

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND



**INTERMEDIATE
TEACHER'S
HANDBOOK**

Book 2

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

**SABBATH SCHOOL
TEACHER'S
HANDBOOK**

INTERMEDIATE GRADE
BOOK 2

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PREFACE

THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Sabbath School Materials Published by

The Committee on the Instruction of the Young

Intermediate Course - Suggested age 13 - 16

These materials form part of a three year course for Intermediate students, designed to reach their minds and hearts with the Bible's message of salvation through Jesus Christ and to give them an understanding of the Word of God as their only infallible rule of faith and life.

Each lesson takes account of the two-fold aspect of teaching - the teacher's preparation and the classroom presentation. A proportion of the material for each teaching period (i.e. 'Background Notes') is devoted to helping the teacher to master the biblical subject matter. Also included is a suggested presentation and, while not intended to be given verbatim to the class, it discourages the verse by verse lecture method of teaching and provides a framework within which the teacher can effectively communicate the truth to the students. Students' worksheets are available with each lesson, to be used as indicated in the teacher's notes. This material is brief and aimed at securing the student's interest and enforcing the lesson with particular directness.

Where Scripture quotations are used, these are from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

The Committee sincerely thanks the many members of the church who wrote, prepared and revised these materials for publication. It is our earnest prayer that they will be used by the Holy Spirit to fulfil their aim.

LESSON 1

Studies in the Psalms

GOD IS KING OF ALL THE EARTH

Scripture Text - Psalm 47

AIM OF LESSON

To show what our response should be to God who is King of all the earth.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Psalm 47 is one of a group of three psalms (46, 47, 48) which have a common theme. In these psalms God is extolled because He has brought His people through a great crisis. It is possible that Psalm 47 was written either after the return of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6) or after the defeat of the Assyrians in the time of King Hezekiah, when God worked a miracle and delivered His people, Israel. (Is. 36, 37) It is a call to all the people of the earth to praise God because He is the holy, powerful and great King of all the earth.

Verse 2 'dreadful' – 'awe-inspiring'. This is not something repulsive, but something marvellous and attractive which calls forth our praise.

Verses 3 & 4 The verbs in these verses may be read in the past tense.

Verse 4 'our inheritance' - a term used to describe the land of Canaan. Just as a father may give a son a piece of land as an inheritance, so God gave Canaan to the Children of Israel as their inheritance. See Ex. 15:17, Deut. 4:21.

'the excellency of Jacob' - This is a term for Canaan also.

Verse 9 'the shields that do defend the earth' - This could also be read as 'the mighty armies or rulers of the earth'.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Introduction

Ask your class the following questions.

Have you ever felt like jumping for joy because of something which has happened to you?

Have you ever been so excited that you could not help going round telling everyone your good news? Read No. 1 in the students' worksheet.

2. Digging Deeper

There are two possible occasions after which this psalm could have been written.

- (a) It could have been written after the return of the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. (See Lesson 11.)
- (b) It may have been written after the miraculous defeat of the Assyrians in the time of King Hezekiah. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, had captured many fortified cities and was now advancing on Jerusalem (Is. 36:1, 2). He tried to destroy the confidence which Hezekiah and the people had in God. Hezekiah prayed earnestly to God, asking, not only that he might be delivered from Sennacherib, but also that all the people might know that the Lord alone is God (Is. 37:20). God heard Hezekiah's prayer and worked a mighty miracle. While they slept, God put to death a hundred and eighty five thousand men in the Assyrian camp (Is. 37:36). God had shown that He alone was God the Lord.

If either of these two events formed the background to the writing of this psalm no wonder the writer wanted everyone to realize that God was indeed 'great King the earth throughout'

(Ps. 47:2). Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. A call to praise God for what He can do for Israel (vs. 1-4)

Read vs. 1-4. Ask these three questions:

How does the psalm begin?

What were all the people to do?

Why were they to shout and clap their hands?

Look at verses 3 and 4. In some versions this is in the past tense. (See Background Notes) God had subdued heathen people and made nations to bow to Israel. These two verses could refer to the conquest of the land of Canaan in the days of Joshua, when the Children of Israel undertook a task which really seemed impossible. With God's help they did conquer many nations which were stronger and mightier than themselves. Use the Background Notes to explain the meaning of verse 4.

On the other hand the tense of the verbs in verses 3 and 4 may be future. If this is so, it shows the great confidence the people had in their God. God had done something great for the people and they were happy - but more than this - they were thankful. Ask 'How were they to express this?' (v.1)

In verse 2 we read that God is 'dreadful'. See Background Notes. This means that God is so powerful and awe-inspiring that we can do nothing else but praise Him. One of the titles given to God in verse 2 is great King the earth throughout. This theme is continued

in verses 5 - 9. Verse 7 states once more that God is king of all the earth and verse 8 tells us that God rules the nations - not just His own people but all the nations are under His control. Again, the second half of verse 9 (see Background Notes) states that the mighty armies and rulers of the earth ('shields that do defend the earth') are under God's rule. They belong to God whether they realize it or not. In fact the first part of the same verse shows us that some of the heathen princes did accept God's kingship over them and they wanted to be numbered among the people of God (... 'of the God of Abraham, they who the people be' ...) Complete No. 3 (a) and (b) in the students' worksheet.

4. King of kings

Remind your class that today it is easy for us to forget this tremendous fact that everything is under the power of God and that God is indeed King of all the earth. When we are disheartened by all the evil in the world and when it seems to us that those who do wrong prosper more than those who live by God's commands, we do well to remember that all people are under God's dominion and that God is 'King of Kings'. See I Tim. 6:15 and Eph. 1:22-23. Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

5. Praising God

Ask: How should God's people respond to the fact that He is King of all the earth? Read verses 6 and 7. We are to praise God. Ask: How many times does the writer state that we should sing praise? This emphasizes the fact that we should respond to all God has done for us by praising Him. Stress that not only can we praise God when we come to worship Him in church, but we can praise Him at home or at school, wherever we may be. Ask your class: Have you ever offered praise to God even in the middle of your work when perhaps He has answered your prayers in a very specific way? Sometimes we fail to praise God because we do not stop to think what He has done for us. Now complete No. 5 (a), (b) and (c) in the students' worksheet. The application has been made throughout the lesson.

LESSON 2

Studies in the Psalms

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Scripture Text - Psalm 51:1-13

AIM OF LESSON

To show that we must recognize our sin and, having done so, then turn to God to ask for forgiveness and cleansing.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In order to understand this Psalm, 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12 should be read by the teacher as this will give the events leading up to the writing of the Psalm. There is little doubt that this psalm was written by David after Nathan the prophet had confronted him with the sins he had committed against Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. These sins of David were ultimately against God. The confession of David in this psalm was declared publicly, as it is known that he gave it to the Chief Musician. The Psalm is like a ladder which climbs from the horrible morass of sin to the heights of joy when there is the assurance of sins forgiven.

Hyssop (v.7) - a plant used in Jewish cleansing ceremonies e.g. Num. 19: 17-19.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask your students if they have ever done something wrong and then tried to cover up and pretend that it had never happened. For example, imagine you accidentally broke a valuable ornament in your mother's china cabinet and, in the hope that it would not be noticed, you put it back behind something taller. How would you feel? Would your conscience tell you that you should own up, or would you continue to say nothing in the hope that you would never be found out? Explain that David, when he was King of Israel, committed a very serious sin and tried to cover it up. One sin led to another until David committed murder. When, however, he was brought to his senses and was confronted with his sins, he looked to God for forgiveness. The psalm we are looking at today is David's confession and his plea for forgiveness.

It will not be possible in the time available to go into much detail about David's sin. However, a brief outline of the events leading up to the writing of this psalm are set out below. Relate this to your class.

1. What sins did David commit?

While the army was away at battle, King David, while walking on a flat part of the roof at the palace in Jerusalem, noticed a beautiful woman having a bath. This woman's name was Bathsheba, and her husband Uriah was with the army in battle. David however, wanted and took Bathsheba for himself. Thus he committed adultery with her. When he discovered that she was expecting his baby he set about trying to cover up his sin. He wanted Uriah killed so that he could marry Bathsheba, but first he made an excuse for Uriah to return home from battle, so that when the child was eventually born, it could naturally be assumed that Uriah was the father. Uriah, however, refused to go to his own home. David, having failed in his ploy, had it so organized that, when Uriah returned to the battlefield, he was put in the front line of battle. As expected, Uriah was killed in battle while fighting for his king and country. David then took Bathsheba as his own wife. God, however, was very displeased with David. He sent his prophet Nathan to David to challenge David about what he had done. Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. David's feeling of personal guilt

David recognized that he had sinned against God. It is after these events that he writes this prayer of confession in Psalm 51. Read together Psalm 51: 1-13 and then consider the following. David recognized that it was he who had sinned against God. Ask, Which words in verses 2 and 3 show this? (me, mine, my, I). He did not blame Bathsheba for his sin, but confessed (v.5) that he had been a sinner from birth. Ask your students to complete No. 2 in their worksheet. Challenge them to recognize that they too have sinned against God.

3. David's sin against God

Ask, What does David say in v. 4a? (He has sinned only against God.) David had indeed sinned against Uriah, but he realized that ultimately his sin was against God. Thus David realized the seriousness of his sin. Ask, What three words (in vs. 2 and 3) did he use to describe what he had done? (sin, iniquity, transgression) Explain each of these in turn. **Sin** means to miss the mark, to come short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). God sets a standard and we fail to reach it. **Iniquity** is the natural sin which comes because we have a fallen nature. We are no longer as God intended us to be when He made Adam and Eve. We are twisted by sin. **Transgression** literally means 'to step over a boundary', to break the law of God, to go into those paths that God forbids. It is rebellion against God. Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. David's desire for cleansing

Consider the following questions with your class.

Was David content to realize that he had sinned and do nothing about it? No. David felt unclean as a result of his sin. In v.9 what does he ask God to do? (to blot out his sin completely) When you were a child did you ever ask to rub out what your teacher had

written on the blackboard? This is what David was asking God to do - to wipe out his sin completely. What does he ask in v.7? (Refer to Background Notes.) What will be the result of this washing? (He will be whiter than snow.) God is the only Person who can forgive sin and David asks Him to do this because of God's unfailing love (v.1). Ask the class to complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet. Remind your pupils that they can have their sins forgiven, only by coming to Jesus Christ, who died for us on Calvary, taking our sins on Himself.

5. David's concern

When God pardons his sin, what does David promise to do (v.13)? Complete No. 5 in the students' worksheet. He promises to tell sinners about the way of salvation. Speaking from experience, David's great desire is that they will turn to God, who has forgiven him.

APPLICATION

Ask your students to consider No. 6 in their worksheet and think about the application below.

David, although King of Israel and an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ, was tempted and gave way to Satan. He was human just as you are. You therefore must :

- (a) Recognize and admit to being a sinner. (Read together the 'Think About' section of the students' worksheet.)
- (b) Ask God to forgive your sins. That can only be done because of the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ on the cross.
- (c) Tell others what God has done for you.

LESSON 3

Studies in the Psalms

LOVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Text - Psalm 119 : 97-104

AIM OF LESSON

To show the Psalmist's attitude to God's Word and the blessings he received from it.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

A. Introduction

Consider these questions with your class.

What is your attitude to the Bible?

Do you believe that it is God's Word to you?

Do you enjoy reading it?

Do you read it each day?

Do you read it thoughtfully and prayerfully?

Do you try to put into practice what you learn from your reading?

OR Do you read the Bible out of a sense of duty, perhaps because your parents expect you to?

Do you just read it whenever you feel like it?

Do you read a passage quickly, then close your Bible and immediately forget what you have read?

1. The Psalmist's attitude to God's Word

Ask two or three students to read a few verses of Psalm 119:97-104 from the worksheet. (Note - all references in this lesson are taken from the Metrical Version.) In these verses five different words are used to refer to God's Word. What are they? Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

Consider the following points with your class.

2. The Psalmist loves God's Word (vs 97, 103)

The Psalmist has come to love God's Word and has acquired a taste for it. To study God's Word is to him more pleasant than eating honey. We can only acquire a taste for God's Word when we are trusting in Christ as Saviour and are committing our lives daily to Him, seeking to know His will for us. Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. The Psalmist studies God's Word (vs. 97-99, 102)

The Psalmist spends time meditating on the Word of God. As he reads, his mind is open to let God speak to him and to apply the Word to his life. He is conscious that God is teaching him (v. 102). Note that he meditates 'all the day' (v. 97). This suggests that, having studied God's Word, the Psalmist often recalled it during the day (v. 98). Stress that daily Bible reading and study are vital for a Christian's growth. Look up 1 Peter 2:2. Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

4. The Psalmist obeys God's Word (vs. 100-102)

It is not enough just to read and study God's Word. It must be obeyed, i.e. worked out in our lives. Read together James 1:22-25. This is not easy because the devil will tempt us not to be obedient to the Word of God. However, if we ask God, He will help us and we will have the victory over disobedience. Suggest to the students that they might like to keep a daily notebook in which they could write down what they are going to do in response to God's Word. Complete No. 4 of the students' worksheet.

5. The result

Ask, What is the result of loving, studying and obeying God's Word? See verses 99, 100 and 104. The Psalmist says that he obtains understanding or wisdom. What does Proverbs 1:7 say about the origin of wisdom? True wisdom which comes from God is very different from man's wisdom. In Matthew 18:3 Jesus said that if we would be wise we must become as little children because God hides His wisdom from some but reveals it to those of humble childlike faith (Luke 10:21). God opens the Psalmist's eyes. He realizes that it is through God's Word that he gets wisdom. The Psalmist says that he is wiser than his foes (v. 98), his teachers (v. 99) and the elderly (v. 100). What does he say is his attitude to sin now? See verse 104. Complete No. 5 of the students' worksheet and consider the application.

APPLICATION

Encourage the students to study the Bible. This should be systematic and regular, and should be accompanied by prayer. Endeavour to have a copy/copies of suitable daily Bible Reading Notes to show to your class.

Give your students the following pattern as a guide for their daily Quiet Time:

PRAY

READ - God's Word.
- The daily notes.

MEDITATE - What is God's Word saying to me?

PRAY - For God's help to obey.

LESSON 4

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

CHRIST AS PROPHET

Scripture Text - John 1:18; 14:26
Shorter Catechism Q. 23 and Q. 24

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jesus Christ is a prophet, and how He reveals to us God's will for our salvation.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Familiarize yourself with the scripture texts above, and also Deut. 18:15-19 and Acts 3:22-23.

- 'execute' - means to perform, or carry out
- 'office' - means function or service
- 'estate' - means state or condition.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the students to recite or read Questions 23 and 24, and, if necessary, ask them what 'execute', 'office' and 'estate' mean. (This question will be amplified in the following lessons.) Complete sections A and B in the students' worksheet.

Consider these points with your class.

1. What is a Prophet?

When we think of a prophet we most likely think of someone like Moses, Elijah or Ezekiel. A prophet was simply a man who made known God's Word to the people around him. The prophet stood between God and the people, and it was through him that God made known His will (Amos 3:7).

Sometimes the prophet spoke of future events, other times of present events, but at all times he spoke God's Word. Because the prophet feared God, he feared no man. Therefore his message revealed the clear, uncompromising requirements of God upon the people. Ezekiel was such a prophet. Complete No. 1 (a) and (b) of the students' worksheet.

2. How was Jesus a Prophet on earth?

Jesus was sent into the world by God to perform the function of a prophet. However, Jesus was not just a prophet, but 'The Prophet', looked forward to in the Old

Testament. (See Deut. 18:15 and Acts 3:22-23.) Jesus was greater than all the prophets who went before Him, because only He had seen God face to face, for He came from the Father's side (John 1:18). Therefore, all that Jesus did, and all that He taught was from God who sent Him. John 6:38 states, 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.' Because Jesus spoke the words of God, He spoke not to win the favour of men, but to please God. That is why, for example, He was fearless in His denunciation of the hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisees.

Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. How is Jesus a Prophet today?

Jesus continues to be a prophet today, because He speaks to us and teaches us from the Bible, which is the Word of God. The teaching of Christ, therefore, is not to be limited to the Sermon on the Mount, or even to the Gospels, but the whole of the Bible is the Word of Christ. (Col. 3:16 and I Peter 1:10,11) However, the Word of Christ, without the Spirit of Christ, is not sufficient in itself to teach us the will of God for our salvation. Because the natural man is sinful and, therefore, dead spiritually, he cannot understand or accept spiritual things. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us alive and teach us spiritual things. That is why Jesus promised His disciples another Teacher/ Helper after He left, 'the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things..... .' (John 14:26). So Jesus continues His prophetic activity today in revealing to us by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation. Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Jesus teaches us the will of God for our salvation. Ask, What is that will? God's will and desire is that none should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the Saviour. Emphasise to your class that if they have accepted Jesus as their Saviour they must seek to discover His will for their lives, day by day, that they might walk worthily before the Lord. Remind them how to do this. We must study the Scriptures and ask Jesus by His Holy Spirit to help us understand and apply them to our lives.

LESSON 5

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

CHRIST A PRIEST

Scripture Texts - Hebrews 2:17; 7:20-28.
Shorter Catechism Q. 25

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Christ carried out the office of a priest at Calvary and how He is still acting as priest.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Read the account of the Crucifixion in John 19: 16-30

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Consider the following with your class. Have you ever heard of anyone making 'The Supreme Sacrifice'? When someone from our Armed Forces is killed in battle he is said to have made 'The Supreme Sacrifice', because he has given his life in defence of his country. Almost 300 years ago in Scotland two Covenanters, a widow of 63, Margaret McLachlan, and a young girl of 18, Margaret Wilson, were sentenced to die by drowning because they refused to renounce their loyalty to King Jesus. They too made 'The Supreme Sacrifice'. We shall see from today's lesson how Jesus Christ Himself made the ABSOLUTE SUPREME SACRIFICE. Complete parts A and B of the students' worksheet.

1. What is a Priest?

A priest was one who drew near to God on behalf of others. In the O.T. the priest offered up sacrifices of animals, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. Read No. 1 on the students' worksheet.

2. Christ the Perfect Atonement

Read Hebrews 7:20-28. Note v. 27a. The Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated again and again. However, what does Heb.7:27b say about the sacrifice offered at Calvary? Who was the priest? (Jesus) Who was the sacrifice? (Jesus) How often did this sacrifice have to be repeated? (Never again - see also Heb. 9:12,28) Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. The cost of Christ's sacrifice

Remind the class of some of the details of the Crucifixion. Picture vividly to them the agony of Christ - how deeply grieved He was in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:34) and how the very thought of His coming suffering made His sweat become like drops of blood (Luke 22:44). At His trial He felt the scourging and the beating (Mark

15:15,19). He felt the racking of His body as the nails were hammered through His hands and feet and then the excruciating pain as He hung on the cross. He saw His mother and other woman weeping (John 19:25; Luke 23:27). He heard the taunts of the soldiers and the rulers (Luke 23:35, 36). He tasted the vinegar and gall which He was offered (Matt. 27:34). But, above all, His agony of soul was intense as He was separated from His Father (Matt. 27:46). On the cross Jesus was carrying out His work as a priest. Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. The reasons for Christ's sacrifice

(a) to satisfy divine justice

God is a Holy God who cannot tolerate sin (Hab. 1:13). He must punish sin (Rom. 6:23a). Who was punished for our sins? (Isaiah 53:5) Heb. 9:22 says that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness'. Sin could not be forgiven without blood being shed. Look up I Peter 1:18,19. Whose blood was shed? Sin was punished and God's justice was satisfied. Also God's love was shown in that He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die. See Romans 5:8. Complete No. 4(a) of the students' worksheet.

