

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 27

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



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THE BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

339 Lesson

THE CONSEQUENCES OF OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

TEXT: Leviticus 26:1-46

Our text today forms part of the conclusion of God’s commandments to Israel under the Levitical priesthood. The book of Leviticus had, before this chapter, therefore dwells on the later – prohibition of idolatry, observance of the Sabbath, benefits of obedience and danger of disobedience. The promise of manifold blessings and security is intended to lead us to obedience to God’s commandments while the fearful warning of divine judgement is to deter us from disobedience and avoidable suffering.

Whenever the Word of God comes to a person, a family, a church or a nation, two different paths present themselves – the paths of obedience and disobedience. As both paths represent different responses, they also lead to different experiences. God allows the freedom to choose our path. He however forewarns us of the consequences that lie in our chosen path. The divine principle in dealing with man is succinctly expressed in the scriptures: **“See I have set before thee this day life and good and death and evil”; “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore chose life, that both thou and thy seed may live”** (Deuteronomy 30:15,19).

In the midst of it all, the riches of God's mercy stand out, holding out forgiveness to anyone who in the past stood obstinately against God's commandments but who returns to God in humility, repentance and penitence.

CAUTION AGAINST IDOLATRY AND PROFANATION OF THE SABBATH (Leviticus 26:1,2; 19:4 Exodus 20:2-6, 8-11; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:15-20; Isaiah 44:9,10; Psalm 115:4-8).

Question 1: Why was it important to caution against idolatry and profanation of the Sabbath?

The caution against idolatry and profanation of the Sabbath was not only necessary but also important because (i) disobedience and disregard to God's instructions lead inexorably to the erosion of true piety and devotion to God; (ii) idolatry and profanation of the Sabbath are sins which are provocative to God; (iii) they constitute a great temptation to which Israel was constantly exposed because of the influence of the heathen nations surrounding them; and (iv) the caution set for Israel the condition for the possession of, and prosperity (or their opposite alternatives) in the Promised Land. Today, idolatry in its many forms and shades is still an ever-present danger against which a heaven-bound soul must be on the watch.

Properly considered, idolatry is foolish and senseless worship of the creature rather than the Creator. It involves setting up symbolic representations of the true God or of one of the false deities worshipped by heathens (Exodus 32:4). Like other sins, idolatry is a turning away from the path of common sense and man's duty towards God, into self-debasement and abuse. It is a sin that exposes man to the fiery judgement of jealous God, which judgement if not

averted or halted by genuine repentance and God's mercy damns the idolater both in this present life and in eternity. Idolatry was one of the great sins recorded against Ahab, the king of Israel who the scripture says **"did very abominably in following idols"** (I Kings 21:26), and Jeroboam, another king for whom **"this thing"** (idolatry) **became sin unto (his) house even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth"** (I Kings 13:34).

It is rather amazing how anyone would think that the work of his own hands is his helper or maker and worthy of his worship. As the scripture affirms, **"They that make (idols) are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them"** (Psalm 115:8). Israel's first national fall into idolatry was in the matter of golden calf (Exodus 32:7,8)

That Israel fell into this terrible sin so soon after the law was given, after God had done so great things for them, declared His intention to do more and after they had promised to obey, reveals the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. In different places and at different times, wood, stone, other man-made objects and creatures have been selected as objects of worship. These include the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets and zodiac signs. At other times and places, beasts, trees and mountains are revered and worshipped.

Question 2: Mention some modern forms of idolatry.

Modern objects of idolatry are sometimes less gross than their ancient counterparts? They are nonetheless equally idols. Also men are as prone today as ever to idolatry in their more subtle variants. Whenever we make anything more or equally important to us as God and His will, we thereby lay ourselves open to charges of idolatry. Viewed against these definitions,

we can see how prevalent idolatry has become and how watchful therefore in our individual lives we who have **“turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God”** must guard against this great sin.

Just as the prohibition of idolatry in all its forms is essential for the preservation of true worship, a proper observance of Sabbath was very essential as an antidote against idolatry.

Question 3: What is the correct perspective of the Sabbath in the New Testament dispensation ?

Man's insatiable quest for material acquisitions fosters the profanation of the Sabbath which also encourages forgetting God and idolatry. Very frequently therefore, the Sabbath and the sanctuary are mentioned in the books of the Law as antidotes against idolatry. **“Ye shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD”** (Leviticus 19:30; 26:2). The original word translated Sabbath does not mean seventh but rest. The Sabbath is meant to be a sacred pause from the routine labour by which man earns his daily bread, in order to afford him the privilege of worship and rest. The law on Sabbath was meant to give joy, mercy and refreshment arising from a focused remembrance of God's goodness. Christ's words in the New Testament delivered the Sabbath from the vindictiveness and falsehood of Pharisaic interpretations which stripped it of the spiritual benefits and blessings which its correct observance was designed to confer on man. It should be added that after the Lord's resurrection, the early Church began to observe the first day, instead of the seventh day of the week as **“the Lords day”** (Revelation 1:10, John 20:1,19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

BLESSINGS FOR THE OBEDIENT (Leviticus 26:3-13; Joel 2:22-27; Ezekiel 34:20-31; Amos 9:13;

Deuteronomy 11:13-15; Joshua 23:10, 1 Samuel 14:6-16; Revelation 21:3,4)

The myriads of blessings that the Lord promised Israel were prefaced with the condition: **“If ye walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and do them”** (Leviticus 26:3). He promised to bestow upon them a variety of blessings, so long as they continued to be obedient to Him. A faithful God, He is able to amply fulfill every promise He makes to His people. Nothing is as pleasing to God as cheerful obedience to His commandments and precepts. A humble, sincere and complete obedience to God’s will is more pleasing and acceptable to Him than many burnt offerings and sacrifices (1 Samuel 15:22). God rewards obedience and submission to His will with blessings such that the obedient is blessed with all the good desires of his heart. Though the blessings outlined in our text appear to relate mainly to the physical life, they also are types of spiritual blessings of the Gospel dispensation in Christ.

