

OLD TESTAMENT WORSHIP

by Christine Walton

**Grades 5-6
Year 2
Quarter 2**

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Bible Baseball

Singles

- Name one object in the Tabernacle.
- What was on top of the Ark of the Covenant?
- Name one metal used in the Tabernacle.
- What were the two parts of the Tabernacle?
- Name one part of the clothing worn by the high priest.
- Name one color yarn used in the clothing worn by the high priest.
- Name one type of sacrifice in the Old Testament.
- Name one animal offered in sacrifice in the Old Testament.
- Name one regulation for a mammal to be considered clean.
- Name one unclean animal.
- Name one event upon which the Sabbath is based.
- Describe the animal that was sacrificed on Passover.
- How was this animal cooked?
- What was done with the blood of the Passover animal?
- Name one harvest festival celebrated by the Israelites.
- In the New Testament, what happened on Pentecost?
- What did the high priest do on the Day of Atonement that he was not allowed to do at any other time of the year?
- On what holiday did the Israelites live in temporary shelters?
- What does Hanukkah celebrate?

Doubles

- Name two objects in the Tabernacle.
- Name one thing in the Ark of the Covenant.
- Name two metals used in the Tabernacle.
- Name one animal used in making the coverings for the Tabernacle.
- What kind of wood was used in the Tabernacle?
- Name two parts of the clothing worn by the high priest.
- What hung down from the bottom of the high priest's blue robe?
- Name two colors of yarn used in the clothing worn by the high priest.
- How many stones were on the breastplate worn by the high priest?
- Name two types of sacrifice in the Old Testament.
- What type of sacrifice did not involve killing an animal?
- Name two animals offered in sacrifice in the Old Testament.
- Name both regulations for an animal to be considered clean.
- Name two unclean animals.
- Name two events upon which the Sabbath is based.
- Name two things eaten with the animal on Passover.
- In what way were the Israelites to eat the Passover?
- Why was the holiday called *Passover*?
- Name two harvest festivals celebrated by the Israelites.

What is the Hebrew name for the Feast of Trumpets?
What is the Hebrew name for the Day of Atonement?
Explain what happened to the two goats on the Day of Atonement.
Between the Old and New Testaments, what group of people fought against a country that set up pagan worship?

Triples

Name four objects in the Tabernacle.
Name two things in the Ark of the Covenant.
Name three metals used in the Tabernacle.
Name two animals used in making the coverings for the Tabernacle.
Name four parts of the clothing worn by the high priest.
Name three colors of yarn used in the clothing worn by the high priest.
What kind of stones were attached to the shoulder pieces of the ephod worn by the high priest?
What was inscribed on the gold plate attached to the high priest's turban?
Name three types of sacrifice in the Old Testament.
Name three animals offered in sacrifice in the Old Testament.
Name three unclean animals.
How long did the Passover festival last?
Name three harvest festivals celebrated by the Israelites.
In which festival was yeast used in a burnt offering?
Between the time of the Old and New Testaments, what country supported pagan worship in Israel?
Between the time of the Old and New Testaments, what ruler set up pagan worship in the Temple?
What elderly priest refused to offer sacrifice to a false God and ultimately led a revolt against Syria?
Name Mattathias' third son who led the revolt when Mattathias died.
Tell the Hanukkah legend of the oil.
What is another name for Hanukkah?

Home Runs

Name all the objects in the Tabernacle.
Name three things in the Ark of the Covenant.
Name three animals used in making the coverings for the Tabernacle.
Name six parts of the clothing worn by the high priest.
Name four colors of yarn used in the clothing worn by the high priest.
Name five types of sacrifice in the Old Testament.
Name five unclean animals.
What is another name for Pentecost?
Name three evil laws made by Antiochus Epiphanes IV.
Whom did Antiochus Epiphanes IV replace as high priest?
Name a brother of Judas the Maccabee.

THE TABERNACLE -1

Exodus 25-27; 36-38

Lesson Aim

That your students will learn the basic parts of the tabernacle and its function in Israelite life.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15, 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 9:11 - “When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.”

Lesson Background

God is perfectly holy and cannot be approached by sinful man. However, God’s Son Jesus Christ shed His blood to pay the penalty for the sin of those who would place their trust in Him. Long before this occurred in time, God gave His people pictures of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. One of these major *types* was the Tabernacle. Although the Israelites did not understand its complete significance (Hebrews 9:8), they worshiped God as He was truly revealed in this picture of a heavenly reality, and, in faith and obedience, because of Christ’s atonement, they were accepted by God. Today, a study of the Tabernacle can give us a greater appreciation of all Christ has done for us. Hebrews 9:2-5 succinctly describes the tabernacle:

A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover.

The most important thing to understand about the Tabernacle is that the omnipresent God was present there in a very special way and that the way was opened for man to have fellowship with God by the bringing of a blood sacrifice. The Tabernacle and its construction were not man's invention; rather it was a copy and shadow of what is in heaven, the pattern of which was revealed to Moses on the mountain (Hebrews 8:5). The very details of the Tabernacle point to Christ, as you will see in next week's study.

The rectangular-shaped Tabernacle was constructed from 10 cubit high by 1.5 cubit wide gold-covered acacia wood (a very hard, light wood) boards or frames (translators disagree as to the word's meaning). One cubit equals approximately 18 inches. To change cubits into feet, multiply the number of cubits by 1.5; thus, 10 cubits = $(1.5)(10) = 15$ feet (for measurement particulars see the passage itself, and the diagram and tabernacle model description below; for the model, a scale of 1 centimeter = 1.5 cubits was used, i.e., 1 cubit = .667 cm.; to figure out the number of cubits from the model, multiply the number of centimeters by 1.5; multiply again by 1.5 to change the number of cubits into feet). The two long sides of the Tabernacle each contained twenty boards and the back seems to have had eight boards, the corner two of which were double. Each board had two projections that fit into two silver bases. The boards were attached together by gold-covered acacia wood crossbars held to the boards by gold rings; each of the three wooden sides had five crossbars, one of which on each side went the entire length of that side's boards.

The front of the Tabernacle was a linen curtain embroidered with blue, scarlet, and purple yarn and hung by gold hooks to five gold-covered acacia posts with bronze bases. The tabernacle was covered like a tent by four different layers of material. The first layer was two sets of five linen curtains (each curtain 28 x 4 cubits, the long parts sewn together) embroidered with blue, scarlet, and purple yarn; one end curtain of each set had 50 blue loops sewn to it; gold clasps joined the blue loops and hence the two sets of curtains together. The curtains were placed over the tabernacle boards like a tent so that the blue loops were down the middle parallel to the short side of the tabernacle. The next layer was sewn from goat's hair in the same way as the inmost layer, except the curtains measured 30 x 4 cubits, there were 11 curtains (5+6), the curtain was not embroidered, and its clasps were bronze. The next layer of the Tabernacle covering was made from red rams' skins, and the outermost layer from the waterproof hide of a sea cow (possibly porpoise or dolphin).

The Tabernacle was divided into two sections, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The two sections were separated by a curtain, embroidered with cherubim and blue, scarlet, and purple yarn as well as thin threads of gold. The curtain hung from silver hooks on four gold-covered acacia wood posts with silver bases. The furnishings of the Tabernacle were made of acacia wood covered with gold except for the lampstand (*menorah*), which was pure hammered gold. Six branches, with cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms, went out from the central branch of the lampstand, which had four almond-flower-shaped cups with buds and blossoms. The lampstand held seven oil lamps and stood on the south side of the Holy Place. A table (2 x 1 x 1.5 cubits) surrounded by a golden molding was located on the north side of the Holy Place. It had a rim with a gold molding and four gold rings on the legs through which gold-covered acacia wood poles could be inserted to carry the table. It also had plates, dishes, pitchers, and bowls of pure gold. Twelve loaves of bread ("the bread of the Presence"; literally *face bread*, traditionally *shewbread*) to be eaten by the priests alone were placed on this table. In front of the Most Holy Place stood the altar of incense (1 x 1 x 2 cubits).

The most important object in the tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant, located in the Most Holy Place. The high priest was the only one who could enter this place, and that only once a year with a blood sacrifice, for it was here that God's presence dwelt in a special way. The ark (2.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 cubits) was a hollow acacia-wood chest covered inside and out with gold and containing the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, and a pot of manna. Like the table, it had a gold molding and four gold rings through which gold-covered acacia wood poles could be inserted for transport. An atonement cover made from pure gold

was placed on top of the Ark. Two cherubim (usually thought to be human-looking creatures with two wings, although Ezekiel mentions cherubim with four wings) of pure hammered gold faced each other from each end of the atonement cover, spreading their wings to overshadow the center of the cover.

A wash basin or laver was located outside the Tabernacle, and a bronze altar of burnt offering (5 x 5 x 3 cubits) on which priests sacrificed animals stood near the courtyard entrance. A bronze grating was placed halfway up the altar under a ledge, and there was a horn on each of the altar's four corners. The altar was carried on two bronze-covered acacia-wood poles inserted through bronze rings on its four corners. After sacrifice and before entering the Tabernacle to serve God, the priests were required to wash in the laver.

Priests were the only ones who could enter the Tabernacle, and could only do so on the basis of sacrifice made at the altar of burnt offering to forgive their sins and the sins of the people. Of course, the sacrifices did not really atone for sin because "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Jesus Christ died and shed His blood as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (I John 4:10). This quarter as you and your students learn more about the Tabernacle and Israelite worship, may you grow in thankfulness and love for the Lord Jesus who dwelt among us, was sacrificed for our sins, and is our great High Priest.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson approximately as follows: "The Israelites who lived thousands of years ago were God's chosen people. God told a man named Moses how he wanted the Israelites to worship Him. Their worship may seem strange to us, but we will see why God told them to do this. When Moses was up on a mountain, God told him how to build a building called the Tabernacle. Hebrews 9 gives us a short description of what it looked like."

Read Hebrews 9:2-5, and as you do draw a picture on the board of what is being described (or have students read the passage aloud and/or draw the diagram). Talk briefly about what was there and then assign pairs of students or individuals find out more information about the different parts of the Tabernacle by looking up information in Exodus (explain also how to convert cubits to feet). You may also assign a student to find out how much gold, silver, and bronze were required to build the Tabernacle (Exodus 38:21-31; note that 1 talent = 75 pounds or 34 kilograms; 1 shekel = 2/5 ounce or 11.5 grams). Because of its nature and length, do not read the Bible passage to your class. Explain that you will discuss the significance of the different parts of the Tabernacle next week.

- Courtyard and its curtains - Exodus 27:9-19; 38:9-20
- Curtains over Tabernacle - Exodus 26:1-14; 36:8-19
- Curtain in front of Tabernacle - Exodus 26:36-37; 36:37-38
- Curtain in front of Most Holy Place - Exodus 26:31-33; 36:35-36
- Tabernacle walls - Exodus 26:15-30; 36:20-34
- Altar of burnt offering - Exodus 27:1-8; 38:1-7
- Laver - 38:8
- Lampstand - Exodus 25:31-40; 26:35; 27:20-21; 37:17-24
- Table - Exodus 25:23-30; 26:35; 37:10-16
- Altar of incense - Exodus 37:25-27
- Ark of the Covenant - Exodus 25:10-16; 37:1-5
- Atonement cover - Exodus 25:17-22; 26:34; 37:6-9

Your students should then present what they have learned to the class, if possible drawing pictures to help in their explanation.

Class booklet

Your students may wish to incorporate their pictures and perhaps a short written explanation of each part into a class booklet for future reference.

Tabernacle Diagram

Have each student draw a diagram of the Tabernacle, to scale if you desire. Keep these diagrams for reference next week.

Tabernacle Model

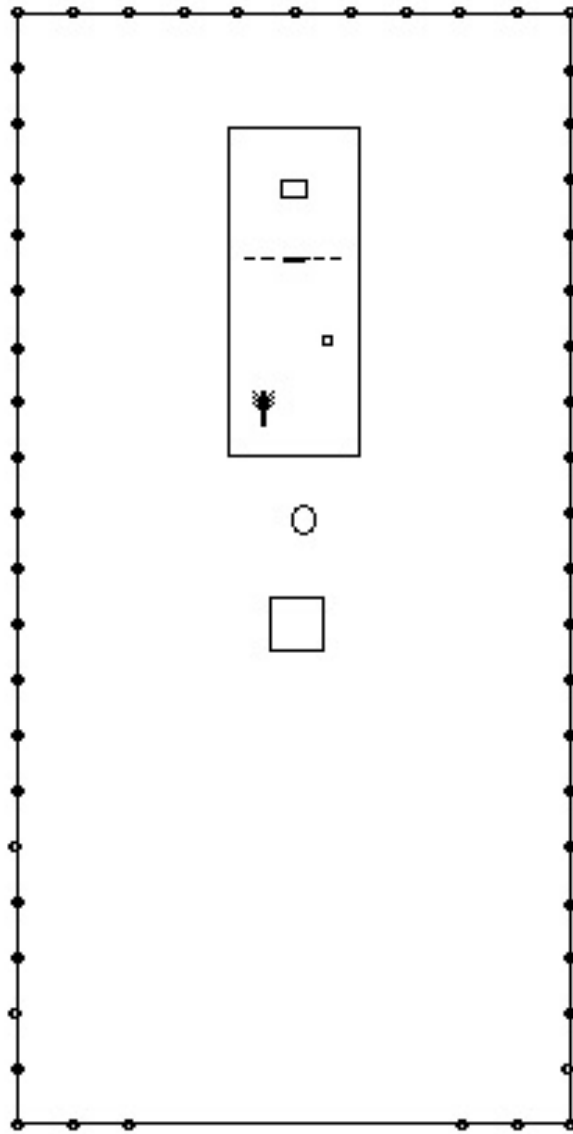
See next week's lesson.

Activity

God commanded the people to bring offerings to Him to build the Tabernacle. The people were so willing to give that Moses finally had to restrain them because they had more than enough to do the work (Exodus 35-36). The people not only brought offerings, but used their skills to build His sanctuary. God gifted certain people like Bezalel and Oholiab with the wisdom and skill necessary to make the beautiful structure He desired.

Your students, too, can contribute toward the building of God's house, not the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but the people of God, and also toward the maintenance of the place where they meet. Encourage your class to bring in offerings of money they have earned to contribute to the church; perhaps you would like to have a special project (see Activity Book) working as a class to earn money to give to your church. Your students can also help at a church work day or with a special project suggested by the deacons (see Activity Book). Those with artistic abilities may have ideas on how to make the church building or your classroom a more beautiful place to worship God; implement these ideas if possible.

TABERNACLE DIAGRAM



THE TABERNACLE - 2

Exodus 25-27; 36-38

Lesson Aim

That your students will understand the spiritual significance of the Tabernacle.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15, 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 9:11 - “When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.”