(b) to reconcile us to God

To reconcile means 'to remove the enmity or quarrel between two people and bring them together in peace'. What caused the enmity between God and man? Read Romans 5: 12 and Isaiah 59:2. Complete No. 4(b) in the students' worksheet. Notice the gap separating God and man. How was the gap between God and man bridged? Read Eph. 2:13. Consider the diagram in No. 4(c).

5. How is Christ a priest today?

Jesus died and rose again. Where is He now? What is He doing? Read Romans 8:34. His function is still that of a priest (Heb. 7:24). At Calvary He offered Himself on our behalf. Now He is making intercession to God on our behalf. To intercede is to make requests on behalf of others. Note the following characteristics of Christ our Intercessor:

- (a) always alive - Heb. 7:25
- (b) merciful and faithful - Heb. 2:17
- (c) sympathetic - Heb. 4:15
- (d) holy, blameless and pure - Heb. 7:26

1 John 2:1 says 'if anybody sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'. Complete No. 5 of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Christ FREELY offered up His own life - a sacrifice so perfect that it needed to be offered only once (Heb. 10:10). Each one of us must recognize that we need Christ as priest. Those who have Christ as priest can then, in His name, pray to God with confidence.

LESSON 6

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

CHRIST A KING

Scripture Texts - Psalm 110:3; Isaiah 33:22; 1 Corinthians 15:25
Shorter Catechism Q. 26

AIM OF LESSON

To show that Christ must be Sovereign in every part of our lives.

BACKGROUND NOTES

That there is a Kingdom of which Christ is King we can be sure. The thief on the cross recognized this (Luke 23:42, 43) and even the inscription over the Cross of Christ, 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews', although intended as mockery, was no less than the truth.

Many other references in the Bible claim Christ as King and this Catechism question deals with this great truth. Many kings ruled during the history of Israel from the time of Saul, whose success as warrior was his main qualification for the role of first King of Israel. Saul was followed by David who was regarded as the ideal king, establishing a dynasty which lasted over 400 years.

David was to be the predecessor of our Lord, the King of kings (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 2; Ps. 72; Ps. 110 etc.). God promised that David's house would continue until a Son was born Who would sit upon the throne for ever. The Messianic hope of Israel was fulfilled in the New Testament, in Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1-17; 21:5. cf. Zech. 9:9). The people of Israel expected a political king who would deliver them from Roman rule, but Jesus pointed out that His Kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36) but was a Heavenly Kingdom.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATIONIntroduction

Discuss very briefly Monarchy today. Then bring in the subject of our lesson - another Monarch Who rules today - Jesus Christ. He is ruler over every individual in the world, including every Head of State.

Let us look, then, at Christ as King and how He carries out His work. Fill in section A and B on the students' worksheet. Now consider the following points with your class.

'Christ executeth the office of a King ...'

1. '... in subduing us to Himself...'

Read Romans 5:10 and 8:7-9.

What does this say about people who are not Christians? (They are at enmity with God. They cannot please God.) How can an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ become one of His loyal subjects? This can only happen as God, through His Holy Spirit, works a miracle in that person's heart and changes him from an enemy into one who loves Christ and is willing to serve Him. In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ subdues him to Himself and makes him a willing captive. Complete No. 1 (a) and (b) on the students' worksheet.

Now read Ps. 110:3 and Phil. 2:13.

Who is it who makes us want to do what pleases God? Who is it who enables us to do what pleases God?

Complete No. 1(c) in the students' worksheet.

2. '... in ruling and defending us ...'

Read together Isaiah 33:22

Jesus Christ as Ruler

There can be only one of two rulers in our lives - Christ or Satan. Ask the students to read and compare the two stories in Acts 13:6-12 and Acts 7:54-60.

How do they differ? Who ruled in Elymas' life? Who ruled in Stephen's life?

There is no grey area in our lives over which no one rules. If Christ does not rule over any area of our lives, then Satan does.

Complete No. 2 and allow a few minutes for the students to consider the challenge presented.

3. **Jesus Christ as Defender**

Christ the King has given His servants armour which they are to use in battle against Satan. Discuss briefly with the students this means of defence as it is listed by Paul in Ephesians 6: 11-18.

Psalm 62:1-8 is only one of many portions of Scripture which show God as the defender and the deliverer of His people. Read these verses together.

Against whom is this defence? (Satan)

Why do we need this defence? (Because we are powerless to defend ourselves.)

Read Luke 22:31-32 and complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. '... in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.'

Read 1 Cor. 15:25

Who and what are these enemies? - sin, Satan and death. Discuss with the students how these are our enemies and why we cannot overcome them ourselves. Who is the only Conqueror? When can we expect to see Christ's enemies under His feet? Satan has already been defeated, through Christ's life, death and resurrection, and this defeat will be made complete when Jesus Christ comes again. 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death' (1 Cor. 15:26). In the Last Day, when Christ returns, the dead in Christ will be raised (1 Thess. 4:16) and everyone will be judged (Rom. 14:10b). All those who have rejected Christ's reign will be condemned to everlasting punishment - see 2 Thess. 1: 8-9. All His enemies will then be under His feet and Christ the King will reign forever (Ps. 146:10).

Complete No. 4 of the students' worksheet.

5. APPLICATION

Is Jesus Christ ruler in our lives? Can we say that He rules every part of our lives - everything that we see, hear, say, think or do? Discuss No. 5 in the students' worksheet. If He does not, then Satan does. Are we willing to serve Him as His obedient subjects?

LESSON 7

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION

Scripture Texts - Isaiah 53:3; Matt. 27:46; Luke 2:7; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:8
Shorter Catechism Q. 27

AIM OF LESSON

To show that it was necessary for Jesus to become man, suffer and die, to save us from our sins.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATIONIntroduction

Tell the following story to the class.

Rosalind was out one summer evening after tea playing with some friends she had just made. New neighbours had moved in next door and Rosalind's mother had suggested that she should go and introduce herself to the children, even though they looked slightly older than herself. As they played they talked and the conversation came round to bedtimes. The others said that they didn't have to go to bed until ten o'clock in the summer holidays. 'Neither do I', said Rosalind. Just then she heard her mother's voice, 'Rosalind, time to come in. It's half-past eight and past your bedtime'. Rosalind felt humiliated.

Ask these two questions:

Do you know what humiliation means? Have you ever been humiliated?

Some of the words in the Shorter Catechism have different meanings now from what they had when the Catechism was written. Today we think of humiliation in terms of being made to feel ashamed or disgraced, like Rosalind in the story. In today's lesson, however, we will see that Christ's humiliation was something **VERY DIFFERENT** from this. Fill in parts A and B on the students' worksheet. Consider the following points with your students:

1. '... in His being born and that in a low condition ...'

The first way in which Jesus humbled Himself was in the very fact that He was born and the conditions in which He was born. Read Luke 1:35, Luke 2:4-7 and John 6:38. Stress the difference between being the Son of God in Heaven with all its glory and being born to Mary and Joseph in conditions of poverty. As the Son of God it might have been expected that He would be born in a king's palace, be very rich and have servants to look after Him. Instead, He was born in a stable and, not long afterwards, His life was threatened by Herod. His earthly father was a carpenter who had to work hard to support his family. Fill in No. 1 in the students' worksheet.

2. '... made under the law ...'

Read Gal. 4:4. God had given the law for the people to Moses at Mount Sinai. Ask your class, What do we call this law? (The Ten Commandments.) As Jesus is God's Son, it might have been expected that He would not have been bound to keep the law when He was born. Yet this is what was required of Him - to keep the Law perfectly. He had become a human being and so the law applied to Him just as it does to all of us. Fill in No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. '... undergoing the miseries of this life ...'
Read Is. 53:3. Life was not made easy for Jesus on earth. He endured many difficulties. Ask your class to fill in No. 3(a) in the students' worksheet. Jesus knew poverty, hunger, grief, pain and tiredness. He also knew what it was like to be tempted (Matt. 4:1), so He can identify with us in every situation. Fill in No. 3(b) in the students' worksheet. However, there is one main difference - He did not sin. Fill in No. 3(c) in the students' worksheet.
4. '... the wrath of God and the cursed death of the cross ...'
Jesus did not sin but we all deserve God's anger because we are sinful. In what we say, think and do we break God's law. Read Romans 3: 23. Jesus, being sinless, did not deserve this anger, yet He willingly agreed to take our sin as His own, and so God's full anger came upon Him (2 Cor. 5:21). This meant that He became separated from God the Father when he was on the cross and so cried out the words of Matt. 27:46. It was not enough that Jesus should be nailed to the cross. He actually had to die so that He could pay the full penalty for sin (Rom. 6:23). Death by crucifixion, to the Jews, was the worst possible kind of death, because the person was cursed (Gal. 3:13). See also Phil. 2:8 and complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.
5. '... in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time ...'
After His death, Jesus was buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb and remained there until the time for His resurrection on the third day. Read Matt. 27:57-60; 1 Cor. 15:4 and Acts 2:27 and answer No. 5 in the students' worksheet.

6. APPLICATION

Ask your class to think about the following application and to ponder the questions raised. In this lesson we have been finding out what it meant for Jesus to become a human being like us and live on earth. We are the reason He came, so that He could pay the price for our sin, making it possible for us to have a right relationship with God. In order to do this for us, Jesus had to suffer immensely. Have you ever really thought about what Jesus willingly endured for us?

Do you accept what Christ has done?

Have you responded to His call to become a child in His family?

Complete No. 6 in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 8

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

CHRIST'S EXALTATION

Scripture Tests - 1 Corinthians 15:4; Acts 17: 31
Shorter Catechism Q. 28

AIM OF LESSON

To explain the meaning and importance of Christ's exaltation.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATIONIntroduction

Relate this to your students. There was an air of great excitement - a strange kind of excitement because it was a mixture of indescribable joy and doubting fear. Why? A small group of people had been utterly shattered just three days earlier, when the Master they loved and followed, had been cruelly put to death on a cross. Their hopes and dreams had crumbled around them. Now, this strange thing had happened. This same Master whom they loved so dearly had risen from the dead and they couldn't quite take it in.

There are many today who don't want to take it in - let alone acknowledge that this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, not only rose from the dead but ascended up into glory where He presently reigns, until the day arrives when He will come back to earth.

Discuss the following with your class.

Ask your students to complete sections A and B in the students' worksheet. Indicate that there are four distinct parts in the answer. It is very important that we should understand the four aspects of Christ's exaltation as spelled out in the answer to this question. We need not only to believe ourselves, but also to be able to answer those who would argue that these things never happened. Point out that we could think of these as four steps of a ladder and consider them one by one with your class.

1. The first step - the Resurrection

Either read or ask one of the students to read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Matthew 28: 1,8-9 and Luke 24: 13-18. There are many today who do not believe that Christ rose from the dead, just as many refused to believe it at the time it happened. In the passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul the writer records the event as a fact and tells us of many different people who actually saw the risen Lord. Complete No. 1 (a) in the students' worksheet.

Read Acts 1:3 and John 20:24-25 and complete 1(b) and (c) in the worksheet. Some

question what kind of body the risen Christ had. Others state that people who claimed to have seen Him only saw a vision. While we know from Scripture that His body was recognizable, we also know that there were ways in which it was different from a normal human body. Read John 20:26 and Luke 24: 31, 39, 43. He could eat food and yet He could also appear through closed doors. So we see that while His body was in many ways the same as it had been, yet its quality was different. Complete No. 1(d) in the students' worksheet.

Discuss these differing points of view with your class:

You may come across some today who will argue that the disciples believed so strongly that Jesus would rise that they just imagined He did. This is clearly not so. The disciples would not have been so sad if they had expected the Lord to rise again. Nor would they have been so afraid when they first saw Him after He rose. Luke 24:37 says 'they were terrified'. Ask someone to read this verse.

Others will argue that the disciples just made up the story of the resurrection - that it was all lies. Can you imagine a group of men making up such a story and sticking to it so strongly that they actually were put to death for it, as we read later on in Acts? Not likely! Read 1 Cor. 15:17-19 and complete 1(e) in the students' worksheet.

2. The second step - the Ascension

In Luke 24:51 we read that, after Jesus had spoken to His disciples, 'He was carried up into heaven'. This momentous event is expanded a little in Acts 1:9. Ask someone to read this verse. Again there are people who scoff. Those who don't believe in the resurrection naturally cannot believe in the bodily ascension of our Lord. Others may mock at the idea of a body going up beyond the clouds. In bygone days such a thing may have seemed humanly impossible but today, not only do aeroplanes go up above the clouds, but how very much farther astronauts have been. How much more then was the risen Son of God able to overcome the pull of gravity and return to the glory which He had left some thirty-three years before.

Ask the students to complete No. 2 of the worksheet.

3. The third step - the Sitting Down

There is not a great deal we can say about this because human eyes cannot normally see into heaven. It is generally accepted that this is pictorial language since God is a Spirit, not having bodily parts like us. The position that Jesus now occupies at God's right hand can be interpreted as being a place of honour. Jesus returned to the glory He had known before, except this time He returned as both God and man. He had completed the task God had given Him to do on earth and He is now sitting down at a particular place in heaven - the place we call 'God's right hand'. Read Hebrews 10:11-12. Ask the students to complete No. 3 of the worksheet.

4. The fourth step - the Second Coming

Now we look briefly at the final aspect of Christ's exaltation - the Second Coming. When He first came it was to provide the way of salvation. His second coming will be to judge. There are many differing and confusing views about the events leading up to Christ's return. The important thing for us is to realize that He is coming back and that we should always be ready for His return.

There are certain facts we do know :-

- (a) No-one knows when He will come back - no one can put a date on it. Read Mark 13:32.
- (b) He will return suddenly. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:2.
- (c) His return will be public. Read Revelation 1:7.
- (d) At His return the dead will be raised. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
- (e) Believers will be changed. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.
- (f) He will judge the world and there will then, as now, be two classes only - the saved and the lost. Read Acts 17:31 and Matt. 25:31-33.

Ask the students to complete No. 4 of the worksheet.

5. APPLICATION

Work through the following application with your class. You will realize that the events of steps one and two are in the past, while step three speaks of Christ's present position. He is not sitting idly. He went to prepare a place for His followers. Ask a student to read John 14: 2-3. Is He preparing a place for you? He constantly makes intercession for His people. Ask a student to read Hebrews 7:25. However, this third step will come to an end when step four happens and this will be the climax of Christ's exaltation. Then those who know and love Him will be on the right side at His judgement and will dwell with Him for ever. Will you be on the right side? Read Matt. 25:1-13 and Matt 7:19-23. Discuss how these references challenge us about how we should be living daily. Complete No. 5 in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 9

The Covenant people and their early kings

THE PEOPLE DEMAND A KING - SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL

Scripture Text - 1 Samuel 8 - 10

AIM OF LESSON

To see how Saul became Israel's first king.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

(As there is a lot of Biblical material to cover in this lesson, there will not be time to read all of these three chapters in class.)

1. The People Demand a King: Chapter 8

Up until this time the Israelites had been ruled by judges. Samuel was a judge (1 Sam. 7:15) and so were his sons (1 Sam. 8: 1-2.) However, the people began to get very discontented with this kind of government and came to Samuel. Read verses 1-5. What three reasons in v.5 did the elders of Israel give for wanting a king? Read verse 20 also and complete 1(a) in the students' worksheet.

Their request greatly displeased Samuel. On the very face of it, it was an affront to himself. Evidently the people thought Samuel was getting too old. They were tired of him and wanted rid of him. Besides this, Samuel's sons were unworthy successors (v.3). Above all, however, they wanted a king such as all the other nations had. Ask your class to think about this. Does this not sound a familiar theme today - the desire to have what those around us have? Can they think of any examples? The Israelites had lost sight of the fact that God's purpose for them was to be very different from all the other nations, because God was to be their king. Likewise, God's people today are to be different from the people in the world around them. Ask someone to read Rom. 12: 2.

Read together verses 6 - 10. Samuel felt deep personal injury. What did Samuel do? (v.6) He knew he needed God's wisdom and guidance to deal with the problem. So we too, when confronted with difficult situations must seek God's will in the matter. Consider God's answer to Samuel (vs. 7-9). So Samuel, as directed, spelled out very clearly the price the people would have to pay for having a king (vs. 11-18). Read these verses together and complete 1(b) in the students' worksheet. Despite such a warning the people still demanded a king (v.19), and God granted their wish (v. 22).

2. Saul is Brought to Samuel: Chapter 9

Consider the following quote with your class.

‘God’s providence is like a web of many threads, woven with marvellous skill; a network composed of all kinds of materials, great and small, but so arranged that the very smallest of them is as essential as the largest in the completion of the fabric.’ (W.G. Blaikie).

The thread which brought the old ruler, Samuel, and the new ruler, Saul, together, was the straying of the donkeys belonging to Saul’s father, Kish (v.3). Encourage your students to learn from this that every event has been planned by God, in the working out of His purposes.

Relate to your class the events in verses 5-14 which seem accidental but are in reality steps leading towards the meeting of Samuel and Saul.

- (i) Saul and his servant look for the missing donkeys.
- (ii) They have been away so long Saul is afraid his father will now be worrying about them.
- (iii) They decide to consult Samuel.
- (iv) They meet some young girls who direct them to Samuel.
- (v) Samuel tells them the donkeys have been found and asks Saul to go with him to the feast.

Complete 2(a) in the students’ worksheet.

There are 3 things we can observe about the character of Saul in this chapter. See verses 2, 6, 18-19(a) and 21.

We learn firstly that he was of a striking and impressive appearance, one who could intimidate his enemies. We see also he had a commendable and healthy sense of humility. The third thing we learn, however, is rather disquieting. Seemingly Saul had never heard of the prophet Samuel. This cannot but strike us as strange. Complete No. 2(b) of the students’ worksheet.

Read verses 15-17 and complete No. 2(c) on the students’ worksheet.

3. Saul is anointed as king: Chapter 10

Read verses 1-7 and 20-24.

Samuel anointed Saul as Israel’s first king (v.1). In order to confirm this appointment Samuel told Saul that he would meet three groups of people. Who are they?

Complete No. 3(a), (b) and (c) of the students’ worksheet.

Saul was told that the Holy Spirit would come upon him and he would prophesy (v. 6). Saul obviously felt inadequate for the task (vs. 20-24), but everyone whom God calls, He also equips. Remind your class of this fact. Encourage your students to have the faith that God will help them do any task He asks of them. Check 1 Samuel 10: 7

and read Phil. 4: 13.