<p>Question 4: Mention some of the blessings God promised Israel and explain how they are fulfilled in Christ for the believer today.</p>
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For being obedient, God promised Israel that:

- (i) They would enjoy abundance of agricultural harvest resulting from divine provision of sufficient rain – neither too little nor too much (verse 4).
- (ii) Their fields would be so fruitful that they would be kept happily busy, harvesting and gathering in their agricultural products throughout the year (verse 5).

Consequent upon plentiful harvest, they would be able to eat their bread to the full. These promises of complete satisfaction typify the full satisfaction of all our needs enjoyed in Christ the Living Bread, by all believers. **“And Jesus said unto them, I am the**

Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger” (John 6:35)

(iii) Their stock of old grains would still be large and unexhausted when the next harvest would bring in fresh supplies

(iv) Their physical safety would be enriched with peace and absence of fear. **“I will give peace in the land”** (verse 6). Both safety and peace are secured for the believer by **“the good Shepherd”** (who) **giveth his life for the sheep**” (John 10:11). The Prince of Peace promises: **‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’** John 14:27).

(v) The Land would not be infested by dangerous beasts nor the inhabitants be in the dread and alarms of war (verse 6).

(vi) They would have victory in the event of any war with their enemies (verse 8)

(vii) God would multiply them and establish His covenant of His presence always (verses 11-12).

By promising abundance of earthly things, God stirs the mind to consider the rich treasures of the spiritual blessings laid up in store for the obedient. The sum total of these promises translate into the abundant life which Christ, the seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed, promised every believer **“...I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10). It is evident that obedience to divine commands is not only the surest, but the only way to personal and national excellence, permanent, prosperity, happiness and glory.

CURSES FOR THE DISOBEDIENT (Leviticus 26:14-39; Jeremiah 5:17; Micah 6:15; 1 Samuel 2:33; Judges 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; Proverbs 29:1)

Just as the promises of great blessings upon Israel were predicated on their walking according to God's statutes and commandments, so was their disobedience to bring untold curses upon them (Leviticus 26:14-16).

Having set the blessing before the people if they would be obedient, God here sets the curse before them, the evils which would make them miserable, if they were disobedient.

He warned that the curses or judgement would come in grades and torrents. If they would not learn obedience by the things they suffered, God Himself would be against them. This implies that the whole creation would be at war with them.

Disobedience or the setting up one's will against or in competition with the known will of God is likened to the most reprehensible acts of sin, such as rebellion, stubbornness, witchcraft and idolatry (1 Samuel 15:23). It begins with neglect or improper attention to a known precept of God's word ("**If ye will not hearken unto me**") and then degenerates into omission to do what is known to be God's command ("**and will not do all these commandments**"). This again underlines the importance of paying attention to those means by which we are brought to, taught and reminded of our obligations towards God. These are promoted by, a proper observance of Lord's Day commanded early in this chapter. Such observance enables us to present ourselves for special worship and fellowship, hearing the exposition of God's word, studying, meditating and praying. We must turn from doing our own pleasure on God's holy day "**and**

call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour [GOD], ...nor finding [our] own pleasure nor speaking our own words”
Isaiah 58:13.

If ruin and curse do not immediately follow disobedience, the sinner may be deceived into remaining unmoved by God’s warning and the private prodding of his own conscience. At other times, the initial moderate judgement of God may not elicit necessary repentance. In that case, the sinner is ripe for a more intense judgement [Proverbs 29:1]. God will allow terror, consumption and a burning ague “that will consume the eye and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow the seed in vain for your enemies shall eat it” (verse 16). Other consequences of disobedience include divine resistance resulting in the sinner falling prey to the violence of his enemies and being subjugated to their will and being dominated by the fear of the unknown.

It is note worthy that the severity of God’s judgement increases in intensity and variety as the sinner prolongs his disobedience.

<p>Question 5: Why is it in the sinner’s interest to repent as soon as he realizes his sinfulness?</p>

“And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins” (verse 28).

It is indeed a lost battle to set oneself against God by willful or continued disregard of His commandments. If true repentance does not halt the increased tide of God’s judgement, it will surely proceed until the unspeakable horror of eternal death and separation from God. The clear implication of God’s word in our

text is that those who remain adamant in their sins must be ready for yet more severe storms of divine disapproval even after they have emerged from a preceding one. None can mock or defy God and it is futile to resist to Him. Every sinner had better appreciate this truth and return to God at the first sense of his sin.

CONDITION FOR RESTORATION TO GOD'S BLESSING (Leviticus 26:40-46; Jeremiah 3:12,22, 4:1; 15:19; 18:11; 1 Samuel 7:3; Ezekiel 18:23)

Question 6: How can one be restored to God's blessing?

In spite of the severity of God's punishments, those who had been disobedient can actually turn those curses into blessings as they allow those chastisements to guide their straying feet back to the path of rectitude. Acknowledgement and confession of sin is the only thing that halts the unmitigated disaster caused by disobedience. To the penitent delinquent, God has graciously promised: **"If they shall confess their iniquity... with their trespass which they trespassed against me, ...if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, ...Then will I remember my covenant with ... Abraham"** (verses 40-42). Note that restoration to blessings is conditional.

It is assuming that the chapter concludes with gracious promises of the return of God's favour to His people if they genuinely repent of their disobedience. Their repentance should include confession of their sins which had brought all the disasters in the first place with a godly sorrow for sin. They must surrender to the justice of God in all His dealings. They must accept that they were being punished for their iniquity (Leviticus 26:41,43). By so doing, they justify God and

condemn themselves, bear the punishment patiently as that which they have well deserved.

