

AT82S

TEACHINGS OF FAITH AND COURAGE

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A8 - 2Pe

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CHAPTER ONE

HOW DOES MAN KNOW GOD?

AIM: Studying this lesson will help me understand that I can know God through Jesus Christ, his Son.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:1-2:9

MEMORY VERSE

"No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (John 1:18).

"I know John," said Samuel. What do we mean when we say we know someone? Do we mean we recognize him when we see him? Or do we mean more than that? We may mean we know what he will do in certain situations. We understand his purpose in life. We know how he thinks.

Can we know someone if the only contact we have with him is letter writing? Can we know someone to whom we speak on the telephone with no other contact? Do we really know these people? No, not completely. We will know something about them, but we really will not know them until we meet them face to face and spend time with them.

Do you know God? How well do you know him? Do you know him as your best friend? Our lesson today will help us know God.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The writer of Hebrews did not sign his name to his book, so we do not know who wrote it. He made his purpose very clear, however, for his readers to understand. He wanted to help Jewish Christians be faithful to God. He showed Christians that God revealed himself completely through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The author explained that Jesus was and still is greater than angels, prophets or man. He wanted Christians to be faithful to God at all times. He knew that if Christians know Jesus, they will know God and be faithful to him.

How does a person get to know God? There are many ways to know God. His beautiful world around us tells us about God. God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:26). Then God called men to serve him. He wanted them to love him and to know him. So he told men about himself.

GOD SPOKE TO MAN THROUGH PROPHETS

Read Hebrews 1:1-4. God wanted to talk to man. He needed men who were obedient and who loved God. He called men to serve him. He called them in different ways.

God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. (See Exodus 3:1-6.) He spoke to Amos in a vision (Amos 1:1). He spoke to Isaiah in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-2).

The prophets told others what they knew about God. God wanted his people to know still more about him. So, he sent his son, Jesus. The time was right, and all was ready for him. We can know God best when we know his Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Saviour.

CHRIST REVEALS GOD TO MAN

Jesus Christ is God. He was with God from the beginning of time (John 1:2). Hebrews 1:3 means Christ is God's exact image. When we know Jesus, we know God (John 14:9). Jesus is like God in every way. He is powerful. He can forgive sin. God has given his Son, Jesus, the place of honour and of power in heaven.

Angels are God's messengers. They were created to serve God. But Jesus is not an angel. Jesus is God's only Son. Jesus is greater than angels, God wants people to know him. He wants you to believe in Jesus. God wants you to be his child. If you are a child of God, what does God want you to do?

GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO LISTEN TO HIM

Read Hebrews 2:1-9. When God spoke to his people through angels and prophets, he expected them to listen and obey him. When they did not obey, God punished them. When children fail to obey their earthly fathers, they are punished. It is the same way when we are God's children.

When Jesus came to earth, many people listened to him. Some obeyed him. Jesus forgave their sins. He changed their lives. All who believed in him were saved.

God uses people who know his Son to tell others about Jesus. Is Jesus your Saviour? If he is, God expects you to obey him.

GOD CARES FOR ALL PEOPLE

If God did not love man, he would not have created him in his own image (Genesis 1:26). God made man to rule over the world. Later Jesus came to earth. He lived, he suffered, he died on the cross for all men. Jesus rose from the dead so all who believed will be saved.

God cares for all people without regard to race, colour, tribe or customs. God wants all people to be saved.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do you want to know God? First, you must turn from your sins and accept Jesus as your Saviour. You can know about Jesus without knowing Jesus. Do you understand this? You can know all about some famous person who died many years ago, but you can never know that person. He is dead.

In the same way, you can know all about Jesus who lived in the world many years ago. But until you accept him as your Saviour, you cannot know him. He is dead to you. He comes alive for you when he enters your life as your Lord.

After you accept Jesus as your Saviour, you begin to know him. As you study the Word of God every day and as you pray, you know him better. As you trust him more and more, you know him better and better. You must make an effort to know Jesus. He reveals himself, and he reveals God to the Christian who is obedient. He reveals himself to the one who tries to follow him daily.

We know God best through Jesus Christ. Jesus said he is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to God except through Jesus.

Have you trusted Jesus as your Saviour?

CHAPTER TWO

JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST

AIM: I will study this lesson to understand how Jesus acts as a priest between me and God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 2:10 to 5:10

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

MEMORY VERSE

"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

In a war-torn area, a small band of men, women and children ran through the woods as fast as they could. The adults kept looking back to see the enemy who followed closely. As a child stumbled and fell, he was quickly picked up and carried by his mother. Only a little farther, the leader thought, and the group would be too exhausted to go on.

Suddenly, just in front of the leader, the ground seemed to disappear. There was a wide gap and no way around it. The men would jump across, but the women and children could not. The leader called four men together and spoke to them quickly. Then the four ran with all their speed and jumped the gap. On the other side they supported each other and leaned far back over the gorge.

The leader called two more men to hold his feet, then he stood and fell headlong across the gap. The four men grabbed his arms as he fell. There the leader hung between both sides! The men helped the little children to walk across on the body of their leader. The women followed, and the leader was pulled to safety by his friends. The last men made their jump.

Then the group hid quietly in the bush. When the enemies came to the gap they were sure the women and children could not have crossed there. They divided and began to search in the trees beside the gap.

The little band quietly made their way on in the security of being on the opposite side of the gorge.

JESUS IS OUR BRIDGE

Our lesson today tells us that Jesus is our priest. A priest is a bridge between God and man, and between man and God. He bridges the gap for us. In Old Testament times the high priest was a very special person. He was the one who represented God to man and man to God. But the high priest of Israel was also human. He sinned like the other people did. And so a part of his job was to offer sacrifices to God for his sins and the sins of his people. The high priest tried to teach the people about God, but he often failed. He tried to help people, but he also needed much help.

Jesus is our High Priest. He really helps people. He teaches us about God. He helps us understand God, because he is God. He was without sin, and so he can forgive our sin.

Christians have special privileges and blessings because we are children of God. When we accept Jesus as Saviour, he also becomes our High Priest. When we sin and ask for forgiveness, Jesus is there in God's presence asking God to forgive us.

HOLD FAST TO FAITH

In Hebrews 4:16 - 5:10 Christians are told to "hold fast" to their faith. If we hold fast to our faith, we use it every day. We let it grow. We want to keep sin out of our lives.