4. APPLICATION

The children of Israel, in insisting on having an earthly king, were rejecting God as their king (8:7). Because of their persistence God granted their request, but pointed out it would not be for their ultimate good (8:11-18).

Likewise, if we persist in asking God for something which we know is not God's will for us, God may grant it, but, at the same time, 'send leanness into our souls' (See Ps. 106: 15). Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 10

The Covenant people and their early kings

DAVID: LEARNING TO BE A KING

Scripture Text – 1 Samuel 23; 24: 1-7

AIM OF LESSON

To show David's trust in God and submission to Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Through the prophet Samuel, God selected David, still a very young shepherd boy, to be heir to the throne. In God's own time David would replace Saul as King of Israel. David had taken great care of his father Jesse's sheep, so God knew that he could be trusted to look after His sheep - the children of Israel. After David's dramatic victory over Goliath, a giant of over nine feet (1 Sam. 17:4), he became famous all over Israel and the countries beyond. But he was careful not to take to himself any of the glory that belonged to the Lord. He had confidence and faith in God (1 Sam. 17:37). Sadly this faith in God's protection began to be replaced by fear of King Saul who had become jealous of David (1 Sam. 18:9). Saul's attempts on David's life were becoming more frequent, more intense and more public. Now, instead of trusting God as he had always done in difficult situations, David began to take matters into his own hands. He devised schemes to escape death at Saul's hand - but the results in each case were disastrous for David. He and his dear friend Jonathan were separated (1 Sam. 20:42). On one occasion he panicked and feigned madness (1 Sam. 21:10-15) and because he went to Nob, many hundreds of innocent people lost their lives at the hand of Saul (1 Sam. 22:6-23).

David gathered an army of 400 men around him (1 Sam. 22:2) and fled to the forest of Hereth (1 Sam. 22:5). It is after this, that David begins to realize once again that he should trust God for his safety.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Read Sections A and B in the students' worksheet. Ask your students, How many of you hope to learn to drive a car when you are old enough? Before you can pass your test you must learn to drive a car. Your instructor goes with you - you must never go out without him - he shows you what to do and watches as you practise driving. Then, when he considers you are good enough, you enter for your test.

David was learning to be a king with God as his instructor. However he did not always remember this.

1. David saves Keilah 1 Sam. 23:1-5

Read 1 Sam. 23: 1-5

While in the forest of Hereth, David heard that the Philistines were attacking the town of Keilah. What did David do? Notice v. 2. (He asked the Lord if he should go and attack the Philistines.) The Lord said, 'Go'.

David's army - 400 completely untrained men - made up of 'everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented' (1 Sam. 22:2) - was in effect a group of outlaws who were anxious and fearful. How could they attack the well-trained, well-armed Philistines? Humanly speaking, it would be madness. Again David asked God for guidance. Reassured a second time by the Lord of the promise of victory (v.4), David boldly led his men to Keilah, and delivered his fellow-Israelites from the Philistines.

Complete No. 1 in the students' worksheet.

2. Saul pursues David 1 Sam. 23 : 6-29

Learning from his spies that David was in Keilah, Saul ordered his soldiers 'to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men' (v. 8). Was David's first reaction to run away from Saul as he had done before? No. Read verses 9-13. David asked God about the situation. He asked the Lord a specific question, 'Will Saul come down?' and the Lord said, 'He will come down' (v.11).

Wondering what would actually happen if he stayed inside the walls of the city, David asked again, 'Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?' Again the Lord answered specifically. 'They will deliver you' (v.12). So David and his men fled from Keilah (v.13). Saul continued his search, but, so long as David trusted the Lord and sought His guidance, he escaped from every trap which Saul set for him. Read 1 Sam. 23: 14-18. God thwarted Saul at every turn - and without God's permission no-one could harm David. Point out to the students how God used Jonathan to strengthen David's faith. Even when David was betrayed by the Ziphites (v.19), God was still working. Read vs. 26 - 29. Consider what happened just as Saul was closing in on David. (News came that the Philistines were raiding the land.) So Saul had to give up pursuing David and send his army to fight the Philistines. Here we see clearly God's sovereign protection of David, yet again.

Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. David spares Saul's life 1 Sam. 24 : 1-7

David and his men took refuge in Engedi, where there were many caves, but again Saul pursued him, this time taking three thousand of his best soldiers with him (v.2). Saul entered the VERY cave where David was hiding. Read vs. 4 - 7. David's men

were delighted - now was David's opportunity to kill his enemy. They even interpreted it as the Lord's doing (v.4). While Saul slept, David crept up and cut off a corner of his robe. But immediately his conscience bothered him because he knew that Saul was no ordinary enemy, but 'the Lord's anointed' (v.6). So he rebuked his men and did not allow them to harm Saul. He was content to leave the outcome to God.

Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Ask your class to think about the following points.

- (a) We must not depend on our own strength or ideas, but read God's Word daily and pray to Him for wisdom and guidance.
- (b) We must not return evil for evil, but instead, forgive those who sin against us and endeavour to show them God's love. (See No. 4 on the students' worksheet.)

LESSON 11

The Covenant people and their early kings

DAVID'S REIGN: THE RETURN OF THE ARK

Scripture Text - 2 Samuel 6: 1-19

AIM OF LESSON

To show that God expects us to worship Him in exactly the way He commands in Scripture.

BACKGROUND NOTES

- (a) The Ark of Covenant was also called 'The Ark of the Lord', 'The Ark of God', 'The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord' and 'The Ark of the Testimony'. It was a rectangular box made of acacia or shittim wood, about 1.1m x 0.7m and covered with gold. The solid gold mercy seat on top had cherubim, with wings extended, situated at either end of it. It was carried by gold-covered poles which passed through gold rings at each corner. It was made at Sinai by Bezaleel (Ex. 37:1ff) to the exact pattern given by God to Moses (Ex. 25:8-22). Only priests or Levites were permitted to carry the Ark and it was not allowed to be touched by hand. (Joshua 3: 3; 6: 12 and 8: 33)

The contents were the two tablets of stone on which were engraved the Ten Commandments, the gold pot of manna and Aaron's rod which had budded (Heb. 9:4,5).

The Ark served as the place in the sanctuary or tabernacle where the Lord met with His servants and revealed His will to them (Ex. 25:22). Two examples of this are found in Joshua 7:6-15 and Judges 20:26-28. The Ark symbolised the Divine presence guiding God's people and it played a significant part in the crossing of Jordan (Joshua chs. 3 and 4), at the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6) and at the ceremony of remembering the Covenant at Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:30ff).

- (b) At one point in the history of the Israelites the Ark was captured by the Philistines on the battlefield at Ebenezer (1 Sam. 4). Because of the presence of the Ark of the Lord among them, the Philistines suffered severe plagues (1 Sam. 5) and, after seven months, they returned the Ark to Israel (1 Sam. 6). It was taken to Kirjath-Jearim to the house of Abinadab, where it remained for some years.

The portion of Scripture in this lesson deals with the return of the Ark from Kirjath-Jearim to Jerusalem.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the students, Have your parents ever given you something which you treasured very much? Perhaps a new bicycle. You looked after it carefully, read all the instructions about how to clean it and keep it running smoothly. You really had nothing else which meant so much to you. Then, as time went by, the novelty wore off, you became older, other things began to take the place of the bicycle and, gradually, you didn't bother with it any more.

So it was with the Children of Israel. God had given them the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of His presence and guidance.

1. The Ark of the Covenant - its history

Read together Exodus 25:8-22.

Use this together with a brief summary of section (a) of the Background Notes, as an introduction to the appearance, the purpose and the history of the Ark. Now turn to the students' worksheet and help the students to complete 1(a), (b) and (c).

The Ark of the Covenant was holy and God made special rules regarding it:-

- (a) Only the priests or Levites were permitted to carry it (Numbers 1:50,51).
- (b) It was only to be carried with the poles provided (Exodus 25:14, 15).
- (c) It was not to be touched by hand. Offenders would die (Numbers 4:15).
- (c) If anyone looked on the Ark they would die (Numbers 4:5-6 and 16-20).

Discuss these with the pupils and then ask them to complete 1(d).

Read 1 Samuel 4: 6-7 and complete No. 1(e) in the students' worksheet.

2. The Ark of the Covenant - its return to Jerusalem

Summarise the points given in section (b) of the Background Notes.

During the reign of Saul the Ark had been forgotten. The Children of Israel were not worshipping God in the way in which He had commanded. Now David was king. God had given him victory over the Philistines (2 Samuel 5). He remembered the Ark and made preparations to bring it back to Jerusalem.

David's first attempt to bring back the Ark

Read 2 Samuel 6: 1-11. What enthusiasm the people showed when the Ark was returning! Just imagine what it would be like! This was a great occasion. Elaborate plans had been made. 30,000 men had been chosen to join the procession. Everyone was happy. They were playing their musical instruments and making a great noise. A new cart had been made to carry the Ark and it was pulled by the best team of oxen driven by Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab. Everything seemed to be going

well. But suddenly - TRAGEDY - the oxen stumbled, Uzzah put out his hand and touched the Ark to steady it. A natural reaction you might think. But what happened? God struck him down dead! What a punishment - unjust you might think, just as David did. He was displeased with the Lord, we are told in verse 8. So, what was wrong?

Complete 2(a) (i)-(iv) of the students' worksheet.

The Ark was very special and holy

BUT (1) the people did not treat the Ark with the reverence God demanded and

(2) the people had disobeyed three commands, which God had given.

- (a) Neither priests nor Levites carried the Ark.
- (b) They put it on a cart and did not carry it with the poles provided.
- (c) Uzzah touched it.

So, although the people were enthusiastic, they still disobeyed God.

They did not carry out His clear instructions regarding the moving of the Ark from one place to another.

Uzzah's punishment is meant as a warning for us as it was for the Children of Israel. God is holy and, especially where His worship is concerned, He expects His children to show, without question, the reverence and the obedience due to Him as Sovereign Lord.

Discuss David's reaction to what happened that day (v. 8-11) and then complete 2 (a) (v), (vi) and (vii).

David's second attempt to bring back the Ark

Read 2 Sam. 6:12-19. This was an even greater occasion than the previous one. This time it brought God's special blessing because His commands were obeyed and His will revered. Note that, on this occasion, the Ark was carried - presumably by the priests (v.13). Summarise the main points in this day of rejoicing by completing 2(b).

APPLICATION

Consider the following points with your class using No. 3 on the students' worksheet.

- (a) Do we ever complain that God is unfair?
We must remember that God is never unjust and He never makes a mistake. He demands obedience and reverence and He punishes those who fail to show these to Him.
- (b) God is holy. How do we worship Him?
Do we worship Him exactly as He has commanded? Do we give Him and His Word the reverence we should?

LESSON 12

The Covenant people and their early kings

THE PEACEFUL REIGN OF SOLOMON

Scripture Text - 1 Kings 4 and 6

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Solomon was able to use his gifts when he obeyed God's commands.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Discuss the following questions very briefly with your class. If you were to become ruler of a very large country, how would you set about ruling it? What type of a person would you need to be to rule well? Complete Section A of the students' worksheet. Today's lesson is about a king who was faced with this problem and how, using the gifts God gave him, he was able to cope. Who was he? - Solomon.

1. Solomon's Empire 1 Kings 4: 24

Solomon inherited a large empire from his father David as a result of all the successful wars in Saul's and David's reigns. To find the extent of his empire read 1 Kings 4:24. Refer to the map in the students' worksheet and complete No. 1.

2. Solomon's Organisation 1 Kings 4: 1-28

As the country was now at peace with its neighbours, Solomon's work was to keep its large boundaries secure and to maintain his position of strength. As he could not oversee all this work himself, he wisely delegated his authority to officers. Using 1 Kings 4:2-6 fill in section 2(a) in the students' worksheet.

Solomon's court was a very large and busy one. Read v. 20-28. As it included 40,000 (some versions 4,000) stalls of horses and 12,000 horsemen (v. 26), this meant that vast amounts of food were required every day. Therefore 12 district governors were appointed from all parts of the country, one for each month of the year, so that the burden of provision was equally shared by all the people. Fill in section 2(b) in the students' worksheet.

3. Solomon's Wisdom 1 Kings 4: 29-34

The reason that Solomon was able to rule well was that he had a very special gift from God. What was it? (See 1 Kings 4:29-34 and compare with Prov. 1:7.) He had more wisdom than any other person at that time and his fame spread to all parts of the world. He did not keep his wisdom to himself but shared it with all who came to visit at his court. This suggests that we should freely share anything that we have learned with others. He also wrote much down and we can learn from him today as we read, for example, the book of Proverbs. Furthermore he was an expert on plants

and animals. Fill in section 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. **Solomon's Temple** 1 Kings 6

One of the good things for which Solomon is remembered is that he built the temple to house the Ark of the Lord. This was only possible because the people were at peace. (1 Kings 5:4-5) Before David died, he charged Solomon with the work of building the temple. David had wanted to do it himself, but, because he had been involved in so many wars, God would not allow him. Instead his son, who would be a man of peace, was to build it. (1 Chron. 22: 6-16) And so Solomon, whose name means 'peace', carried out this charge starting in the 2nd month of the 4th year of his reign and finishing in the 8th month of the 11th year, i.e. seven and a half years.

The Temple was 27 metres long, 9 metres wide and 13.5 metres high. Inside it was divided into two parts, the Holy of Holies and the Sanctuary, with a porch. Round the outside were three storeys of store rooms. (See students' worksheet.)

Ask your class to read the verses referred to below.

It was built of stones prepared at the quarry. (1 Kings 6:7) Inside, the walls were covered with carved cedar wood, overlaid with gold. (1 Kings 6:18-22)

The Holy of Holies, or Most Holy Place, contained two cherubim of olive wood covered with gold, each 4.5 metres high. It also contained an altar of cedar covered with gold, and the Ark of the Covenant. (1 Kings 6: 19-28) It was as David had imagined - 'exceedingly magnificent and glorious' (1 Chronicles 22:5).

Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

5. APPLICATION

Consider this application with your class.

The reason why the people had peace and were able to build the Temple was that they were obeying God's commands. God had promised that He would be with them if they would do this. (1 Kings 6:11-13) Similarly with us, if we do what God wants, using the gifts He has given us, (e.g. able to work to the best of our ability at school; able to use our hands in making things or in helping at home; taking part in the young people's group), then He will be with us and help us.

Complete No. 5 in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 13

The Covenant people and their early kings

SOLOMON: THE FAILURE OF HUMAN KINGS

Scripture Text - 1 Kings 11:1-13

AIM OF LESSON

To show that even the greatest can fail and that God punishes any who sin.

BACKGROUND NOTES

We may think on first reading that Solomon's only sin in this passage is the fact that he had so many wives and concubines. However, that is not so. Although God in the beginning did ordain marriage as the union of one man and one woman - and that is still the Christian standard - yet the practice of a multiplicity of wives developed because of the sin of man. It was common practice in Old Testament times - and in more recent times, too - to arrange marriages for political ends and such, no doubt, were most of Solomon's marriage alliances. Solomon sinned, not only in the number of his marriages, but also in the fact that he married foreign women who practised idolatry. In providing for them the means for such worship he allowed himself to be drawn into idolatry too.

Concubine - In a society where polygamy was practised, a concubine was a wife of inferior status.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Consider the following questions with your class.

Do you always do what your friends want you to do because you want to please them?

Can you give examples of occasions when it would be wrong to go along with what your friends want to do?

Solomon wanted to please all his wives (he had 1,000 of them!) by giving in to all their requests. Sadly, Solomon's wives did not want something good. Instead, they wanted Solomon to turn away from worshipping God - the only true God - and to worship their foreign idols. Unfortunately, Solomon allowed himself to be persuaded. He had disobeyed God in the first instance by marrying foreign women and by doing this he put himself in danger of being led into further sin. And indeed this is what happened.

1. **Solomon's sin** 1 Kings 11:1-8

Earlier in 1 Kings we read that King Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, King of Egypt and, as was a common custom, this alliance was strengthened by Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. Ask a student to read 1 Kings 3:1. Later he married a great many more women from surrounding nations and this act of disobedience was the beginning of his downfall. Read v. 1. God had prohibited mixed marriages with the nations of Canaan - see Exodus 34: 12-16 and Deuteronomy 7:1-4 - but Solomon

disobeyed. Ask a student to read verse 2. Now ask the students to complete and discuss No. 1(a) of the worksheet.

Verses 3-8: One sin leads to another

In the beginning God ordained marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Therefore Solomon sinned in having more than one wife. This sin led to other sins. Read verses 3-8. Obviously Solomon wanted to please his wives. There does not seem to have been anything wrong in that. Also, to his credit, he did not seem to have had favourites. Ask a student to read verse 8a. Solomon wanted to please ALL his foreign wives. This sounds even more commendable; but the problem is how he pleased them. These women were pagans; they worshipped false gods and they persuaded Solomon to do the same. Note the names of some of the gods whom his wives, and then Solomon himself, worshipped (vs 5, 7).

It is particularly tragic that Solomon allowed himself to be so easily misled when we think of how great a man he was - how God had appeared to him and, as a result, had given him such wisdom as was never known before or since (ch. 3) and how he had built the great temple (ch. 6). His fame concerning the Name of the Lord had spread far and wide. Ask a student to read 1 Kings 10:1. Yet, despite all this, he fell into more sin because of the temptations of his wives - the sin of idolatry. Ask the students to complete No. 1(b) of the worksheet.

2. Sin's consequences 1 Kings 11:9-13

Ask a student to read the first part of v. 9. The Lord was angry with Solomon. In the early part of his reign God had appeared to Solomon in a vision and offered him anything he wished (ch. 3). To Solomon's credit he had acknowledged the goodness of God to his father and his own need of help for the great task before him. He had requested wisdom from God. God was well pleased with Solomon's request and promised him not only wisdom but, in addition, greatness, riches and honour. The fame of Solomon's wisdom and greatness spread far and wide. What a tragedy then, that after all God had done for him, he turned away to worship idols. No wonder God was angry. Solomon had broken God's commands. He had sinned and sin had to be punished. Furthermore, as is so often the case, one person's sins can affect many other people. Solomon's sin affected the whole nation and his kingdom was divided - though not in his lifetime. Read verses 11-13. Ask, Who was Solomon's son? (ch. 11:43). Who, however, became king of most of Solomon's kingdom? (ch. 12:20). Thus we see that what God said He would do, did happen. What a sad end to a reign which had begun with such promise. Complete Part 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. APPLICATION

Ask the students to complete and discuss Part 3 of the worksheet.

LESSON 14

Paul - a prisoner for Christ

ARRESTED IN JERUSALEM

Scripture Text - Acts 21: 8-36

AIM OF LESSON

To acquaint the students with the story of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, and to see his submission to God's will.