How comforting it is to know that when repentant sinners come to God through Christ “the mediator of a better covenant”, He is ever ready to forgive them and give them grace to lead the new life.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Ephesians	5-6	Ezra	7
TUE	Philippians	1-2	“	8
WED	“	3-4	“	9-10
THUR	Colossians	1-2	Nehemiah	1-2
FRI	“	3-4	“	3-4
SAT	1 Thess	1-2	“	5-6
SUN	“	3-4	“	7

340 Lesson

LAWS CONCERNING VOWS AND TITHES

TEXT: Leviticus 27:1-34

MEMORY VERSE: “Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows” (Job 22:27).

The last chapter of the book of Leviticus deals with details concerning vows and tithes. Both vows and tithes as religious practices have been before the giving of the law at Sinai. In Genesis, we read of Abraham (Abram) presenting a tenth of the spoils of his war victory to Melchizedek **“the priest of the most high God”** (Genesis 14:20) and Jacob vowing avow unto God (Genesis 28:20-22). This was centuries before the law was given. The law however brought with it more specific regulations and directions concerning both practices.

Vows are religious promises made unto the Lord, and for the most part with prayer, and paid with thanksgiving (Numbers 21:2, 3; psalm 66:12-14). They are made to advance a plea to God for a desired blessing. A man might vow or devote himself, his children, cattle, goods, etc. to the Lord. Rules are also laid down for the redemption of all these. But if, after consecrating them, the person making the vow refused to redeem them, then those items vowed became the Lord’s property for ever. Tithes on the other hand represent that proportion of one’s property or income devoted to God, and their requirement as revealed in our text and in other scriptures is backed up by God’s express command.

Question 1: Differentiate between vows and tithes.

Vows differ from tithes in not being mandatory. They could only be made on a voluntary basis. However, once made one comes under obligation to perform the vow made (Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21, 22). Tithes on the other hand are quantitatively and qualitatively specific and mandatory under the law (Deuteronomy 14:22). From scriptural and historical perspectives, vows and tithes are designed for the support and sustenance of those who are occupied in the spiritual service.

LAW CONCERNING VOWS AND THEIR REDEMPTIONS (Leviticus 27:1-8, 14-27; Numbers 6:2-11; 1 Samuel 1:11).

The children of Israel were required to dedicate certain things such as the first fruits of their harvests, firstborn animals, firstborn sons, a tithe of their increase, etc. to God and His service. Many were often willing to go beyond these to dedicating themselves or members of their families, additional animals, landed properties, etc. to God and His cause.

The relative values of persons are regulated according to an estimate of the value of their future service or work. If a man was too poor to redeem his vow according to the redemption chart, the priest determined some figures according to the poor person's ability. The redemption rate for middle-aged persons between twenty and sixty years was highest – fifty shekels for males and thirty for females. Persons between the ages of five and twenty shekels for males and ten shekels for females. Even infants were not exempted. They too may be devoted to the Lord in a vow before their birth as was the case with Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11). The redemption rate for infants between the ages of one month and five years was five shekels for males and three for females. A man or a woman

above sixty years old attracted a redemption value of fifteen and ten shekels respectively.

Question 2: What lesson does making vows and redeeming them teach us?

From the foregoing, some salient instructions emerge. Firstly, making vows teaches us the duty of volitional, non-obligatory services unto the Lord. We should accordingly not restrict ourselves to those duties to God which are mandatory. God is highly pleased when we voluntarily take upon ourselves non-mandatory expressions of faith, love and gratitude to God. In other words, we may go beyond what we are compelled to do by an operative commandment and regulation to do those extra acts that further the ends of the precepts of God's word.

Secondly, it is highly instructive that under the vow regulations given by God, age, gender or economic condition was not allowed to preclude the liberty of devotion towards God. Thirdly, the lesser redemption value stipulated for females and the graduation of redemption prices according to the age of individuals show what God expects from everyone. It teaches us to avoid the temptation of limiting ourselves to the general average effort in the face of challenges of service to the Lord. We must instead, rise to make exceptional responses whenever our skill, talent, wealth, faith or maturity places us in a vantage position. **“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”** (Luke 12:46).

THE SANCTITY OF VOWS, PLEDGES AND PROMISES (Leviticus 27:9-13; Ecclesiastes 5:2; Psalm 15:4; Judges 11:35; Jeremiah 35:1-6).

While it is good to be zealous in good things, wisdom and discretion are also needful to guard against making rash vows. From a general consideration of scriptural prescriptions concerning vows once made are not to be altered.

Question 3: Mention instances in which vows are redeemable and cases in which they are not.

Redemption and exchange were also necessarily allowed where the animals vowed could not be used for sacrifice by reason of its uncleanness. Redemption was also allowed in situations where the management of the subject of the vow would be cumbersome if not commuted to cash as in the case of landed property. Even in those cases where it was necessary to allow for redemption, there was an imposition of twenty percent surcharge upon the value of the animal or property redeemed.

Question 4: What principle does the foreclosure of renunciation or the imposition of a surcharge on redemption of vows teach us?

The foreclosure of renunciation of vows and the impositions of surcharge were no doubt meant to discourage thoughtlessness and frivolity in making vows. The vital lesson in this is that God takes words, pledges and promises seriously, and expects us to be bound by our words. He frowns at situations where at the least difficulty we abandon our promises on the altar of convenience. Commitment to our promises and vows to God and our fellow men ought to be strong enough to compel performance, though it may have become more difficult by reason of unforeseen developments. The scripture comments **“He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not”** (Pslam 15:4).

If we apply this principle to the promises and vows made on our wedding day before the lord, our families

will be happier and more enduring. The same principle will induce greater loyalty to our employers and business partners according to the vows and promises we entered into by the terms of our employment and partnership. Like good soldiers of Christ, we should resist every temptation to abandon our promises, vows and pledges in pursuit of a life of ease.

With the principle of faithfulness to our vows and promises, it becomes easier for our biological and spiritual children to honour God by adhering to the pious teaching of their godly parents and pastors, especially when as in the case of the Rechabites, those parents and pastors are no longer there (Jeremiah 35:1-6).

Question 5: What should a believer do to avoid unnecessary difficulties arising from his vows and promises?