Jesus knows we are weak. He knows we will sin. He understands us. He wants to help us. When we come and tell him about our sins, he forgives us and gives us his mercy and grace. These are wonderful gifts from our High Priest: forgiveness, mercy and grace!

Jesus is our bridge, our bridge to God. He knows our sufferings and our weaknesses. He is there to help us.

THE OLD TESTAMENT HIGH PRIEST

In the Old Testament days there were many priests, but there were only a few high priests. What were the requirements for being a high priest?

1. He had to be called by God. He had to be Jewish. He was called to act for the people before God. He was to try to understand his people and try to help them.

2. He had to offer sacrifices for his sins and for his people's sins. The high priest must offer an animal sacrifice for his sins. Then he had to offer another sacrifice for the sins of the people.

Being a high priest was a difficult job. No one asks for a hard job! He was chosen for the job. God chose Jesus and told him he was a "priest forever." He will always be our High Priest.

Melchizedek was a high priest of God. Abraham paid tithes to him (Genesis 14:18-20). God called Melchizedek to be a priest. He was well-known. Yet Jesus is greater than Melchizedek.

When Jesus drew near the cross, he prayed with "loud cries and tears" to God. He knew that it was only God who could save him from death. Yet, because he was obedient to his Father, he accepted his death on the cross.

Jesus understands us, He understands our sufferings. He has been through every suffering we have, and he did not sin.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Jesus wants his people, believers in him, to be obedient. He wants us to obey him. He has saved

us from our sins. He will forgive us our sins. Therefore, we should be humble and obedient to Jesus.

Remember the man who became a bridge to save his people? Read the Introduction of this lesson again. Jesus is just like this man. He offered himself to be the bridge for man to pass over to reach God.

Do you still have sin in your life? Will you ask Jesus to forgive you? Will you obey him? He wants to help you. He will help you live an obedient, happy life. He is waiting for you to say, "Your will be done, Jesus."

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS, THE NEW COVENANT

AIM: This lesson will help me understand how Jesus became our new covenant, the way to God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 6:1-10:39

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:10-25

MEMORY VERSE

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

We do not often hear the word, covenant, except among Christians. It means an agreement between two or more people. Today we use the word, contract, for agreements between people.

This lesson is about the agreement God had with man in the Old Testament and how this was changed in the New Testament. We need to remember as we study that the covenant was the way God related to man.

God knew man would need words of comfort. He knew men would need to know he loved them. So God made a covenant with Abraham, his children and his grandchildren. Later God gave them the law through Moses. He knew his people would need laws to help them live right. God's people promised to obey him and his laws, but they did not. They broke their promise to God. Let us look at God's covenant with Abraham.

THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT

Read Genesis 12:1-3. This is one of the Old Testament covenants between God and man. After Adam had sinned in the Garden of Eden, God looked for a new way to have a relationship with man. His words in Genesis show that he had chosen a nation, Abraham's descendants. They were to serve as a priest nation, bringing men to God and God to man.

Later the descendants of Abraham were called Israelites. God promised many good things to Abraham "...so that you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). They quickly accepted all the good things, but Abraham's descendants forgot that they were to be a blessing too. They had agreed to obey God. After a period of time, however, the Israelites forgot their promise. They forgot God's laws. They sinned against God.

THE NEW, EVERLASTING COVENANT

God knew the old covenant had failed. He told Jeremiah to warn the people that there would have to be a new one. The new covenant would be one of love and willing obedience to God.

Read Hebrews 8:7-13. The new covenant was made by the blood of Jesus. Jesus' death on the

cross made the new covenant, "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The new covenant would be written in the hearts and minds of those who believed. They would not be able to forget it. The new covenant would keep them from sin. It would help them want to love, serve and worship God.

GOD'S MERCY

In Hebrews 8:12, we read about God's mercy. "Iniquities" are sins. God promised to forgive our sins. "Mercy" means God will forgive us, even though we do not deserve it. Because of our belief in Jesus, he will take away the guilt of our sin.

The new covenant was made because God loves us. Since he loves us, we want to obey him. We do not fear him. We love and respect him.

We have a new covenant with God. We have a new life of faith and hope. This new life makes us want to help others.

This new life is without fear. It is without loneliness. Jesus promised to be with us always when we believe in him. He who promised is faithful. Jesus made the new covenant, so we have life everlasting.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Because of what Jesus did for us, we can go boldly to the throne of grace with full assurance in faith. We know God loves us. We are not afraid. Jesus will never break his covenant with us. He is faithful.

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

We have faith and can go into the very presence of God. Jesus, our high priest, waits there to help us.

We need to hold strongly to the hope that is within us. This is the strong, secure hope that we will spend eternity with Jesus. We will share God's glory.

We must think about ways to encourage our Christian brothers and sisters around us. This is our time to show the love that God has given to us. We serve others in various ways, displaying the love we have for them.

Even in the early days of Christianity, some people had decided to stop attending worship services. The writer of Hebrews reminded them that they must meet together so they could help each other. Read Hebrews 10:25 again. Christian people must meet together in worship in order to obey God. As we meet with other believers, we can encourage each other.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Since we have a new life of faith and hope, we should help others of the faith. We should encourage each other. We should work together doing good deeds.

We should meet together to worship God and to hear what God has done for others. Meeting together as Christians helps all to know God's presence. It helps us to realize we are not alone. Jesus is with us.

The Israelites forgot God. Have you forgotten God? The Israelites broke their promise to God. Have you broken promises you have made to God? Some Israelites neglected to meet with other Christians to share God's love. Have you failed to worship with other Christians and share God's love? Have you been encouraging others in their faith?

Remember that when you forget God, you have sinned. Jesus died once for our sins. That great sacrifice was enough for all eternity, for all men.

CHAPTER FOUR

FAITH, STRONG AND REAL

AIM: This lesson will increase my understanding that God expects me to continue to grow spiritually.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:1-12:29

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 12:1-17

MEMORY VERSE

"It is for discipline that you have to endure, God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Hebrews 12:7).

The teacher told his student, "I have faith in you." What did the teacher mean? Faith means a strong belief in someone or something. It means the teacher had confidence that the student would do the right thing.

To a Christian, a true believer in Jesus, faith means much more. Faith is our trust and belief in Jesus, God's Son, and in God himself. We trust Jesus to save us. This is the beginning of faith for a Christian.