BACKGROUND NOTES

- (a) Paul was on a journey to Jerusalem to deliver money, which had been collected from Christians in Greece and Asia Minor, for poor Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17). He had said farewell to the Ephesian elders knowing that he would not see them again (Acts 20: 17-25).
Acts 21: 1-9 shows how he had progressed as far as Caesarea.
- (b) Acts 21: 23-24 The four men were Jewish Christians who were about to complete a Nazarite vow by offering prescribed sacrifices (Numbers 6: 1-8 and 13-21). It was considered a meritorious act to defray the expenses of poor Nazarites. By identifying with these men, Paul openly showed his respect and conformity to the Jewish law.
- (c) Acts 21: 28-29 Anyone might go into the outer court of the temple, but notices in Greek and Latin forbade Gentiles, on pain of death, to enter the inner courts. By the letter of the law, Trophimus would have been the guilty party had the charge been true, although Paul would have been guilty of aiding and abetting him.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

This series of lessons is based on Paul's arrest and trial at Jerusalem and his journey to Rome as recounted in Acts 21-28. Introduce this lesson by briefly summarizing the reason for Paul's journey to Jerusalem and his journey to Philip's house at Caesarea. See Background Notes (section a).

1. The People's Advice: Acts 21:8-14

The Holy Spirit revealed to Agabus that danger awaited Paul in Jerusalem, so Paul's friends tried to stop him from going on. However, Paul was sure the Holy Spirit wanted him to go, and he was prepared, if need be, to die there (Acts 20:22-24). Likewise, we should be prepared to face the consequences of doing God's will. Doing God's will does not necessarily mean we will have no difficulties. Complete section 1 (a) and (b) of the students' worksheet.

2. Paul's Arrival at Jerusalem: Acts 21:15-26

Paul bore good news of many non-Jews trusting in Jesus Christ as Saviour, but the Jews in Jerusalem had heard that Paul had told certain Jews to give up some Jewish customs (v. 21). Paul decided to accept James' advice to show that the rumours were false (v. 26). See Background Notes (section b). His concern was for the spread of the Gospel and on this occasion he felt it would bring more glory to God if he followed James's advice. Emphasize that Paul wanted to do only God's will and to glorify Him (1 Corinthians 10: 31-33).

Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. Paul Arrested: Acts 21: 27-36

Paul knew that it was God's will for him to be arrested and he accepted it calmly. Complete No. 3(a) in the students' worksheet. Later in his letter to the Philippian Christians, he was able to explain how God had used him as a witness in his imprisonment. (See Phil. 1:12-14.) Complete No. 3(b) in the students' worksheet. We cannot expect the Christian life to be easy, but God will use our difficulties and problems to bring glory to Himself. Complete No. 3(c) of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

This is included in the students' worksheet in the 'Ask Yourself' section.

LESSON 15

Paul - a prisoner for Christ

DEFENDS HIMSELF BEFORE THE CROWD

Scripture Text - Acts 21: 37 - 22: 29

AIM OF LESSON

To outline the defence Paul gave to the crowd and to show the results of it.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATIONIntroduction

Ask your class to think about the following situation.

Imagine that you had been falsely accused, handcuffed, shouted at by a frenzied mob and were about to be taken into the police station. How do you think you would feel? Scared? Angry? How do you think you would react? Kick and struggle? Scream and shout?

The Jewish crowd had falsely accused Paul. They had rioted and started to beat him. The Roman soldiers had intervened and arrested Paul. Their commander had ordered him to be taken into the Roman barracks nearby and so great was the violence of the crowd that Paul had to be carried by the soldiers (ch. 21: 30-36 - see last week's lesson). Ask the class, How did Paul react? Did he shout and struggle? See ch. 21:37.

1. Permission to speak Acts 21: 37 - 22:2

Read Acts 21:37 - 22:2 together and consider the following. In what language did Paul first speak? His knowledge of Greek prevented the commander from confusing him with an Egyptian terrorist (v. 38). Paul stated that he was a Jew from Tarsus and having obtained permission to speak, he then addressed the crowd in Aramaic (Hebrew). How did the people react when they heard him speaking in their own dialect? (22:2) Note also the polite way in which Paul addressed them (22:1).

Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. Paul's defence Acts 22: 3 - 21**(a) His old life: vs 3 - 5, 19, 20**

Read verses 3 - 5, 19, 20. Paul here gives an account of his past life. This would convince the Roman commander that he was not the Egyptian he thought he was (21: 38). Also the Jews would realize that he was not that enemy of their law and temple they had taken him to be (21:28). Note what a fierce persecutor he had been of the Christians (vs 4, 5, 19, 20) who are described as the followers of 'this Way' (v. 4). Complete No. 2(a) of the students' worksheet.

(b) His conversion: vs. 6 - 11

Read together the facts of Paul's conversion as he gives them here.

(c) His new life: vs 12-18

Ask the students to read these verses. So great was Paul's revelation of Christ on the road to Damascus that he was blinded. God sent Ananias to Paul to enable him to regain his sight and to tell him what the Lord wanted him to do. See verses 14 and 15. In his defence Paul passed quickly over the details of his conversion and what happened in the next few years. In Galatians 1:17-18 we read that three years elapsed before he was back in Jerusalem (v 17).

(d) His new mission: v. 21

Paul ended his defence by telling the crowd what special task the Lord had given him to do. What was it? (v. 21) Before the riot and his ensuing arrest Paul had told the Jewish Christians 'what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry' (Acts 21:18-19).

Complete No. 2(b) of the students' worksheet.

Paul used this opportunity to witness to the crowd. He outlined how the Lord had met with him and had changed his life. As Christians we may never have to defend ourselves in such difficult circumstances but there will be occasions when we ought to speak out as followers of Christ.

3. Paul's treatment Acts 22: 22-29

(a) By the crowd: vs 22-23

Read these two verses. The crowd listened quietly until Paul used the word 'Gentiles' (v. 21). This word reminded them of their grievances against him (21:28-29 - see last week's lesson). How did they now react? Complete No. 3(a) on the worksheet.

(b) By the Romans: vs 24-29

After reading these verses consider the following. To save Paul from the crowd the Roman commander had him taken into the barracks. What orders did he then give? (v. 24) Why? What question did Paul ask the centurion who was supervising the flogging? (v. 25) Paul now mentioned his Roman citizenship which exempted him from this treatment. (A non-Roman might be flogged in order to make him admit the truth.) Thus far Paul had mentioned only his Tarsian citizenship (21:39; 22:3) . What were the two results of Paul's mention of his Roman citizenship? (v. 29)

Complete No. 3(b) of the students' worksheet.

Note Paul's behaviour in this incident (vs. 25-29). Can you see any similarities in

how he reacted here and how he reacted in the incident at the beginning of our lesson (21:37a; 22:25)?

4. APPLICATION

As Christians we are called to be faithful in our service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps for a while everything seems to be going well, but sometimes we may find ourselves in a very difficult and trying situation where we are called to stand up and speak out for Christ - as Paul was in our lesson. How do we react on such occasions? Are we afraid of the reactions of others or do we politely but firmly speak out for what we believe?

Consider No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 16

Paul - a prisoner for Christ

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Scripture Text - Acts 22:30 - 23:11

AIM OF LESSON

To show how God protected and encouraged Paul during a time of persecution for Christ.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The background to this lesson is found in the previous two lessons, the details of which set the scene for Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin.

'Sanhedrin' or 'council' (22:30) - The name of the highest tribunal of the Jews. It met in Jerusalem and was composed of 70 members. The powers of the Sanhedrin were extensive but any decisions taken were subject to the authority of the Roman government.

The high priest's command (23:2) - According to Jewish law, no person was to be beaten until he had been proved guilty of a crime - see Deuteronomy 25: 1-2. It would seem that the High Priest had already made up his mind to condemn Paul and so was hindering him from making his defence.

'whitewashed wall' (23:3) - hypocrite, a term of contempt. It is thought that here Paul is not speaking in sinful anger but in holy zeal against the High Priest's abuse of his power.

'Sadducees' (23:6) - belonged to well-to-do families and many were priests. They rejected the doctrine of the soul and its after-life and treated the idea of the resurrection of the dead with scorn. They were the so-called free-thinkers of the day.

'Pharisees' (23:6) - very strict orthodox Jews. They upheld the Law but introduced many extra rules which they insisted should be diligently kept. They contended earnestly for the things which the Sadducees denied.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATIONIntroduction

Introduce the lesson by asking these questions. 'What is going to happen today?' Do you ever find yourself thinking this when you waken in the morning? Perhaps something special

has been planned for the day and you look forward to it with excitement and anticipation. Occasionally, perhaps, you don't really look forward to the events of the day, because you know that something unpleasant or sad has to be faced. I wonder how Paul felt when he woke up one particular morning. Do you remember where we left him at the end of last week's lesson? (In prison.)

So - what was going to happen today? Was he going to be kept in prison? If so, what were the charges going to be? Paul knew he had done nothing wrong. But think of the riot which had occurred yesterday. The mob had dragged him from the Temple, beaten him and tried to kill him. They wouldn't listen to what he had tried to say. Twice the commander in charge of the soldiers had to intervene. Paul had told the commander he was a Roman citizen. Could he keep him in prison without a proper trial? If he was released, would the angry mob still be waiting for him? What would today bring?

1(a) The hostility of the day Acts 22:30 - 23:10

The commander didn't know the night before what to do with Paul. Why was he afraid? (See Acts 22:29.) What did he decide to do the next day? (v. 30) Explain, using the Background Notes, the terms 'Sanhedrin', 'Sadducee' and 'Pharisee'. Fill in section A of the students' worksheet. Acts 23:1-10 describes Paul's experiences in front of the Sanhedrin. The drama of these verses will be more easily grasped if individual pupils are cast as narrator, Paul, those who stood by (v. 4) and the scribes of the Pharisee party (v. 9). Ask for verses 1-10 to be read.

Complete No.1(a) of the students' worksheet.

Ask each of your students to imagine herself or himself in Paul's situation by considering the following. You are standing alone before 70 Jewish religious leaders and some Roman officials. What is your reaction and what are your feelings in this situation? Why do you decide to address the Jewish council as 'brethren'? (v. 1 - Paul was a Jew, speaking to fellow-Jews. He was a Pharisee and would regard himself as their equal.) You have scarcely started to speak when Ananias, the High Priest, suddenly gives a command. What is it? (v. 2). What does this make you realize? (The council is hostile towards you; you have no human support in this ordeal; everyone is quick to condemn you (vs. 2 and 4) and you are being given no opportunity to explain your belief.) Of what do you accuse the High Priest? (v. 3) (of being a hypocrite) Why? You are angry that the High Priest, who has been appointed to judge fairly according to the law, should break the law himself by condemning you unheard. (See Background Notes.)

Those standing near criticise you. 'You dare to insult God's High Priest?' they say. You know the High Priest has done wrong but you make it clear that God's Word should be honoured in the matter (v. 5).

1(b) The disruption in the Sanhedrin Acts 23: 6-10

Faced with such hostility, how do you try to use the situation for Christ? (v. 6 - You focus attention on the resurrection, which is the heart of the Gospel.)

The dispute between the two parties in the council grows so heated that you find yourself in great danger. What seems likely to happen to you? (v. 10a) Do you think that perhaps you are going to die? But no! God is intervening again. For the third time in two days He is sending the same person to rescue you. Who is he? Where is he taking you? (v. 10)

Complete No. 1(b) of the students' worksheet.

2 The blessing of the night (Acts 23: 11)

Paul is now back in the prison cell. He is alone. Ask your students to try to picture how he might be feeling. The strain of the past two days is taking effect. He must be physically and emotionally exhausted. He may be downcast, wondering if he has failed God in front of the Sanhedrin and wondering if he will ever be given a further opportunity to speak for his Lord. Suddenly what happens? Read Acts 23:11. The Lord appears and stands close to Paul. What does He say to him? What does He bring to him? Three things:-

- Comfort - through His presence. 'The Lord stood by him.'
- Encouragement - through His command. 'Be of good cheer.'
- Hope - through His promise of future service. 'As you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.'

What a contrast between the night and the day! Now there is reassurance instead of attack; understanding and encouragement instead of deliberate misunderstanding and hostility. There is no rebuke from the Lord to His servant. This implies Divine approval of Paul's words during the day. Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Consider the following with your class. We may never be brought to court for trial because of our loyalty to Christ, as Paul was. However, like Paul, we may sometimes

- feel the hostility of those around us to the faith we have and want to share
- be accused wrongly in front of others
- be deliberately misunderstood by those we thought would support us.

Paul was faithful during his time of persecution. What did the Lord Jesus Christ do for him?

- He stood close beside him.
- He comforted and encouraged him.
- He gave him further opportunities to speak for Him.

The Lord will do the same for you - if you are faithful to Him.

LESSON 17

Paul - a prisoner for Christ

SHIPWRECKED

Scripture Text - Acts 27

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Paul placed his trust in God in a crisis and that God did not fail him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

To fill in the gap between the last lesson which was about Paul's witness before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and this lesson, tell your students the events which took place in the meantime.

The day following Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin, a plot to kill Paul was discovered. Paul's nephew informed the commander holding Paul of the plot. Consequently that night Paul was brought safely out of Jerusalem and taken under military escort to Caesarea where he appeared before Felix, governor of Judea. Felix heard Paul's case, but put off making a decision and kept Paul prisoner at Caesarea for two years. Felix was then recalled to Rome and was succeeded in Judea by Festus, who asked Paul if he wished his case to be heard in Jerusalem by the Council. Paul, however, knew he would get no justice from the Jews, so he used his privilege as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar. This meant that Paul had to go to Rome. God had already revealed to Paul that He intended him to preach the gospel in Rome, and Paul could see in this event another step in the fulfilment of God's plan. The sea voyage to Italy is shown in the map in the students' worksheet.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the students if any of them have experienced an unpleasant sea voyage. How did they feel? Was it stormy? How long were they on the boat? Ask them to imagine what it would be like to be on a ship, not nearly so large and strong as present-day ships, with only one sail and a rudder to guide it. Think what it would be like to be stranded on a ship like this for fourteen days and nights under severe storm conditions.

1. Paul's sea journey

Read Acts 27:1-12 and follow Paul's route on the map in the students' worksheet.

2. Paul Sets Sail

Paul was to travel to Rome with a group of other prisoners, but he was given special consideration. He had two friends with him - Luke, who wrote the book of Acts

(Note the use of the word 'we' (v. 2ff.), and Aristarchus (v. 2). They boarded the ship in Caesarea towards the end of the summer. There was no time to waste as sea travel became dangerous on the Mediterranean in autumn (v. 9). They called in at Sidon and then travelled on, keeping close to the coast, past Cyprus and called at Myra (v. 5). Here they changed ship for Italy and were now passengers on board a grain ship sailing from Egypt to Italy with grain for Rome (v. 6).

The ship made for Cnidus but winds prevented it from keeping its course, so it sailed for Crete and docked at Fair Havens (v. 8). They stayed at Fair Havens for some time and the stormy winter season was coming closer. Paul (v.10) advised remaining at Fair Havens but the decision was taken to move on to Phoenix and winter there. (vs. 11-12). Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. The Storm: vs 13 - 26

Read these verses together. On the way to Phoenix a fierce north-east wind blew up (v. 14). The ship was blown about mercilessly by this wind for fourteen days. The crew undergirded the ship (v. 17), that is, they passed ropes under her to keep the planks from breaking apart under the pressure of the swelling grain. They threw as much of the cargo and tackle overboard as possible but the situation remained desperate. It was now that Paul showed to everyone on board his leadership and staunch faith. He had a vision during the night given to him by God (vs. 22-24). He himself would appear before Caesar in Rome, the ship would be wrecked on an island, but no one on board would be lost. This was the second time that God gave him this assurance that he would reach Rome. (See Acts 23:11; 27:23-24.) Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. The Shipwreck: vs 27 - 44

Read this passage together. After fourteen days, the sailors found that they were close to land and dropped anchors to save them from being wrecked on rocks. They then waited for daylight. Some of the sailors decided to escape and thus save themselves, but Paul became aware of what they were doing and he told the centurion. He knew that, without skilled sailors, they would all be lost. (See vs. 30-32.)

Again, Paul showed his leadership and advised them to eat to build up their strength before daylight. Notice in this critical situation how Paul witnessed before others. What did he do? (v. 35) In daylight they saw a sandy beach and headed for it, but the ship ran aground on sandbanks and started to split up (vs. 39-41). The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, so that none could escape, but the centurion forbade this, because he wanted to spare Paul's life (vs. 42-43). Everyone reached the shore safely - some swam, some floated on planks, or on pieces of the ship, but none was lost. Paul's words were shown to be true (v. 34). How many men survived? (v. 37) To what island

had they come? (Melita or Malta, Acts 28: 1). Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Paul remained calm throughout the storm, knowing that God was with him and that God was certainly going to bring him to Rome as He had previously told him. This strong reassuring faith gave Paul the strength to help others through this crisis. How do you react in a crisis? Do you, like the sailors, panic and try to save your own skin? Or are you like Paul, calm in your trust in God, and so able to help others weaker than yourself? Point out to the students that Joshua 1:9 shows how those who are Christians, have God to help in every situation. This verse would make a good motto for each of us for life. Learn this verse. See students' worksheet.

LESSON 18

Paul - a prisoner for Christ

ASHORE ON MALTA

Scripture Text - Acts 28: 1 - 10

AIM OF LESSON

To show that God was in complete control of Paul's life and had a special purpose in bringing him to Malta.

BACKGROUND NOTES

v. 8 The miracle of healing in this verse is an example of the signs associated with the ministry of the Apostles referred to in 2 Corinthians 12: 12.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Mark, a Christian, really enjoyed playing football and was selected to play on his school's first team. However, one Saturday he was injured - he had broken his leg. Mark was very disappointed. The next week his team was due to play a very important match but, of course, Mark could not play. Mark was very tempted to ask, 'Why should this happen to me?' Still feeling disappointed, he had a visit from his Maths teacher. He told Mark that often God can turn difficulties and disappointments into opportunities to serve Him.

Paul, who was on his way to Rome, found himself in a situation similar to Mark. Where is Paul now? (Melita or Malta, v. 1) How did Paul find himself in Malta? Briefly recap on last week's lesson. Ask your class to look at the map in the students' worksheet and put an X on Malta. Paul's destination was Rome. Find Rome on the map. The grain ship on which Paul was travelling left Myra and was heading for Cnidus. Find Cnidus on the map. Now mark with a dotted line what you think would be the most direct route, by sea, from Cnidus to Rome. Is Malta at all close to the direct route from Cnidus to Rome? (No.) Follow on your map the route from Cnidus which Paul's ship was forced to take which meant that he came ashore on Malta.

As you can see the island of Malta is far from the most direct route, by ship, from Cnidus to Rome. I wonder how Paul felt now. Fill in Section B in the students' worksheet He knew that it was God's will, as well as his own desire, to go to Rome, and yet here he was, seemingly stranded on Malta, many miles from Rome. Nevertheless, it was God's plan for Paul to come ashore on Malta. Today we shall find out what God's plan was for Paul.

1. Paul's reception on Malta (v. 2)

When Paul and the other survivors came ashore they were treated by the natives with unusual kindness. How did they show that kindness? Ask a student to read v. 2. Remember Paul and the other survivors were soaked to the skin with rain and sea water. The fire was necessary to warm them and dry their clothes. Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet. What happened when Paul threw the wood on the fire? Ask your students to read v. 3.