Lesson Background

One of the dangers of biblical interpretation is over-spiritualizing, finding allegorical parallels in events and objects that have no spiritual significance (because God is called a rock in Scripture does not mean that every stone represents God; David, in fleeing from Saul, hid by a large grey object, not by God). Yet the Bible does at times use people, events, and objects to point out something about the character of God. God’s design of the Tabernacle has clear symbolic significance, as Hebrews 8-10 indicates. The difficulty arises when one attempts to read allegory into the minutest aspects of its construction. Where should one begin or end? Do the colors of the tapestries or tent coverings have meaning? Possibly they do, but perhaps not. Be clear with your students about what is clear in Scripture; you may mention applications that seem likely, but stay away from extreme interpretations.

From the outside the Tabernacle was not impressive, but the closer one came to the Ark of the Covenant, the more beautiful it became. Gold, the most beautiful and precious metal, was used for parts of the Tabernacle closest to God’s presence and symbolic of Himself and His work. Silver and bronze were

used more as one moved away from the Ark of the Covenant toward things more symbolic of the earth and man. God chose the beautiful colors in the tapestries according to His purpose to beautify the Tabernacle, but one cannot state with certainty their meaning (some have suggested that white indicates righteousness, purple - royalty, blue - heaven, scarlet - blood and gold - worth and righteousness).

All this beauty was hidden from the common people, for only priests could enter the Tabernacle. They could only enter on the basis of the shed blood of the sacrifice, which was offered at the altar of burnt offering. Here the people and priests would bring the sacrifices and offerings God had specified to make atonement for their sins. This, of course, could not really pay for their sins because “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Jesus Christ died and shed His blood as an atoning sacrifice for His people’s sins (I John 4:10). Before entering the Tabernacle, priests were required to wash in the laver; this symbolizes the washing away of sin (Hebrews 10:22; I Corinthians 6:11; Acts 22:16).

The Tabernacle furnishings also give us a picture of Christ. The lampstand was the only source of light in the Tabernacle. Jesus is the light of the world (Matthew 4:16; John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36,46). He dispels darkness (I John 1:5) and shows us the path in which to walk. Believers are also called to be lights in the world (Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15). The source of light on the menorah was the burning of oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:2-6). On the table in the Tabernacle, the priests placed loaves of bread; this also pointed to the Lord. Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35 and chapter; Mark 14:22; I Corinthians 11:23-24). He is the one who feeds us and nourishes us, sustaining our lives physically and spiritually. The table is a place of fellowship with God. The altar of incense stood in front of the curtain separating the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Here priests offered incense, symbolic of prayer (Psalm 141:2). Jesus, our great High Priest, lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34). We, too, should intercede for others in prayer (I Timothy 2:1).

The only person who could enter the Most Holy Place was the High Priest, once a year, and only then with sacrificial blood. To enter the Most Holy Place, he had to pass through the curtain separating the two rooms; this veil was also symbolic of Christ (Hebrews 10:20). When Christ died, the veil in the Temple was ripped in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50-51), signifying that now, because of Christ’s death, man has free access into the presence of God.

God’s presence dwelt above the mercy seat of the atonement cover on the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark contained objects the meaning of which Christ fulfilled: a pot of manna, representing God’s perfect provision (see also Christ the Bread of Life above), Aaron’s rod that budded, giving a picture of the resurrection (life from a dead stick - Numbers 17; John 11:25), and the two tables of the law, perfectly kept by Christ, who never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

The Tabernacle is a beautiful picture of Christ and what He has done for us, His people. Because of His perfect life, death, and resurrection, because His blood has appeased the just wrath of God, we have forgiveness and free access to fellowship with God.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:19-23).

Lesson Procedure

Review last week's lesson with your students, using their Tabernacle diagrams and pictures of the Tabernacle furnishings. Remind them that the Tabernacle had symbolic significance and ask if they can determine to what the furnishings of the Tabernacle might point.

- Bronze altar - a blood sacrifice is necessary for atonement (you will go into this in detail in other lessons).
- Laver - cleansing from sin.
- Lampstand - Jesus is the light of the world (Matthew 4:16; John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36,46; I John 1:5). The illumination came from the burning of oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:2-6).
- Bread - Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35 and chapter; Mark 14:22; I Corinthians 11:23-24), who feeds us and nourishes us, sustaining our lives physically and spiritually.
- Altar of incense - symbolic of prayer (Psalm 141:2).
- Ark of the Covenant - God's presence dwelt here. Inside the Ark, the Ten Commandments represented the Law, Aaron's rod life from death, and the pot of manna, God's provision.

Guide your children to see how more precious metals and beautiful materials were used the closer one approached God. You might ask such questions as:

- What metals were used in the construction of the Tabernacle?
- Do you notice any sort of pattern as to what the metals were used for?
- How does the construction of the roof show this same concern?

Tabernacle Model

If desired, have your class construct a model of the Tabernacle. This project will require several weeks of time and some expense, so "count the cost" before you begin. The model described below uses craft sticks (popsicle sticks) for the Tabernacle walls and has a scale of 1 centimeter = 1.5 cubits (i.e., 1 cubit = .667 cm; obviously it will be difficult to be precise when constructing this model, but do the best you can). The model will be approximately 67 x 34 cm (approximately 26 by 13 inches) to the sides of the courtyard curtain, plus whatever additional space you desire around the outside. A larger model could be built using tongue depressors instead of popsicle sticks. Refer to the tabernacle diagram and Lesson Background to plan your model. Materials you will need include: gold, silver, and bronze paint (spray paint works best), white cloth (linen or cotton), red, blue, and purple embroidery thread, some sort of material to simulate goats' hair, red rams' skins and sea cow hide (suggestions - black felt, leather or fake leather cut from an old jacket or pocketbook), tooth picks, dowel rods, short straight pins, thread, thin wire and gold-colored wire for the menorah (wire may be painted gold), wood blocks for the Tabernacle furnishings, a doll's cup or similar object for the laver, aluminum foil, a shallow box 70 cm x 36 cm, another box somewhat larger and deeper than this. A hot glue gun is helpful.

Construct the Tabernacle furnishings and altar of sacrifice from wood blocks cut to the correct size (all measurements given in centimeters): the Ark (1.67 x 1 x 1), altar of incense (1.33 x .67 x .67), table (1.33 x .67 x 1), altar of sacrifice (3.33 x 3.33 x 2). Add details described as best you can. The atonement cover could be made from a tiny cardboard box lid to fit over the Ark. Rather than making the Ark from a block of wood, you may choose to make it from a tiny box and put stone tablets (made from dough), Aaron's rod, and a pot of manna inside. Boxes can be constructed from oak tag, cardboard, or poster board. Model cherubim from dough. Use the ends of toothpicks for the horns on the altar of sacrifice (curve them by first softening them in boiling water). Construct the lampstand from gold wire or dough. Paint the furnishings

gold except for the altar of sacrifice, which is bronze. To make the laver, paint bronze a doll's tea cup with the handle removed, or a suitable bottle top. Use dowel rods for the poles to carry the furnishings.

Cut the top and bottom off craft (popsicle) sticks to make the Tabernacle walls. Allow 1-2 cm beyond the basic length of 6.67 cm, which should be cut into two projections so that the bottom of the stick looks like the letter H. The straight cut across the top of the stick is easy to make by scoring a straight line with a pocket knife and breaking off the excess with pliers. Scissors can be used to cut the indenting lines for the projections, but be careful because it is easy to split the stick; then score the cross cut and break off the excess with pliers. You will need fifteen crossbars made from dowel rods to hold the upright popsicle sticks together: two 20 cm, eight 10 cm, one 4 cm, and four 2 cm long. You may purchase or make from wire tiny rings to hold the crossbars (glue to the sticks or merely glue the crossbars to the sticks, in which case the Tabernacle walls will not be able to be disassembled). Paint the Tabernacle boards and crossbars gold. Assemble your Tabernacle on an overturned box (70 cm x 36 cm or larger) fit inside a slightly larger box. Poke the projections of the Tabernacle boards through the box to help them stand upright. Fold aluminum foil around each projection to make silver bases.

Sew together 2 sets of 5 cloth curtains, the curtains each measuring 18.67 cm by 2.67 cm (sew the 18.67 cm sides together). The two curtains are then joined along two 18.67 cm ends. In the actual Tabernacle this was done by using gold clasps that connected 50 blue loops on one curtain to 50 blue loops on the other. You may merely wish to sew or paint a blue strip down each of the curtains and sew them together; however, if possible, make loops as follows:

Fold a piece of blue cloth over one end of each set of curtains in such a way that the blue material sticks out from the white a little bit; sew the blue material folded over the white. Make tiny scissor snips down the length of the blue cloth to make 50 loops with a little space in between each (make 99 snips and cut out every other loop; each loop or space is about .18 cm, that is slightly less than 2 mm). Attach the loops together with gold-colored wire. This curtain should be embroidered with blue, scarlet, and purple yarn or embroidery thread. The curtain goes over the top of the popsicle stick frame like a tent so the blue loops are parallel to the short side of the Tabernacle.

Another curtain of "goats' hair" (use black felt) is made the same way except that instead of 18.67 x 2.67 cm, each curtain measures 20 x 2.67 cm, there is one set of five and one set of six curtains, the two curtain sets are connected with bronze clasps (again use wire), and the curtain is not embroidered. Over this go two more coverings of "red rams' skins" and "sea cow"; if possible use two kinds of fake leather or leather cut from old pocketbooks or jackets for these coverings. The Tabernacle requires two more curtains, one, embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet, for the entrance, and one, embroidered with cherubim and using blue, purple, scarlet and gold (use gold metallic thread) for the curtain separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. The inner curtain is hung on four gold-covered wood posts (use dowel rods) with silver bases and the entrance curtain to the Tabernacle with five gold-covered posts with bronze bases.

The courtyard is a rectangle 66.67 cm x 33.33 cm of white curtains hung by silver hooks (wire) on 3.33 cm high bronze poles made from toothpicks (mark the height needed and poke the rest of the toothpick through the box). The two long sides each require 20 posts with 10 poles for the back, each spaced 3.33 cm apart. There should also be three poles on each side of the courtyard entrance and four poles for the 13.33 cm entrance itself. All the poles have bronze bases. Use straight pins painted bronze as tent pegs attached to thread to help hold the poles.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Exodus 28-29, 39

Lesson Aim

That your students would know that God's people can approach Him with confidence, not dread, because of the work accomplished by Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, who intercedes for them.

Memory Verse

This quarter Hebrews 9:11-15; 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 9:12 - "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

Lesson Background

The Tabernacle itself was beautiful symbol of Christ, but the work of the high priest was needed to complete the picture. The high priest stood before the Lord to offer gifts and sacrifices and to intercede for God's people. Christ is our great high priest "who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man" (Hebrews 8:2). Today your students will learn about the Old Covenant priesthood, the dress of the priests, and the sacrifices that were offered at their ordination. Next week's lesson will cover sacrifices in general, and Lesson 11 will deal with the most important work of the high priest, which he performed on the Day of Atonement.

The priestly garments consisted of a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. The innermost piece of clothing was a linen undergarment, which reached from waist to thigh (Exodus 28:42-43; 39:28). On top of this, the priest wore a fine linen tunic, which presumably had sleeves and reached to the floor (28:39; 39:27). The robe (28:31-35; 39:22-26) worn on top of this tunic is thought to

be sleeveless and also floor-length. This blue robe had a head opening surrounded by a woven edge so it would not tear. Pomegranates of blue, scarlet, and purple yarn, alternating with gold bells, adorned the hem of the robe.

One of the most important parts of the high priest's clothing was the ephod (28:6-14,21; 39:2-7) worn over the robe. Made of gold, linen, and blue, scarlet, and purple yarn, it was held to the body by two shoulder pieces and a waistband, which was of one piece with the ephod. Attached to the shoulder pieces of the ephod were two onyx stones engraved with the names of the twelve sons of Israel and mounted in gold filigree settings. An emblem carried on one's shoulder is a sign of official responsibility, and the high priest bore the Israelites on his shoulder into the presence of God, where they could not enter themselves. A square breastplate (28:15-30; 39:8-21) used for making decisions was worn on top of the ephod. It was a span long and a span wide, folded double and made of the same materials as the ephod. Mounted on the breastplate, close to the heart of the high priest, were twelve precious stones (four rows of three stones each) each engraved with the name of one of the sons of Israel.

The breastplate was held to the ephod by two chains of pure gold braided like a rope; one end of the chains was fastened to the shoulder pieces of the ephod and the other end to two gold rings attached to the breastplate. So that the breastplate would not swing out from the ephod, two gold rings were attached to the other corners of the breastplate and to the bottom of the shoulder pieces of the ephod just above the waistband; the rings were then connected with blue cord. The high priest also wore a turban (28:36-38; 39:28) to which was attached a gold plate inscribed with the words "Holy to the Lord." An embroidered sash (28:39-40; 39:29) of finely twisted linen and blue, scarlet, and purple yarn completed the high priest's clothing. The other priests did not wear the ephod and breastplate, but did wear special garments: linen undergarments, a tunic, sash, and headband. The purpose of the garments was to give the priests dignity and honor (28:2), to set them apart to serve God.

Aaron, the high priest, and his sons, and the subsequent generations of sons that followed for the duration of the Old Covenant, were consecrated to the priesthood in this manner. First a bull and two rams without defect and a basket containing bread made of fine wheat flour without yeast, cakes made with oil, and wafers spread with oil were presented to the Lord. Next, Aaron and his sons were washed and dressed in the priestly garments; Aaron was then anointed with oil poured on his head. Following this, the bull and the rams were sacrificed and the basket of baked goods was offered to the Lord.

The first sacrifice was a sin offering. A bull was brought to the front of the Tent of Meeting and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. In so doing, they imparted their sins to the bull, which was then slaughtered at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Some of the bull's blood was put on the horns of the altar and the rest poured out at the base of the altar. The fat around the inner parts, including the covering of the liver and both kidneys, was burned on the altar. The bull's flesh, hide, and offal were burned outside the camp. For the second sacrifice, Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of a ram. It was slaughtered and this time the blood was sprinkled against the altar on all sides. The ram was cut in pieces, the inner parts washed, and the entire ram burned on the altar.

Another ram, the ram of ordination, was used for the third sacrifice. Again, Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the animal's head. The ram was killed and some of the blood was put on the lobes of the priests' right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. This was probably to indicate the specific need of cleansing these parts of the body to do God's work. As with the first ram, the blood was then sprinkled against all sides of the altar, but now some blood, along with some anointing oil (symbolic of God's Spirit), was sprinkled on the priests and their garments. Not only their hands, feet, and ears, but their whole being had to be consecrated to God. The breast of the ram of ordination was to be waved before the Lord and the right thigh presented to Him; those parts belonged to Aaron and his

sons as their regular share. Also, a loaf of bread, a cake made with oil, and a wafer were to be taken from the basket, waved before the Lord by Aaron and his sons, and then burned on the altar along with the burnt offering. The meat was to be cooked in a sacred place and it was to be eaten along with bread from the basket. If any of the food was left over by the next morning, it was not to be shared with the people, but burned because it was sacred.