Seeing the sanctity of vows, promises and pledges, there is need for caution before making promises and pledges. We should avoid making promises and pledges that would translate into sinful action, or which may become impossible or embarrassing to fulfill. Carefulness, due consideration and the benefit of wise and godly counsel should be brought to bear before we make our promises and pledges. Where necessary, we must safeguard our Christian position by the insertion of necessary provisos and limitation before, not after, entering into an agreement to do a future promised deed. When however, before conversion, we ignorantly agreed to do something wicked and sinful, our superior loyalty to God, and the need for **“a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”** would compel us to renounce all such planned wickedness and sin.

THE FINALITY OF VOWS (Leviticus 27:28;29; Joshua 6:17; Deuteronomy 25:19; genesis 15:16)

This passage, which no doubt needs a careful examination, refers to personal property such as person, animals or things that were devoted to destruction because they were placed beyond the reach of redemption. These were referred to as subjects of vows or under God's ban and so were to be destroyed and not redeemed. Such persons were put to death or in the case of an animal or inanimate object, destroyed for the glory of God.

But no Jew or any man could, from the foregoing, devote his child or servant to the Lord, and thereby oblige himself to put them to death because he had no power over the lives of others, but were directly forbidden, by that great command, "**Thou shalt not kill**" An individual was not at liberty to devote another to a ban at his own will and pleasure, since God's commandment forbids human sacrifice in worship. And seeing he that killed his servant casually by a blow or with a rod was surely punished (Exodus 21:20), it could not be lawful to take lives upon pretext of any such vow as this.

DIVINE OWNERSHIP OF TITHES AND FIRSTLINGS
(Leviticus 27:30-34; Exodus 13:1,2; Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8; Malachi 3:10-12).

The first born of every clean animals was by the law dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 13:1,2). As such they could not be dedicated to the Lord in any act of singular vow (Leviticus 27:26). The practical implication of this is that our vows must advance our consecration to the Lord. "**And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD**" (Leviticus 27:30). The law gave divine authority to tithing. In the largely agrarian economy in Israel, the tithe was an acknowledgement that the land which yielded their harvests belonged to God

and that He actually gave the fruit and the increase on which they depended. They were commanded to give a tenth of all produce and livestock, in addition to numerous offerings to the Lord. Tithes could not be dedicated to the Lord as singular vows because they were already appropriated by divine command. When therefore a pledge or vow is made in support of special projects in the Church, for building, mission work, such a vow or pledge must not be allowed to compromise our faithfulness to paying our tithes. Tithes under the Levitical priesthood system were necessary for the support of the priesthood and the demands of religion under the Mosaic dispensation. Today tithes and offerings are used for Gospel work and the maintenance of its institutions and facilities.

The scripture does not only command: **‘honour the Lord with thine substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase’** but promises that as a result of so doing **“thy barns shall be filled with plenty, and the presses shall burst out with new wine”**. On the other hand, withholding our tithes from the Lord is described as the worst type of robbery – robbing God who has freely given us all things to enjoy – of his due, honour and glory.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1Thessalonians	5	Nehemiah	8
TUE	2Thessalonians	1-2	“	9
WED	“	3	“	10
THUR	1 Timothy	1-2	“	11
FRI	“	3-4	“	12
SAT	“	5-6	“	13
SUN	2 Timothy	1-2	Esther	1-2

341 Lesson

THE NUMBERING OF GOD'S ARMY

MEMORY VERSE: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4)

TEXT: Numbers 1:1-46

Our study introduces us to the book of Numbers which forms the fourth section of the Pentateuch. The previous section (that is, the book of Leviticus) deals with the promulgation of God's laws and regulations for the people of Israel, but the book of Numbers record their preparation to enter the land of Canaan. It points out their failure because of unbelief, and the consequent discipline of wilderness wanderings.

The opening chapter of Numbers portrays the children of Israel as an army, in their various formations, ready to advance on the camp of the enemy. They were numbered, ordered and pitched behind their standard (or flags) under the leadership of their respective captains.

Question 1: In what sense can we liken believers to God's army as portrayed in our text?

This reminds us of the New Testament description of Christians as soldiers. Believers are called soldiers and portrayed as people who are engaged in battle. For this reason we are told to **"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"** (Ephesians 6:11,12).

Several other scriptures also emphasize the fact that believers in Christ are involved in a spiritual conflict and we need to fight courageously before we can win (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:3,4).

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

(2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2:15; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Numbers 1:1-3, 44,46,;26:1-4,62-65).

The book of Numbers derived its name from the records of numbering or counting of the children of Israel which are found in its opening chapters and also towards the end of the book (Chapters 1 and 26). In the original Hebrew Old Testament, the book is Known as “Bemidbar” which means “in the wilderness”. But the Greek and Latin translators gave the title Numbers because of the census accounts in it. The events in the book of Numbers Spanned a period of about 39 years. It lasted from the first day of the second month of the second year after Israel left Egypt, till the fortieth year (Numbers 1;1; Deuteronomy 1:3).

Apart from recording the numbering of Israel’s fighting men, the book was designed to warn the people of God about the consequences of unbelief and disobedience to God. The book points out the failure of the children of Israel to enter the land of promise. And from their example, God expects us to avoid similar mistakes that can hinder us from getting to heaven.

Question 2: Point out some lesson we may learn from the book of Numbers

There are several lesson we may learn from the book of Numbers in general. One, we learn that faith in God and obedience to his commands are basic requirements for any generation of people to experience the fulfillment of His promises. Even though God had

promised to lead the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage to the place of rest in Canaan, the book of Numbers shows us how that first generation failed God and forfeited the promise because of unbelief and disobedience. God emphasized this fact (that disobedience can cancel His good plan for any person or people) through Jeremiah the prophet. **“And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them”** (Jeremiah 18:9,10)

Two, we also learn that if a generation fails God, then He will raise up another to fulfill His plan. In Numbers, we see the failure of the old generation of Israel and how they were killed in the wilderness. In their place, God raised up a new generation which went into Canaan to possess the land. This shows that, instead of changing His plan or allowing His purpose to be defeated, God would rather replace the people or personnel that fail Him. John the Baptist underscored this point when he told the Jews that if they failed to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance God could cast them off and raise up children from stones, in order to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham (Numbers 1:1; Deuteronomy 1:3).