Our faith, however, needs to grow. It must begin to grow as soon as we are born again. It continues to grow until we die and go to be with God.

A GREAT PURPOSE

In Hebrews 12:1, we are reminded that we are not alone in our faith in God. The writer tells us in chapter 11 about men and women who believed in God. They were persecuted, many died and yet they remained true to God because of their strong faith.

Every person who has accepted Christ has a great purpose in the life he lives. His purpose is to become like Jesus. There is no goal more worthy for any man to have.

We know sin keeps us from doing our best to reach our goal in our lives. We should put off, leave behind us any sin which keeps us from reaching our goal.

Imagine a runner in a race, beginning to run, carrying a fifty kilo weight. He will soon toss the weight away when he sees how slowly it causes him to run. Neither can a Christian try to live like Jesus while carrying a heavy load of sin. It is not possible. Throwing off the sin in our lives, we can live for Jesus every day.

JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

In Hebrews 12:2-3 we read that Jesus sacrificed himself so we might be saved. He died for all of

us. We have not had to suffer like Jesus suffered. He took our place on the cross.

Discipline helps our faith grow strong and real. Suffering for Jesus increases our faith.

He is our perfect example. He suffered willingly for sinful men.

We read in Hebrews 12:5-11 that Christians are sons of God. The word, son, is not that used for a small child. It means, instead, an adult son who has come of age.

An adult son understands his father's instructions. Because we are children, adult children of God, we will understand his instructions. We will understand our need to be disciplined when we fail to obey him.

THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD

"Discipline" is the training of the mind and character of a person to produce self-control and obedience. Discipline is for training.

God loves us and must discipline us so we may become what he wants us to be. Our love and respect for him grow when we are disciplined.

When God trains his children, it is painful. Later, however, the results are wonderful. These results are righteousness, holiness, willing, obedience to God's will and purpose in our lives, right living, right working, right standing with God, patience, trust, peace, love and gentleness.

These results of God's discipline are eternal results. We become children who are clean, pure and holy. We become obedient children of God.

There are, however, some dangers a Christian must face in trying to live a faithful life. God provides his Holy Spirit to help during those times of trouble and danger. In Hebrews 12:12-17, Christians are encouraged to keep growing spiritually.

It is very easy for a Christian to be lazy. A lazy Christian will stop reading his Bible. He will stop going to church regularly. He has become lazy, and he does not visit and witness to others as he should.

Christians should be aware of this serious danger. If they see signs of laziness in their lives, they should repent and ask God to help them overcome that laziness.

God's discipline causes his children to want to be obedient. They want to share God's love and teachings with others. God's children share with each other in their faith.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Every Christian needs more faith. As we use the faith we have, it increases. How do we use our faith?

Think about someone you know who is not a Christian. You want that person to be saved. You think you have little faith. You decide to use the faith you have to try to win that person. You are scared, but you know you can pray. You pray, "Lord, make it possible for me to see that lost person today." God answers the prayer, and you see the lost person. You may be too scared to say anything to him about Jesus.

That night you remember how God answered your prayer. That gives you courage to pray again. So you pray, "Lord, thank you for letting me see that lost person today. Tomorrow let me see him again, and give me courage to tell him I am a Christian."

The Lord will answer that prayer too. You are using the faith you have, and it is growing stronger. You are obeying God and practising obedience. If you continue in this way, God will help you show the lost person how to become a Christian.

Every Christian should have a goal or purpose for his spiritual life. That purpose should be to become more like Jesus every day. Reaching that goal will require discipline from God. He will teach us to obey him. He will help us develop a strong and real faith.

Are you willing to have that discipline in your life?

CHAPTER FIVE

VICTORY IN LIVING

AIM: This lesson will teach me why I need to have strong convictions about God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 13:1-25; 1 Corinthians 15:58

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 13:1-8, 20-21

MEMORY VERSE

"Jesus is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

A young Baptist girl was accepted as a student at a Baptist high school. Her father thought there was a hostel for girls at the school.

They arrived at the school on a Sunday afternoon. They were very surprised and discouraged to learn there was no girls' hostel.

The headmaster telephoned a pastor to tell him about the girl and her need. He asked if the pastor knew of a Baptist family who could keep the girl. The pastor invited the headmaster, the father and the girl to his home.

The pastor said he and his wife would like to keep the girl. They would treat her as if she were their daughter. The father was surprised. His tribe and the pastor's tribe had been enemies for many years.

Because of his faith in Jesus, the pastor had victory over tribal hatred. He and his wife showed the girl so much love that she felt at home with them during the years she lived with them.

We too can live victorious lives. If Jesus lives in us and we are obedient to him, we will have victory.

LOVE OTHER CHRISTIANS

Read Hebrews 13:1-8. To live a life of victory, Christians must love other Christian brothers and sisters. If a Christian says he loves God but does not love other Christians, he lies. "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

It does not matter which tribe he is from. It does not matter what colour he might be. If he is a Christian, he is our brother. Today Christians need to show love for one another even more than ever before.

When the book of Hebrews was written, the inns and hotels were very bad. Christians helped others by giving them food and a place to sleep.

Today in Africa, we can offer hospitality to our Christian brothers. We can visit the sick in hospital. We can shop for food for a sick neighbour. We can care for the neighbour's children if the mother is sick. We can help a neighbour do his farming.

There are many ways to help people who are in need.

BUILD CHRISTIAN HOMES

God teaches us to be faithful to the person we have married. It does not matter whether the marriage is tribal, Christian or legal. God's plan is for one man to be married to one woman for life.

Christ helps us have homes that are filled with love, concern, discipline and prayer. He helps us to live so trust and love will grow in the home. Trusting each other and loving each other builds strong Christian homes.

BE HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Hebrews 13:5 tells Christians they should learn to be content with what they have. He is not saying a Christian may not have material things. He is saying we must work hard and honestly to get the things we need or want.

If we spend money foolishly without planning and saving, we will never have anything of value. Money is a tool. It is a way to buy what we want. Money, though, is not to be loved.

Christians who obey God will have the things they need.

JESUS IS ALWAYS THE SAME

Times change. Governments change. People change. Jesus is always the same. He never changes. Today Jesus has the same power that brought him out of the grave. It is the same power he had when he lived on the earth.

