2,5-6

John told the people to repent of their sins in order to prepare for the coming of the Lord. He knew the people would not be ready to receive the Lord if their hearts were full of sin. They needed to turn their lives around and seek God. They needed to break with their old ways and become new. For God to rule in their hearts, they had to completely leave their old sin and selfishness.

John's preaching drew crowds. Many confessed their sins and were baptized by John in the Jordan River as a sign of repentance. Baptism showed their death to their old life. They thought John was Elijah or the Christ, but he denied this. He said he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," making the "way straight" for the coming of the Lord. He encouraged the people to get ready for the coming of the King.

He Denounced the Unrepentant-Read Matthew 3: 7-10

John was not afraid to tell the people the truth. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Saducees coming for baptism, he doubted their repentance. He knew that they were proud of their good works. He knew they believed that because they were Jews, they would be saved. He warned them that their repentance must be sincere. Their faith in Abraham was worth nothing. Each man had to face God alone in true repentance of his sin. Anything less would lead to destruction. God expected to see the fruit of obedience in every life. If he did not see it, it would not matter if a person was a Jew or not. Faith in religion or nationality would not save anyone! He called on them to turn from their sin and self-reliance and turn to God for salvation and forgiveness.

He Proclaimed the Messiah -Read Matthew 3:11-12

John could have convinced the people that he was the Messiah. They wanted him to be! But John was a true servant of God. He did not want to bring attention to himself, but to God and his message. John did not point to himself, but to God and the coming Messiah whom he announced. He told the people that he was not even worthy to be a slave of the one who was coming. He would baptize them with fire and the Holy Spirit. He would have the power to completely cleanse and change them. He would know their hearts and would separate the true believers from the false. He would gather his own to himself. Those who rejected him would be destroyed. The coming of the Messiah would mean joy and sorrow. Joy for those who accepted him, sorrow for those who refused him. Jesus would come as both Saviour and Judge.

Herald of Christ-Read the memory Verse

A herald is a person who makes announcements for a ruler. A messenger of the king is called a herald. He foretells the coming of an event or person. He may face danger or persecution as he does his task. Nothing stops the herald from delivering his message. In every way, John the Baptist was God's herald. He came before Jesus, helping people to prepare for his arrival. He got the road ready for the King's coming-he made it straight and clean.

All Christians are called to be God's heralds in this way. Each of us should give a witness to the truth of the Gospel. We should not be afraid to speak the truth openly. We should not hesitate to suffer hardships or persecution for Jesus' sake. We should be willing to point people to God, not thinking about ourselves and our own glory. Nothing should be more important than helping people prepare their hearts to receive the Saviour.

Teaching the Lesson

Ask a student to read aloud the introductory story in the pupil's book.

Say: "Today, we shall study about a herald of God who announced the coming of Jesus."

Divide your class into four small groups. Be sure that in each group at least one person can read. Give each group one of these scriptures and questions which you have written on pieces of paper:

1. Matthew 3:1,3-4. Who was John the Baptist? What do we know about him? (See also Luke 1:5-13, 18-19, 24-25, 57, 62-63 and 80)
2. Matthew 3: 2,5-6. What was his message? How did people respond to him? (See also Luke 3:3-6 and 10-14.)
3. Matthew 3:7-10. What did he say to the religious leaders of his time? What did this mean? (Luke 3:7-9 says the same thing.)
4. Matthew 3: 11-12. Whom did John announce? What would he do? Who was he? (See also Mark 1:7-8, and Luke 3:15-17.)

Let each group work on this for about 15 minutes. After that time, call the group together and let each group report. You can add anything you think is important from your background material.

Conclusion

Say: "John the Baptist was God's Herald. What is a herald?" (Ans: See background material, Herald of Christ) John the Baptist announced the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He was a good preacher and had many followers. He could have told the people that he was the Messiah himself and they would have believed him and followed him. But John was obedient to God and wanted all the glory to go to God. He knew that the Messiah would be blessed by God and have much more power than he had. He knew

that he would save men from their sins. So John was faithful to tell the message just as God had told him. He pointed people to the Saviour."

Read the last paragraph in your background material, Herald Of Christ.

Ask: "Are you ready to share the good news of Jesus coming with someone? Perhaps you did so this week, as we talked about at the conclusion of last week's lesson. Would any of you like to share how you witnessed to someone this week?" Give them an opportunity to share.

Say: "Perhaps some of you are afraid to share because you don't know what to say or do. Today, I would like to show you how to witness to someone using a simple plan. This plan is in your lesson today in the To Think About and Do section." Ask one of your students to come and sit by you. Use the following outline to witness to him:

1. All people are sinners- Isaiah 53:6
2. Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins: Luke 19:10
3. God wants all men to be saved: John 3:16-17
4. We must repent and turn from our life of sin-Luke 13:3
5. If we confess our sins, he will forgive us and make us clean-1 John 1:9
6. We must believe that Jesus can save us from our sins-Acts 16:31
7. We need to confess Jesus as our Savior openly before men:
Matthew 10:32-33.

After you have finished, say: "You can see how it is done. Anyone can do it, if he is a believer and understands how Jesus saved him. If you are not a believer, perhaps you would like to accept him today. If you do not understand how Jesus saved you, study the verses I used in the demonstration. When you understand them, share the good news with a friend. I will pray for you this week as you do this.

"Let's pray now, to ask God to help us be his heralds, just as John the Baptist was." Lead in closing prayer.

To think about and do

Each Christian should be a herald of the message of salvation. We should share the gospel with those around us, so that all can know the joy and peace which comes from God. Study the summary of how to become a Christian which is given. Think about each step. Ask yourself, "Have I done this?" When you are sure that you have and that Jesus had really saved you, share the plan with a friend. Be a bold witness of what you have experienced. Be God's herald to spread his good news everywhere!

1. All people are sinners- Isaiah 53:6
2. Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins: Luke 19:10
3. God wants all men to be saved: John 3:16-17
4. We must repent and turn from our life of sin-Luke 13:3
5. If we confess our sins, he will forgive us and make us clean-1 John 1:9
6. We must believe that Jesus can save us from our sins-Acts 16:31
7. We need to confess Jesus as our Savior openly before men:

Matthew 10:32-33.

Scriptures to read this week

Sunday: Matthew 3:13-17

Monday: Mark 1:1-11

Tuesday: Luke 3:2-14

Wednesday: Luke 3:15-23

Thursday: John 1:15-28

Friday: John 1:29-36

Saturday: Read you Bible Study Lesson for this week