Three, the book of Numbers teaches us that unbelief and disobedience can bring unnecessary setback, delay and suffering to a person, family or nation. The journey of the children of Israel from Horeb (mount Sinai) to Kadesh-barnea (which was just near the edge of Canaan) was about eleven days journey (Deuteronomy 1:2). In just a few days the children of Israel could have entered Canaan from Kadesh but, because of unbelief, they spent about forty 'long years in the wilderness. The only times the people made

appreciable progress were times when they obeyed and had faith in God. Four, we also see the patience and longsuffering of God in bearing with His people. He showed great and tender care for them even while they were under discipline. Obviously, He did so in order to give them the opportunity to repent. Indeed, as the book of Numbers reveals the failure of men, it holds up, in contrast, the faithfulness and loving kindness of God to His undeserving people.

Five, learn that though God is loving and gracious, He does not gloss over sin, neither- does He condone unbelief in HIS people. He punishes sin and disciplines His children when they do wrong. The book of numbers records several instances when God disciplined the Israelites for murmuring, complaining, rebellion or total loss of faith in Him. if we sin God will discipline us and if we repent He will forgive us. But if we continue in sin and die in such a condition He will reject us forever. Six, we learn from the book of Numbers that the work of spiritual leadership is not an easy one. The person who would effectively lead others must be called and adequately prepared by God for the task. All through Numbers we see Moses and Aaron, God's chosen leaders, pass through the grill as they led a self-willed and rebellious people. Eventually, Moses and Aaron did not enter Canaan because the people they led became stumbling blocks to them. How then we need to refrain from rushing into leadership without divine prompting; and also ensure that we pray for our church leaders and cooperate with them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NUMBERING GOD'S ARMY (Numbers 1:1-46; 26:1-63; Joshua 21:1-45)

In the opening chapter of the book of Numbers God commanded Moses to number or count those who could go to war among the children of Israel. Those to

be enlisted should be men as from the age of twenty upward and they should be counted according to their clans and families. Women, children, the aged and strangers were excluded from this census simply because these could not engage in warfare. Without delay, Moses obeyed and did as the Lord commanded (Numbers 1: 1,18). He appointed one census leader from each of the twelve tribes and after counting the people, they returned a total of 603,550 men. It is worthy of note that, without exception, all the tribes that were counted submitted their census figures to Moses. What a challenge to us on the need for accurate and prompt submission of reports in the Church.

It is also important to note that the counting of God's people by Moses was not a self-motivated adventure, like that which David carried out (2 Samuel 24:1-9) and which resulted in divine displeasure and discipline. Rather, the counting which Moses did was in obedience to God's directive and it was for divinely appointed purposes.

Question 3: Point out the purpose why the army of Israel were numbered on this occasion.

We can easily discern the purpose why God commanded Moses to number the army of Israel as they prepared to march away from the Sinai peninsula. One, military purpose: it was done to know the number of those who could go to war, to organize and prepare them for battle in readiness to capture the land of Canaan. It will be recalled that when the Israelites left Egypt, though they were called the army of the Lord (Exodus 7:4; 12:41,51) they were largely untrained and poorly organized. Therefore, before they would advance to Canaan it became necessary to know the size of the army, organize them and give them some measure of training.

Two, for proper order and easy identification. Any true army must be well ordered and arranged so that every soldier would know their position and rank, and so that each man could be easily identified or located. That is why the numbering was done according to tribes and families. Three, to recognize the true Israelites and distinguish them from the mixed multitude or the aliens which might easily infiltrate their ranks in the wilderness. For this purpose, the census leaders were chosen from their respective tribes because they should be familiar with their tribal pedigree; and also the people being counted were made to declare their pedigree or family line (Number 1:18). Four, to serve as a testimony of God's faithfulness in a two-fold way. In the first place, the census was designed to show that the children of Israel had greatly multiplied and that the promises which God made unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been fulfilled (Genesis 15:5; 28:14). Counting the people revealed that the few members of Jacob's family that went down to Egypt had increased rapidly probably to over two million people in a little time. This great and unusual increase in population can only be attributed to a divine intervention and fulfillment of God's promise. But also, it revealed God's great power and faithfulness to sustain such a large population of people with their flocks in the wilderness.

Question 4: Point out some prophecies that were fulfilled as we analyze the census figures of the twelve tribes of Israel. What encouragement does this give us as believers?

The result of the census showed striking fulfillment of prophecies which Jacob had spoken many years before the exodus. (1) The tribe of Judah had the largest number of soldiers (74,600), while Manasseh had the least (32,200). (2) Ephraim and Manasseh,

both sons of Joseph, were elevated to the status of tribes, being made equal with the other sons of Jacob. With this development Joseph had a double portion in Israel and the total number of fighting men from his line totaled 72,700. (3) We also see that Ephraim the younger had a larger population than Manasseh, the elder. All these details were fulfilled as Jacob prophesied earlier (Genesis 48:17-19;49:8). From this, we learn that every promise that God has given us in His word will certainly be fulfilled. It also teaches our children to ensure that they live in such a way as to earn their parents' blessing.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF NUMBERING GOD'S ARMY
(Romans 15:4;4:23,24; I Corinthians 10:11; Proverbs 27:23; 2 Timothy 2: 19; Numbers 26:2,63-65; Acts I: 17).

The account of numbering the army of Israel like other 'scriptures, was written for our admonition and learning. God wants us to learn and be encouraged or warned as we read the things that were written aforetime (that is the Old Testament scriptures)

Question 5: Point out the implications of the numbering God's army to believers.