Jesus has promised to give us that power if we will obey and trust him. That power, Jesus' power, will help us get victory in our Christian life every day.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

How strong a Christian are you? Do you stand up for your convictions? Do you really believe God and his promises? I wonder.

The world is filled with weak, helpless, ineffective Christians. No one can depend on them to stand up for anything. They let the world decide what they will do. That means they behave just like all the rest of the unsaved world. Their homes are no better than the homes of everybody else in town. They work on Sunday to get more money because they feel they must have more and more. They do not realize that they love money. Their language is just like everyone else's

language. Non-Christians feel free to tell any kind of story or make any remark they want to in the presence of those people. Their church cannot depend on them. The pastor cannot depend on them. Their fellow Christians cannot depend on them. God cannot depend on them or use them in any way.

In Revelation 3:1-2, God told the church at Sardis something he is likely to tell many Christians today: "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead."

Are you dead? Are you alive? You need to decide if you are willing to stand up and be counted on the Lord's side. God needs Christians who have strong convictions and who will act on those convictions.

Victorious Christians love their Christian brothers. Jesus said, "Love one another." Victorious Christians help others who are in need of help. It is a way of witnessing.

A victorious Christian is faithful to the one he or she has married. They have loving, praying, trusting, disciplined Christian homes. Victorious Christians will not covet things that belong to someone else. They trust and obey Jesus, who is always the same. Jesus never fails us.

CHAPTER SIX

GOD'S GLORY IN CREATION

AIM: This lesson will help me trust God more with my daily concerns and problems.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 104

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Psalms 104:24-34

MEMORY VERSE

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom has thou made them all; the earth is full of thy creatures" (Psalms 104:24).

This week we begin a study of important Old Testament teachings. These teachings will help us meet problems of today with greater faith. They show God's concern for all people. When we know God is concerned about us, we can love him even more and trust him even more.

The writer of Psalms 104 praised God when he looked around him and saw all the things God had created. Everything has a purpose. The writer realized that God's power created everything, and it keeps the world going.

God's power is still keeping the world - the universe - going properly. His power is still creating beautiful things. He is still providing everything for men to enjoy. We should praise God for his great creation, just as the psalmist did.

GOD CREATED ALL THINGS

In Psalms 104, the singer is praising God because of creation. He knew God was powerful and wise because he made all the world. He looked at the seas and all the animals that lived in the seas. The sea creatures were too many to be counted.

God created Leviathan, a huge fish, and controls him. (Read verse 26 again.) Some translations of the Bible say God made Leviathan for his own pleasure. It makes God happy to see his creations happy.

GOD CARES FOR ALL HIS CREATION

Read Psalms 104:27-30. God's creations depend upon him for everything. God provides food and shelter for the animals and birds he created. He provides air to breathe, food to eat and water to drink.

God created man with a brain able to think, eyes able to see, ears able to hear, hands able to work. God gave man good health and enough strength to work. God provides all that man needs.

If God did not take care of his creations, they would die. God made fish to live in water. A fish

which is taken from the water will die very quickly.

God gives life and he takes life. God gives food and health to all living creatures (verse 30).

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS CREATION

The writer continue to praise God in verses 31 and 34. As he continued to see God's creations all around him, he began to praise and worship God.

God looked at his creation. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good..." (Genesis 1:31).

The writer wanted to praise God. He did praise God, both in songs and in worship. He thought about God. He thought how much God loved his creation.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

If God takes care of animals,, birds and flowers, surely he takes care of us. Man is God's greatest creation. Man was created in God's image. God gave him rule over all creation. God loves and cares for man. He wants man to love and worship him. How much do you love God?

We can praise God for his beautiful world. We can thank him for his love and concern for us. We can thank him for providing for us every day. We can sing praises to God. We can worship him.

Before you go to sleep tonight, thank God again for the food you ate today. Thank him for your health. Thank him for your children. Thank God for your pastor and church. Thank him for all the blessings he has given you. Praise and worship God each day.

This week try to pray at least one prayer of praise to God. In the prayer, just praise God. Thank him for who he is. Try to think of things he has done for you. Do not ask God for anything in this prayer. Just praise him.

Probably the first time you do this, your prayer will be very short.

Continue trying, however. As you think of things to praise God for, your list will grow longer. As it grows longer you will become more joyful in your praise. Praising God is one way we say we love him. Practise praise.

God used his great wisdom and power to create all things. He saw that everything he had created was good. God cares for all his creations. He provides for them all.

God cares for, loves and provides for his highest creation--man. God cares for you.

We should praise God, love God and worship God for all that he has done for us.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAN LOOKS AT GOD'S CREATION

AIM: Studying this lesson will help me to see who I am in relation to who God is.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Genesis 26-31; Psalms 8

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Psalms 8

MEMORY VERSE

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!" (Psalms 8:9).

A man born in the northern plains of Kenya had lived all of his forty-five years in the flat, dry land. This was all he knew of the world.

One day he received a letter from his son who was at school in Nyeri, Kenya. He had been ill and wanted to see his father. The man prepared for the trip. He left his home in the late afternoon. His trip took him the rest of the day and all night.

As the next day began to dawn, the bus was entering Nyeri town. Looking around, the man was shocked at what he saw. Tall trees clung to the sides of tall hills. Tea and coffee fields were on each side of the road. In the distance, the man could see Mount Kenya, a sight that stunned him. Nothing could be that big or that beautiful!

Climbing from the bus, the man stumbled, blinded by his own tears. Never in his life had he imagined anything like this! He had read of mountains, trees and rivers. But seeing them was quite another thing.

If God could create such beauty, the man thought, then he should be praised every day by every man on earth.

OUR GREAT GOD

Read Psalms 8. This is one of the greatest of all the Psalms. It is a psalm of the night. It reveals God in all his glory in nature.

The hymn opens with a cry of reverence to God who created the world. God's glory is greater than the heavens. Nothing is as great as God! No person is as great as God!

From the mouths of babies and small children God receives praise. Their cries of praise build a wall against God's enemies. This calls to mind that God often uses the weak and helpless of the world to succeed in his purposes.

A little girl who was only three years old told her father, "God made the pretty flowers." Her father was not a Christian. Because the little girl said this, he thought to himself, "My little girl

knows more about God than I do." He soon became a Christian because he wanted to know God better.