2. The reaction of the islanders (vs. 4-6)

Read these verses together. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from Paul's hand they decided he was a murderer. They thought all wicked people were punished for their sins in this life. The people expected Paul to swell up or suddenly fall over dead. The viper is a very poisonous snake and its bite is usually fatal. They waited a long time and when nothing happened they changed their minds and said he was a god. The reaction of the islanders should teach us not to jump to conclusions or to be too greatly influenced by what our friends or classmates think, but to reason things out for ourselves. Complete No. 2. of the students' worksheet.

3. Paul at the Governor's house (vs. 7-8)

The governor of the island, who was called Publius, owned a large estate. He was rich and generous and he invited Paul and his party to stay at his home for a few days. See v. 7. How was Paul able to repay Publius' kindness? Read v. 8. We must note here that Paul prayed to God before placing his hands on the sick man to heal him. It was the power of God through Paul that enabled him to perform this miracle of healing. Complete No. 3. of the students' worksheet.

4. God's special plan and purpose (v.9)

What happened next? See v. 9. In this way Paul was able to repay the kindness of the islanders, bringing comfort and blessing to them. How long were Paul and his party on the island? (v. 11) What kind of a send-off did the islanders give them? (See v. 10.) Note how God, through the islanders, graciously provided for the needs of the 276 men as they were about to set sail once again. Paul accepted the gifts because of need, not as payment for his services. It is our duty as Christians to do God's work wherever He places us.

Paul was on a journey to Rome as a prisoner for Christ. He would not have sailed anywhere near Malta if it had not been for the storm. Paul was exactly where God wanted him to be. God was in complete control of Paul's life and He had a purpose for him being on Malta. Paul had the opportunity to serve God there. God enabled him to shake off the snake with no ill effect. The incident set Paul apart from the other prisoners and made the people take particular notice of him. Then God enabled him to perform the miracle of healing. The old man would have died in a short time

from weakness and dehydration. When the people of Malta saw him restored to health, those who were sick all came to be healed. In these three ways God's power was demonstrated. Complete No. 4. of the students' worksheet.

5. APPLICATION

How do you behave when things seem to go wrong and you have to change your plans? Perhaps you have worked hard, yet you failed the examination. Perhaps you cannot attend the school you would like to attend. Consider No. 5. in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 19

Paul - a prisoner for Christ

UNDER HOUSE-ARREST IN ROME

Scripture Text - Acts 28: 11 - 31

AIM OF LESSON

To show that 'all things work together for good to those who love God.' (Rom. 8:28).

BACKGROUND NOTES

- v.11 The ship in which Paul made the final stage of his journey to Rome, was probably another grain ship from Alexandria, carrying the figurehead of Castor and Pollux, the twins (Gemini), the mythical sons of Jupiter, who were supposed to protect sailors.
- v.12 The first port of call on this journey was Syracuse, a very important city on the east coast of Sicily.
- v.13 With favourable winds, they made their way to Rhegium across the straits of Messina, at the toe of Italy. Finally, they sailed to Puteoli on the Bay of Naples, from where they made their way to Rome by road.
- v.15 The Appian Way - one of the great Roman roads of S. Italy, called after Appius Claudius, who began its building in 312 B.C. 'The Three Taverns' and 'Appii Forum' were stopping places on this road, where travellers could rest and be refreshed.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION1. Introduction**The final stages of Paul's journey to Rome** Acts 28:11-16

Three years before the events of this story Paul had written a letter to the Christians at Rome (the Epistle to the Romans). Paul had desired for a long time to visit Rome, the capital of the Gentile world and the centre of the Roman Empire. Ask the students to read Romans 1: 11-15 and Romans 15: 23-24. Stress that Paul had been hindered from going to Rome until now. Discuss with your class how Christianity had spread to Rome and the origin of the Church there. We know from Acts 2:10 that there were Roman Jews and proselytes (i.e. converts to Judaism and believers in the one true God) present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. No doubt, some of them were converted to Christ and returned to Rome to form the first Christian fellowship there. God had made a promise to Paul, that he would witness to Christ in Rome (Acts 23:11), but, between the promise and its fulfilment, lay a tortuous route involving conspiracies, delays, imprisonments and shipwreck. Now, at last, God's time had come, 'and so we went towards Rome' (Acts 28:14). Read Acts 28: 11-16. The Christians in Rome had a world-wide reputation for the faith (Romans 1: 7-8);

they were about to show their faith by their works. When they heard of the arrival of Paul at Puteoli, a number of them set out to welcome him. They travelled a distance of about 6 miles, probably on foot. What a tonic to the weary apostle! When he saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God for this evidence of their Christian love. Refer back to the map given in Lesson 17 and look at the route taken from Malta to Rome. Now complete No. 1. in the students' worksheet.

2. Paul, the prisoner of Christ v.16

Paul was in Rome at last! But how different were the circumstances from what he may have planned! He was a prisoner awaiting trial before the great Caesar. All the other prisoners were handed over to the Captain of the Guard, but Paul seemed to have earned the favour of his captors and he was permitted to dwell by himself, in his own hired house, but with a soldier to guard him.(Acts 28:16)

The great Apostle Paul bound with a chain! (Acts 28:20). Ask your students to think about this for a while! He came from a fine family and had had a good education and many privileges. He had been exceedingly religious, a strict Pharisee, a student of the famous teacher Gamaliel, with excellent prospects for the future. Then the risen Lord Jesus had confronted him on the road to Damascus and Paul had been convinced that he had been totally wrong about Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was indeed the Messiah (the Christ) who had been promised to the Jews. Instead of being a persecuter of Christ, Paul had become a servant (or slave) of Christ, and in the end 'the prisoner of Christ,' as he described himself in letters written from Rome at this time (See Philemon v. 1, Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1). He did not think of himself as Caesar's prisoner, but Christ's. He acknowledged God's providence in everything that happened to him. Suffering was nothing new to Paul. In 2 Corinthians 11:16-28 we learn that, compared to other Christian leaders, Paul had worked much harder, been in prison more often, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Life or death was not the issue that mattered to Paul. What did matter was that Christ should be exalted in his body, whether by life or by death (Phil.1:20). Paul was ready to surrender his liberty and, if need be, his life, for the sake of Christ. Self preservation did not concern Paul. His aim in life was to finish the course which Christ had marked out for him. Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. Paul, the Preacher of Christ

Read Acts 28:17-31. Paul's prison became his pulpit. He began by sending for the Jewish leaders in Rome and explaining to them why he was a prisoner - 'It is because of the hope of Israel' (i.e. the Messiah) 'I am bound with this chain' (v. 20). They were careful and astute in replying that they had not heard anything bad about him, but were anxious to hear his views, because everywhere people were talking about this 'sect' (v. 22). So they arranged a day to meet and talk with Paul. They came in

large numbers and listened 'from morning till evening' as Paul taught them about the kingdom of God and tried to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah who had been foretold in the writings of Moses and the prophets (v. 23). Some believed and some did not (v. 24). Paul told them that this, too, was foretold in Isaiah's writings (vs. 25-27). God had sent the Gospel first to the Jews. Now He would send it to the Gentiles, and they would listen. For two whole years, Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus (vs. 30, 31), welcoming all who came to see him. Now complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. Paul's Prison Letters

There was another purpose in Paul's imprisonment. He had time to write letters! They were written either by Paul himself or dictated to a scribe (secretary). We can still read them today. In God's providence, the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, the second epistle to Timothy and the one to Philemon (all of which were written by Paul in prison) are part of the revealed Word of God and are priceless teaching for the benefit of all Christ's people everywhere and in every age. Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Consider the following with your class. Ask a student to read Philippians 4:11b. Paul had learnt to be content whatever the experiences of life might be. He trusted God completely. Ask, what shall we say then of the difficulties, the delays and the hardships which Paul encountered? God meant them for good. He had things to teach Paul through these trials and He planned to bless others through them also. Paul had proved in his own experience the truth of Romans 8:28, 'We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.' How do we feel about the delays and the difficulties in our lives? Have we learned to be content with whatever experiences God sends us? Do we really believe that God works out everything for our good, if we belong to Him? See students' worksheet.

LESSON 20

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

CALLING AND REGENERATION

Scripture Text - Ephesians 2: 1-10; John 6: 44-47, 60-69
Shorter Catechism Qs. 29, 30 and 31.

AIM OF LESSON

To show what is meant by effectual calling and the part played by the Holy Spirit in it.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Fill in the blanks in part A of the students' worksheet. Discuss the meanings of the words in part B and match the words to their meanings.

- partaker - a person who has a share in
- redemption - deliverance achieved by the payment of a ransom. This ransom is the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus on the cross.
- effectual - That which produces the desired effect
- embrace - To receive willingly or eagerly

Read the story in part C of the students' worksheet and discuss the following points. Simon did not become a Christian. Yet he had heard the same sermon as John had. Why did John respond and Simon did not? It was not that John lived a better life than Simon or that he knew more about God. The call to repentance and acceptance of Christ as Saviour had been made by the minister to all in the congregation that day. However, the call heard by John was effectual, i.e., it produced the desired effect. John repented of his sin and trusted in Christ for salvation.

1. Sinners and Salvation

How do we explain the difference between John's and Simon's reactions to the preaching of the Gospel? Ask a student to read the answer to Catechism No. 29 and read together Ephesians 2:1-10. God has commanded man to repent and believe. However, because he is 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Ephesians 2:1,5) he cannot do this by his own efforts or just whenever he likes. As a sinner he has no time for God, nor does he understand the gospel message. Read 1 Corinthians. 2: 10, 14 together.

Thus, God by His Holy Spirit, must awaken the 'dead' and sinful heart and give both the desire and the ability to hear and respond to the gospel. The Holy Spirit had worked in John's life and had enabled him to respond to the gospel. Thus the call which came to John was effectual. Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2 What does the Holy Spirit do for us in the work of effectual calling?

Let us now look in detail at the answer to Catechism No. 31. What is effectual calling?
Ask a student to read the answer.

(a) The Holy Spirit convinces us of our sin and misery

As we have already noted, the non-Christian of himself cannot realise that he is a sinner. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts men of their sin. Read Acts 2: 37 - 41. Peter had just preached a sermon to a large crowd. Many of them crowd were convinced of their sin. Ask 'What did they say?' (v. 37) and 'What was Peter's reply?' (v. 38)

Complete No. 2(a) of the students' worksheet.

(b) The Holy Spirit enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ

Read Acts 26: 18. Ask 'How is the sinner described here?' (blind and in darkness) When the Holy Spirit works in the life of a sinner he will see the truth of the gospel. He will no longer want to sit in spiritual darkness. See Ephesians 1: 17, 18.

Complete No. 2(b) of the students' worksheet.

(c) The Holy Spirit renews our wills

Consider how the sinner is described in Ephesians 2: 3a and Titus 3: 3. The unregenerate man follows his own desires and thoughts. But it is the Holy Spirit who renews our wills, causing us to want God's will for our lives, not our own. Note the change which took place in Zacchaeus' life when he met Jesus. No longer was he the dishonest tax-collector. Now he wanted to put things right in his life. Read Luke 19:8 and Ezekiel 11:19-20.

Complete No. 2(c) of the students' worksheet.

(d) The Holy Spirit persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel

Discuss with the class how, when we become Christians, we are often conscious of our part in this. We repent of our sins and ask Christ to take control of our lives. However, it is only as we study Scripture that we realise that it is God, by His Holy Spirit, who gives us the desire and ability to accept Christ's offer of salvation. Look up John 6: 37, 44-47, 60-69.

Complete No. 2(d) of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Ask the class to think about whether they are like John or like Simon and to consider if the Holy Spirit has

- convinced them of their sin and misery?
- enlightened their minds in the knowledge of Christ?
- renewed their will?
- persuaded and enabled them to embrace Jesus Christ?

LESSON 21

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?

Scripture Text - Romans 5: 19; 2 Corinthians 5: 21; Ephesians 2:8-9.
Shorter Catechism Qs. 32, 33

AIM OF LESSON

To show the students what is meant by justification.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Question 32 - Only a short time need be spent on this question as it is dealt with more fully in the following lessons.

Justification - This may be defined as that legal act of God by which He declares the sinner righteous only on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Christ.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask a Student to read Q. 32 and the answer to it. (If desired, recap briefly on Q. 31 - effectual calling.) Discuss with the class what three benefits those who are effectually called enjoy (justification, adoption, sanctification) Complete Section A in the students' worksheet. We will consider the first of these benefits today - justification.

Ask the class to look at the illustration in Section B of the students worksheet and then relate this story to the class. Picture the scene - a courtroom. A young lad comes before the judge accused of stealing money from the car of none other than the judge himself. He pleads guilty to the charge - but notice what the judge says. Surely the young boy should pay the fine? This is only an illustration. It would be hard to imagine this happening in the courts of our land, but it helps to explain the meaning of today's catechism question.

1. God pardons sin and declares sinners righteous
'Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sin and accepteth us as righteous in His sight...' Ask the class to look back to the illustration, and discuss with them that, even though the young lad has pleaded guilty to theft, he is not punished. He does not have to pay the fine for the judge has paid it for him. The young boy is treated as if he has done nothing wrong even though he has broken the law by stealing. This is a picture of what justification is. The judge illustrates something of what God is like and the boy illustrates what we are like. Even though the boy was guilty, the judge treated him as if he were not. Likewise, we are guilty, yet when God justifies us, He declares us not guilty and treats us as

such. Justification is God pardoning a person's sin because Christ has been punished for it. It is also God declaring that the sinner is not guilty in His sight even though he has, as we all have, broken God's perfect Law.

Notice how the Catechism calls justification 'an act of God's free grace'. This means that it is God's gift to us which we do not merit, and for which we cannot work. See Ephesians 2: 8, 9.

Complete No. 1 in the students' worksheet.

2. Christ stands in the place of sinners

'... and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us ...'

Discuss, 'How can a Holy God justify us and accept us as righteous?' It is only because of what Christ has done.

(a) Read Romans 5: 19. Ask, Who is the first man mentioned? (Adam). Ask, Who is the second man mentioned? (Christ). Jesus Christ lived a life of total obedience to God which culminated in His death on the cross. He was therefore perfectly righteous. It is only because of this that God can declare sinners righteous. The catechism puts it this way: 'God accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.' To impute means to reckon or to lay to the account of someone, something which originally belonged to someone else. Thus, in justification, God takes something from us which He gives to Jesus Christ and takes something from Him which He gives to us. Complete 2(a) of the students' worksheet.

(b) Ask, 'What does God take from us and lay on Jesus Christ?' Look up 2 Corinthians 5: 21a. 'God made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us...' Our sin was 'laid to His account' and He was treated as if He had sinned our sin!

Ask, 'What do we receive from Jesus Christ?' See 2 Corinthians 5: 21b. '...that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' The perfect righteousness of Christ is 'laid to our account'. God treats us as if we had never sinned. He treats us as if we had kept all His Holy laws perfectly!

So, in justification, an exchange takes place. Christ takes our sin and we receive His righteousness. How amazing this is! Complete No. 2(b) in the students' worksheet.

3. Sinners receive Christ's righteousness by faith alone

'... and received by faith alone.'

We have seen how God justifies sinners but how does the sinner receive this justification? By faith alone. See Galatians 2: 16. This verse tells us that we can only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in any other person or thing cannot save us. Nor do we need anything more than repentance and faith to be justified. No matter how sinful a person has been, if he repents of his sin and believes in Jesus Christ accepting Him as his only Saviour and Lord, he is justified immediately. There and then, he is regarded as righteous before God. Justification is an act of God's free grace. Once a person is justified, he is justified for all time. Just as when Jesus Christ died on the cross at Calvary He made full payment for sin, so justification is complete from the time the sinner repents of his sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

(See Think About section on students' worksheet.) Ask the class to consider how they stand before God the judge. We are all guilty before God, but those who confess this guilt, God freely forgives and accepts us as not guilty if we have accepted Christ as our sin-bearer.

When God looks at you does He say 'guilty' or 'not guilty'?

LESSON 22

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

WHAT IS ADOPTION?

Scripture Texts - Romans 8: 15-17; John 1: 12; 1 John 3: 1
Shorter Catechism Q. 34

AIM OF LESSON

To see the basis and the benefits of being adopted into God's family.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Relate this situation in class:

Imagine that you are an orphan, or that your parents no longer wanted you. How would you feel? Then one day a very friendly couple meet you and say how much they want to make you part of their family. How would you feel now? This is the practice which we usually refer to as adoption. Fill in Section A of the students' worksheet. In today's lesson we shall see that the act of God's adoption has some similarities to legal adoption, and is also in some respects quite dissimilar. Read and discuss Section B of the worksheet.

1. The Basis of God's Adoption

Man usually adopts to satisfy his own needs, perhaps because he has no children of his own, but God does not adopt upon this account. He had a Son of His own, the Lord Jesus. He was God's beloved Son, who was the express image of His Father, who was more dear to His Father than all the angels in heaven. Therefore it is not because of any necessity that God adopts, but it is an act of God's free grace. Furthermore, when man adopts he usually has a preference for either a girl or a boy. He will also want to pick a pretty child, one with pleasant features. However, when God decided to adopt us there was nothing attractive about us, or any beauty in us. Indeed, Paul describes our condition by saying that, 'We ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.' (Titus 3:3) There was nothing, therefore, to move or incline God to adopt us, but rather He adopts out of His own free grace. That's why John is able to exclaim with amazement, 'Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God' (1 John 3:1). The basis of God's adoption is therefore His grace. Grace is God's undeserved, unmerited love shown toward guilty sinners. It is because of God's grace that He is willing and able to forgive us for our sins and welcome us into His great family - 'into the number', a number so great no man can number. Thus when God adopts He does not adopt just one, but millions. He brings 'many sons to glory'. This, however, does not mean that everyone is a child of God. It is a popular idea

that all men are the children of God, and that God is the Father of all men. This is a mistake. God is not the Father of everyone. All men are not by nature the children of God. All men are born children of the devil. A child of God is not one who is born, but one who has been born again. 'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (John 1: 12, 13). See also Galatians 3: 26.

God's children are only those who by grace have been forgiven, been born again and instated as sons and daughters through faith in Christ. Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. **The benefits of God's adoption**

Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers. Adoption takes us into God's family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. In our present day we are very familiar with broken homes (and one-parent families). God's family is not like that. In it there is absolute stability and security. God is wise and good, He is a perfect Father; thus our position as children is permanently assured. The very concept of God's adoption is itself a proof and guarantee of our eternal security in God's family.

Ask the class to consider

What some of the other benefits and privileges which the adopted children of God have?

- (a) We receive the Holy Spirit who in Romans 8:15 is called the Spirit of adoption.
- (b) The Holy Spirit assures us that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16), and thus we are able to talk to God as our Father (Romans 8:15) and know He will answer us (1 John 5: 14, 15).
- (c) We are assured of God's Fatherly provision of all things that we need (Psalm 34: 10; Matt. 6: 33).
- (d) In our own families if we have done something wrong we may be chastised. Likewise in God's family if we sin or are disobedient we are subject to God's Fatherly correction (Hebrews 12: 6).
- (e) Finally, because we are sons of God then we are heirs of God's Kingdom (Romans 8: 17).