The ordination process was to take seven days. To purify and consecrate the altar so that it would become “most holy” (and thus that whatever touched it would be holy), a bull was offered as a sin offering each day (29:36). Also each day, two year-old lambs were offered in sacrifice, one in the morning and the other at twilight. One tenth of an ephah (about two quarts) of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin (about 1 quart) of olive oil, as well as a quarter of a hin of wine, was offered with each lamb.

God carefully proscribed the dress and ordination process of the Levitical priesthood, men specially set apart for holy service to Him, even though they were unable to bring men to God (Hebrews 7:11,18). However, we do have a High Priest who can offer an efficacious sacrifice (Himself!) and bring us to God (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14). Hebrews 7:24-27 proclaims:

... because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

Amazingly, not only is Jesus our great High Priest, but Christians, too, are called priests of the most high God (I Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). We can offer sacrifices of praise and good works, which please God (Hebrews 13:15-16). Like a priest, we can intercede for others in prayer. The Lord encourages us to come into His holy presence, where heretofore only the high priest was allowed once a year (Hebrews 10:19). We can only do this on the basis of the blood of Christ shed on our behalf; we can only come into His presence and serve Him clothed in His righteousness, not our own filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6; Zechariah 3:1-5; Isaiah 61:10; II Chronicles 6:41; Psalm 132:9,16).

The sacrifices of Aaron and his sons were to indicate a wholehearted devotion to God. May we give our lives completely to the Lord to love and serve Him in thankfulness for His sacrifice and work as high priest in our behalf. As the author of Hebrews encourages us (Hebrews 4:14-16):

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Lesson Procedure

This week you will again summarize the Bible passage for your students rather than reading it because of its length. Use the Lesson Background to help you inform your students and discuss with them the priests’ work, dress, and ordination sacrifices (next week’s lesson deals with the Israelite sacrificial system in general, so cover the ordination sacrifices only briefly).

You may wish to introduce the lesson as follows: “What would you think if you read the following ad in a newspaper - ‘Help Wanted: Priest to minister in God’s Tabernacle. Applicant must be a descendant of Aaron. He should love God and be willing to work hard. No salary but all needs provided for.’ That is a silly advertisement because today there is no Tabernacle on earth, nor are there descendants of Aaron to minister in it. Thousands of years ago, there were no newspapers with such advertisements either, but there were men whose job description fit the ad, who served in the Tabernacle day after day. What did they do? Today we will learn something about this and why it is important. We will also learn about a special priest called the high priest.”

“The high priest was the most important person in Israelite society. He was a descendant of Aaron and held his position for life. His main job was to offer sacrifice and pray. Other priests helped him in these duties, but only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place into God’s very presence, and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement; we will learn more about this in a later lesson. Today we will look at what happened when the high priest was ordained (the time when he was made high priest). This would, of course, be a very special occurrence, which would be remembered by the Israelite community for a long time, for it would occur perhaps only once during most of their lifetimes. The first man to become high priest was Aaron, Moses’ brother.”

“First, a bull and two rams without defect and a basket containing bread made of fine wheat flour without yeast, cakes made with oil, and wafers spread with oil were presented to the Lord. Next, the high priest was washed and dressed in the special priestly garments and oil was poured on his head to anoint him as high priest. Then, he and the other priests would lay their hands on the bull, symbolically transferring their sins to the animal. The bull was killed and its blood put on the horns of the altar and poured around its base. A similar procedure was followed for the two rams - their blood was sprinkled against all sides of the altar and some of the blood from the second ram was mixed with anointing oil and put on the priest’s right thumb, right big toe and the lobe of his right ear and was sprinkled on him and on his clothes. Why do you think this was done? Part of the second ram was to be eaten by the priests, but some of it and the entire first ram were to be burned. The baked goods were waved before the Lord and then burned. The whole ordination process took seven days. In addition to the bull and two rams that were sacrificed, two year-old lambs were sacrificed each day, one each morning and one each evening at twilight. About two quarts of fine flour mixed with about a quart of olive oil plus about one quart of wine were offered with each lamb. All this may seem very strange to you, but God had a purpose in it. You will learn more about the Old Testament sacrificial system in future lessons.”

“I just said that the High Priest wore special garments. Why do people wear different kinds of clothes?”

Explain that, as a soldier or sports figure’s uniform tells who he is and indicates authority, responsibility, and the group to which he belongs, so did the clothing of the priest, giving him dignity and honor (Exodus 28:2), as well as covering him and being a source of beauty. Draw the high priest and his garments on the board as you explain them to your class. Have your students do so as well, either at this time or later for review purposes. You may wish to have students look up and report on the priest’s various garments as you did to learn about the different parts of the Tabernacle. If available, bring in pictures of the high priest’s clothing and/or of the precious stones used in his garments (even though the identity of some of these is uncertain). At the end of the lesson, explain to your students that while the Israelite priestly system was abolished a long time ago, there is a High Priest today who makes intercession for His people, Jesus Christ. Read Hebrews 4:14-16 and discuss. You may also discuss, if you wish, how God has chosen his people to act as priests as well (see Lesson Background).

Songs

“Jesus, My Great High Priest” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #306); “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #521); “Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #520); “Let Our Praise to You Be as Incense” (Brent Chambers; *Maranatha Praise*, third edition, 160).

THE SACRIFICES - 1

Leviticus 1-7

Lesson Aim

That your students would understand how the Levitical sacrifices pointed to the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, Who shed His blood to pay the penalty for His people's sins.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 9:13 - "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so they are outwardly clean."

Lesson Background

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Old Covenant was the sacrificial system. Its strictly defined, highly delineated procedures were prescribed by the Lord; obedience to these precepts was the proper way for an Israelite to worship God. Yet the sacrifices were only meant as a temporary measure, as Hebrews 10 says, "a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves" (Hebrews 10:1). They pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who died to pay the penalty for His people's sins (I John 4:10). Next week you will discuss this in some detail, but today concentrate on the Levitical sacrifices themselves.

There were five major sacrifices under the Old Covenant: the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, and the fellowship offering. All except the grain offering involved the killing of an animal without any kind of spot or defect. This symbolized the perfect Lamb of God who never sinned. With the possible exception of the guilt offering (where the action is not mentioned, but highly likely), the guilty person (or his representative) would lay his hands on the animal's head, symbolically imparting his

sins to the sacrifice. Apparently, the burnt offering represented atonement for original sin and sin in general, while the sin offering pointed to the necessity of payment for individual sins committed by the priest, community, leaders, and individuals. The guilt offering focused on culpability for specific sins in regard to the worship of God or injury to others. The fellowship or peace offering indicated that, as a result of atonement, people could have fellowship with God. The grain offering seems to have been a gift to the Lord.

A wood fire was kept burning on the bronze altar at all times so that regular burnt offerings of males from the herd, male goats or sheep, or doves or pigeons could be offered. The worshiper would present the offering at the Tent of Meeting, lay his hands upon it, and he (or the priest; the wording is somewhat ambiguous) would kill it. The priest would then pour the blood on all sides of the bronze altar, skin the animal, cut it in pieces, and wash the inner parts and legs with water. The entire animal, except the skin, which belonged to the priest, was then burned on the altar. In the case of the birds, the blood would be drained on the side of the altar.

To confess his sins, the Israelite would bring a sin offering before the Lord. There were some differences in this offering depending upon who brought the offering, but basically the worshiper would bring an animal, lay his hands upon it (the elders would do this in the case of community sin), and then the animal would be killed and its blood applied to the horns of the altar. If a priest or the community as a whole became aware of having sinned, they would bring a young bull to be sacrificed. The priest would dip his finger in the bull's blood and sprinkle it seven times before the curtain in the Tent of Meeting; he would then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of incense. If a leader of the Israelites sinned he would bring a male goat to be sacrificed, and an ordinary individual would bring a female goat or lamb (or a dove or pigeon). The blood from these animals would be applied to the horns of the bronze altar rather than to the altar of incense. In all cases, the rest of the blood would be poured out at the base of the bronze altar and the fat portions (which included the fat, kidneys, and covering over the liver) would be burned on the bronze altar. The hide, flesh, head, legs, inner parts, and offal were taken to a clean place outside the camp and burned with a wood fire. The meat from this offering was to be eaten by the priest or any male in his family, unless the blood of the offering had been brought into the holy place (in other words, if it had been offered by the priest or community), in which case it was to be burned.

The guilt offering was similar to the sin offering but was for specific sins against the Lord's holy things and sins that injured others, such as stealing. A ram was offered and, in addition, restitution was made with an additional twenty percent given as well. The blood was sprinkled on all sides of the bronze altar and the fat portions were burned. Any male in the priest's family could eat the meat.

The privilege of communion with God is symbolized by the fellowship (sometimes called peace) offering. Fellowship with God can only be achieved on the basis of shed blood, so, as with the burnt, sin, and guilt offerings, an animal had to be sacrificed, in this case a male or female from the herd or a male or female lamb or goat. The worshiper would lay his hands on the animal, it would be killed, and its blood sprinkled by the priest on all sides of the bronze altar. The fat portions would be burned, but then the worshiper could feast on the meat in fellowship with the Lord. The right breast and thigh of the animal were reserved as the regular portion for the priest. The fellowship offering could be given as an expression of thankfulness or as a result of a vow or as a freewill offering. If it was a thank offering, the worshiper was also to offer "cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil" (Leviticus 7:12), as well as an offering of cakes of bread made with yeast. These would belong to the priest who sprinkled the blood of the fellowship offering.

There were several types of grain offerings. Fine flour on which oil was poured together with incense could be brought. The priest would burn a handful of the flour and oil and all the incense and keep

the rest. The worshiper could also bring baked cakes made with oil, wafers spread with oil, or flour and oil cooked on a griddle. None of these offerings could contain yeast or honey. The priest would take a memorial portion of these offerings to burn and was allowed to keep the rest for food. All grain offerings were to be seasoned with salt. Salt was used to bind covenants (Leviticus 2:13) and to prevent putrefaction. The grain offering of a priest had to be burned completely. The imagery of unleavened bread as symbolic of the body of Christ and oil as representing the Holy Spirit is abundant throughout Scripture (John 6:30-59; Mark 14:22-25; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Zechariah 4:2-6).

Each day (double on the Sabbath), the Israelites were to offer a lamb morning and evening and a grain offering of one tenth of an ephah (about two quarts) of fine flour along with a quarter hin (about one quart) of oil and an offering of a quarter hin of fermented drink (Exodus 29:38-41; Numbers 28:3-4,9). Every month at the new moon, a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs was to be given. The Israelites were to contribute a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil with each bull, two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil with each ram, and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for each lamb. They were also to supply one-half hin of wine for each bull, one-third of a hin of wine for each ram, and one-quarter hin of wine for each lamb. Besides this, one male goat was to be presented to the Lord as a sin offering.

To us the Israelite sacrificial system may seem archaic, complicated, crude, and even repugnant. Yet such appraisals are faulty, for God ordained the sacrifices to be a beautiful picture of our Lord and His atoning work. May your study this week renew your appreciation of who Jesus is and how great was the cost to pay for our sins.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson with the following brief story:

“Ben hunched down over the plate, determination written on every inch of his face. Two strikes, a tie score, and walks his first two times at bat. He was not going to let this ball get by him. The pitcher wound up and the ball came flying toward him, a little low, but then Ben liked them that way. He swung hard and smooth, remembering to keep his feet planted like his brother had told him. Smack! leather hit metal and Ben tore off toward first. Crash! Another sound reached Ben’s ears before he had even touched the base and he stopped, frozen. Looking toward right field, Ben realized he had hit the ball farther than he ever had in his life, all the way to Mr. McCarthy’s house. And there was Mr. McCarthy, arms across his chest, scowling through the space that had once been his picture window. What was Ben going to do?”

Ask your class what they think will happen next. Discuss, bringing out that the right thing to do would be for Ben to apologize to Mr. McCarthy and pay for the window. However, Mr. McCarthy saw Ben and so, even if he did not confess, he would probably have to pay for the window. The emphasis of this brief discussion should not be on doing what is right, but on the fact that we must pay the penalty of our wrongdoing, even when it is only accidental (that Ben broke the window was not, of course, sinful unless the place where they played ball habitually caused them to break windows). Use this to lead into a consideration of how we have broken God’s Law, which necessitates payment. Explain the system of Old Testament sacrifices using the Lesson Background. Do not read Leviticus 1-7 to your class because of its nature and length. Help your students fill in the summary chart of the sacrifices (keep this chart to review next week). Explain to them how these sacrifices have been fulfilled by Christ. You will discuss this during next week’s lesson as well. Your explanation might go something like this:

“Just as Ben would have to pay for the window, people must pay for their sins, their wrong actions and rebellion against the God who created them. God gave the Israelites regulations to carry out that showed this necessity. The Lord required that the Israelites kill animals in recognition that their own lives were forfeit for their sins. God specified precisely what animals the Israelites were to kill under what circumstances and how the sacrifices were to be accomplished. There were five basic types of sacrifice, which are written across the top of the chart in front of you. Down the left side of the chart, there are questions about the sacrifices. Fill in the empty boxes as I explain the differences among the sacrifices to you.”

Do so, using the teacher’s chart that is already filled in and any additional background material you wish to include. When you have done this, which will take much of the class period, continue approximately as follows:

“What is your reaction to all this? Does it seem extremely complicated and very strange? Think what it would have been like to be an Israelite in those days. Think of the cost and trouble involved in the sacrifices. If you were an Israelite, how would the sacrificial system affect your view of sin? Why do we not sacrifice bulls and rams today?” [Explain briefly, since you will cover this next week, how Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system - that it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), but the spotless Lamb of God did so by His death on the cross. In your discussion, try to focus on the seriousness of sin. People become so used to the ease (from a human perspective) with which sins can now be forgiven that we forget, if we ever did have even a beginning comprehension, what it cost the Lord to die on our behalf. Perhaps seeing what the Israelites had to bear, which is, of course, minuscule compared to what Christ had to endure, will give your students some comprehension of the cost of sin.

Sacrifice Chart

SACRIFICES	burnt offering	sin offering	guilt offering	fellowship offering	grain offering
what offered	bull, male goat or sheep, dove or pigeon	bull/male goat/female goat, lamb, dove, pigeon	ram plus 1/5 value	male or female from herd, lamb or goat	flour/cakes/wafers/pan all w/ oil and salt, w/o yeast & honey
who/how offered	hands laid on animal; animal killed	hands laid on animal; animal killed	hands laid on animal?? animal killed	hands laid on animal; animal killed	offering waved
where blood placed	all sides of bronze altar	horns of the altar (which depends on who offering)	all sides of bronze altar	all sides of bronze altar	—
what burned	entire animal except hide	fat portions	fat portions	fat portions	memorial portion
what done with rest	priest keeps hide	partly eaten	partly eaten	partly eaten	partly eaten
who ate	—	priest	priest and males in family	priest (right breast and thigh), worshiper	priest
purpose	atone for sin generally?	atone for individual sins	atone for specific individual sin	fellowship, thanksgiving, vows	thanks? dedication?