MAN'S PLACE IN GOD'S WORLD

The psalmist was looking up into the night sky. He was completely amazed at the beauty he saw there. In Genesis 2:7-19 creation was said to have been done by God's hand. Here, the writer of Psalms 8 says the heavens are the work of God's fingers. This gives the idea of an artist at work, taking time over the beautiful things he was making.

Seeing such majesty in the heavens and understanding that the Creator of such majesty must himself be far greater than his creation, the singer suddenly became aware of himself. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" (Psalms 8:4). He was really saying, "Who am I that God should care for me so much?"

Yet we learn from reading his Word that God made the sun, moon and stars. He made the trees, flowers and all plants. He made the animals and all things. And he made them all for our use and for our pleasure. God made man his last and highest creation. We should never stop praising him for his goodness and his love.

The question of the psalmist is important for us today. Who are we that God would love us so much?

God made man inferior only to himself. "Inferior" means lower in quality, lower in social position, lower in importance or quality. Inferior means not worth much, not as good as something else.

When God created man, he created him less than God. Man is not as good as God. Man is not as great as God. Yet, God gave man a place of honour. God gave man dominion (rule) over all the other creations. God loves man very much.

MAN'S USE OF GOD'S WORLD

God gave man the power to rule over all the things he had created. God said he could use all the things he had made. But he must use them in a wise and good way. Man is responsible to God for how he uses God's creations.

The writer of Psalms 8 praises God again in verse 9. God deserves praise.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Choose a night this week and go outside. Find a place where you can see the full sky. Lie down so your face is toward the stars. As you lie there, think about the greatness of God who could create all the beauty you see there before you. Think about his majesty, his glory, his power. Praise God as you lie there. Then, begin to think about yourself, alone under the night sky. Think as the psalmist did of how small you are and how great God is. Does such a thought bring

you to amazement that such a God could love such as you? Perhaps you will praise him again when you think that he loved you so much he sent his Son to die for your sins.

God made all things, and they were good. Man is the greatest of God's creations. God has given man the job of ruling over God's other creations wisely.

Man must obey God. Man must carry out the responsibilities God has given him in a just and wise manner.

Have you accepted the responsibility God has given you to take care of his creation? Are you using his creations wisely?

CHAPTER EIGHT

GOD AND MAN IN COVENANT

AIM: I will learn that I have been chosen by God to be holy, just and obedient to him.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Exodus 19, 20, 32, 34

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Exodus 19:3-6; 20:1-17

MEMORY VERSE

"Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient'" (Exodus 24:7).

A covenant was made between God and man. "Covenant" means an agreement or promise between two or more people. The covenant God made was with Israel. God promised to care for them. They promised to obey God. Turn back to chapter 3 of this book and revise the teachings there about God's covenant with man.

Our lesson today tells what God wanted the Israelites to do.

GOD SPOKE TO MOSES

Read Exodus 19:3-6 and Exodus 20:1-17. Moses had persuaded Pharaoh to let the children of Israel return to Canaan. Moses led them out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

When they reached Mount Sinai, Moses went up to the mountain to speak to God. God gave Moses a message to give to the children of Israel.

God reminded the people and Moses how he had taken care of them. When they were slaves, they prayed for release from captivity. God answered their prayer. He promised to take care of them. He kept his promise when he led them out of Egypt.

Then God told them about the covenant he would like to make with them. Read Exodus 19:5-6 again. The children of Israel were to be greatly honoured. God would choose them to be his people if they agreed to obey God. They would be a "kingdom of priests." Their work would be to tell the world about God.

The covenant had to be made with all the people. It was not for just a few of the Israelites. All of them had to agree. So God made a covenant with all the Israelites. The whole nation agreed to obey God. The most important part of the covenant was the Ten Commandments.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

The first commandment (Exodus 20:3) said the Israelites were to put no other god before God. He is the only true God. He was to have first place in the lives of the people.

The second commandment (20:4) said the Israelites were forbidden to make idols to worship. Other people would make idols and worship them, but the Israelites must not. When people make an idol of God, they worship the idol instead of God.

The third commandment (20:7) told the Hebrews not to use God's name in a careless way. Men were to use that precious name only with reverence and respect.

The fourth commandment (20:8) set aside a day to worship God. God began this day of rest. When he finished creating all things in six days, he rested on the seventh day. Read Genesis 2:3. The seventh day was first called sabbath in Exodus 16:23. It was to be a day of rest.

Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Therefore, today most Christians worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, to remember what Christ did for them.

These four laws related to man's responsibilities to God. But man has other responsibilities also. These relate to other people.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO MAN

The fifth commandment (20:12) tells God's people to honour their fathers and their mothers. God gives life through parents. We are to honour them. When we fail to honour our parents, we break God's law.

The sixth commandment (20:13) forbids killing. Only God can give life. Only God has the right to take a person's life.

The seventh commandment (20:14) forbids adultery. God intended sex to be between a man and his wife only. All sex outside marriage breaks this law of God.

Some people today say times have changed and so they can ignore this law. But God's laws never change. His word is the same yesterday, today and forever. Sex outside marriage breaks this law of God.

The eighth commandment (20:15) points to many people today. It says, "You shall not steal." No one has the right to take what belongs to someone else.

The ninth commandment (20:16) tells us not to lie. We should always tell the truth. We should never say things about someone else that are not true.

The tenth commandment (20:17) tells us not to covet. Covet means to desire to have something so much that we can think of nothing else. We are especially warned not to covet the property of other people.

The Ten Commandments were given to help men live at peace with God and at peace with other men.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Today people lie, cheat, steal and deceive others to get what they want. If we are really God's children, we cannot live like this. We must live responsible lives.

Are you obeying God? Are you keeping his commandments? When man keeps the covenant, he makes Christ Lord of his life. Is Christ the Lord of your life?

CHAPTER NINE

THE STEADFAST LOVE OF GOD

AIM: This lesson will help me understand how to repent and turn to God, or how to lead someone else to do it.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 136; Isaiah 55; 2 Samuel 7:8-16

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Isaiah 55:1-9; 2 Samuel 7:8-16

MEMORY VERSE

"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever" (Psalms 136: 1).

During an evangelistic campaign, three Christians were going to each house in a certain part of town. They knocked on one door. A very simpleminded man came to the door. His appearance frightened the women, but one had more courage.

"Sir," she said. "Jesus loves you and wants you to believe in him." With tears in his eyes the man said, "Nobody loves me."