The account of numbering the army of Israel teaches us several lessons as New Testament believers. One, we see the need for accurate record keeping in the Church. Attendance records and demography of members should be well documented and kept for the purpose of strategic evaluation, planning and management. Leaders in the Church should be abreast of such records and update them from time to time. This is one of the ways that a leader can know the state of his flocks and look after the people (Proverbs 27:23). Two, by comparing the census of soldiers in Numbers chapter one with the other census

towards the close of the book (chapter 26), we see that it takes more than numbers or population to obtain divine approval. The generation of Israel that failed to enter the Promised Land were more in number than those that eventually entered. Therefore, it was not the inadequacy of their number but the insufficiency of their faith as well as their disobedience that kept them out of God's appointed blessing. We should learn from this experience of the Israelites and not place undue emphasis solely on figures or the size of our congregation but we should equally emphasize the quality of faith, obedience and commitment of the people to God. A smaller congregation in which all the members are fully yielded to God and strong in faith will enjoy divine presence and favour more than a large congregation where in majority of the members are unbelieving and disobedient to God.

Another implication of the numbering of Israelite soldiers for us as believers is that everyone who belongs to God's spiritual army, that is the Church, is very important in the sight of God. In Bible language, to number something was an indication of care, concern of interest in that thing. For example, the Psalmist said that **"He (God) telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names"** (Psalm 147:4). We also see that while talking to reassure His true followers, Jesus said, **"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered"** (Matthew 10:30). This implies that God knows us individually, we are all numbered by Him: we are significant in His sight and He cares for us. Four, every one who claims that he/ she belongs to Christ should be able, with certainty and assurance, to declare his/her spiritual history or connection with Jesus. We must be sure of our experience of salvation and that we are in the number of people who are saved by grace. We see that each of the people numbered could declare their

pedigree after their families and by the house of their fathers. In the same way, a true believer born of the Spirit of God should be able to trace his/her spiritual descent to Christ. In the New Testament we are told **that "The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity"** (2 Timothy 2: 19b).

Five we should be watchful and take heed lest, after we have been saved and numbered with the saints of God, we should fall and become a castaway. We should remember that most of the men who were numbered in our text did not enter the Promised Land. Except Caleb and Joshua, they all died in the wilderness because of unbelief (Numbers 26:2, 63-65). This is a warning to us that it is not enough to have our names written in any record of the church but we must strive to get to heaven. We must make spiritual progress and get sanctified even after our initial experience of salvation because it is the sanctification experience that would remove all Adamic tendencies which, if retained in our hearts, could still cause us to stumble and fall. Let us remember that it was said of Judas Iscariot. **"For he was numbered with us and had obtained part of this ministry"** (Acts 1: 17). But he fell away! Shamefully too, the priests who could not find their names-in the register of their genealogies were away from the priesthood (Nehemiah 7:63,64) - a picture of the plight of backsliders at the end of time.

Lastly, we learn that though God was leading the children of Israel yet they had to make military preparation. In other words the divine presence among them and the fact that God was fighting their battles for them did not prevent necessary precautions and positive plan. This is the principle of divine - human partnership and it is God's own way of dealing with

man right from creation. We need to cooperate with God and walk in obedience to His commands before we can make heaven. Before we can enjoy the fruits of salvation, either now or in eternity, we must do our own part and allow God to do His own part. We are to repent from sin, consecrate our whole lives to Him and follow Him wherever He leads us. Then God on His own part will keep and preserve us to His everlasting kingdom

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Timothy	3-4	Esther	3-4
TUE	Titus	1-3	“	5-6
WED	Philemon	12	“	7-8
THUR	Hebrews	1-2	“	9-10
FRI	“	3-4	Job	1-2
SAT	“	5-6	“	3-4
SUN	“	7-8	“	5-6

342 Lesson

SEPARATION OF THE LEVITES

MEMORY VERSE: "But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle" (Numbers 1:50). (Deuteronomy 30:2,3).

TEXT: Numbers 1:47-54

In the opening chapters of the book of Numbers, we see the numbering of the children of Israel and their arrangement around the tabernacle. This gives us a vivid picture of God dwelling in the midst of His people and being mindful of them. It also portrays the fact that the life of Israel, and indeed all the people of God, should revolve around God, His tabernacle and His worship. It tells us, by illustration, that God should be at the center of our lives; and His worship and service should be the major preoccupation of our existence.

Question 1: What lesson do we learn from the arrangement of the children of Israel around the tabernacle in the wilderness?

The children of Israel were numbered (or counted) as they were about to leave the wilderness of Sinai. The numbering concerned males aged twenty years and above, all that were able to go forth to war. God gave the assignment to number them to Moses, but Aaron and the princes of Israel, being twelve men, were also involved in the task. God specifically told Moses to appoint a census leader from each tribe to assist him in the enumeration exercise and in collating the population figures from their respective tribes. In the

Bible, we see that God usually gives assignments to leaders who in turn are expected to get men of like-minds involved in the work. Paul involved Timothy in the work of the ministry and enjoined him: **“the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also”** (2 Timothy 2:2). This is the scriptural pattern for every Bible-believing church and the members are expected to cooperate with the leadership in this regard.

In numbering the children of Israel, God instructed Moses to exclude the tribe of Levi. Moreover, he is to give the tribe a peculiar location to pitch their camp and they were also charged with a special responsibility from which other Israelites were barred. God’s purpose in separating the Levites was to enable them serve God in the tabernacle ministry and to avoid distractions.

Question 2: What does the separation of the Levites typify for believers today?

The separation of the Levites from the generality of the children of Israel, which is the focus of our present lesson, typifies the kind of separation and exemplary living that should characterize believers in Christ. In fact, the New Testament plainly teaches that believers are to be totally separated and consecrated to God. **“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”** (2 Corinthians 6:17).

SELECTION AND EXEMPTION OF THE LEVITES
(Numbers 1:47-49; exodus 32:26-28; Numbers 2:33; 3:1-8; 26:57-62; Romans 3:23; 1 Peter 1:2).