Sacrifice Chart

SACRIFICES	burnt offering	sin offering	guilt offering	fellowship offering	grain offering
what offered					
how offered					
where blood placed					
what burned					
what done with rest					
who ate					
purpose					

THE SACRIFICES - 2

Leviticus 1-7

Lesson Aim

That your students would understand how the Levitical sacrifices pointed to the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, who shed His blood to pay the penalty for His people's sins, and how we can offer "sacrifices" to Him.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 9:14 - "How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"

Lesson Background

God commanded the Israelites to worship Him by offering various sacrifices. Yet these offerings could never truly make atonement for their sins. As the author of Hebrews wrote:

For this reason [the law] can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:1b-4).

A perfect sacrifice was needed to atone for sins once and for all. This was accomplished by Jesus Christ, God's Son, who offered Himself, the spotless Lamb, to die for His people's sins (I John 4:10; Romans 3:25-26; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:10-14,19).

God required the Israelites to offer sacrifices, looking forward to the time when Christ would shed His blood for His people. The Lord was not, however, always pleased with the Israelites' sacrifices, for they many times obeyed the outward form but their hearts were not right before Him, or they would only follow His regulations in part but still justify their actions (Isaiah 1:10-17; Malachi 1:6-14; Proverbs 15:8; 21:27; I Samuel 2:12-17,29). Sometimes they mixed idol worship with the worship of the one true God. God is pleased with true worship, but He does not need our sacrifices and considers other things more important (Proverbs 21:3; Psalm 50:8-15; 51:16-19; Hosea 6:6; Mark 12:33). Many times we, even as Christians, try to buy favor with God with the multitude of our "sacrifices" and good works, instead of truly understanding that we can never please God by our own efforts, but are only forgiven and accepted by Him on the basis of Christ's sacrifice.

Even though our justification is based solely on Christ's atonement on our behalf, God asks us to make sacrifices to Him (I Peter 2:5). Scripture compares our praise to God (Hebrews 13:15), our good works (Hebrews 13:16) and our monetary gifts (Philippians 4:18) to sacrifice. Paul tells the Philippians that if he has to die for the cause of Christ it will be a drink offering he is glad to give (Philippians 2:17; II Timothy 4:6). However, most importantly, our whole lives need to be offered as sacrifices to God. In Romans 12:1, Paul says: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual [or reasonable] act of worship."

To us the Israelite system of worship seems complex and exacting. Perhaps we cannot understand its demanding precepts because we have such a low view of sin and Christ's atoning sacrifice. Too many times it is easy to utter a quick "Lord, forgive me," with no conception of what it cost for Him to do so. As you and your students study the Israelite sacrifices, may you come to appreciate more fully the sacrifice of the Lamb of God and respond to Him in obedience, love, and worship.

Lesson Procedure

Use your students' sacrifice charts to review briefly the different types of sacrifices brought by the Israelites. Remind the students of the large number of offerings involved. Continue approximately as follows:

"As you can see, the Israelite form of worship was very complicated and difficult to observe. Can you imagine bringing an animal to sacrifice every time you sinned? Think of the work involved; think of the cost involved. Remember last week's story about Ben, who broke a picture window while playing baseball? Maybe after he talked to Mr. McCarthy, he thought about the hundreds of dollars needed to replace a picture window and wondered how he could ever pay him back. Could you ever bring enough animals to pay for your sins? How can your sins be paid for?" Have your students read and then discuss I John 4:10; Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:10-14.

"We think of our sins and Jesus' death very lightly. 'It was just a little lie; it didn't hurt anyone,' or, 'I didn't do exactly what I was told and not right away, but at least I did something, not like so-and-so.' Perhaps if we remember how much the Israelites did to try to gain favor with God we will better appreciate how serious sin is."

"God told the Israelites to offer sacrifices, but do you think He needed them? Was God always pleased with the Israelite sacrifices? Why might He not have been? Look up Isaiah 1:10-17 and Malachi 1:6-14 to find out. Offering right sacrifices is a very serious matter to God, but He considers other things to be important, too. Read Psalm 50:8-15; 51:16-19, and Hosea 6:6 to see what they are."

“Do you know that in some parts of the world people still sacrifice animals because they think this will obtain God’s favor? This does not please God, however, but actually makes Him angry. We have no more reason to sacrifice animals because Jesus died to pay the penalty that we deserved. No good works we do can ever buy us God’s blessing.”

“Remember two weeks ago we learned that, even though there is no longer a priesthood like in the Old Testament, God calls His people priests and wants them to act in certain ways as priests: to be holy, to come into His presence, and to pray for other people. What was probably the most important job of the priests? Of course, it was to offer sacrifice. God says we can offer sacrifices to Him, too. Don’t worry - you do not have to bring a sheep into class next week! We know that only by the blood of Christ can we be forgiven and come into God’s presence; nothing we do can ever make us acceptable to Him. But God is pleased when we offer right sacrifices. Let us see what the Bible means by this.”

Have your students look up the following verses and discuss what they mean with them: I Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15-16; Psalm 141:2; Philippians 4:18; Philippians 2:17; Romans 12:1. You may wish your students to illustrate these concepts with individual drawings or a class mural of different “sacrifices.” Remind your students that the verses talking about Christians being priests and offering sacrifice apply to Christians only. They mean nothing to a person if he has not trusted in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God and given his life to Him. If most in your class are Christians, have them quietly think about and pray silently about a specific way they can act as priests and offer sacrifices this week. End your lesson by offering a “sacrifice of praise,” singing songs to worship Him.

Songs

Some songs about sacrifice you may wish to sing are: “Jesus My Great High Priest” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #306); “Arise, My Soul, Arise” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #305); “I Will Sing of My Redeemer” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #650); “Thy Works Not Mine O Christ” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #524); “What Can Wash Away My Sins” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #307); “Not All the Blood of Beasts” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #242); “Only By the Blood of the Lamb” (Rosemary Foster and Jeff Nelson; *Maranatha Praise*, third edition, 189); “We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise” (Kirk Dearman; *Maranatha Praise*, 235); “Let Our Praise to You Be as Incense” (Brent Chambers; *Maranatha Praise*, 160); “Holy, Holy Lamb” (Dan Burgess; *Maranatha Praise*, 256); “To the Lamb” (*Maranatha Praise*, 24); “Take Me Into the Holy of Holies.”

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS

Leviticus 11

Lesson Aim

That your students would learn the meaning of clean and unclean animals and be motivated to live holy lives to the Lord.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 9:14 - “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.”

Lesson Background

God chose the Israelites to be a holy people, set apart to Him. One indication of this was the food regulations He gave them. The Bible does not reveal the Lord’s motivation in requiring adherence to these rules. A special diet would emphasize their uniqueness and bond as a special people and bring to mind daily the importance of obedience to God in all aspects of life. However, probably the primary reason for these dictums seems to be the protection of the Israelites’ physical health. God told His people (Exodus 15:26; see also Deuteronomy 7:15): “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you.”

The Lord divided animals into two types, clean and unclean. Rules and specific lists determined which animals fell into which category. For example, in order to be clean and thus permissible to eat, a mammal had to both chew the cud and have a split hoof. This eliminated the pig, which does not chew its

cud although it has a split hoof, and the camel, coney (or rock badger), and rabbit, which do not have cloven hoofs. By forbidding the consumption of these animals, God protected His people from trichinosis (in pigs), toxoplasmosis (in pigs), the echinococcus bacterium (in pigs), and the tularemia virus (in rabbits).

The Israelites were only allowed to eat water creatures with fins and scales, thus eliminating from their diet sea creatures far more prone to parasites, such as clams (a source of hepatitis) and snails (host to Bilharziasis which causes urinary schistosomiasis). God also gave the Israelites an extensive list of birds (and one flying mammal, the bat) that they were to detest; the germ-ridden food sources of these primarily carrion- and fish-eating birds could have had a deleterious effect on the Israelites' health. The Israelites were permitted to eat insects with jointed legs for hopping such as the locust, katydid, cricket, and grasshopper, but were to detest all others; the consequences of eating such filthy insects as flies and cockroaches seems obvious. God also mandated the Israelites' behavior in relation to dead animals, whether clean or unclean (for specifics on this, as well as more detail on food prohibitions, see Leviticus 11). An animal carcass is an ideal breeding ground for disease, and the rules for washing and/or destroying that which touched it would go a long way toward eliminating contagion.

What significance do the dietary regulations in Leviticus have for believers today? We are no longer under the ceremonial law and God allows us to eat foods that had been forbidden to the Israelites. "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (I Timothy 4:4-5; see also Acts 10). This does not mean that we can abuse our bodies and consume as much of anything as we desire with impunity. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we should therefore honor Him with our bodies (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Christians differ on the implications of this verse, but, as Paul says in Romans 14, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). As Paul indicates in Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8, no matter what our convictions, we are to love those who differ with us on disputable matters. What we eat can affect our health and well-being, but it has no bearing on the Lord's love for us. ". . . food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do" (I Corinthians 8:8), but whatever we do should be done for the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31). May we honor God with our bodies, and even more so with our spirits and whole lives, that we will be a holy people, set apart to God.

Lesson Procedure

Today's lesson will be presented in play form. You may also read the Bible passage if you choose, but the basic information in the chapter is presented in the dialogue of the drama. The play relates how Reginald Ram, Percival the Pig, Osgood the Owl and Matilda Mosquito instruct young Wally the Weasel in the meaning of clean and unclean animals as well as the significance of sacrifice. As an opening activity you may have your students make masks of the characters from paper plates. Ask them what adjectives come to mind when they think of the word "pig." Someone will probably say "dirty." Tell them that God called pigs unclean, too, in Leviticus 11. Tell your students that today they will overhear some animals talking about the concepts in that chapter. Read the play in a dramatic manner to your class, if you desire using the masks they have made when the different animals speak.

Characters: Percival the Pig, Reginald Ram, Wally Weasel, Osgood the Owl, Matilda Mosquito, and assorted animals.

P: What a beautiful day it is today!

R: It surely is that, with the blue sky and those wispy clouds high over the desert. Praise be to God, it's a good day to be alive!

W: But, but, Lawrence the Lizard said you weren't going to be alive much longer. He said something was going to happen, but he wouldn't tell me. Are you sick or something? Larry said . . .

All: Shh!! [*ad. lib. "be quiet," etc.; Wally looks ashamed and confused*].

R: That's all right, Wally. You didn't say anything wrong. I am going to die. So will you all, someday. I am just going to die a little sooner. It's a long story, but if you would like, I will tell it to you.

W: Please, Uncle Reggie, if you would.

R: Well, you know all those humans I live with; they are a special group, chosen by God Himself to be His people [*chorus of respectful oohs from the animals*]. God told the Israelites to divide animals into two types called clean and unclean. I hope you won't think I'm proud when I say this, but I am a clean animal and most of you [*R looks around*] are, uh, unclean.

O: That's all right, old chap, I refuse to allow nominative categories to imperil my identity. I'm a creature of God the same as you, don't you know. I have had many experiences and have many abilities of which I'm rather proud. Flying, for one.

P: Eating mice, for another.

O: You, my dear sir, are hardly the one to belittle others' dietary habits.

M: All right, you two; quit the bickering. Reggie, why don't you tell young Wally here what this clean and unclean business really means.

R: Well, Wally, it means that the Israelite people are allowed to eat clean animals, but not unclean ones.

W: Oh, wow, I'm glad I'm an unclean animal! I am, aren't I? Huh? Aren't I an unclean animal?

R: Yes, Wally, you don't have to worry. You're an unclean animal.

W: How about Lawrence the Lizard? Is he an unclean animal? I mean, he's my friend and . . .

R: Yes, Wally, lizards are unclean animals. You needn't worry.

W: Is Percival a clean animal?

R: No, pigs are unclean.

W: But I heard - excuse me, Percival - that humans eat pigs!

- R: Some people do eat pork, but the Israelites are not just any people. They are a holy people, set apart to God. The Lord told them not to eat pigs or rats or owls or snails or even weasels.
- W: But how do they know what they can eat? Did God just give them a long list?
- P: For some animals He did. For instance, God said the Israelites were to detest - sorry, Osgood, it's God's word, not mine [*Osgood mumbles " 's all right "*] - As I was saying, God said they were to detest [*Percival recites quickly*] the eagle, vulture, black vulture, red kite, black kite, raven, horned owl, screech owl, gull, hawk, little owl, cormorant, great owl, white owl, desert owl, osprey, stork, heron, hoopoe, and bat.
- W: Wow! That's some detailed list!
- O: However, the Lord also issued specific instructions in order to delineate the exact parameters of their dietary intake.
- W: [*Says "Huh?" or merely looks confused*]
- M: He means God gave them rules.
- W: Oh.
- O: As I was saying . . . God permits the Israelites to eat mammals that are both ruminant bipartite ungulates [*Osgood glances at Wally*], that is to say, if they chew their cud and have split hoofs.
- W: Like a cow?
- O: That is correct. The bovine species is classified in the permissible category.
- M: The camel does not fit because, while it chews its cud, its hoofs are in one piece with soft pads to help it cross the desert sands.
- P: On the other hand, I have split hoofs, which I must say I think far more elegant, but I don't chew the cud. Sorry, Reggie, but I do think that regurgitation is rather a disgusting habit.
- W: What about fish? May the Israelites eat them?
- M: They may as long as the creature has fins and scales, but, if not, they are to detest them. That means they are not permitted to eat lobster or crabs, for example. And the only insects they may eat are those that have jointed legs for hopping like the locust, katydid, cricket, and grasshopper. So I, Matilda mosquito, am an unclean animal to the Israelites and they are forbidden to eat me. But I can bite them! [*Matilda chuckles*].
- R: Not only are the Israelites forbidden to eat certain animals, but the person who touches the dead body of even a clean animal must wash his clothes and he remains unclean until evening. If a dead unclean animal like a rat touches something, that thing must be washed; in the case of a clay pot, the pot and any food in it must be destroyed.
- W: Wow, that's a lot of rules. Why did God give the Israelites so many rules when other nations don't have them? Was He just being kind of picky?