Patently the Christian women told the man about Jesus and how much he loved him.

Everyone needs to know that God loves them. They need to know someone cares about everything that happens in their lives.

The children of Israel did not always obey God. They did not always return God's love. They were not faithful to God. Yet God Continued to love them. He continued to keep his part of the covenant he had made with Israel.

God does not change his mind, neither does he break his Word. God's love is steadfast. We can trust God to keep on loving us.

AN INVITATION TO ALL MEN

Read Isaiah 55:1-9. When someone invites you to their house for food, you must either say yes or no. The host will not force you to come to his house. The decision is up to you.

God has invited all men to come to him. God encourages men to come to him. But God will not force anyone to come. They must come because they want to come to him.

Have you ever been thirsty? Really thirsty? You looked for something to drink. People can live without food for a while, but they cannot live without water. Our physical bodies must have water.

Our spiritual bodies, our souls, must also be satisfied. Some people have a strong thirst or desire for spiritual things. Isaiah knew that souls needed spiritual food and water. Isaiah said, "Come to God."

The children of Israel, who were God's chosen people, refused to obey God. They were living sinful, disobedient lives. Isaiah told them God was going to send a Saviour. The Saviour was coming to save all people who trusted in him. Everyone was invited to come. People who had no money were invited to come.

Everyone could come to God. God's free grace would go to whoever came to him. God's grace would make men happy. Men tried buying things to make them happy, but they were not happy. Man had worked hard, but he was not happy. Only God can satisfy man's needs, both physical and spiritual.

GOD'S EVERLASTING COVENANT

God had a message for his people. He wanted them to listen to him. He wanted them to do what he told them to do.

God had made a covenant with King David. Read 2 Samuel 7:8-16. God promised to love the people of Israel. He also promised to punish them if they did wrong, if they disobeyed him. God wanted Israel to love and obey him.

David was the king of Israel. He was their leader. Isaiah told the people of Israel that God was going to send someone else to lead them. He was going to be the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). He would pay the price for the sins of God's people. Jesus Christ was that Suffering Servant. He paid the price for the sins of all men who believed in him. God's new covenant, the everlasting covenant, was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

GOD FORGIVES SIN

Read Isaiah 55:6-7 again. God wants to forgive our sins, but we must want to be forgiven. God will not always be near. We cannot be sure we will be alive tomorrow. Today we know we are alive. Today we know we could believe in him. Today we could be saved.

If we want to be saved, we must do two things. First, we must want God to forgive us. We must know we have sinned and want God to forgive that sin.

Second, we must truly repent. Repent means to be sorry for having sinned and to turn our backs on sin. We must decide that we want God to forgive us. When we repent, we turn away from sin. We turn to God. If we choose not to repent, then we will die (Luke 13:3).

Isaiah knew that sin begins in the mind. A sinful man must leave his bad thoughts. He must change the way he acts. Then God will forgive and pardon him (Isaiah 55:7).

GOD IS GREATER THAN MAN

God does not think like man. He does not act like man. God does not have sinful thoughts like man. God cannot sin. Even his thoughts are higher, better and greater than man's. God wants us to be like him.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Have you truly repented of your sins? Have you truly invited Jesus to save you? Do you say you are a Christian because your mother and your father were Christians? Are you depending on their relationship with God to save you? It will not save you. You must decide for yourself. You must repent of your sins yourself.

If you are a Christian, is sin causing you to live a defeated life? Why not repent of your sins? Confess them to God. He will forgive you and help you live for him.

God loves us. He prepared a way for us to be saved. We must repent of our sins and believe in God's Son, Jesus. God will forgive us then.

If we love God, we will obey him.

CHAPTER TEN

GOD'S PRESENCE WITH MAN

AIM: How well does God know me? This lesson will tell me.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 139

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Psalms 139

MEMORY VERSE

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalms 139:7).

A small child was playing outside his mother's house. He had gathered some sticks together. He wanted to make a fence for his "farm animals."

As he took hold of one of the sticks, he suddenly cried out and dropped the stick. It was covered with thorns. One of the thorns had pierced his hand, and blood was coming from the hole. He turned as the tears began to fall and ran to his mother. Mothers know what to do when a boy needs help.

Children go to their parents when they are hurt or need help. To whom do adults go? If we go to our friends or relatives, they will sometimes misunderstand. Sometimes they cannot help even when they want to. There is One, though, who can help. He will always understand. He is God.

In today's lesson, we learn that God promised to be with men. The psalmist turned to God when he needed help. He knew God would understand. He knew God loved him and was always near.

GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT US

Read Psalms 139. Have you ever heard someone say, "Come on! Nobody is looking!" Did you feel uncomfortable as though there was someone watching you? You were right. Someone was watching you. God is always watching you.

Many times we forget that God knows everything about us. Jesus said even the hairs on our heads are numbered. God knows all about us.

A young man said, "I tried to run away from God, like Jonah did. But everywhere I went, God was already there." The writer of Psalms 139 said the same thing. We cannot get lost from God. He always knows where we are and what we are doing.

God knows what we, are thinking, and he knows what. we are going to say before we say it. God knows everything. We can tell him our deepest thoughts. We can tell him our hurts and sorrows.

We do not need to pretend with God. He already knows what we are. He knows just how big or how small we are. If we know that God knows everything, then we should realize that it is

important to obey him.

GOD'S PRESENCE IS EVERYWHERE

When you were a child, did you ever do something wrong then try to hide from your parents? You may have been successful in hiding from them for a while. But we can never hide from God. No matter where we go, he is there.

God goes with us to lead us. He wants to protect us from harm. He wants to comfort and encourage us. He wants us to obey him.

GOD KNEW US BEFORE WE WERE BORN

Before you were born, God knew every part of your body. It was he who made your body inside your mother's womb. Every bone, every organ, every part of your body is known to God.

When you were waiting to be born, God knew the days you would live. He made a plan for your life. The psalmist is so amazed with all this knowledge that he told God that God's thoughts were precious to him.

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS PRESENCE

When was the last time you thanked God for his protection? We have many things to thank God for. There can be no harvest of maize if there is no sun and rain. Man does not control the sun and the rain. God does. We should thank God and praise him for everything he does for us.

It is hard to understand how people can continue to be enemies of God. God has done so much for man. Yet, the writer of Psalms said God's enemies were his enemies too.

SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART

The writer of Psalms wanted God to test his heart and his thoughts. He did not want any evil in his life. He did not want anything to stand between him and God. He wanted God to lead him forever.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do you think it is good that God loves you? Of course it is! Do you think it is good that God knows every one of our thoughts? Perhaps that idea makes you stop and think for a while. Some of us need to clean up our thoughts.

What kinds of places do you go to visit? Are they places you would like for God to see you visit? Maybe you need to change the choices you have been making about where you spend your time.

Who are your friends? Who do you spend your time with? Are you glad God sees you with those people? Do you need to make some changes in your friends and companions?

What do you talk about most? Do you talk about your work, your money' your place in life, your ambitions, your friends or your God? Do you need to change what you talk about? Most of us do.

Can we really say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts."

God already knows our thoughts. He already knows our plans. He knows everything about us. He is always near us and ready to help us. God wants us to obey him. He wants us to have clean thoughts and clean lives. He wants us to love him and praise him.

Do you need to make some changes in your life today?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RULES FOR RIGHT LIVING

AIM: This lesson will help me to decide to choose holiness as a way of living.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Leviticus 19

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Leviticus 19:2, 9-18

MEMORY VERSE

"...You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

A missionary remembers that when she was a very young child, she often felt she should go to her mother and tell her she loved her. It did not matter if she was busy playing or not. If she had the feeling, she got up, left her play and went to say "I love you" to her mother.

How pleased the mother must have been to hear her tiny daughter tell her she loved her. A smile would come to the mother's lips, and she would hug the little girl.

God is like this too. He likes to hear us tell him we love him. In this book we have studied about God's love and concern for us, his people. We learned how God continues to give good things to man. Such love requires that man respond to it. Man responds by the way he acts. He responds in the way he obeys God.

In our lesson today we will learn about some of God's rules or laws. The test of true Christianity is the way we live. We must put God's laws into action in our lives. We must respond to God's love in a positive way.

THE REASON FOR RIGHT LIVING

Read Leviticus 19:2. "...You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."

"Holy" was used in the Old Testament to mean "set apart." When "holy" is used in referring to God, however, it meant something else. It meant God is always right. He is perfect. He is without sin. He is pure. God is not the same as man. God is holy.

Because God is holy, he wants his people to be holy also. God's people must be set apart from the evils in the world. The New Testament says that Christians should be in the world but not of the world. God wants man to show his love for God by living righteously.

Man cannot be holy without God's help. Man needs God's power to help him. God's Holy Spirit living in man causes him to live right before God and before man.

SOME RULES FOR RIGHT LIVING

Read Leviticus 19:9-18. God knew men would need to help one another. God knew how selfish men were. Today men are still selfish, but God's laws are still good. Some of God's laws are:

1. Think of other people. Help feed the poor by leaving some grain in the field for them to gather. If you have a garden, give some of your harvest to someone in need.
2. Be honest. Do not steal from one another. Do not cheat others. If you are paid to work eight hours a day, then work eight hours. Do not cheat your employers. Be honest. Tell the truth.
3. Do not say a lie is true. This brings disgrace to God. Tell the truth always.
4. Do not make false promises. If you say you will do something, do it. Keep your promises.
5. Be honest with people who work for you. When God gave this law, men got very low wages. People had to be paid every day so they could have food to eat. Employers needed to be honest with those who worked for them. Today people need to be honest with those who work for them.
6. Be kind and helpful to the deaf and blind.
7. Be just and fair. God said everyone should have a fair trial in court. God said all people should be treated the same way.
8. Do not gossip. Envy and hatred result in gossip. God wants his people to love each other.
9. Love your neighbour as you love yourself. Treat them fairly.

RIGHT LIVING IN YOUR DAILY LIFE

The people of God were told to be honest in their dealings with all people.

A Christian man went to the bank. When he received the money he asked for, he moved out of the way and counted it. He was very surprised! He had been given two thousand shillings (name of local currency) too much. He took all the money back and told the teller, "You gave me too much."

The bank teller was very happy to get the money back. He would have been required to replace that money at the end of the day when all was counted. Christians must be honest at all times.

We cannot be Christians only on Sundays. We must live our Christian faith every day. God loves us. We show our love for God by the way we live every day. We must be honest.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Christian people must treat all people fairly. God treats all people fairly because he is holy. He wants us to be holy too. He wants us to live like Jesus.

Are you honest in your dealings with others? Do you steal from anyone? Do you cheat your employers? Do you keep your promises to other people? Do you gossip?

Do you need to make some changes in your life? Do you remember the lesson in chapter 10 of this book? God is with us all the time. He knows us completely. We cannot hide anything from him. He wants us to be holy like he is. How do you measure up to God's plan for your life?

CHAPTER TWELVE

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

AIM: I will learn in this lesson who is really responsible for my sins and wrongdoing.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Ezekiel 18:1-20

MEMORY VERSE

"Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

How often do you blame someone else for your mistakes? It seems to be the way of most people today, to blame others for our mistakes and wrongdoing. We do not want to feel guilty.

Adam said, "Eve made me do it." From that time, men have blamed others for their sins.

Today we shall learn that each person is responsible for his own sins. The blame for wrong actions, for mistakes, for sin cannot be placed on someone else. We cannot blame family, friends or enemies. We must answer to God for all our sins and wrongdoing.

The Israelites thought God would not punish them because of the covenant he had made with them. They expected God to punish their enemies but not them. They were wrong. God punishes anyone who does wrong. God will forgive sin, but we must ask for his forgiveness.

A FALSE PROVERB

In Ezekiel 18:2-13, we read about a false proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

The children of Israel were saying they were suffering for sins they never committed. What they were really trying to say was, "The sins of which you accuse us were born in us. We cannot help having them. We must sin. Our fathers sinned, and the evil passed to us. We cannot change ourselves."

The Israelites did not understand that God's judgement in the past fell on the nation of Israel because the nation failed to obey God. Individual people were choosing to disobey God now. They were blaming someone else for their sins.

GOD'S REPLY - A NEW TEACHING

God was not happy with the Israelites because they were using this false proverb. God said, "... this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel" (Ezekiel 18:3).

The new teaching given by God to the Israelites in Ezekiel 18:4 had two parts.