God instructed Moses not to number the Levites with the other children of Israel but were to be numbered separately and camped around the tabernacle

before the camps of the other tribes. They were to be marshalled as a host being wholly dedicated to the service of the sanctuary. Here we see that the Levites were particularly identified, separated and honoured by God. They were to be especially close to God to take charge of the holy things under the supervision of Aaron and his sons, The selection of the tribe of Levi for this special privilege and responsibility teaches us several lessons and also gives us a deep revelation concerning the grace of God.

It is instructive to know that Levi was one of the sons of Jacob who, along with Simeon, was once involved in cruel revenge against the Shechemites when Dinah was defiled. Because of their cruelty, Jacob cursed both Simeon and Levi (Genesis 49:5-7). Sin is destructive; it brings a curse and attracts divine punishment. Because of sin so many people like Simeon, Levi, Adam, Cain, Pharaoh, Herod, and so on, have brought upon themselves terrible and severe judgments. But it is good to know that the grace of God can deal with the sin problem of man creating a way for him out of its consequences.

God's grace lifted the Levites above the, curses of sin. From the history of that tribe, we learn that there is no limit to what the grace of God can do in a person's life. The grace of God can transform a person and lift him up from the depth of sin and ruin to the peak of God's glory. God's grace can break all yokes, neutralize curses, and heal 'chronic sicknesses and, most importantly, bring a person into close union and fellowship with God. This transforming grace of God is available to all who decide to follow the Lord today.

Question 3: By looking at the history of the tribe of Levi, how can sinner or backslider obtain God's favour and overcome sin and curses?

The Levites had opportunity of reconciling with God after the incident of the golden calf when the whole of Israel went into idolatry. At the invitation of Moses, the Levites came to the side of the Lord when the offer was made (Exodus 32:25-28). By virtue of that decision, the tribe of Levi exempted themselves from judgment and condemnation of sin which came upon the whole congregation of Israel. They separated themselves from the company of evil doers and pitched their tent with the holy people of God. Instead of a curse, God decided to bring them near to Himself and confer on them special privileges in His tabernacle. In like manner, sinners and backsliders today can have their sins forgiven and be reconciled to God by acknowledging their sinful state, confessing and forsaking their evil deeds and believing in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

In order to portray the special privilege of the Levites in Israel, God commanded a three-fold separation for them. One, they were not listed among the twelve tribes, but were regarded as an entity on their own. In a latter arrangement, their place among the tribes was taken by Manasseh while Ephraim represented Joseph (Revelation 7:8). Two, the Levites were never numbered among the fighting men of Israel but were counted separately (Numbers 1:47; 2:33; 3:1-8; 26:57-62): God gave the reasons for their being numbered apart from the Israelites, which are: (i) they had no inheritance among the children of Israel because God was their portion (Numbers 26:62), (ii) they were to bear the holy things and the tabernacle, not arms. In other words, the Levites were exempted from physical warfare so that they could concentrate on spiritual warfare. Three, the Levites were not camped behind the standard (banner or flag) of any other tribe, neither in a particular cardinal point but they encircled the tabernacle.

SERVICE AND ENCAMPMENT OF THE LEVITES

(Numbers 1:50-54; Exodus 38:21; Numbers 3:6-9; 4:15, 23-35; 1 Peter 2:5,9).

God instructed Moses to arrange the camps of Israel tribe by tribe and standard by standard. To this effect, the twelve tribes were divided into four camps of three each. To the east was the camp of Judah which consisted of the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Towards the south was the camp of Reuben, comprising the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad. On the west was situated the camp of Ephraim which was made up of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin. Towards the North was the camp of Dan for the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naphtali. Each had its standard to distinguish it from other tribes.

In the arrangement of the camps, God told Moses to separate the Levites and make them encamp around the tabernacle in such a way that they interposed between the tabernacle and the various camps of the children of Israel. With this arrangement, the tabernacle was at the center, and then the Levites encamped around it while the four camps of Israel formed the outermost circle around the Levites and farther away from the tabernacle.

Question 4: What is the significance of the position occupied by the Levites in the camp of Israel?

The position occupied by the Levites was quite strategic and very significant. In the first place, it portrayed them as the guardians of God's presence among the people. They were to be in waiting at all times upon the divine presence in the midst of Israel. The tabernacle which they encircled was actually a symbol of God's presence in the midst of the Israelites. Two, it depicted them as the royal guards of the King of heaven as He dwelt in the midst of His chosen people.

Like security guards, they were stationed to prevent any intruder from getting near the holy tabernacle. Three, the position occupied by the Levites signified that their ministry was crucial and important to all the tribes in Israel. Every Israelite needed the ministry of the Levites; therefore, they were camped in all directions and within the reach of every tribe.

Four, their position was also an indication of the closeness and intimacy which every minister of God should not only have but also exemplify to others. Five, it gave them proximity to the tabernacle wherein they ministered. This was necessary because a true minister, worth his salt, must not only be able to serve, he must also be available for service even at short notice. In this regard, leaders who are often away from their place of ministry need to learn from the Levites and stay or 'camp' with the people they are leading. Being strategically positioned, the Levites were to prevent wrath upon the people. This was so in the sense that they did not allow the people to get close to the tabernacle and thereby incur God's wrath.

God placed the Levites in an honourable position in the camp so that they could perform some important duties on behalf of the whole nation. They were to assist the priests in tabernacle ministry; to dismantle the tabernacle and carry its various components when changing camp location; to erect it at new camp sites, and to perform any duties that the priests might assign to them. Their duties were so important and very demanding that God exempted them from secular engagements. Thus, we see that the privileges that God gave the Levites were in view of the responsibilities they were called to discharge. Their selection and exemption from physical warfare was not for idleness, neither was the special position

they occupied in the camp for mere ostentation, but for service. The assignment God gave them was both honourable and serious. Honourable because they were in close proximity to God and, as the psalmist said; **"blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: ... we shall satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple"** (Psalm 65:4). So it was a great honour for the Levites to be put in charge of the tabernacle to bear its holy vessels. But their work was also a serious one because they were expected to maintain a high standard of holiness and reverence for God. A little uncleanness, whether moral or ceremonial, disqualified them from service. Also, they could be smitten if they touched or gazed upon the holy things before the priests wrapped them up. Such were the delicate and sacred service committed to the Levites.