- R: You know better than that, Wally. The Lord knows what is best and has reasons for what He does, even though we don't always understand them. Remember, as I said before, Israel is a special, holy people, set apart to God, and He wants them to act differently from the nations around them. I'm not sure, but I think a very important reason for the clean and unclean rules is so the Israelites don't become sick. Many animals carry diseases that can make humans very ill. I heard a group of Israelites talking once about God's promise to them that if they did right in His eyes and paid attention to His commands and kept His decrees, He would not bring on them any of the diseases He brought on the Egyptians because He is the Lord who heals them. So God gave these rules to help keep His people healthy.
- O: Yes. Consider Percival here. Pigs carry diseases like trichinosis, in which tiny worms burrow into the muscles, causing pain, fever, gastrointestinal problems, and fatigue, and toxoplasmosis, which produces symptoms similar to pneumonia. A person can contract the echinococcus bacteria, which can cause tumors in the brain, lungs, and other organs, by merely touching a pig.
- P: It's not my fault! I didn't invite those nasty little creatures to live in me.
- M: That's all right, Percy. Osgood's not trying to criticize you. Many animals carry disease.
- O: Matilda's correct. Rats carry bubonic plague and rabbits can carry the tularemia virus, which produces chills, fever, fatigue and swollen lymph nodes. Sea creatures carry parasites, although the ones with fins and scales, which the Israelites may eat, are less likely to do so. Clams can carry hepatitis, a liver disease, and snails are host to Bilharziasis which produces urinary schistosomiasis.
- M: Osgood, quit showing off. You're going to confuse Wally with all your big words. Remember, too, Wally, that clean or unclean animals are superb breeding grounds for germs, which is why God wanted the Israelites to avoid touching them if possible.
- W: Thanks, everyone, for explaining all that to me. But that still doesn't answer my first question; what Matilda said just reminded me of it. Dead animals. Uncle Reggie, are you gonna die? How do you know?
- R: Yes, Wally, I think I am, but don't mourn for me. I consider it a privilege, for I overheard two Israelites talking about me, and I'm not just going to be killed for food like an ordinary clean animal might be. I am going to be sacrificed. Do you know what that means? [*Wally shakes his head, "no"*]. Well, you know that human beings rebelled against God and do things that He hates [*murmurs from the animals of sorrow and incomprehension how such a thing could be possible*]. A man will come and lay his hands on my head and, in some way, I will take his sins. Then I will be killed to take the punishment he deserves. I'm just an animal so I don't see how I could really pay for his sins. Even thousands and thousands of animals could never pay God back for even one tiny, little sin. So I think my death is only part of the whole picture, maybe a symbol of something, I don't know. Yet, I do know that God is good, that He has made us animals to serve people, and that this is part of His plan for the universe and for my life. So I'm not afraid.
- W: Wow! I hope those humans appreciate what you are going to do for them. I love you, Uncle Reggie.
- R: I love you, too, Wally.

Discussion Questions

- Do the Old Testament rules about clean and unclean animals have any meaning for us today? Is it wrong for us to eat pork or lobster?
- Can you think of a story you studied last quarter that talked about clean and unclean animals? [Briefly review Acts 10 with your students, reading Acts 10:9-23 if you desire.] God told Peter that he could eat unclean animals. Does this mean it doesn't matter what we eat? Would it be okay to live on chocolate cake and soda? Why or why not? What does God have to say about this?

Several things are clear from Scripture. God is concerned about all aspects of life. Our salvation does not depend on what we eat (I Corinthians 8:8), but He wants us to honor Him with our bodies (I Corinthians 10:31; 6:19-20). Christians have different convictions about dietary matters, but it is important for your students to think about these things. Our attitude toward our brothers, however, should be that expressed by Paul in Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8, where he discussed a disagreement by Christians about what it is permissible to eat. The issue here was a spiritual one related to food sacrificed to idols rather than one relating to health concerns, but the attitude of love should remain the same. "The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him" (Romans 14:3).

Read I Corinthians 10:31 and I Corinthians 6:19-20, as well as parts of Romans 14 (verses 3-4,14,17-23). Discuss the meaning and implications of these verses with your students. Discuss specific food choices with them, but be sure they understand that these are decisions each person must make before God. "No food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean" (Romans 14:14; see also 14:20-23). You may wish to discuss some of the following topics: the food groups (fats/sweets; dairy; bread/cereal; fruit; vegetable; meat/beans/nuts) and food types (protein, carbohydrate, fats, and the like); the problem of "junk food" (many students eat and drink a very large amount of "junk food"; their bodies can actually become addicted to this consumption, where, for example, they require more and more sugar for something to taste sweet); the problem and effect of artificial colors and flavorings, pesticides, and caffeine; misleading advertising (a product may be advertised as healthy, low fat, but is loaded with sugar; a product may indicate it has no sugar, but it contains a high amount of honey), the overemphasis on diet and looking good (including the problems of anorexia and bulimia, and the difference between this and biblical fasting).

Activities

Make a healthy food and eat it. Some suggestions include: soup, celery with peanut butter, popcorn (little or no butter and salt), cornbread, low-sugar granola.

Have your students put on the play for others.

Game

#1. Put the names and, if possible, pictures of different animals on cards. Have teams of students sort them into clean and unclean animal piles. The team with the most animals in the correct pile after a given time limit wins. You may choose to have a team lose points for animals placed in an incorrect pile.

#2. Play as game #1, but sort food into categories such as food groups (dairy, fruit, etc.) or types (protein, carbohydrate, sugar, and fat).

#3. Designate one side of the room or a boundary line outdoors as “clean” and another as “unclean.” The teacher says the name of an animal and the students run to the proper side.

Songs

“The Kingdom of God is Not Meat or Drink” (Romans 14:17).

To Do at Home

#1. Have your students write down everything they eat this week and make a chart of what types of foods they eat.

#2. Have your students make a list of all the artificial ingredients found in the foods they eat this week, and the foods in which they were found.

THE SABBATH

Exodus 20:8-11; 23:10-13; Leviticus 25:1-7

Lesson Aim

That your students will learn about the Fourth Commandment and honor God on the Lord's Day.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15; this week, Hebrews 9:15 - "For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from sins committed under the first covenant."

Lesson Background

"Praying and singing hymns all day - how boring!" This is often the non-Christian's idea of the Lord's Day, and indeed of heaven itself, of which it is a foretaste. All too often the Christian, too, regards the Lord's Day as something to be endured rather than a privilege. Hopefully, you can communicate to your students how precious a gift it is to be able to be with and serve God without the hindrance of other obligations one day in seven.

The work six days/rest one pattern is rooted in creation itself. "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Genesis 2:2-3). Referring back to His creation of the world, God told Moses that His people were to remember the Sabbath

and keep it holy as a day on which no labor would be done (Exodus 20:8-11). Moses also told the people they were to observe the Sabbath day because God brought them out of bondage in Egypt. The one-in-seven principle is evident throughout Scripture. Once every seven years, the Israelites were told to let their land lie fallow (Exodus 23:10-13; Leviticus 25:1-7). By so doing the land could rest, the poor people and wild animals could eat, and the Israelite and his family could enjoy what grew by itself without having to labor for it. After seven sevens of years, a special Year of Jubilee was ordained in which everyone returned to his own property, and those Israelites who had been sold as slaves to their countrymen were released (Leviticus 25:8-54).

In the New Testament the first rather than the last day of the week was set apart as special to the Lord as a day of worship and meeting together (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10). It is interesting to note that several Old Testament feasts were also to begin on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:7,15,35-36?); the Sabbath itself was considered a feast, a day of sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:1-3). We celebrate our release by the mighty act of God, not from the oppression of Egypt, but from the bondage of Satan (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). One cannot completely equate the Old Testament Sabbath and the Lord's Day, but the New Testament emphasis (and subsequent practice by the church) does seem to shift to the first day of the week as the one set apart for worship and service to God.

Are Christians, then, bound to keep the Old Testament regulations regarding the Sabbath? The major consideration is understanding the differences among the civil, ceremonial, and moral laws found in the Old Testament. The moral law, based on God's character, is valid in all times and places, but the ceremonial law, fulfilled by Christ (Hebrews 8:7-13; 9:15-22; 10:1-4,16), and the civil law intended for the Israelite theocracy, although we can learn from them, were only in force under the Old Covenant. The Ten Commandments summarize the moral law of Christ, and hence we ignore the fourth mandate of the Decalogue at our peril. On the other hand, Christians are not bound to keep all the Old Testament sabbatical regulations (Colossians 2:16-17; Galatians 4:9-11) nor to adhere to Pharisaical legalism. Jesus said that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28).

Many people with Sabbatarian convictions immediately want to categorize activities as permissible or not. Certainly each Christian must deal with specifics before the Lord, but not in a self-righteous list-making or judgmental manner (Romans 14:5-8). In general, this one day in seven should be set apart specially to the Lord to spend time with Him alone and in fellowship with other believers, to worship Him, study and learn more about Him, tell others about God, serve other people, and rest from the sometimes crushing obligations of the remainder of the week. Not working needn't mean complete inactivity. Jesus pointed out that priests work, but this is not considered breaking the Fourth Commandment (Matthew 12:5). He also praised doing works of mercy and necessity no matter what the day (Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 13:10-17).

The commandment to rest one day has, of course, another side: it implies we are to work the other six days of the week! Scripture in many places commends the value of hard work (II Thessalonians 3:10; many verses in Proverbs, e.g., 30:24-25). All our time belongs to the Lord. Whatever we do should be done to His glory (I Corinthians 10:31).

Keeping the Sabbath under the Old Covenant was a very serious affair (Nehemiah 13). Whoever worked on the Sabbath was to be put to death (Exodus 35:2). Not being under the Old Covenant does not excuse us from sober consideration of how we are to use our time to please God, particularly on the one day in seven set apart for His honor. Yet again, we must remember that following the Fourth Commandment, as with all the commandments, is not meant to be a burden; they are in keeping with God's character and obedience to them will bring us blessing.

“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” The mouth of the Lord has spoken (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Lesson Procedure

Read Exodus 20:1-17 with your students. Ask them if there are any commandments that do not seem to fit or seem less important than others. If they do not pick out the Fourth Commandment, tell them that some people think it does not apply to people today. Guide the discussion until the students realize that all the commandments are given by God and must be obeyed. Have your students look up Genesis 2:2-3, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, Exodus 23:10-13, and Leviticus 25:1-7 to see how the Sabbath was based on God’s rest from creation and the Israelites’ deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and the principle of work six/rest one seen in other rules. You may also mention briefly the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 23:8-54) if you choose. Read Exodus 35:2 to point out how critical it was to keep the Sabbath.

Continue your consideration by looking up New Testament references to the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2, Revelation 1:10), showing how the day of worship and fellowship shifted from the seventh day of the week to the first. Ask them why this was so (Jesus rose on the first day of the week). Ask them whether or not Old Testament laws about the Sabbath apply to Christians, and if so in what way they do (see Lesson Background on moral, civil, and ceremonial law). Read Mark 2:23-3:6 and Luke 13:10-17; have your students explain what they learn from these passages about how Jesus views the Sabbath and what things are good to do on this day. Proceed with the following questions and comments.

“What are your favorite things to do? Are many of those activities much more fun when you do them with a good friend? In fact, often the activity itself does not matter very much as long as you can do it with your friend. It’s that way with someone who loves the Lord. If you love God, you want to spend time in His presence. You want to spend time with His people. You want to spend time serving Him and helping others.”

“God did not make the Sabbath day to be mean. Like the other commandments, it was meant to bless His people [read Isaiah 58:13-14 to your class]. There are two major reasons why a person could find the Lord’s Day boring. The most important reason is that he may not love the Lord. If you must spend time with a person you hate, you will be miserable no matter how much fun the activity you are doing with him is. Give your life to God to let Him be your ruler and you will find not only the Lord’s day but every day to be joyful, even when things are hard.”

“Maybe, however, you really do know and love the Lord. It’s possible that the things you do on this day really are boring! Can you think of interesting things to do that would honor God on this day (we will discuss some ideas later)? Try not to think of yourself and how bored you feel, but how you can honor God and serve others. Maybe your family is going to visit someone who does not have children near your age. Think how you could be helpful: Talk to the adults even if they ask all the usual questions about how old you are and what you are studying in school; don’t just answer their questions with one-word answers, but talk about yourself and ask about them, too; just talking to them may encourage them; ask God that your words would bless them; ask if you can help set the table or get dinner ready; entertain younger children so that the adults can talk. Maybe you don’t enjoy Sunday School or church. Perhaps your teacher and pastor speak in a dry manner with a flat tone and words you don’t understand. Stop! Check your attitude first. Remember

things that help us may not always be fun. Really listen to what the teacher or pastor is saying. Ask God to teach you through their words. Ask God to help them speak His Word in power and truth, not just for your sake, but for others who are listening and for God's glory; perhaps you could meekly suggest ways your teacher could make his lessons more interesting, or Christian songs you would like to sing to worship God."

Discuss with your students specific things they might do on the Lord's Day. The talk will probably be lively, as different students and their families have different expectations for this day. Help your class understand that attitude of heart is more important than specific restrictions. Have your class look up Colossians 2:16-17 and Galatians 4:9-11 and discuss. Ask: "How then can we know how to please God in these matters?" The important thing to consider is one's motivation, whether one is doing an activity to please himself or to please God and help other people.

Here are some good ideas of things you might want to do on the Lord's Day that you might not have much time to do the rest of the week because of school, homework, and chores: Have a quiet time reading the Bible, praying, and praising Him; worship God with other believers; learn about God in Sunday School; invite a friend to come to Sunday School with you; play hymns or worship songs on an instrument you play; write the music and/or words to a song praising God; take a walk in the park (maybe your family can come along) and praise God for His creation; stop and really look at some part of God's creation and thank Him for the marvelous way He made the world; learn a Bible verse; help a friend or family member learn a Bible verse; act out a Bible story with your family or friends; visit a friend; write letters to friends or missionaries; make a card or gift for someone; write a note of encouragement to someone; write, call, or visit someone who is sick or lonely (perhaps someone in your class who does not seem to have friends); be extra quiet and considerate of your family members so they can enjoy the Lord's Day, too; read a missionary story, Christian biography, or Christian fiction story.

Game

Write down on small pieces of paper the suggested activities above or others you deem appropriate. Fold the papers and put them in a container. Students take turns drawing papers from the container and reading what they say out loud until every person has two papers. Students have one opportunity to trade one paper with another person (this person cannot refuse the trade). Students then will, unless this is impossible, do the activity on at least one of their papers. The object of this activity is to familiarize your students with interesting things they might do on the Lord's Day and to encourage them to put one into practice.

Discussion

"What about the rest of week? Does God care about what we do on those days?" Help your students understand that one day of rest implies six days of work. Diligence in their school work and chores is very important. *All* our time belongs to God! Whatever we do should be done to His honor and glory (I Corinthians 10:31). If a person works hard the rest of the week he will be glad for the opportunity to rest one day.

Activity

As a class, do an activity (see Activity Book) to praise God and/or help another person.

Songs

“O Day of Rest and Gladness” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #392); “Lord of the Sabbath” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #390); “Come Let Us Join” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #393); “This Day at Thy Creating Word” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #394); “This is the Day the Lord Has Made” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #389); “Yodel Song” (on *Sir Oliver’s Song*, Birdwing/Sparrow).

PASSOVER AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Exodus 12; Leviticus 23:5-8

Lesson Aim

That your students will understand the Israelite Passover (and Feast of Unleavened Bread) and how it represents Christ, our Passover.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15; Hebrews 10:11-14; This week review Hebrews 9:11-15.

Lesson Background

Today you will begin a several-week study on the different Israelite feasts by learning about Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These were really two parts of the same festival commemorating God's deliverance of the Israelite people from bondage in Egypt.