Complete No. 2(a) and (b) of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Discuss the points made in No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

LESSON 23

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?

Scripture Texts - Romans 5: 1-5; Ephesians 4: 17-32.

Shorter Catechism Qs. 35 and 36.

AIM OF LESSON

To explain the meaning of sanctification and to note some of the blessings which result from this work.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**A Introduction**

Relate this story to the class (see Section A of the students' worksheet.)

Poor Simon! It would be many weeks, even months, before he could walk properly again. The doctor told his mother that it had been a bad break and would take quite some time to heal. . . .

Eight weeks later. 'Well Simon', said the doctor, 'your leg healed remarkably well, but you will still need to take great care, especially now that the plaster is off. Exercise every day and that will make your leg stronger. It will strengthen gradually. Don't expect great results overnight because they won't happen.' It took some time for Simon's leg to heal completely.

When a person becomes a Christian a process known as sanctification begins in his life. It takes a long time for this process to be complete.

Discuss with the class what sanctification is. Sanctification is the process by which a Christian becomes more holy, that is, more like God. Let us see what this means in practical terms. Complete Section B of the students' worksheet.

1. The Author of Sanctification - Where does it begin?

Ask class to read 1 Thessalonians 4: 3a. Consider what important thing this verse tells us about sanctification - that it is God's will that we be sanctified - He wants us to become holy. Discuss who actually does this in the life of the Christian and who the author of sanctification is. Ask the students to look up 2 Thessalonians 2: 13b. (God the Holy Spirit.) Sanctification then is the work of God's Holy Spirit.

Complete Section 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. **The Work of Sanctification**

Although God is the author of sanctification yet He requires the Christian to co-operate with Him and so have a part to play in his own sanctification. Ask class to read together Ephesians 4: 17-24; noting what the Christians are told to do in verses 22-24. It requires a great deal of effort by the Christian to do his part faithfully. Now he has a new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he wants to obey Him. However, his old nature is still there and Satan continually tempts the Christian to do wrong. So he is aware of a conflict going on inside him - a continual battle between the old nature (the old 'man' or 'self') and the new nature (the new 'man' or 'self'). He wants to obey Christ but sometimes he finds it very difficult. Discuss with the class if they sometimes find that they know what is the right thing to do but something inside them seems to be keeping them from doing it and they lose the battle. All Christians find this difficulty. Even for Paul it was a very real problem (Romans ch. 7). If we are Christians we must make a determined effort not to yield to sin. We must fight hard all the time to have victory. Ask the class to read Philippians 2:12b and 13. Discuss together if it is possible to do our part by ourselves. Verse 13 shows clearly that we cannot. 'For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.' Ask the class to try to put this into their own words. God is able to give us victory over sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. As we grow in the Christian life God helps us to have victory over sin in our lives more and more and so to become more and more like Christ, that is, God is sanctifying us and we are being 'enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness'.

This will show in our lives. Ask class to look up Ephesians 4: 25-32. As God worked in the lives of the Ephesians their lives would be changed. Then ask them to identify (a) any four things which, as Christians, they should not be doing and (b) any four things which they should be doing.

Discuss with class that if they are Christians God is changing their lives, making them more like Christ, but they must do their part.

Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. **The Nature of Sanctification**

(a) It is undeserved

Sanctification is 'the work of God's free grace.' We are told in 2 Thessalonians 2: 13 that God chose us 'for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit.' The Holy Spirit sanctifies the Christian, not because he deserves it or can do anything to earn it, but because God has chosen him and wants him to be sanctified.

(b) It is gradual

Sanctification begins the moment a person accepts Christ as Saviour and Lord. He has become a new creation. Just as a new-born baby grows slowly and takes a long time to become a mature adult, so sanctification is a gradual process. It is a work and not an act. It continues throughout the entire life of a Christian and is only completed when he reaches Heaven (cf. 1 John 1: 8 and Revelation 14: 5).

(c) It should affect every aspect of the Christian as a person

'Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God'. This means that every part of us should be becoming more holy, more like Christ, as we grow in the Christian life. Our minds, our wills and our emotions - every part of us - should show the effect of the Holy Spirit working in us. Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

4. The benefits associated with justification, adoption and sanctification

Ask students to repeat together the answer to Catechism Question 36. All believers have been justified and adopted and all should be in the process of being sanctified. Other additional benefits, or blessings, which are dependent on these three, have been supplied by God.

Discuss these blessings briefly with the students in the light of the Scripture references given below and then complete section 4 of the students' worksheet.

- (a) Assurance of God's love - 1 John 3: 1
- (b) Peace of conscience - Romans 5: 1
- (c) Joy in the Holy Ghost - Psalm 51: 11, 12
- (d) Increase of grace - Proverbs 4: 18
- (e) Perseverance therein to the end - John 10: 27-29

(Note - 'the perseverance of the saints' refers to the fact that believers have been assured of eternal salvation through faith in Christ. They will never perish.)

5 APPLICATION

God's command to us is 'Be holy: for I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16). Our prayer to Him should be 'O God, make me more like the Lord Jesus and help me to do my part today.'

LESSON 24

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

WITH CHRIST IN PARADISE

Scripture Texts - Luke 23: 43; John 5: 28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4: 14
Shorter Catechism Q. 37

AIM OF LESSON

To show that for believers death is not the end of everything but the beginning of life forever with Christ in Heaven.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Complete the Catechism answer in Section A of the students' worksheet. Death is not a subject about which people generally like to talk. Discuss with the students Section B of their worksheets. Consider together the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death unless Christ returns in their lifetime - also that death is not the end. The Scriptures teach that there is Heaven for the believer and Hell for the unbeliever after death. In today's lesson (Cat. No. 37) we are considering what happens to the believer at death. At death the soul and body are separated from each other.

1. What happens to the souls of believers at death?

(a) **They are made perfect in holiness**

In 1 Thessalonians 4: 3a we read that 'It is God's will that you should be holy.' In Lesson 23 we saw that the process of becoming more holy, i.e., sanctification, goes on right throughout the believer's life on earth. It is only completed when he goes to Heaven at death. At death the believer is made totally free from sin. See Revelation 14: 5 and 21: 27. (Complete No. 1(a) of the students' worksheet.)

(b) **They do immediately pass into glory**

The Roman Catholic system teaches that when a person dies he does not immediately go to Heaven but to an intermediate place called purgatory until he has become purified of all his sins. However, this is totally contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Consider the story Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-22). In verse 22 there is no mention of an intermediate place. Lazarus went straight to Heaven. Also consider what Jesus said to the thief on the cross. (Luke 23: 43) He did not mention an intermediate place. Paul longed to leave this life and to be with Christ (Philippians 1: 23). He makes no mention of an intermediate place. All these references show that the soul of the believer at death passes immediately into glory. Ask class to read Romans 8: 38, 39. Note that, in the list of things which cannot separate us from the love of God

death is mentioned first. Complete No. 1(b) of the students' worksheet.

2. What happens to the bodies of believers at death?

(a) **They are still united to Christ and rest in their graves.**

When Adam sinned, death both physical and spiritual, came into the world. Christ by His death on the cross overcame spiritual death for those who trust Him for salvation. However, all, both believer and unbeliever, must face physical death. Ask class to discuss how this is described in Genesis 3:19. The body disintegrates into dust. Then ask them to consider how the believing dead are described in I Thessalonians 4:14 and 16 - 'fallen asleep in Jesus' and 'dead in Christ'. The body in the grave is still precious to Christ and is resting there until the resurrection. Complete No. 2(a) of the students' worksheet.

(b) **They rest in their graves until the resurrection**

Ask class to read John 5: 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15: 52; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16.

Here we have references to the resurrection of the body when Christ returns. Ask the class to try to imagine this scene - all those who have ever lived on earth rising again, both those who have died natural deaths and those who were devoured by lions, burnt at the stake, etc. How will this be possible? It is a great mystery and one which we cannot fully understand. Paul tries to explain it in 1 Corinthians 15: 35-38. He uses the illustration of a seed being sown. While the seed and the resulting plant are essentially the same, yet they look very different. So a 'seed' of each body is preserved and out of this 'seed' God will build a resurrection body. The resurrected body of the believer will be forever with the Lord in Heaven. (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Complete No. 2(b) of the students' worksheet.

3 APPLICATION

- Death is not something the believer has to fear.
- The believer is assured of God's presence in the valley of death. Psalm 23: 4
- For the believer physical death is only the stepping-stone to Heaven. The sting of death has been taken away by Christ's death on the cross. 1 Corinthians 15: 54b-57.

The death of believers is described as -

- (a) being precious in the sight of God. Psalm 116: 15
- (b) a falling asleep in Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4: 13, 14
- (c) a going to the house with many mansions prepared by Jesus. John 14: 2, 3
- (d) being at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5: 8
- (e) a gain. Philippians 1: 21

However, none of these assurances can be given to the unbeliever. He is separated forever from God and punished for his sins in Hell.

LESSON 25

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS

Scripture Texts - Psalm 16: 11; Matthew 25: 31-46; 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44;
 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18
 Shorter Catechism Q. 38.

AIM OF LESSON

To illustrate the glorious rewards which await believers on the Day of Judgement.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Question 37 dealt with what happens to the souls and bodies of believers at death. The souls pass into glory while the bodies remain in their graves. This question deals with the events of the last day - the Judgement Day, when Christ shall come for the second time. On that day the bodies of the dead will rise from the graves where they have lain since death. As at death, the souls of believers and unbelievers are treated in different ways, so it will be at the resurrection. The bodies will go their different ways; those of believers to eternal happiness with Christ and those of unbelievers to eternal damnation.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Complete Section A of the students' worksheet.

Relate this situation to your class.

Have you ever heard anyone say 'I'm going to resurrect my old bike.' By this the person means that he hasn't used his bike for some time, but now he is going to take it out, clean it, fix it up and ride it again. However, when we talk about resurrection in the Biblical sense, we mean something a little different. Ask the students who they think of immediately when we mention the word 'resurrection.' Jesus Christ. Christ's resurrection was three days after His crucifixion. He rose up out of His grave. The word 'resurrection' literally means 'to rise again'. Complete Section B in the students' worksheet.

1. **When will the resurrection be?**

Ask class to read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18 and John 5: 28-30. When the last day comes Jesus Christ will return to the earth - this time to judge the world. It is hard to imagine what it will be like - Christ will come in glory and what noise there will be! Discuss with class who will rise up first - 1 Thessalonians 4:16. However, it is not only the believers who have died who will rise up. What does John 5: 28, 29 tell us? All who are in their graves will come up out of their graves. All will rise up to be judged. One point to note in passing. While we know that the resurrection will take place at the Day of Judgement

yet we do not know exactly when the Day of Judgement will be.
Complete No. 1 in the students' worksheet.

2. **What will Christ do at the resurrection?**

Ask class to read Matthew 25: 31- 46.

We cannot even begin to picture the scene! Everyone who has ever lived, and all who are living will appear before Christ who will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. Discuss with class what Christ will do (v. 32). How many groups of people will there be? Those who have done good will be on the right, and those who have done evil will be on the left. See John 5: 29. Everyone will have to give an account of the things he has done while alive (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. **What will happen to Christians at the resurrection?**

The Catechism answer states that believers will be raised up in glory. Believers will have a new body to replace the old one which has turned to dust in the grave. We cannot describe in detail what it will be like but the most important thing about this new body is that it will be free from sin. When Christ appears our bodies shall be made like Him and be perfect (1 John 3: 2). Read 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44. This new body will be a perfect body which will never perish.

Ask the class to turn to the Catechism answer and find three other benefits which the believer will receive from Christ at the resurrection:

(a) The believer will be openly acknowledged.

This means that on the Day of Judgement Christ will declare, before the whole world, that those who have believed in Him are His. He will acknowledge them. He will own them as His children. (Matthew 10: 32).

(b) The believer will be acquitted.

On that day believers will also be acquitted. This means that they will be declared not guilty because they have Christ's Righteousness rather than their own. See Lesson 21. (2 Corinthians 5: 21)

(c) The believer will be made perfectly blessed as he enjoys God fully forever.

Those who have believed in Christ on earth will now be in the immediate presence of God Himself. Because there is no sin, the believer will be able to enjoy God's presence fully, perfectly, forever. In Heaven he will be able to fulfil completely what he was created to do - 'glorify God and enjoy Him forever'. (Ps. 16: 11)

Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. **What will happen to non-Christians at the resurrection?**

The Catechism answer deals with what will happen to Christians on the Day of

Judgement but what about those who are not Christians? Matthew 25:41 and 46a tells us vividly what will happen to non-Christians on that day. They will be separated from God and go to eternal punishment.

Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Although death and resurrection may seem far away, what will take place on the Day of Judgement is determined by the person's spiritual state in this life.

Unless the person is resting on Christ alone for salvation there is no prospect of glory in heaven.

Challenge the students to think about the Day of Judgement and the need to prepare now, and if necessary, to 'seek the Lord while He may be found.'

LESSON 26

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

JEROBOAM LEADS THE PEOPLE INTO SIN

Scripture Text - 1 Kings 12: 25 - 33

AIM OF LESSON

To see how Jeroboam was unbelieving and disobedient toward God.

BACKGROUND

Read 1 Kings 11:26 - 12:33

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Read and complete Section A Background in the students' worksheet. Read 1 Kings 11:43 and 12:1-5. When King Solomon died, he was succeeded by his son, Rehoboam (12:1). The Israelites were hoping that their new king would not be as severe on them as Solomon had been in his later years. So Jeroboam led a delegation of the people to meet Rehoboam to request a more compassionate policy from the new king (12:3, 4). Jeroboam was evidently a man of standing and influence (11:26, 28). For three days Rehoboam considered their request. Complete Nos. 1 and 2 on the students' worksheet. Read 1 Kings 12:6-15. Rehoboam foolishly rejected the counsel of the elders (12: 6-8), and instead followed the instructions of the young men (12: 12-14). Read verses 16-20. As a result of Rehoboam's choice, the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam, and installed Jeroboam as their king. Thus the nation was now divided. Jeroboam was king in the north ruling over ten tribes, which became Israel, while Rehoboam was king in the south ruling over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, known as Judah. Complete Nos. 3 and 4 of the students' worksheet.

1. Jeroboam's Folly

Read 1 Kings 12: 25-33. Jeroboam had been previously told by God through the prophet Ahijah (11: 29-39) that he would one day rule over the ten tribes of Israel, even though Jeroboam himself had no royal blood in his veins. God promised him protection and prosperity, provided Jeroboam was obedient and faithful to God. Jeroboam's opportunity had now arrived. When the Israelites installed him as their king it was really God making him king. He seemed destined to a great future.

Yet Jeroboam threw all the promises away. Instead of becoming a great northern nation, Israel became a nation of internal strife, due largely to Jeroboam's distrust in God. Jeroboam obviously felt insecure. His first task was to fortify Shechem which became the capital, and build Peniel as a border fortress (12:25). This action met the immediate military problems, but Jeroboam still felt insecure (vs. 26, 27). Had Jeroboam forgotten the word of the Lord to him? Complete No. 5 in the students' worksheet.

2. Jeroboam's Sin

Jeroboam did not trust God to maintain his Kingdom, neither did he trust his people. He was afraid they would switch their allegiance to Rehoboam and defect to the south (12: 26, 27). As Rehoboam had done, Jeroboam turned to counsellors (v. 28). Their advice was not helpful. As a result Jeroboam initiated a new religious system intended to rival and replace the true religion of Judah. Read 1 Kings 12: 28-33.

Four things characterised this sinful system.

(i) **A new manner of worship** (v. 28)

Jeroboam had two calves made out of gold and gave orders that these were to be used by the people in their worship. Jeroboam said of the golden calves 'Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.' This was in defiance of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd commandments.

(ii) **A new place of worship** (vs. 29, 31a)

Jeroboam feared that if the people should make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, as God had commanded, their loyalty would revert to Judah. As a preventative measure, Jeroboam set up centres in the north and south of his Kingdom to worship, i.e., Dan and Bethel. Ironically, many of the people would now have to travel much farther than previously to Jerusalem.

(iii) **A new priesthood** (v. 31b)

According to Mosaic law only Levites were allowed to be priests. But they were all in Judah. Jeroboam merely chose certain men as priests regardless of tribal background.

(iv) **A new time for worship** (vs. 32, 33)

The Feast of Tabernacles had been observed in the 7th month, but now Jeroboam instituted a rival feast on the 8th month which was obviously intended to break down the mental concept of Jerusalem's importance.

Complete No. 6 of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

The root of Jeroboam's problem was that he did not believe in the Word of God or the promises of God. The result was a feeling of insecurity and downright disobedience. If we believe in God's promises, the result will be faithfulness and obedience. (see Nos. 7 and 8 on the students' worksheet.) Challenge the students as to whether they read God's Word every day, believe it and obey it.

LESSON 27

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

ELISHA: INSTRUMENT OF GOD'S MERCY

Scripture Text - 2 Kings 4

AIM OF LESSON

To show that God cares about the needs of His people and can use His servants to meet these needs.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In 2 Kings ch. 4 we are presented with four incidents through which God shows that He cares for His people and is able to meet all the needs that may arise.

Verse 1 - Records of the time show that sons were often taken in payment for debts and had to be slaves for seven years. See Exodus 21: 2.

Verse 13 - 'To dwell among my own people' means she was content with her lot.

Verse 19 - The boy was probably suffering from sunstroke.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Discuss with the students what would happen if they went into an exam without a pen. How would a doctor cope without his medical instruments? Or a musician without his musical instrument? The Bible illustrates for us many examples of God using His people as His instruments in helping and caring for others and in bringing them to know Him. In today's lesson we see how Elisha was used on four different occasions as an instrument of God's mercy. (see introductory section of the students' worksheet.)

Everyone has needs

In our passage we meet two individuals and one group of people who had very definite and very different needs.

1. The Widow

Ask class to read 2 Kings 4: 1-7.

This was the widow of one of the prophets. She had been left in debt and was afraid that her two sons would be taken away as payment for her debts, so she needed cash. Note that she was encouraged to use what she had - a little oil (v. 2). She was then provided with enough oil to pay her debts and what was left would allow her to have enough capital to set up a business to be run by herself and her sons. God met her need, not just for the moment, but in such a way that her future was secure. Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. The Shunammite Woman

Summarise briefly the events found in 2 Kings 4: 8-37.

In the eyes of the world she was successful and prosperous and, when Elisha asked what he could do for her in return for her hospitality, she told him she was content. However, deep inside she longed for the child which it seemed impossible for her to have. Though her husband was an old man, she was able to have the child she longed for and, when the child died, he was restored to her. God showed through this incident His power over life and death. Complete No. 2 of the student's worksheet.

3. **The Prophets**

Ask the class to read 2 Kings 4: 38-44. Elisha was teaching these men and preparing them for God's work. In the area where they were, Gilgal, there was a famine which was to last for seven years due to the wickedness of the people. The prophets needed food to live, so we have here two separate incidents when this need was met. God demonstrated His power over nature when the poison was eliminated from the prophets' stew and when the twenty loaves of barley bread were multiplied to feed a hundred men. Complete Nos. 3 and 4 of the students' worksheet.