1. "All souls are mine." Every person belongs to God. Every person answers to God for how he uses his life.
2. Every person, every soul, must pay for his own sin. No one could blame his parents, his friends, his children or anyone else for the sins he committed. Each man, each individual soul has to pay for his own sins.

The payment for sin in the Old Testament was death (Ezekiel 18:4). The payment for sin in the New Testament was death. The payment for sin today is death, and it will be so forever. This is a just law that God has given us and to all people for all ages, for all times. But God does not stop with punishment for sin. He continues by giving hope to those who obey him.

REWARD FOR GOOD LIVING

Read Ezekiel 18:5 and 9 again. God told Ezekiel that each person would be judged on his own actions. He would not be judged nor condemned to death because of his father's or his forefathers' sins.

Ezekiel knew his people. God listed acts a just man and a righteous man would not do.

- 1) He would not worship idols or false gods.
- 2) He would keep himself sexually pure and faithful to his wife.
- 3) He would treat all people fairly, without partiality.
- 4) He would show mercy to the debtor.
- 5) He would feed the hungry.
- 6) He would give clothes to those who needed them.
- 7) He would not cause violence or trouble between men.
- 8) He would obey God.
- 9) He would follow God's teachings in his daily life.
- 10) He would not charge interest on loans to fellow Israelites.

A man who did these things was just or righteous, God said.

EVIL LIVING IS PUNISHED

In Ezekiel 18:10-13, the prophet Ezekiel listed the evil or the sins which would be punished by God. But he said, the one who sinned, the one who lived an evil life would be the one who would be punished. A father would not be punished because his son sinned. A father who lived a good life would not be punished because his son lived an evil life. Each person would pay for his own sin.

God always gives a person a chance to repent. God is just. In Ezekiel 18:30-32, God said he would judge according to each person's way of living. Then God said, "...repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.... Get yourself a new heart and a new spirit! ...For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live."

What is God's message? Repent and turn from your sin. Repent and live. Repent and get a new heart and a new spirit. Repent and be forgiven.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God still wants man to repent. God wants to forgive men today. God has even prepared the way of salvation for all who believe in Jesus, his Son. Now we can have eternal life with God.

No one likes to be wrong. We all like to be right. Have you been blaming someone else for your mistakes and your sins? Why not confess your sins to God? Ask God to forgive you. Repent. Turn away from evil. Ask God to help you live by his laws and his teachings.

God will give you a new heart and a new spirit. He will give you eternal life. He waits only for you to accept his gift.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DANGERS OF FALSE SECURITY

AIM: This lesson will teach me that I must put my full trust in God and reject the false security of the world.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 30:1-7; 31:1-3; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Micah 6:6-8

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Isaiah 31:1-3; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Micah 6:6-8

MEMORY VERSE

"It is better take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Psalms 118:8).

People trust in many different things. A man may feel safe and secure because he has a good job. What happens, though, if he should lose his job?

A person may feel secure because he has good health. But sickness comes suddenly. Then what?

People may put money in banks, and this makes them feel secure and safe. Then the banks fail, and their money is gone.

A wife may have a good husband who takes excellent care of her. She feels she is secure. She has nothing to worry about. But her husband dies leaving her with no money.

What can people trust that will not fail them? This lesson will tell us.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH

The nation of the Israelites had come to a disagreement.

The northern part of the country wanted to worship idols. They worshiped the images of calves. They did not want to worship God. They thought God would not punish them. None of their nineteen kings tried to bring them back to God. This part of the nation kept for themselves the name, Israel.

The southern part of the nation chose the name of Judah. They followed the dynasty of David. They worshipped God, but some worshipped idols too. Some of their kings tried to bring these people back to God.

Israel, the northern kingdom, felt secure, but they fell first. They were taken captive by the Assyrians. Jeremiah warned Judah, the southern kingdom, to repent and return to God. Judah, however, felt very safe. Nothing could happen to them since the temple was at Jerusalem. They were sure God would allow nothing to harm his house.

Josiah was one of the kings of Judah. He was a good king, and he tried very hard to get the

people to return to God. The people did not listen very well, and they soon forgot Josiah's words.

Jeremiah knew that the northern kingdom had fallen. He knew they had fallen because they had turned away from God. God spoke to Jeremiah and told him to warn the nation of Judah. Read Jeremiah 7:1-15.

Jeremiah told the nation they must not trust in the temple. It was built with the hands of men and could be torn down by the hands of men.

A CALL TO REPENT

Then, Jeremiah told the people of Judah to "...Amend your ways and your doings" (Jeremiah 7:3). They were to repent and stop doing wrong acts. Going to the temple was not enough. They must live for God every day.

They were to treat people in a righteous way. They were not to mistreat strangers or orphans.

They were to be faithful to God. God was angry because so many were following other gods.

GOD'S PROMISE

God made a promise to the people of Judah. He said if they repented and were faithful to him, he would keep them in the land promised to Abraham. He would protect them from their enemies. If they failed to keep their promise to God, they would be taken into captivity just as the northern kingdom had been.

God proved once again how much he loved the people. It did not matter that they had continued to sin against them, he still loved them.

Jeremiah wanted the people to understand all that was required of them. He asked them some questions. 1) Were they going to keep sinning? 2) Were they going to continue to break the covenant by stealing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely and worshiping other gods?

The people of Judah thought all they had to do was attend the temple services. Jeremiah told them God wanted them to live pure lives. Another prophet, Micah, told them what God wanted them to do.

WHAT GOD WANTS FROM HIS PEOPLE

Read Micah 6:6-8. The people of Judah thought God wanted many sacrifices. They did this, but it was not what God wanted.

Micah told them God wanted three things. The people must: 1) do justice, 2) love kindness and 3) walk humbly with God. To do justice meant they were to do what was right, treating all people fairly. To love kindness meant they were to have a forgiving, loving and helping spirit.

To walk humbly with God meant they were to depend upon God, trusting him completely.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God still wants the same things from his people. He wants us to trust him completely. He does not like to see us depending upon other false security.

Do you have false securities in your life? Are you trusting in the church to save you? Are you trusting in your money, your land or your family and friends for security? All these will fail you.

Why not trust God? He gives eternal security. Even if you have become a Christian, you may not be trusting God fully.

Sin in our lives prevents us from truly worshiping God. God wants us to trust him, and only him. God does not want us to trust in things which give us a false security. He wants us to trust him only. God promises to take care of us if we live for him each day.