God told each Israelite family to take from the herd a year-old male sheep or goat without defect. This was to be done on the tenth day of the first month, which was *Abib* (also called *Nisan*; it occurred in late March or early April). They were to take care of the lambs or goats until the fourteenth day of the month, when the whole community would slaughter them at twilight. The Israelites were to take some of the blood and use a hyssop branch (cf. Psalm 51:7) to apply it to the sides and top of their doorframes. They were to roast the entire animal with bitter herbs and consume all of it, along with some unleavened bread, before morning. If a lamb was too much for one family to eat, they were to share it with their nearest neighbor. The Israelites were not to leave their houses until morning. Temporary residents or hired workers were forbidden to eat the Passover, but a circumcised slave, or an alien living among the Israelites who was

willing to have all the males in his household circumcised, was, with his family, to eat it as if they were native-born Israelites. God told the Israelites to eat the Passover in haste with sandals on their feet, staff in hand, and cloaks tucked into their belts in an attitude of readiness to travel; we, too, should stand alert before God and not be tied to this world.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the fifteenth day of the first month and continued for seven days. For that time period, the Israelites were to eat no yeast; in fact, they had to remove all yeast from their houses. So serious was this restriction that anyone who ate yeast was to be cut off from the people of God. The first and last days of this feast were times of sacred assembly on which the Israelites were to do no regular work, although, unlike regular Sabbaths, they were allowed to light cooking fires.

The annual observance of this ritual was a powerful reminder to the Israelites of God's mercy to them in Egypt, when He destroyed the firstborn of every creature except those who had taken refuge in buildings with doorways sprinkled with the blood of a lamb. Not using leaven in their baking would help the Israelites call to mind their quick flight from the Egyptians, when there was no time to permit their bread to rise. The bitter herbs (possibly wild endive, chicory, peppermint, snakeroot, or dandelion) might make them think of the cruel slavery they endured. The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread do not merely commemorate the deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egyptian oppression. More significantly, they point to our release from the bondage of sin by the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. This should motivate us not to "return to Egypt," but to live in a way that pleases God. As Paul said in I Corinthians 5:7-8,

Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

May we do so in thanks to the Lamb of God who died for us.

Lesson Procedure

Find the Yeast Game

Divide your room or an outside area into several sections and your class into as many teams as there are sections. Hide the same amount of "yeast" in each section. Have the teams race to see how much yeast they can collect in a given time. "Yeast" can be grains of rice, sequins, small beads, or, if outdoors, bird seed.

Bible Story

Explain to your class that, as they sought to find all the rice (or whatever objects you used) in their section, once a year the Israelites tried to get rid of all the yeast in their houses. Read Leviticus 23:6-8 to your class.

Questions on Leviticus 23:6-8

- How long did the Feast of Unleavened Bread last?
- What were the Israelites to do on each day of the Feast [sacrifice and eat bread without yeast]?
- How were the Israelites to act on the first and seventh days of the Feast?

- Why do you think God told the Israelites not to eat yeast? Can you think of a time when the Israelites ate unleavened bread?

At one time, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt. They prayed that God would free them from their cruel taskmasters and He did so. They fled in such a hurry that there was no time to let their bread rise. The Pharaoh, king of Egypt, did not want to let the Israelites go, but God sent ten terrible plagues upon the Egyptians, and finally the Pharaoh relented. The worst plague was one that killed every firstborn person or animal except for God's people who did what He told them to do at this time. God said that the Israelites should celebrate their deliverance from Egypt every year on the fourteenth day of the month *Abib*, and the next day begin their celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The feast on the fourteenth was called *Passover* because the angel of death *passed over* the Israelite families and did not harm them. Let's read about these feasts and the events they commemorate in Exodus 12.

Questions on Exodus 12

- What were the Israelites to do on the tenth day of the first month of the year?
- What were the Israelites to do on the fourteenth day?
- What were the Israelites to do with the blood of the lamb? Why did they do this?
- Why didn't the Israelites use yeast in their bread?
- How did the Israelites "plunder the Egyptians"?
- How many Israelites fled Egypt?
- Who was allowed to eat the Passover?

There is a passage in the New Testament that has something important to say about the Passover. Let's read it [read I Corinthians 5:6-8].

Questions on I Corinthians 5:6-8

- What does Paul mean here when he says we must "get rid of the old yeast"? Does that mean we shouldn't eat bread anymore? What does yeast symbolize here? How is yeast similar to sin [small, but has far-reaching effects, penetrating everything it touches; it is hard to get rid of once it is in something; it keeps growing unless it is stopped]?
- In what sense is Christ our Passover Lamb? How is He like the lamb the Israelites sacrificed in who He is and in what the sacrifice accomplished [He is spotless, without sin; as a lamb had to be killed to protect the Israelites from physical death, so Christ had to die to protect His people from spiritual death; as the people had to apply the blood to their houses and remain inside if they were to be protected, so we must appropriate salvation through trusting in Christ's shed blood; as God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, He delivers Christians from sin and from their cruel taskmaster Satan]?

Thank the Lord Jesus for His atoning sacrifice. Encourage your students to search for and eradicate sin in their lives with even more diligence than they showed in finding the "yeast" in the game you played.

Activity - Make Matzos

Have your class make and eat unleavened bread. Mix flour and water in a three-to-one ratio (e.g., 3 cups flour and one cup water). Knead and roll into a circle. Prick the dough with a fork. Bake on a cookie sheet at 550° for six minutes. Turn the bread over and bake two more minutes.

Songs

“Christ, Our Passover”; “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #279 - especially verse 3); “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #420); “Jesus My Great High Priest” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #306); “Arise, My Soul, Arise” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #305); “I Will Sing of My Redeemer” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #650); “Thy Works Not Mine O Christ” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #524); “What Can Wash Away My Sins” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #307); “Not All the Blood of Beasts” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #242); “Only By the Blood of the Lamb” (Rosemary Foster and Jeff Nelson; *Maranatha Praise*, third edition, 189); “Holy, Holy Lamb” (Dan Burgess; *Maranatha Praise*, 256); “To the Lamb” (*Maranatha Praise*, 24)

FIRSTFRUITS

Leviticus 23:9-14

Lesson Aim

That your students will understand that God wants our best, the firstfruits of our lives, and that Christ is the firstfruits of those who have died in Him.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 10:11 - “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

Lesson Background

We sometimes forget in our twenty-first-century Western society that all we have and are is graciously given to us by the hand of a merciful God. Although one’s dependence on the Lord to provide adequate amounts of sun and rain, good soil, and protection from the ravages of disease and thievery, for even our supply of daily bread, may be much easier to comprehend in an agricultural society, the Israelites, too, tended to ignore their debt to God. His requirement of the sacrifice of firstfruits would help bring this to their remembrance.

God first reminded His people of His blessings to them - “When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest . . .” (Leviticus 23:10). The Israelites would still be slaves in Egypt were it not for the Lord’s gracious provision; it was He who would give them a fruitful land and an abundant harvest. All we have comes from God as well, and we owe all to Him.

The Lord told the Israelites to bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain they harvested. On the day after the Sabbath, the priest would wave the sheaf, offering it to God. At this time the Israelites were also to bring a spotless year-old lamb for a burnt offering, along with an accompanying grain offering of two tenths of an ephah (about four quarts) of fine flour mixed with oil and a drink offering of a quarter hin (about one quart) of wine. They were not to eat any bread or roasted or new grain until they had brought this offering to God. This was to be a lasting ordinance. The sheaf was symbolic of the whole harvest; in truth, all belongs to God. Likewise, our lives belong to God and we should bring the first and best to Him. Whether possessions (I Corinthians 16:2), time, or heart, we should “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

Firstfruits is not only a reminder of our obligation to God, but also of what He has done for us in giving us all the blessings of creation, along with the Lord Jesus and the blessings attendant on relationship with Him. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:20-23: “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn; Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.” Although we owe our lives to God, Christ’s sacrifice was accepted on our behalf, and, as the firstfruits of the harvest represents the whole, the resurrection of Christ from the dead means that we who have trusted in Him will someday be raised from the dead as well. In gratitude may we offer all we are and have to Him.

Lesson Procedure

To introduce this lesson, bring in some apples or other fruit. As you and your students munch on this treat, discuss where the apples came from. What was necessary for their growth and what could have prevented it? Have them think of other types of food and how they grow. Who is ultimately responsible for the harvest? Although the answers to these questions will be very obvious to your students, try to bring them to a new understanding of their daily dependence on God, even for “daily bread.”

“God wanted to Israelites to recognize that He was the one who gave them food and all good things and that they owed Him their very lives. To help them remember this, He commanded that the Israelites celebrate an annual harvest festival. Let’s read about it.” [Read and discuss Leviticus 23:9-14 with your class.]

Questions on Leviticus 23:9-14 and Matthew 6:33

- Why do you think God told the Israelites to bring a sheaf of the first grain to the priest so that he could wave it before the Lord? What did this symbolize [it was symbolic of the whole harvest, which they owed to the Lord; all good things come from God; we owe our lives to Him and should bring Him the first and best of what we have]?
- Why do you think the Israelites were forbidden to eat any of the harvest until they had made this offering?
- Why was it also necessary to sacrifice a lamb at this harvest festival?

We are quite removed from the agricultural process and don’t often think of the consequences of drought or pestilence for our food supply. We are all too used to having food readily provided whenever we want it. To see better your dependance on food and God’s provision of it, perhaps you could try not eating for several hours, or even a whole day, and think about God’s goodness to you. Let’s make a list of other things that God gives us besides food.

God told the Israelites to bring the first and best to Him before consuming things for themselves. Jesus said that if we put God first, we would not have to worry about whether or not we would have food or clothing because He would provide them for us. Read Matthew 6:33. *These things* refers to food, clothes, and other such material provisions (see verses 25-32). How can we “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness”? In what practical ways can we give the first and best we have to God [consider areas of time, thought, energy and strength as well as money and possessions]?

The Israelites had to bring the firstfruits of their harvest to God. The Bible talks about another kind of firstfruits. Let’s find out what this is. [Read I Corinthians 15:20-24].

Questions on I Corinthians 15:20-24

- What does verse 20 mean by *those who have fallen asleep*?
- Who are the two men in verse 21?
- What does verse 22 mean?
- What does this passage mean by saying that Christ is the firstfruits [if God raised Christ from the dead, we can trust Him to give us new life with Him when we die]?

Discuss how this is even more reason for us to give our lives, all we are and have, gratefully to God.

Activity

This is a rather short lesson, which should give you time to work on the Tabernacle project or other activity of your choosing (see Activity Book).

PENTECOST

Leviticus 23:15-22

Lesson Aim

That your students will understand how the Jewish harvest festival of the Feast of Weeks pointed to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week Hebrews 10:12 - “But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”

Lesson Background

God told the Israelites to celebrate three harvest feasts: Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths). All three would serve to remind the Israelites that the land, its fruit, and their very being belonged to God, but each had a slightly different emphasis and pointed ahead to a different historical fulfillment.

Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14) apparently took place the day after the second Sabbath of the Passover celebration (fittingly, the day Christ rose from the dead). Forty-nine days later, or fifty days after that Sabbath, the Feast of Weeks, that is Pentecost (*pente* means *fifty*), was celebrated. At this time an offering of new grain was made from the firstfruits of the harvest (this should not be confused with the feast of firstfruits, at which time a sheaf of the first grain was presented to the Lord; Pentecost occurred at the completion of the harvest, when the work was done). Two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour baked with yeast were waved by the priest before the Lord. The inclusion of yeast, often symbolic of sin, is highly unusual in an offering made to God. Along with this, a burnt offering of spotless animals -

seven one-year-old male lambs, one young bull, and two rams - together with their grain and drink offerings were to be sacrificed to the Lord. In addition to this, one male goat was to be given as a sin offering and two year-old lambs were to be presented as a fellowship offering. The priest was to wave the lambs with the bread of firstfruits before the Lord. Numbers 28:26-31 mentions additional offerings that were to be given during this feast. These requirements were a lasting ordinance for the Israelites.

The Feast of Weeks was a time of great celebration for the Israelites. They would be thankful for the great bounty God had given them in a fruitful harvest. In Deuteronomy 16:9-12, the Israelites were enjoined not only to provide the required sacrifices, but to give a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord had given them. The day was to be one of sacred assembly on which they were to do no regular work. All the people, including servants, Levites, aliens, the fatherless, and widows were to rejoice before the Lord. It was a day to remember especially the poor and alien, and the Israelites were reminded not to harvest the edges of their fields and to leave the gleanings for those in need, for they were once slaves in Egypt.

The Israelites could not know, however, how great the celebration should be for what God would one day do on this day. Forty-nine days after the Resurrection, as the apostles and Christ's followers met together, something wonderful happened:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:1-4).

The passage reports that those in Jerusalem for the feast were perplexed by what was occurring, as they heard the Christians declaring the wonders of God in different languages (some even thought they were drunk), but Peter reassured the Jews that this was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32). Peter then preached the Gospel to them, urging them to repent, which many did. After the hard work accomplished by Christ, the planting of the seed, it was now time to reap blessings and rejoice. The Holy Spirit is one who brings great joy (Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; I Thessalonians 1:6; Luke 10:21). It was time to call others to rejoice as well and bring in a bountiful harvest (Acts 2:41,47; see also John 4:35-38; Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2-3).

Also significant is the fact that by this time, besides being a harvest festival, Pentecost had become a commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, however, God's people are no longer subject to the condemnation of the Law (Galatians 3-5; Romans 6-8). Our lives are still mixed with the yeast of sin, but we can come to God forgiven because of Christ's sacrifice. We may also rejoice because God's gift is available to all people who turn to Him, including the poor and alien (Acts 2:38-39). For all this may we praise God and be truly thankful.

Lesson Procedure

What is your favorite holiday? Why do you like it? What is it about that time that makes you happy? Several of the Israelites' joyful holidays involved gathering in the harvest. Last week we studied the offering of the first sheaf to God. Seven weeks later, another festival was held celebrating bringing in the harvest. Try to imagine what it would be like to bring in a harvest. What would it look and smell like? What would you hear? How would the people feel?

If you would like, have your students draw a picture or write a poem about bringing in the harvest. Read and discuss Leviticus 23:15-22 and Deuteronomy 16:9-12 with your class using the material found in the Lesson Background.

Questions on Leviticus 23:15-22

- When did this feast to occur?
- What were some of the offerings the Israelites were to bring?
- What were the Israelites commanded to do in Leviticus 23:15-22? Why did God tell them to do this?
- This was called *gleaning*. Can you think of another book in the Bible that talks about someone benefitting from this practice?

Questions on Deuteronomy 16:9-12

- What kind of offering does this passage mention that was to be brought during the Feast of Weeks besides the offerings mentioned in Leviticus 23?
- How were the Israelites to celebrate this feast [with joy]? Who was to do so?
- What were the Israelites to remember? Why do you think God told them this?

Scripture speaks of another type of harvest besides gathering apples or reaping barley. Do you know to what I am referring? Let's read some passages to find out [read John 4:35-38; Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2-3].