Notice how different these people are from each other; the contrast between the poor widow and the rich Shunammite, between the two women who lead everyday lives and the men who are being prepared for a life of service to God. However, they do have one thing in common which you may have spotted. They are all followers of God; the widow whose husband was a prophet, the woman who provides shelter for a man of God and the prophets who have dedicated their lives to God.

God is able to meet those needs

In each case, as a result of God's provision, the people were able to continue their lives in the way God intended. If we are His, God knows our needs and cares for us. Many verses in the Bible assure us of God's ability to meet our needs. Read Philippians 4: 19.

Elisha was God's instrument

In each of these miracles God used Elisha as His instrument. He was God's representative on earth and people turned to him in their need. Notice how Elisha was ready to be used by God, even though it meant inconvenience (Gehazi could not revive the Shunammite's son; Elisha had to go there himself) and sacrifice (the twenty loaves were, after all, given to Elisha). Read No. 5 in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

People nowadays are no less needy, despite advances which have been made since Elisha's time. Just as God used Elisha to meet His people's need, so He sees fit to use His children in His service today. Like Elisha, we must be ready and willing to do what God requires of us, even if it means inconvenience and sacrifice. Complete Nos. 6 and 7 in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 28

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

JEHU: INSTRUMENT OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

Scripture Text - 2 Kings 9:1 - 10:31

AIM OF LESSON

To show how God used Jehu to carry out His judgement on Ahab's family.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The killings in these two chapters are described very graphically and seem very cruel to us. However, we must always keep in mind how God abhors sin. In order to understand why Jehu was to wipe out Ahab's complete family, we need to know what sort of person Ahab was and what he had done. When the utter wickedness of Ahab and his wife Jezebel is seen, Jehu's killings are put into perspective.

Ahab was the seventh king over the ten tribes of Israel. 1 Kings 16: 30 tells us that he did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of the kings before him. He married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians, and began to serve and worship Baal. His character is summarised in 1 Kings 21: 25, 26. His wife, Jezebel, was even more wicked than he was. It was she who introduced Baal worship into Israel and it was she who killed the Lord's prophets (1 Kings 18: 4). Furthermore, when Ahab wanted a vineyard which belonged to Naboth, who could not give it to him (1 Kings 21: 3), she engineered Naboth's murder so that Ahab could have the vineyard (1 Kings 21). Ahab was like a spoiled child, with Jezebel the driving force in the family, stirring up, firstly her husband, and then her sons, to do evil.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Remind the class of last week's lesson - how God used Elisha to meet the needs of His people. Then ask students if they can remember who Elisha helped (the widow, the Shunammite woman, the prophets). Today's lesson is about a man called Jehu, whom God also used, but in a very different way.

Read Case 1 and Case 2 in Section A of the students' worksheet and ask the students if either of the situations has ever happened to them. In both these incidents it seems as though sin has gone unpunished. It seemed like this in Jehu's day also, but God chose Jehu to bring judgement on those who had done wrong.

1. Jehu - God's instrument chosen 2 Kings 9: 1-13.

Read the passage together.

Ask class to picture the scene. You are commander Jehu. You are sitting with your fellow army officers when a messenger comes in and asks you to go with him into the house. The messenger, whom you recognise to be a prophet, then pours oil on your head and tells you that God has appointed you king over Israel. Next he tells you what God wants you to do - destroy the whole house of Ahab. Immediately the prophet runs off.

Jehu does not seem to have expected to be anointed King of Israel. Discuss with class what his task was and what God was going to do through him. (2 Kings 9: 7-8) Now complete No. 1 in the students' worksheet.

2. The sin of Ahab's family

God was going to use Jehu as His instrument of judgement on Ahab's family. Discuss who Ahab was and what had he done that his whole family should be completely wiped out. From the Background Notes describe to your class what Ahab and his wife Jezebel were like. Ask a student to read 1 Kings 16: 29-33, 1 Kings 18: 4 and 1 Kings 21: 25, 26. Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. Jehu carries out God's punishment 2 Kings 9: 14-37

Having been given a job to do, Jehu wasted no time in carrying it out. Ahab had already been killed (1 Kings 22: 37), but Jezebel was staying in the palace in the royal city of Jezreel, along with Joram, her son, and Ahaziah, her grandson.

Jehu raced off to Jezreel (see verse 20). Joram and Ahaziah rode out to meet him. Significantly they met at Naboth's vineyard. Read verses 21 - 24 and verse 27. In a very short space of time both were dead.

Jehu then pressed on to Jezreel where Jezebel was. Discuss with class. When Jezebel heard about the deaths of Joram and Ahaziah what did she do? Hide from Jehu? No - read verse 30. She set herself up to defy Jehu. But very shortly, she too was dead - and a very unpleasant death it was.

Read vs. 33, 35-37. Notice how God's Word through Elijah came true. Ask class to compare 1 Kings 21: 23 and 2 Kings 9: 35. Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

4. Did Jehu follow God wholeheartedly? 2 Kings 10: 28-31

In chapter 10 we read of how Jehu killed more relatives and friends of Ahab and relatives of Ahaziah. Furthermore, he destroyed Baal worship in Israel (2 Kings 10: 28) but verse 29 tells us that he still committed the same sins as Jeroboam had done

(Lesson 26). Also, while he received a reward for doing God's will (verse 30), discuss with the class what verse 31 tells us. Complete No. 4 of the students' worksheet.

While Jehu carried out God's will concerning Ahab's family, yet he did not keep God's Law with all his heart. He commented on his 'zeal for the Lord' (verse 16) and it appears that he had plenty of zeal to kill. However, when Ahab's family were all destroyed, where then was his 'zeal for the Lord'? We can question whether God was really at the centre of all that Jehu did.

APPLICATION

Discuss and fill in No. 5(a) - (d) of the students' worksheet.

LESSON 29

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

AHAZ: SCORNING GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Scripture Text - Isaiah 7

AIM OF LESSON

To show the folly of trusting in people instead of in God.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Rezin, King of Syria (Aram) and Pekah, King of Israel (Ephraim) attacked Ahaz, King of Judah. Isaiah was sent by God to Ahaz with a message of hope but Ahaz rejected the message and turned instead to Assyria, the nation which would eventually bring about the destruction of Judah. (See also Political Background on the students' worksheet.)

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Ahaz, King of Judah, and his people were very fearful. Their capital city was being besieged by the armies of two great nations. In Isaiah ch. 7 we have a vivid description of their feelings - 'so his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.' It was at this point that God sent the prophet, Isaiah, to Ahaz with a message of hope.

1. Ahaz as King: 2 Chronicles 28: 1-4
Read this passage and discuss what kind of a king Ahaz was. Was he God-fearing?
Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.
2. Ahaz's predicament: Isaiah 7: 1, 2, 5, 6
God did not ignore Ahaz's wickedness. He handed Ahaz over to the king of Syria (Aram). Read 2 Chronicles 28: 5a. Rezin, the king of Syria allied with Pekah, the king of Israel and the two nations declared war on Ahaz. Read Isaiah 7: 1, 2, 5, 6. They besieged Jerusalem, intending to overthrow Ahaz and put the son of Tabeel on the throne. Complete No. 2 (a) and (b) of the students' worksheet.
3. The Lord's message for Ahaz: Isaiah 7: 3-9
Read this passage. God sent the prophet Isaiah to speak to the troubled king. Isaiah told Ahaz to keep calm and not to be afraid (v. 4). There was no need for him to fear the two invading kings. Discuss how God described them (v. 4) - 'two stubs of smoking firebrands.' The enemy was not likened to two large devastating fires but as fires about to go out. Therefore their attack upon Judah would soon fail (v. 7). Also these two nations themselves would soon be overrun by an enemy. Read verse 8.
8. Ask the class how long it would be before Israel would cease to exist as a

separate nation. God also encouraged Ahaz by reminding him that the kings of these two enemy nations were mere men (vs. 8, 9) - they did not have God on their side. Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

4. God's special sign: Isaiah 7:10-16

Ask the class who Isaiah was to take with him. (v. 3) The boy's name, Shear-Jashub, which means 'a remnant will return', should also have been a source of encouragement to Ahaz. It was a sign that his nation of Judah would never be completely wiped out. There would always be a remnant. Thus, in different ways, God, through Isaiah, offered encouragement to Ahaz. Despite his great wickedness God had not forsaken Ahaz and his people. Discuss with the class how Ahaz reacted to God's message. God told Ahaz to ask for a sign. See verse 11. What was the king's reply? (v. 12) Ahaz was not interested in a sign from God but God gave a special sign not only to him but also to the whole nation of Judah. (The 'you' in verse 14 is plural.) Ask the class what this sign was. Read verse 14. God announced the birth of a Child as a sign of the deliverance which the nation would eventually have. Discuss the following questions - Who was this Child? What does the name 'Immanuel' mean? See Matthew 1: 23. Ahaz was again told of the destruction of his two enemies, Rezin and Pekah. Read verse 16. The length of time which it would take for a child to be old enough to distinguish between right and wrong would be the length of time that Judah would suffer at the hands of Rezin and Pekah. Then the lands of these two kings would be laid waste. Complete No. 4 (a) and (b) of the students' worksheet.

5. Ahaz's response

Ahaz had no intention of trusting God. Instead he turned for help to the king of another country. Read 2 Kings 16: 7 and complete No. 5 of the students' worksheet..

6. The consequences:

Because Ahaz had scorned God's offer of deliverance, God said he would also suffer (v. 17). The king of Assyria did help Ahaz but in return Ahaz had to pay tribute to Assyria. Read 2 Chronicles 28: 20,21 and complete No. 6 of the students' worksheet.

In Isaiah 7: 18-25 we have a vivid description of how Assyria would one day overrun Judah itself and cause utter devastation. The ally, Assyria, would become an enemy. Read verse 20. This verse means that Assyria to whom Ahaz had turned for help would eventually turn round and overrun Judah itself.

APPLICATION

Instead of trusting God in difficulty, Ahaz foolishly trusted the forces of another king.

LESSON 30

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

IMMANUEL: GOD'S PROMISED DELIVERANCE

Scripture Text- Isaiah 9: 6, 7 and Isaiah 53

AIM OF LESSON

To show that Immanuel, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to be our Saviour, as God had promised, and suffered the penalty our sins deserved.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Discuss with class how they would expect a great deliverer to appear. Would he be someone with a fleet of warships, missiles and all the latest weapons at his command? Would they recognise him by his commanding presence giving an air of importance and authority? Not thus the greatest Deliverer ever to appear on the scene of history. His great deliverance was not accomplished with any of the weapons or strategy of warfare. In fact, His introduction to the world He had come to deliver was as a helpless baby.

1. Who was Immanuel?

Read Matthew 1:23. Who was this great Deliverer? (The Lord Jesus Christ) Why had He come? (See 1 Tim. 1: 15) Could someone else have done this? (See Acts 4: 12) If He had not come to save us from our sins, what would have happened to us? (See Romans. 6: 23a. Spiritual death means separation from God forever.) What did God do about this? (See John 3: 16) What does this teach us about God?

Look up Isaiah 7: 14. The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was going to come as the great Deliverer, or Messiah, was revealed by God to His servants, the prophets, hundreds of years before it happened. We can read these prophecies in various parts of the Old Testament. Two of these passages we are going to look at today. Ask one of the students to read Isaiah 9: 6, 7. This prophecy looks forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It shows that He would be born as a baby. He would occupy a position of great dignity and authority - 'the government will be upon His shoulder' (v. 6). Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2(a) Immanuel - His Character

His names tell us more about Him. 'His name will be called ...' (v. 6). In Hebrew a name or a title usually describes a person's character. Let us look at the titles by which the promised Messiah is called.

'Wonderful Counsellor' - He is truly wonderful in His person. Also, He has special

wisdom and so is able to give wise counsel to those in His Kingdom.

‘Mighty God’ - He is not a man but is Divine. He has great power and will be able to carry out all His plans fully.

‘Everlasting Father’ - He will have everlasting loving concern for those in His care.

‘Prince of Peace’ - He rules over His people as Prince or King and establishes peace in His Kingdom. He is the Peace of His people. Immanuel’s reign will last forever and He will rule with justice and righteousness.

Complete No. 2(a) in the students’ worksheet.

2(b) The reaction of the world to Immanuel

Read Isaiah 53: 1-3.

Here we have a picture of someone who seemed completely unimportant. He was totally misunderstood because of His seeming insignificance. We are shown His humble beginning. Discuss the following questions:- Did many recognise the baby born in the stable in Bethlehem as the promised Messiah? When the Lord Jesus Christ lived as a boy in Nazareth, who took any particular notice of Him? Did everyone believe in Him even when He performed miracles? (Compare v. 1 with John 12: 37, 38) When He was on trial no one considered Him worthy of defence. No one would have thought of choosing Him as a Deliverer. The picture here is that of a rejected, despised figure. But the world had got it all wrong! In reality, He was anything but that. Complete 2(b) of the students’ worksheet.

3 Immanuel - His work

Read Isaiah 53: 4-9.

He was not an unimportant, unimpressive figure, but rather the willing substitute for guilty sinners. He had done nothing wrong; yet, on the cross, He bore the terrible consequences of our sin (v. 5). He took the severe punishment which our sins deserved. He willingly became our substitute. He suffered great cruelty yet did not utter one word of complaint (v. 7). There was no word of protest about the unfairness of it all. He endured willingly the punishment our sins deserved. Complete 3(a) of the students’ worksheet.

The comparison with a lamb (v. 7) is apt. He was the Lamb of God. (Read John 1: 29, 36.) He was guilty of no crime, not even a sinful word. Yet the way He was treated was more in keeping with the treatment deserved by a criminal. Complete 3(b) and (c) on the students’ worksheet. However, because of His perfect innocence, God saw to it that He was given an honourable burial. Read Matthew 27: 57-60. In the light of this passage, discuss with the students the significance of the phrase ‘He was . . . with the rich in His

death' (v. 9).

4. God's Plan

Read Isaiah 53: 10-12.

His suffering was not accidental but part of a great divine plan (v. 10). Though He died, He rose again to carry on the work entrusted to Him, the work of salvation (vs. 10b, 11). He gave His all in the great conflict in which He was engaged (v. 12). He has won a great victory in His great work of deliverance. 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' (Revelation 5: 12)

Now complete No. 4 of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Take a few minutes to emphasise with the students the 'POINTS TO PONDER' at the end of the students' worksheet.

LESSON 31

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

HEZEKIAH: CLAIMING GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Scripture Text - Isaiah 37

AIM OF LESSON

To show that God gives victory to those who trust in Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Hezekiah's reign is described in 2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32 and Isaiah 36-39. Hezekiah was one of the good kings of Judah - 'He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord'.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah about 701 BC, (Isaiah 36: 1). Read Isaiah ch. 36 for the historical background.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**1. Introduction - Who was Hezekiah?**

Read 2 Kings 18: 1-7 and 2 Chronicles 29: 3, 5, 35 and complete No. 1 on the students' worksheet.

2. Jerusalem's Threat

Read Isaiah 36: 1-20. Sennacherib was the greatest! Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was bent on conquering the world. Nothing stood in his way except tiny Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah. He had already conquered towns, cities, countries, kings and princes and all seemed powerless against his might (see 37: 11-13).

Now Sennacherib turned his attention to the final obstacle, Jerusalem. He had already attacked and captured all the other fortified cities of Judah (36: 1). Thus it did not seem difficult for Sennacherib to achieve his aim. He sent his field-commander with a large army to Jerusalem (36: 2). The field-commander spoke to Hezekiah's officials demanding that Jerusalem should immediately surrender to Assyria (36: 4-10). He then proceeded publicly to advise the people to reject the leadership and counsel of Hezekiah and to capitulate to Sennacherib, king of Assyria (36: 13-20). Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. Hezekiah's Response (37: 1-4)

When Hezekiah heard from his officials all that Sennacherib's field-commander had been saying, he showed his distress and sorrow. As was the custom of his time, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth (v. 1). He then sent his officials to the prophet Isaiah, asking Isaiah to pray 'for the remnant in Jerusalem that is left' (vs. 2-4).

4. Isaiah's Reply

Read vs. 6-7. Isaiah's message in summary to Hezekiah was, 'Do not be afraid of Sennacherib, because I will make him beat a retreat, and then, in his own land, he shall be assassinated.' God had spoken through Isaiah and had promised the deliverance of Jerusalem from the armies of Assyria. Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

5. Hezekiah's Prayer for Deliverance (vs. 8-20)

Sennacherib, however, persisted with his policy of persuasion and intimidation. He sent a blasphemous letter to Hezekiah telling him to give up his faith in God, because faith was futile in the face of the powerful forces of Assyria (vs. 9-13).

After Hezekiah received the blasphemous letter he immediately went up to the Temple to pray, and spread the matter before the Lord. This provides us with an excellent example which, if we are Christians, we should follow in times of distress. Hezekiah could have sought the counsel of others; or he could have tried to face the emergency in his own strength. Instead, he properly realises his weakness and helplessness, exercises faith and trust in God and comes to God in prayer.

Notice that the overriding concern of Hezekiah's prayer was for the honour and glory of God's name. It begins with adoration, Hezekiah worships God because God is the Almighty, Sovereign God who knows and sees all things. It continues with Hezekiah simply telling God the situation and ends with the simple request for deliverance, that in whatever way God may be pleased to answer the prayer, above all His name may be glorified (v. 20). Complete No. 5 of the students' worksheet.

6. Hezekiah's Prayer is Answered (vs. 21-38)

God hears Hezekiah's prayer and begins immediately to answer it. God gives Hezekiah a message through the prophet Isaiah concerning Sennacherib (vs. 22-29). Isaiah reminds Sennacherib that he has insulted and blasphemed, not Hezekiah, but the Holy One of Israel (v. 23). Because of Sennacherib's wickedness, God will treat him like a hooked fish (v. 29). Isaiah reassures Hezekiah that by the third year life and agriculture will return to normal (v. 30), and, under no circumstances, would Sennacherib attack Jerusalem because God has sworn Himself in this matter (vs. 33 - 35). Complete No. 6 of the students' worksheet.

7. Prophecy is fulfilled

Read Isaiah 37:36-38. Isaiah's prophecy is soon fulfilled in a startling and miraculous way. The Angel of the Lord brought death to Sennacherib's army - 185,000 men died in one night. Sennacherib made a hasty retreat home to Nineveh and, 20 years later, Sennacherib was slain at the hands of his sons. A clear instance of the judgement of God against an arrogant and wicked monarch. Complete No. 7 of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

In our lesson today we have been following the events in the lives of two kings. There is King Sennacherib of Assyria who boasted of his power and achievements. He set himself against the Lord. There is King Hezekiah of Jerusalem who had little about which to boast, because he had very little military power. However, the secret of Hezekiah's strength and success was found, not in himself, but in the Lord whom he loved and in whom he trusted and believed. That is why the Lord gave him victory over his enemies. And the Lord will do the same for us if we do like Hezekiah.