Can you think of a time we studied about last quarter [Year II, Quarter 1, Lesson 1] when God brought a great harvest of people into His kingdom? Read Acts 2:41,47. What else happened in Acts 2 that gives the reason for so many people coming to God? When did this occur? Read Acts 2:1 to find out. Did you know that *Pentecost* is another name for the Feast of Weeks? It is called *Pentecost* because it occurred fifty (*pente*) days after the second Passover Sabbath. God brought the first great harvest of people into His Church on the very day when the harvest celebration occurred, fulfilling the true meaning of that feast.

How else was the New Testament Pentecost like that of the Old Testament? Reading the following verses may help you figure this out [read Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; I Thessalonians 1:6; Luke 10:21]. God told the Israelites to rejoice before Him because of the blessings of the harvest and all His other provisions, but true joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Another important aspect of the Feast of Weeks was that the Israelites were to show concern for the poor and alien in their midst. The coming of God's Holy Spirit on Pentecost opened His blessings to the poor and to foreigners (symbolized by the speaking in other languages - Acts 2:4-11).

The Feast of Weeks was a time to share the bounty God had given with the poor and alien. If we are excited about what God has done for us and are full of joy in the Holy Spirit, we will want share God's blessings, physical and spiritual, with others and "bring in the harvest" by telling people about what Christ has done. Do you have any ideas of practical ways we in this class could do so? Let's ask God for wisdom and help in these efforts.

Activity

In some way, share God's blessings with those less fortunate than you and bring joy to others (see Activity Book for ideas).

ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR

Leviticus 23:23-32; Leviticus 16

Lesson Aim

That your students would rejoice in the Lord, who sent Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for His people's sins.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week, Hebrews 10:13-14 - "Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

Lesson Background

The fall season brought three important holidays into the life of the Israelite, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) and the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths), which you will study next week. In close proximity on the calendar, both Rosh Hashanah (held on the first day of Tishri, the seventh month) and Yom Kippur (on the tenth day of Tishri) were days of sacred assembly, but there were marked differences in celebration and intent.

Rosh Hashanah was the Feast of Trumpets, "a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts" (Leviticus 23:24). On this day of rejoicing, the people were to do no regular work (necessary work was allowed, contra. the Day of Atonement on which no work whatsoever was permitted), and were to present an offering to the Lord by fire. Rosh Hashanah was a special celebration of the feast that occurred on the first day of each month at the time of the new moon. On this day the Israelites were to present to the

Lord a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven spotless male lambs a year old. With each bull there was to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil (one ephah equals approximately three-fifths of a bushel or twenty-two liters), with the ram a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and with each lamb one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil. With each bull there was to be a drink offering of half a hin of wine (one hin equals approximately four quarts or four liters), with each ram a third of a hin, and with each lamb a quarter of a hin (Numbers 28:1-14). In addition to this, on Rosh Hashanah the Israelites were to sacrifice one bull, one ram, and seven lambs with the appropriate grain offerings for each animal as listed above, and one male goat as a sin offering (Numbers 29:1-6). At these celebrations, the Israelites were to sound trumpets over their burnt offerings and fellowship offerings as a “memorial for you before your God” (Numbers 10:10).

Trumpets are used in Scripture not only for New Moon festivals (Psalm 81:3-4), but as a picture of God’s voice (Exodus 19:16-19; Revelation 1:10; 4:1). A trumpet was used to assemble the Israelites to move camp, and frequently the trumpet was a call to battle (Numbers 10:9; I Corinthians 14:8). A trumpet will gather God’s elect to meet Christ at His Second Coming (I Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 24:30-31; I Corinthians 15:51-52), and will signal the judgment of God (Revelation 8-10) and His victory over evil (Revelation 11:15). Rosh Hashanah may be symbolic of these future events.

Yom Kippur (*yom* means *day*; *kippur* means *to cover*, i.e., to cover over or atone for sins), was the most important day in the Israelite year, for it was the culmination of the entire sacrificial system, the day when the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place to make atonement for their sins. He could do so only with the blood of sacrifice, as we can only enter God’s presence on the basis of Christ’s shed blood. On Yom Kippur the high priest would sacrifice a bull for his own sins and a goat for the sins of the people. This goat was chosen by lot from two goats, the other of which was allowed to live. This live goat, called the *azazel* or *goat of removal* (traditionally *scapegoat*), was brought forward and the high priest would place both hands on its head, confessing over it “all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites - all their sins” (Leviticus 16:21). A man then took the goat into the desert where it was released, symbolically carrying with it all the sins of the people. This goat and the goat of the sin offering *together* pointed to Christ. May we forever praise Him for dying for us and removing our sins from us “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12).

Lesson Procedure

If possible, open your class by blowing a trumpet (of course, a *shofar*, that is a ram’s horn, would be ideal, but even a toy trumpet will do; if this is impractical, merely bring in a picture or talk about trumpets). Ask your class on what occasion one might blow a trumpet or a bugle. Tell them that in the Bible trumpets were blown on many occasions, and that today they will learn about a holiday on which this was done. Draw a picture of a trumpet on the board and write down references to the blowing of trumpets: Psalm 81:3-4; Exodus 19:16-19; Revelation 1:10; Numbers 10:1,9; I Corinthians 14:8; I Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 24:30-31; I Corinthians 15:51-52; Revelation 11:15. Have several students look up these verses and report to the class different reasons trumpets were used in Scripture. Read Leviticus 23:23-25 to your class and discuss. Leviticus 23:26-32 and Leviticus 16 are summarized below, since the second passage is quite lengthy. Continue approximately as follows:

“The most important holiday of the Israelite year occurred shortly after Rosh Hashanah. It was called *Yom Kippur*, the *Day of Covering* (or the *Day of Atonement*). This holiday was the culmination of the whole sacrificial system. Can you relate some things you have learned about Old Testament sacrifices? Yom Kippur was the only time during the whole year that anyone could enter the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle. At this time the high priest would do so, but only with an offering of blood. What was the Most

Holy Place, what was in this part of the Tabernacle, and why would anyone who entered there die? You can see what a special time Yom Kippur was. From the evening of the ninth day of the seventh month until the evening of the tenth day, the Israelites were not allowed to do any kind of work; they were also commanded to *deny themselves*, which probably meant they were to fast.”

“This is what happened on Yom Kippur. The high priest bathed himself completely and put on sacred linen garments. He sacrificed a bull for his own sins and the sins of his household. Then he would present two goats before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. One, chosen by lot, would later be sacrificed to the Lord as a sin offering, and the other would be kept alive for another purpose. The high priest would take a censer full of burning coals and two handfuls of incense, and take them behind the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The incense would conceal the atonement cover so the high priest would not die. He would sprinkle some of the bull’s blood seven times before the atonement cover. This was the only time anyone was allowed into the Most Holy Place. Following this, the high priest would “slaughter the goat for a sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull’s blood” to make atonement for the Most Holy Place. He was to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, and also to sprinkle some of the bull’s and goat’s blood seven times on the horns of the altar. Only then was he to deal with the live goat.”

“This goat was called the *azazel* or *goat of removal*, sometimes called the *scapegoat*, that is, the goat that *escapes*. The high priest laid both hands on the goat’s head and confessed over it ‘all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites - all their sins’ (Leviticus 16:21). He then gave the goat into the care of a man who took it to the desert and released it in a solitary place, symbolically carrying with it all the sins of the people. This goat and the goat of the sin offering *together* pointed to Christ. Can you explain how this is so?”

“The high priest would again bathe himself and put on his regular garments. He then sacrificed the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, as well as burning the fat of the sin offering on the altar. The man who released the goat had to bathe and wash his clothes before he was allowed back into camp. The bull and goat whose blood were used for the sin offerings were taken outside the camp and burned completely. The author of Hebrews compares this to Jesus suffering ‘outside the city gate,’ which he uses as an encouragement for us gladly to endure persecution, ‘go[ing] to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore’ (Hebrews 13:13).”

“Today, Jewish people still celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but not as originally intended. Rosh Hashanah has come to be regarded as a New Year’s festival, although the Lord told Moses and Aaron that the ‘head of the year’ was to be in the spring, not seven months later when Rosh Hashanah occurs. The high point of the religious year, Yom Kippur is a somber time in which faithful Jews fast and consider the deeds done in the past year and how they can better their conduct in the coming year. There is no Temple and no sacrifice; feeling sorry and an attempt to help others and improve behavior is all that remains. Do you think this is enough for them to have their sins forgiven? Hebrews 10:4 will help answer that question. If it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins in a sacrificial system ordained by God, no amount of remorse or good works can ever earn favor with God. Only the blood shed on our behalf by His own Son, the spotless Lamb of God, can bring reconciliation.” Read I John 4:10.

“The high priest could only go behind the curtain into the Most Holy Place once a year. Does anyone remember what happened to this curtain when Christ died? It was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). Do you see what this symbolizes? God’s people now have free access into His presence. But just as the high priest could only enter the Most Holy Place bringing the blood of the sacrifice, we can only enter God’s presence on the basis of the shed blood of Christ. What does Hebrews 10:19-22 say we should therefore do? Let’s pray now and thank God for all He has done.”

Activity

Help your students fill in the following chart comparing the different Israelite feasts.

The Feasts of Israel

Feast	When	What celebrated	Future fulfillment	Unique characteristics
Passover and Unleavened Bread	14th; 15-21st of Abib (first month)	Exodus	Crucifixion	lamb; unleavened bread
Firstfruits	probably 22nd Abib	harvest	Resurrection	wave sheaf
Weeks	forty-nine days after Firstfruits	harvest	Pentecost	wave bread with yeast
Trumpets	1st of Tishri (seventh month)	God as king?	Second Coming?	blow trumpets
Atonement	10th of Tishri	atonement for sin	Crucifixion	high priest enters Most Holy Place; scapegoat
Tabernacles	15th-21st of Tishri	wilderness wanderings; harvest	Second Coming	live in booths

The Feasts of Israel

Feast	When	What celebrated	Future fulfillment	Unique characteristics
Passover and Unleavened Bread				
Firstfruits				
Weeks				
Trumpets				
Atonement				
Tabernacles				

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Leviticus 23:33-43

Lesson Aim

That your students will learn how the Israelites rejoiced at the Feast of Tabernacles and look forward to its fulfillment in Christ's Second Coming.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; this week, review these verses.

Lesson Background

The Feast of Tabernacles, sometimes translated as the Feast of Booths, was a time of great rejoicing and thanksgiving to God as the Israelites gathered in the final harvest of the year. This important holiday reminded the Israelites of their wilderness wanderings and also pointed ahead to a future harvest (it was also known as the Feast of Harvest - Exodus 23:16, or the Feast of Ingathering - Exodus 34:22).

The Feast of Tabernacles took place on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishri) and lasted for seven days, plus an eighth day of sacred assembly on which an offering would be made to the Lord by fire and no regular work would be done. The first day of the feast was also a day of sacred assembly on which no regular work was to be performed. The sacrifices mandated for the Feast of Tabernacles were basically double those required for the Feast of Firstfruits. Each day, two rams, fourteen lambs, and a certain number of bulls were to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, and one male goat as a sin offering. With each bull, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil was to be offered, two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour and oil with each ram and one-tenth of an ephah with each lamb. The number of bulls offered each day varied, beginning with thirteen on the first day of the feast and decreasing by one each day until seven were

offered on the seventh day (Numbers 29:13-32). In addition to these sacrifices and the regular offerings, the Israelites were encouraged to bring freewill offerings to God. “Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you” (Deuteronomy 16:17).

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of three holidays each year in which all Israelite men were to go up to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord their God (the other two being the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Weeks - Deuteronomy 16:16). So that they might remember their nomadic existence in the wilderness, the Lord required that all native-born Israelites live in temporary shelters for the seven days of the festival. As they lived in these booths (“tabernacles” here should actually be “booths” or temporary shelters; the word here, *sukkoth*, is different from the one used for God’s Tabernacle or tent), they would be reminded of their dependence on the Lord and His goodness in providing for them. Perhaps they would also be sobered to think of those who rebelled against the Lord and so failed to reach the Promised Land. The people were to do no regular work, but were to take choice fruit, palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars and rejoice before the Lord. Deuteronomy 16:14 says that even servants, aliens, the fatherless and widows were to be joyful at this time. Israel could rejoice because God is trustworthy and would continue to take care of them as He had in the past. “For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete” (Deuteronomy 16:15).

Israel celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles throughout their history, even up to Jesus’ day, although there were times of disobedience when they failed to obey God’s Word (Nehemiah 8:13-18). By the time of Christ, certain customs had been added to the celebration. The priest, accompanied by music, would go to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem and draw water with a golden pitcher, which he would then pour at the base of the altar. On one such occasion, Jesus spoke up in reference to this and caused no small disturbance.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-39).

When Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus on the mountain as He was transfigured before them, Peter, probably with the Feast of Tabernacles in mind, suggested he put up booths for them (Matthew 17:4). However, it was not the time for Christ to set up His eternal kingdom. Zechariah indicates that someday all nations will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14). Now we live in temporary dwellings, “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14). The Feast of Tabernacles points to a day when we will rejoice that tribulation and wandering are past, that we have reached the Promised Land, and that an abundant harvest has been reaped. May we rejoice in the goodness and mercy of God as we, like the Israelites, look back to what He has done for us and forward to that day.

Lesson Procedure

If at all possible, have your class build a rude shelter by tying together branches, sticks and poles you have collected and brought to class. If this is impossible, have each student construct a model booth from twigs. Have the Bible lesson and eat a snack in your shelter or outdoors. Read Leviticus 23:33-43 and Deuteronomy 16:13-17 to your students and discuss, including appropriate material from the Lesson Background. Talk about the beauty of God’s creation and what it would be like for the Israelites to “camp out” for a week. Point out that this was only a temporary dwelling and that our lives on earth are

impermanent as well. Consider how glad the Israelites would have been that they no longer had to wander in the desert, but could praise God for the abundant harvest, as they offered sacrifice and rejoiced before Him with their friends. Someday God's people will be able to rejoice fully before Him when He comes back to be with them forever.

“Have you ever gone camping with your family? What was it like? You were probably quite excited as you made preparations to get ready. Did you learn anything about yourself or God from this camping experience? God wanted the Israelites to ‘camp out’ for seven days every year during a holiday called the Feast of Tabernacles. Can you imagine if not only your family but everyone you knew went camping at the same time? Let's read about this last of the three great harvest festivals.” [Read Leviticus 23:33-43 and Deuteronomy 16:13-17.]

Questions

- How long did the Feast of Tabernacles last?
- What were the Israelites to do on each day of the feast?
- What were the Israelites to do on the first and eighth days?
- Where were the Israelites to live for the days of the feast?
- Why did the Lord say He wanted the Israelites to live in booths?
- What else do you think they might learn from living in these temporary shelters?
- What emotion was to characterize this feast?
- Who was to share in the joy of this feast?
- Why were they to be joyful?
- What were the three Israelite harvest feasts?
- What were the men told to bring to these feasts?
- We learned that the Feast of Weeks was fulfilled at Pentecost. To what do you think the Feast of Tabernacles may point?

“The Feast of Tabernacles was a time of great joy as the Israelites remembered what God had done for them in the past, praised Him for His goodness to them in the present, and trusted that He would continue to bless them in the future. Tell me at least one way in which God has blessed you.”

List these on the board. Perhaps your class would like to paint a mural or write a poem or song exalting God for what He has done. You may wish to read a psalm of praise such as Psalm 145, 150, 100, 96, 146, 148, or 149. Pray and thank God for His blessings, past, present, and future.

Songs

Rejoice before Him. Sing songs of praise such as “He Has Made Me Glad” (*I will enter His Gates; Maranatha Praise*, third edition, 18); “Rejoice in the Lord Always” (*Maranatha Praise*, 239; Philippians 4:4); “The Trees of the Field” (*Maranatha Praise*, 103); “Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord” (Psalm 100 - KJV).

WHAT ABOUT HANUKKAH?

Lesson Aim

That your students would recognize God's faithfulness to His people through the ages and be encouraged to dedicate their lives to Him and zealously serve Him.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 9:11-15 and Hebrews 10:11-14; review these verses.

Lesson Background

The Lord is a good and faithful God. All through the Old Testament, we can see how He initiated a loving relationship with His people, how they turned in rebellion against Him, and how He sacrificially drew them back to Himself. Even during the period after the Old Testament and before the birth of Jesus, God preserved for Himself a remnant through times of alluring temptation and outright hostility.

The Syrians, who in the second century B.C. ruled Judah, were determined to bring Greek culture and religion to the Jewish people. At first, rulers demanded mere political loyalty, allowing the Jews to worship freely. Some Jews, especially those living in Alexandria in Egypt, adopted Greek dress and culture, including the diversions of the amphitheater and gymnasium. The temptation was to compromise with pagan ideas and practices. Then there came to power a man determined to impose all aspects of Greek life on his subject peoples. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) carried off from the Temple in Jerusalem the golden altar, the lampstand, the curtain, the Bread of the Presence, and various other articles such as cups and bowls. He replaced the high priest with the priest's Hellenistic-leaning brother and later with a Benjamite named

Menelaus. With Menelaus' consent, Antiochus instituted pagan worship, including ritual prostitution, the sacrifice of pigs on the altar, and the erection of an image of Zeus (which looked like Antiochus!) In the Most Holy Place. He outlawed the Jewish feasts, the observance of the Sabbath, and the practice of circumcision on penalty of death. Antiochus burned the scrolls of the law; anyone found with a copy of the law would be executed.

Not content to work abominations in Jerusalem alone, Antiochus spread the desecration to outlying districts, forcing citizens to burn incense at pagan altars as an act of loyalty to the government. In 167 B.C., in the town of Modin, Mattathias, an elderly priest, refused. As the tension built, a fearful man walked forward to offer incense and placate the authorities. Full of wrath, Mattathias slew him and the emissary of Antiochus. He then destroyed the altar and, with his five sons and compatriots, headed for the hills to begin a campaign of guerilla warfare, killing Syrian officers and Hellenistic Jews who supported them. The Syrians fought back and slaughtered a large number who refused to fight on the Sabbath day (Mattathias then revised his ideas to allow for self-defense on the Sabbath). Shortly thereafter, Mattathias died and his third son, Judas, called the Maccabee (*the hammer*) took over as leader.

The Syrians underestimated the strength of the revolt and, concerned about rebellion elsewhere, did not leave their strongest force in Judah. Judas, in a surprise night attack, wiped out the Syrian army at Emmaus, opening the road to Jerusalem, which was soon conquered. Menelaus and his sympathizers fled. Judas and his followers found the Temple in appalling condition. The courts of the Temple were overgrown like a thicket, the gates were burned, and the priests' rooms in ruin. They set out to cleanse the Temple and restore proper worship. Demolishing the defiled altar of burnt offering, they built a new altar of unhewn stones. They got rid of pagan statues, rebuilt the Temple and restored the interior and various furnishings. On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev (the ninth month), three years after Antiochus had desecrated the Temple, they offered sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering and worshiped the Lord to the accompaniment of harp, lute, and cymbals. For eight days they celebrated, worshiping the Lord with burnt, peace, and thank offerings. They lit the menorah, one light on the first day and an additional one for each successive day of the festival. Legend contends that there was only enough sacred oil to light the menorah for one day, but God miraculously allowed the oil to burn for the eight days of the festival. Judas Maccabeus and his brothers decided that this should be an annual celebration. In Jesus' day it was known as the Feast of Dedication, and today as Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights.

The Syrians returned to fight with greater force, but with other pressing concerns, they decided to offer peace to the people. A provisional council agreed to the strict terms of the peace treaty, but Judas and his followers, finding them unacceptable, returned to the country. Judas' skepticism was well-founded. Alcimus the high priest had a number of people executed and turned to Syria for aid. War was renewed, but this time Judas gained less support. In 160 B.C., Judas died in battle as his force of eight hundred men lost to a larger Syrian force. Judas' brothers Simon, Jonathan, and Johanan, and several hundred Maccabean soldiers fled across the Jordan.

Jonathan was a better politician than military leader, and, strangely enough, through shrewd diplomacy, became high priest and governor of Judah, gaining virtual independence from Syria. He was murdered by a Syrian general in 142 B.C. and succeeded as high priest by his brother, Simon. When Simon was murdered in 134 B.C., his son John Hyrcanus became high priest.

Rebellion and political maneuvering are rarely considered laudable activities, but we can praise God for using sinful men for His own purposes. The Lord sovereignly protected His chosen people, through whose line the Messiah would come. He used the Maccabees, as Josiah before them (II Chronicles 34), to rid the Temple of idolatry so true worship could occur. Not many years later, Jesus, too, cleansed the Temple (John 2:12-25; Matthew 21:12-17). We can also admire the Maccabees' courage and dedication to the Lord.

May we too be zealous for God's honor and fight against idolatry, that the Lord may be worshiped as He deserves.

Lesson Procedure

Begin by reviewing what you learned this quarter about the Tabernacle and sacrificial system under the Old Covenant. Explain that in later years, under King Solomon, a permanent building called the Temple was constructed to replace the temporary Tabernacle. Worship and sacrifices were continued in the Temple as they had been in the Tabernacle. Emphasize to your students the holiness of the Temple/Tabernacle, its being set apart to God, and the importance of obeying God's directives for worship. Ask them if they can imagine a pig being sacrificed in the Temple. Why would this be a terrible thing? Explain that this actually did happen, as they will learn about today in a story that is not in the Bible, but concerns God's people after the Old Testament times and before the New Testament, beginning about 160 years before Christ was born. The story will be told as an imaginary first-person account by a young man named Reuel.

To Joha,

All hope of victory is lost! We have fled for our lives! Our eight hundred men fought bravely, but the sheer number of men in the Syrian force was overwhelming. Simon, Jonathan, Johanan, and several hundred of us have staggered across the Jordan to regroup, but I feel all hope is lost. Judas, the Hammer, is dead and with him I fear the whole Maccabean cause. How did it come to this? God gave us such victories over those infidels. Why would He desert us now? Do you remember how it all began, my friend? I think it will do me good to recount it again here, although you were with me for most of it.

We used to live so peacefully in Modin as you did in your village, as did all of Israel. We worshiped Jehovah and He blessed our families and gave us good harvests. Although we hated being ruled by the Syrians, at first they allowed us to do what we wanted and worship as we pleased as long as we caused no trouble. But some of our people started to follow the Greek customs they introduced, dressing like them and even going to the amphitheater and gymnasium. How they could dishonor the Lord in this way I do not know, but little by little they became accustomed to and accepted Greek ways, so that things which I guess were harmless in themselves gave way to sin. Even in this I suppose we cannot blame the Syrians, for no one forced the Israelites to behave in such shameful ways. That is, until that despicable, wretched dog, that swine, that - words fail me, but you know who I mean, that cursed Antiochus Epiphanes came to power.

At first we could barely credit the rumors. Anyone caught with a copy of the scrolls of the law was to be executed! Jewish feasts and the observance of the Sabbath were outlawed! Even circumcision carried the death penalty! Antiochus cut at the heart of everything it means to be an Israelite; he struck at the commands of the Lord God Himself! Perhaps worst of all was what we heard was happening in the Temple, the place where God has made His name to dwell. I can hardly write down what happened. Stealing the golden objects from the Temple was bad enough, but the sort of thing many conquerors would do; it had certainly been done to us in the past. But the ritual prostitution - that was horrible! To commit such a sin in God's own dwelling place! Even, that, though, I hate to admit, was not original with Antiochus. Remember Samuel's sons? Putting up an image of Zeus (which coincidentally looked rather like Antiochus) in the Temple, though, was purely his genius. The worst sacrilege, however, must have been thought of by a demon from hell. Antiochus sacrificed a pig on the altar! A pig!! An unclean animal that an Israelite cannot even touch without becoming defiled, sacrificed on the holy altar of God! Such blasphemy! My heart breaks to think about it even now.

These events did not affect us in the outlying regions too much at first, but eventually Antiochus sent soldiers to force the whole country to comply with his evil ways. Things came to a head in our town of Modin one day when Antiochus' emissary told us that as good citizens we had to burn incense on a pagan altar. Mattathias, the elderly priest, and his sons refused. I'll never forget him standing there and in a ringing voice declaring, "We will not obey the command of the king, nor will we deviate one step from our forms of worship!" Yet not all our people were so brave. As soon as he had finished, a Jew, hoping to avoid trouble, came forward to offer sacrifice on the pagan altar. Mattathias was furious, stepped forward and killed the traitor right there at the altar. He then killed the king's officer and pulled down the pagan altar. "Follow me," he shouted, "every one of you who is zealous for the law and strives to maintain the covenant." You may wonder how I remember his exact words, but under such circumstances, they were indelibly impressed. Mattathias and his sons took to the hills and many of us followed, most bringing wives and children as well. Antiochus sent soldiers after us. On the Sabbath, they found a large group of Israelites hiding in caves. These faithful people refused to surrender or to fight on the Sabbath, for they felt this would be disobeying God. Those heartless soldiers just slaughtered them - there must have been a thousand men, women and children killed; they even killed the cattle. When Mattathias heard of this he was heartbroken and decided that it was God's will for us to defend ourselves, even on the Sabbath. So we organized into an army of our own, sweeping through the country pulling down pagan altars. It was shortly after Mattathias died and his son Judas Maccabeus was made field commander that you joined us.

We fought many battles, but although we were often vastly outnumbered, the Lord gave us victory time and time again. Remember when commander Gorgias took a detachment of five thousand men and a thousand cavalry to strike us unexpectedly one night, but Judas had word of this and meanwhile we went to attack the king's army at Emmaus? Gorgias must have really been surprised when he reached our camp and no one was there! He was even more surprised when he returned to his camp and found it being set on fire. He and his army panicked and headed for Philistia. The following year viceroy Lysias sent sixty thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry to attack us (I don't know if my numbers are right, but there sure were a lot of them). The battle began and Lysias lost something like five thousand men. When he saw his men being routed and ours still full of daring, he retreated even though they had the superior force. Judas was not one to rest, and since the path to Jerusalem was then free, he decided to go and cleanse the Temple from the horrible things that had been done there.

Do you remember what it was like? To be in Jerusalem again and to actually go to the Temple. It was wonderful to be there, but horrible to see the destruction and desecration Antiochus had wrought. The gates were burned down, the courts overgrown like a thicket, the priests' rooms a ruin and the altar was profaned. We tore our clothes, put ashes on our heads, fell on our faces, and wept at the desolation. How could this have happened to the house of our God? However, we could not remain in our grief forever. Judas put us to work. Such work! I think my back still hurts from moving those stones! We cleaned up the mess, destroyed the altar, which had been profaned, and built a new one with unhewn stones. Then, such joy! Sacrifice was made on the new altar on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, Kislev, on the anniversary of the very day the Gentiles had profaned it. Do you remember the music, singing hymns with harps and lutes and cymbals? Again, we prostrated ourselves before the Lord, but this time in thanksgiving, not grief. With great rejoicing, we brought burnt offerings, peace offerings and thank offerings. For eight days we celebrated and lit a new branch of the menorah each day. Do you think the story that there was only enough sacred oil for one day but that God let it burn for eight was true? I don't know, but it would seem no more a miracle to me than the victories He gave us, and that true worship could once more occur in the Temple.

God gave us great joy! But no more. My friend, I have a great wound in my leg, but I think that will heal. I do not know about the pain in my heart. It has been good to recount again the deeds God has accomplished on our behalf. It encourages me to believe that He will yet work among us. Humanly speaking

there seems to be no hope. So, dear friend, I will let you know when I can if it is worthwhile for you to join us here to fight on in the cause. Meanwhile, may God be with you and protect you.

Reuel

Reuel and Joha are made-up characters, but the rest of the people in Reuel's letter and the events he recounts are true. These events are not part of Scripture, but are historical facts and show how God protected the Jewish people, through whom the Messiah would come, after the events in the Old Testament and before those of the New Testament. You can read more about the battles of Mattathias and his sons in history books or in the books of First and Second Maccabees (those who revolted were called *Maccabees* after Judas *Maccabeus*; Roman Catholics include these books with the Bible in their Scriptures). Eventually it was a political, not a military solution that broke Israel free from Syrian rule (only to be conquered by Rome not long afterwards). Judas' brother Jonathan, through shrewd diplomacy, became high priest and governor of Judah. He was murdered by a Syrian general in 142 B.C. Simon, another son of Mattathias, succeeded his brother as high priest, only to be murdered himself in 134 B.C. His son John Hyrcanus then became high priest and remained in his office a long time.

Questions

- Why was it particularly important that the Jewish people not be destroyed [they were forbears of the Messiah]?
- What do you find admirable about the Maccabees [their fearless determination and devotion to God; their zeal for God's honor and pure worship]?
- Is there anything about the Maccabees' behavior that troubles you?
- What do you think you would have done had you been ordered to offer incense on a pagan altar? What would you have done, do you think, had you been in Mattathias' place and one of your townspeople gave in to the command?
- Do such questions seem far removed from your present life? How might you have to stand up for God in your life today? God protected the Maccabees and gave them victories against great odds.
- What lessons can we learn from the cleansing of the Temple even though we do not worship at a Temple in Jerusalem today?

Paul compares us as individuals (I Corinthians 6:19) and a corporate body (I Corinthians 3:16-17; II Corinthians 6:16) to the Temple, the place where the Spirit of God dwells and right worship should take place. Idols (an idol is anything that is more important than and trusted in more than God) exist in our lives and the church today that need to be cleansed if the Lord is to be worshiped as He deserves. Ask your students to consider areas of idolatry and pray together that they would be destroyed and pure worship restored.

Activity

Finish any uncompleted activities, do a short project from the Activity Book, or spend the time in prayer and worship.