LESSON 32

Incidents in the life of God's covenant people

GOD'S PEOPLE RETURN TO THEIR LAND

Scripture Passage - Ezra 1; 2: 64-70; 3.

AIM OF LESSON

To show how the return of the exiles illustrates God's faithfulness and sovereignty.

BACKGROUND NOTES

2 Chronicles 36: 15-22 provides a summary of the events of the exile - the Jews' rejection of God's message, His judgement upon them in bringing about the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the killing, looting and taking of the Jewish people into exile, the destruction of the Temple and the carrying off of all the valuables from the Temple. Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people taken into exile to Babylon by king Nebuchadnezzar. The Temple of God, built by king Solomon, had been razed to the ground. God, however, promised that one day He would bring His people back.

Ezra and Nehemiah describe the three-stage return: the main party who returned with Zerubbabel, the party who returned with Ezra eighty years later and Nehemiah's party some thirteen years later. Today's lesson outlines the first stage of the return.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**1. Introduction**

Using the table in the students' material, review briefly some of the events in the history of God's people following the reign of Hezekiah. Explain the division of Israel into two kingdoms, the captivity of Israel by Assyria and the later captivity of Judah by Babylon who had overrun Assyria. Use 2 Chronicles 36: 11-21 to summarise the captivity of Judah by Babylon. Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. Cyrus helps the exiles to return: Ezra 1

Babylon, the great Empire which had overthrown Judah, has now itself been overthrown. Cyrus, king of Persia, is now in control. What amazing thing does he do? Read verses 1 - 4. Who put it into the heart of Cyrus to let the Jews return to Jerusalem to carry out the rebuilding of the Temple? (God) In his decree Cyrus also gave permission for the returning Jews to take with them all kinds of valuables - jewellery, silver, gold and livestock.

Through Jeremiah (v. 1) many years before, God had given the exiles in Babylon a message of hope. Read Jeremiah 29: 10-14. God had said that He would one day bring

the Jews back to Jerusalem. Now He uses the king of a pagan country to issue a decree allowing this to happen.

Outline the rest of the chapter.

vs. 5-6: - Certain Jews prepared to return.

vs. 7-11: - In addition, king Cyrus restored the articles belonging to the Temple which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away to Babylon from Jerusalem. Ask the students what they know about these valuables from the Temple and the use to which Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar, had put them. Refer to Daniel 5: 1-4. Draw attention to the great value and wealth of this collection of articles (vs. 9-11). Thus, Cyrus not only gave the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem but in different ways he actually helped and encouraged them in their desire to rebuild the Temple. This illustrates God's sovereignty over the nations for the benefit of His people (Ephesians 1: 22).

Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. **The Jews return:** Ezra 2: 64 - 70

A vast company of people set out on the journey back to Jerusalem - a total of over fifty thousand people and some eight thousand animals. On their arrival at Jerusalem the people contributed to the building fund for the rebuilding of the Temple (vs. 68, 69), then several months elapsed as this great company of people returned to their towns and villages around Jerusalem and settled in their homes (v. 70).

At Jerusalem: Ezra ch. 3

(a) Rebuilding the altar: vs. 1-6

After some months the Jews began thinking of the purpose of their return to Jerusalem - to rebuild the temple. First, however, they organised their worship. They rebuilt the altar where it had stood before (v. 3) and offered up their usual burnt offerings and sacrifices, celebrating the feasts as laid down in the Law of Moses.

(b) Rebuilding the Temple: vs. 7-9

Verse 6 tells us 'the foundations of the Lord's temple had not yet been laid'. It was now time to start! Verses 7-9 describe the preparations which were made - the ordering of materials for the building of the Temple and the plans made for the supervision of the work. Then the foundations were laid.

(c) Thanksgiving: vs. 10-13

Read verses 10-13. There was great rejoicing at seeing the work begun. There was thanksgiving to God, no doubt, for bringing them back as He had promised. It was an occasion mixed with sadness too, and many people wept as they remembered the former Temple which had been destroyed. Perhaps they wept because they recalled the glory of Solomon's Temple and how it had been destroyed as a result of their sin.

Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

The work of rebuilding the Temple had begun, but it was to be many years before it was completed. The people faced many discouragements and hindrances (Ezra ch. 4) and they themselves became disobedient and rebellious (Ezra ch. 9). Also, the return of God's people from exile was not complete. Eighty years later Ezra returned with a party to complete the rebuilding of the Temple, and thirteen years after that Nehemiah returned to build the walls of the city.

However, throughout all these years, God was faithful to His promise. No wonder the people sang 'He is good, for His mercy endures for ever towards Israel.' (3: 11) God remained faithful to His Word and showed His Sovereign power by causing Cyrus to let the Jews return to Jerusalem.

Today, although we too may face difficulties and disappointments, we know that if we belong to Christ God remains faithful to His Word and so we can say 'He is good, for His mercy endures for ever towards Israel.'

LESSON 33

Studies from the Epistle of James

LISTENING AND DOING

Scripture Text - James 1: 19 - 27

AIM OF LESSON

To show that those who claim to be Christian must not only hear and accept God's Word but must also do what it says.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In his epistle, James is very concerned that his readers should advance from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. He begins by telling them that trials have a part in promoting Christian growth (vs. 2-4). He says that God is the sender of every good and perfect gift (v. 17). The best of these gifts is the new birth which God gives through His Word (v. 18).

Having referred to the Word of Truth as the means whereby they came to spiritual life, James now (vs. 19-25), urges his readers to give constant attention to that same Word so that they may grow in their Christian lives.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Read Section A of the students' worksheet to introduce the lesson. James, a writer of one of the New Testament letters, was very concerned that those who would read his letters would grow up, but not in a physical sense. He longed that they would grow up in their Christian lives. Read James 1: 19-27.

1. **Hearing God's Word** (vs. 19, 20)

It is by God's Word that Christians are brought to new life (v. 18a) and they can only grow in that new life if they pay heed to that same Word. James then mentions three commands which, if obeyed, help the Christian to pay attention to God's Word. Ask the students to look again at v. 19 and ask, what are the three commands given in this verse?

Challenge the students with the following questions:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| (a) Be quick to listen | - | Do you listen to God's Word when it is being read and preached? Do you always listen to your Sabbath School teacher or C.Y. or S.U. leader? Have you asked God to help you to listen? |
| (b) Be slow to speak | - | As perhaps your school teachers have told you often, you cannot listen while talking at the same |

time! We should always be quick to hear what God says about any issue rather than being quick to give our own opinions.

- (c) Be slow to become angry - Has God's Word ever spoken to you and shown you some sin in your life? If so, were you angry like Naaman was when God's Word was spoken to him (2 Kings 5: 10-12)?

Complete No. 1 of the students' worksheet.

2. Receiving God's Word (v. 21)

Not only must the Christian hear the Word which God speaks, but he must also receive that Word. It is possible to hear God's Word and yet not receive it. In the parable of the sower some seed fell on the path. Jesus said that this was like people who hear God's Word but they do not receive it because Satan comes and snatches it away (Mark 4: 15). In order to grow in the Christian life, however, the Christian must receive God's Word. Verse 21 tells us that there are two parts of this. Discuss with the class what these are.

- (a) We must get rid of all evil in us. (b) We must accept God's Word humbly. These two parts work together. We must seek to put aside all sin and we can only do this as we accept God's Word which has been planted in us. The more we read God's Word, the more we see the sin in our lives which has to be got rid of.

Complete No. 2 in the students' worksheet.

3. Obeying God's Word (vs. 22-25)

Discuss, 'Is it enough to listen to and receive God's Word?' (v. 22). No, the Christian must also do what it says. He must be a doer. Ask the students what God's Word is compared to in v. 23 and to whom is the person who reads God's Word compared? God's Word is like a mirror and the person who reads it is like a man looking into a mirror. Read vs. 23-25 again. James mentions two kinds of people. The first (vs. 23, 24) glances into the mirror but quickly forgets what he sees and so does not do anything about his appearance. The second (v. 25) takes a much longer look, remembers what he sees and does something about his appearance. Similarly the first person reads a passage in the Bible very quickly and as a result he does not remember anything which the passage is saying to him. Contrast this with the second person. Discuss how he reads God's Word. He looks intently into it. He does not forget what it is saying to him. Not only does he remember God's Word but he also obeys it, and not only does he obey it once but he continues to obey it. Complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. Characteristics of those who obey God's Word (vs. 26, 27)

Having encouraged his readers to listen, receive and obey God's Word, James goes on to point out three characteristics of those who have true religion. They are those, who, by obeying God's Word, show that they are true Christians. Read again verses 26 and 27. Ask the class what the three characteristics of a true Christian are.

(a) **He controls his tongue.**

How easy it is to speak back in anger. Consider with the class how they react when they have been told off by their parents or teachers, or when they are asked to do something at home when they are playing or watching television? How do they react if someone says something against them? Do they ask God to help them guard their tongue? Ps. 141: 3, Ps. 34: 13, Prov. 21: 23. James sees this as so important that he returns to this subject later in his letter. (Lesson 35)

(b) **He does something for those less blessed than himself.**

Ask your students for ways in which they can follow this example. Are there any old or lonely people living near them whom they could visit? Do they give any of their pocket money to Tearfund or some other relief agency?

(c) **He keeps himself from being polluted by the world.**

The Christian has to live in the world but he must not let the world around him control what he does (Romans 12: 2). A Christian cannot isolate himself from those around him but he must not follow their ways. Rather he must follow Christ. Discuss who influences the students most in the decisions they take - Their friends? Christ?

Complete No. 4 in the students' worksheet.

5. APPLICATION

There are many applications which can be drawn from this passage. They can be summed up in the command 'Do what God's Word says'.

Ask the students to complete No. 5 in the students' worksheet.

Challenge them to take time to study God's Word, to find out what a certain passage is about, and what they should do, or not do, and then obey it. This is not easy. It takes time and discipline but what does James say the rewards will be? See v. 25b. If we do what God's Word says we will be blessed in this.

LESSON 34

Lessons from the Epistle of James

HAVE NO FAVOURITES

Scripture Text - James 2: 1 - 13

AIM OF LESSON

To help the students to see that they should show the love of God equally to all Christians irrespective of who they are.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Consider together - What kind of a welcome do we give to visitors to our church? Welcoming visitors should not be left entirely to the minister, the elders or the members of committee. Every member of the congregation should try to make visitors welcome - a handshake, a few words or a friendly smile can make all the difference. But, are all visitors given the same warm welcome at our church? Is the love of God shown equally to them all? This was not the attitude of some of the Christians to whom James was writing in the New Testament and he had to rebuke them for showing favouritism to the rich at the expense of the poor.

1. Favouritism ('respect of persons') forbidden by God (v. 1-7)

Read these verses.

James says in verse 1 'My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... with partiality.' What a very clear and definite command this is. Ask the class what we mean by partiality or respect of persons. We can see from the context that this means we should show the love of God equally to everyone, irrespective of who they are.

Consider the practical example given in verses 2-4. Discuss the relevance of this to your own congregational situation. Look at NO. 1(a) and (b) in the students' worksheet.

The following examples may prove helpful for discussion.

Example 1

Two strangers walk unexpectedly into your C.Y. meeting one evening. Both are teenagers. One is neat and well-dressed and he is carrying a Bible. The other is rather scruffy in appearance, is wearing 'way out' clothes and looks embarrassed. What is your reaction? What is the reaction of your fellow members? Are both fellows given an equally warm welcome? Do you go out of your way to make them both feel at home? Are they both conscious of the love of Christ radiating from you? Will both want to come back the following week? Complete No. 1(c) of the students' worksheet.

Ask the students to think of other examples of similar situations where they might be tempted to be unduly influenced by the appearance, or the class, of the people they meet.

Example 2

Two new pupils have entered your form at school. One is the daughter of a rich business man. She lives in the exclusive part of the town and has been given all the latest video equipment for her birthday. The other is less well dressed. Her father has been made redundant and they have had to move to a smaller house. Her family has money only for the essentials. How do you react? Do you choose to befriend the first girl? Why might you be tempted to do so? Or, do you show God's love equally to both?

2. God does not show favouritism (v. 5)

God is our prime example in this as in everything else. He does not regard worldly wealth as being important. Some of the Christians to whom James was writing were committing serious sin in their attitude to the rich and the poor and needed to be rebuked for this. Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. Favouritism in the early Church (v. 6)

Read v. 6 and complete No. 3 in the students' worksheet.

4. Favouritism ('respect of persons') is inconsistent with the Royal Law (vs. 8-13)

Read these verses. God has revealed very clearly in Scripture 'the royal law' which His servants must follow (v. 8). The 'neighbour' to be loved as oneself tended to be limited in practice to fellow Jews. Our Lord, on the other hand, insisted that all who need our help in any way are to be regarded as 'neighbours'. This law is said to be 'royal' because it is the law of the kingdom of God given by the supreme King Himself. Complete No. 4(a) and (b) in the students' worksheet.

'Respect of persons' or partiality is wholly incompatible with the Royal Law. Every time this type of partiality is shown, sin is committed and the person sinning is a transgressor of the law or a law-breaker (v. 9). Complete No. 4(c), (d) and (e) in the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Christian love is shown both in speech and in actions (v. 12). Let us remember the importance of both of these as we try to show Christ's love to others in practical ways.

Complete No. 5(a) and (b) in the students' worksheet.

LESSON 35

Lessons from the Epistle of James

CONTROLLING WHAT WE SAY

Scripture Text - James 3: 1 - 12

AIM OF LESSON

To show how evil and powerful the tongue is and how it needs to be controlled.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Relate the saying to the class:- ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.’ Then tell the class that in today’s lesson we are going to see that this is simply not true.

1. The key to holy living (vs. 1-4)

Read these verses. The perfect man is able to control his tongue, and thus has his whole body under control. A powerful animal like a horse can be brought under control with a tiny bit. A large ship, even while blasted with strong winds, is steered and guided by the tiny rudder. The tongue therefore is the key item to be brought under subjection if we want to be victorious in our Christian lives. But here we have a problem. We know it is a world of evil set on fire by hell. We know it can cause great damage. We know that no man can tame it. Discuss with the class what can be done about it. Complete No. 1 on the students’ worksheet.

2. The destructiveness of the tongue (vs. 5, 6)

Read these verses. It just takes one small spark to start a forest fire; one little match can destroy a million trees. So the tongue, though a little thing, can do great harm. We are told four things about the tongue in verse 6. Firstly, it is a world of evil, an unrighteous world. It represents the world with all its wickedness. Secondly, it corrupts the whole person. Is it not true that we use the tongue to talk ourselves into committing the sins we do? We can persuade ourselves that certain sins are permissible, e.g., doing revision for exams on the Sabbath day. Thirdly, it sets the whole course of life on fire, that is, the youngest to the oldest are troubled by it. Fourthly, it is set on fire by hell. We should be in no doubt where evil words come from.

Complete No. 2(a) and (b) of the students’ worksheet.

3. The tongue defies human control (vs. 7-12)

Read these verses. Ironically, man has controlled the animals and the birds, but no man can control the tongue. It is a restless evil always liable to break out. Rather like a half-tamed animal, it might suddenly and unexpectedly revolt.

The tongue betrays our divided hearts and nature. Out of the same mouth we praise God, and curse men. But men are made in the image of God and so, when we curse men, we are actually cursing God. How inconsistent we are! This should not be so. A tongue which praises God should not also curse man.

Complete No. 3 of the students' worksheet.

4. APPLICATION

Though man cannot, God can tame and control the tongue. If we are Christians, then the Holy Spirit lives in us, and, as we submit our lives more and more to His control, then He will help us to have control over the tongue.

James makes it very clear how necessary it is to have a Spirit-controlled tongue. It is a mark of true faith in Christ (ch. 1: 26). Jesus says, '... for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement' (Matthew 12: 36).

Complete No. 4 of the students' worksheet.

LESSON 36

Lessons from the Epistle of James

REMEMBERING GOD IN OUR PLANS

Scripture Text - James 4: 13 - 17

AIM OF LESSON

To show the sin of presumption, and our need to depend upon God to accomplish our plans.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In chapter 4 James warns against a worldly spirit affecting Christian people (v. 4). This worldliness appears as: pride toward God vs. 6-10:

slander toward men vs. 11-12:

presumption toward self vs. 13 - 17.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**Introduction**

Read James 4:13-17 and Section A of the students' worksheet.

1. The sin of presumption (v. 13)

Discuss with the class what presumption means. It means taking things for granted, simply assuming something. Discuss some examples together, for example, have you ever been caught saying, 'When the summer holidays come I will do this and that', or 'When I leave school I want to go here or there'? In our lesson today James shows us that this attitude is wrong. In fact he calls it a sin. Complete No. 1(a) of the students' worksheet.

This man was guilty of presumption in three particular areas. He presumed his life; he simply assumed he would live to see today, or tomorrow or next year. He presumed his ability to choose, as though he could decide on one particular city and he would naturally arrive there safely. Thirdly, he presumed his ability to succeed. He never doubted that he would make money and become rich. Complete No. 1(b) of the students' worksheet.

2. How should we guard against presumption? (vs. 14, 15)

When we realise the seriousness of presumption we will want, if we are Christians, to avoid it. James advises us we can avoid it by taking recognition of three simple things.

Firstly, we should recognise our ignorance (v. 14a). Here is a man who is planning

years ahead, yet ironically he doesn't even know what will happen tomorrow. He might meet with sickness or an accident or robbery or even death. What happened to the rich fool of whom Jesus spoke in Luke 12: 13-21? Proverbs wisely tells us, 'Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth' (27: 1).

Secondly we should recognise our frailty (v. 14b). Remember what we are like; 'a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.' Our lives are, at best, brief and transient. It is presumptuous to plan for years ahead.

Thirdly, we should recognise our dependence on the Lord (v. 15). We ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' This means that it must be a fixed attitude with us that we can do nothing without the permission of God. As we make plans and look forward we should remember reverently, thankfully and lovingly God's providential government of the world, and our absolute dependence on Him for continued health and strength and for the accomplishment of all our plans. Complete No. 2 of the students' worksheet.

3. The seriousness of presumption (vs. 16, 17)

Here we see that presumption is something unacceptable and offensive to God. The seriousness of it can be seen from the three things James applies to it.

Firstly, he calls it 'boasting or bragging' (16a). Boasting is an expression of pride and vain glory. Secondly he calls it 'evil' (16b). This is the same word which is used for the devil, the evil one. The spirit and attitude of the devil is of proud independence of God. So the person guilty of presumption shares that same proud spirit, which is evil. Thirdly, James describes presumption as a 'sin of omission' (v. 17). To omit, simply means to neglect, to leave out or to pass over. That is exactly what presumption does. It neglects, or leaves out the vital Person who gives us our lives, abilities, and opportunities. It is God who gives us these things, and to omit God in our thinking is almost the same as saying He does not exist. This is a searching principle. Have you every thought that you were sinning against God by simply neglecting or omitting to do something?

Complete No. 3(a), (b) and (c) of the students' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Read Proverbs 24:1. Use Section 4 of the students' worksheet and discuss with the class, in the light of today's lesson, what things they should take into consideration when making plans for the coming week.