Question 5: What challenge can we receive from the kind of service God gave the Levites?

From the service of the Levites, we learn important lessons and we receive great challenges. One, God expects us to serve Him in holiness and with deep reverence. Only a holy service befits our holy God. Two, the privileges we enjoy as children of God confer on us the responsibility to serve God in His Church. This is very evident because the separation of the Levites was a picture of believers' separation from the world. We are separated from sin and the pollutions of the world so that we can serve the Lord all the days of our lives. We can get involved in different areas of work in God's Church no matter how lowly. What is important to God is that we make, ourselves vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for His use. No one should be Idle in the church of God because there is enough work for every born again child of God.

Question 6: Mention the various areas of work believers can be involved in, in God's house.

SUBMISSION: AN EXPECTED VIRTUE FROM LEADERS AND THE LAITY (Numbers 1:54; 2:33; Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:6).

Moses, the leader, and the children of Israel, in general, obeyed the Lord and they carried out all His instructions. The Bible says "And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they" (Numbers 1:54). This means that Moses faithfully passed God's instructions to the children of Israel and they in turn obeyed the word of God without adding or subtracting from it.

The obedience of Moses and that of the children of Israel was made possible because they were submissive to the word of God. If all the members of the church would submit to the word of God, without anyone rejecting, suspecting or complaining, we shall have a great revival and God's presence will be wonderfully manifested in our midst.

From the examples of Moses and the children of Israel we learn how leaders and the laity can ensure total submission to the will of God in the church. One, we see that though Moses and Aaron were Levites, they were not afraid to appoint special privileges to their tribe at God's command. They could have feared that the people would probably complain or insinuate against their decisions but they did not. A leader who would do God's will must hear from God and carry out whatever instructions given to him without fearing the people's frown or currying their favour.

Two, Moses and Aaron were very transparent and selfless in their leadership. They did not do anything

to unduly favour themselves or their families. For instance, we did not read that Moses, the overall leader, gave his children a special place in the priests' camp (since they were not priests); rather, they were camped with the other Levites. However, the children of Aaron, being priests were camped with Moses and Aaron in their camp.

This would have convinced the Israelites that their leaders were not pursuing a selfish ambition. Church leaders must be equally transparent and selfless in their leadership. Three, the children of Israel did not ascribe evil motives to Moses and Aaron in separating the Levites and giving them special privileges in the camp. They accepted the decisions of their leaders as God's command, not just human Ideas or actions. In the same manner church members must have confidence in the leadership, trust their spiritual guidance and never attribute see

Question 7: How can we uphold the standard of God's Word despite the degeneration in other places of worship?

Obedience brings God's blessing and never fails to win God's approval. However, the kind of submission and obedience which is acceptable to God must be prompt, total and continuous. In our text we learn that the children of Israel did as God commanded them. The Levites accepted the honour and the responsibility which God bestowed upon them. However, the Bible later reveals different kinds of degeneration among the Levites. A Levite was an idol priest in the house of Micah (Judges 17: 13); Levites forsook their work to look for food in the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13: 10); they also went into apostasy with the other Israelites during the captivity (Ezekiel 44:10-14;); and they were in league with the priests to question John the Baptist (John 1: 19). But despite these cases of backsliding among the Levites,

some of them remained outstanding even in the New Testament. Joses, who was surnamed Barnabbas or son of consolation was a Levite (Acts 4:36, 37). This man sold his land and brought the proceeds to distribute to the poor in the early church. From him we learn that we can maintain a biblical standard of holiness no matter the widespread backsliding among the people. We must endeavor to continue in obedience and total submission to God. We must avoid the general tendency of beginning in obedience and not total submission to God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Hebrews	9-10	Job	7-8
TUE	"	11	"	9-10
WED	"	12-13	"	11-12
THUR	James	1-2	"	13-14
FRI	"	3-4	"	15-17
SAT	"	5	"	18-19
SUN	1 Peter	1-2	"	20-21

343 Lesson

THE ORDER OF GOD'S ARMY

MEMORY VERSE: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40)

TEXT: Numbers 2:1-34

Our lesson focuses on the organization of the camp of Israel and, by implication, of the orderliness which should characterize the rank and file of Christian soldiers. The Bible emphasizes the fact that we are engaged in a spiritual conflict with the powers of darkness, the world and the flesh (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:4). As Christian soldiers, we form a formidable and invincible army under Christ as we combat the foes of righteousness. This spiritual warfare of believers was exemplified by the children of Israel in their march through the wilderness.

Question 1: Why is it necessary to maintain proper order in the Church?

In our text, we see the emphasis that God placed on proper order and organization for the smooth running of affairs among His people. The tabernacle was at the center, and the Levites encamped round about it. Then the twelve tribes, grouped into four camps of three each, formed an outer circle around the Levites. The orderliness and beauty of the camp was so profound that when Balaam was invited to curse the Israelites, he lifted up his eyes and saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes, then the Spirit of God came upon him and instead of cursing Israel, he exclaimed: "**How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!**" (Numbers

24:5). Our God is not the author of confusion but the God of order. He wants His people to maintain proper order and organization, not just for the sake of it, but for proper administration and management. The children of Israel were ordered for the sake of security, convenience and proper identification.

THE COMMAND TO ORDER THE CAMP (Numbers 2:1, 2; 1:52; Joshua 3:4).

God commanded Moses and Aaron to arrange the camp of the children of Israel so that each tribe would be assigned her own location and the various groups would camp under their respective standards (flags or banners). It is important to observe that Moses never did anything without God's instructions and express command. That is why in the book of Numbers, the phrase "and the Lord said" is very prominent, and because of this, some Hebrew scholars called the book "Wayyedabber" which means 'and he said'. It was the hallmark of the life and ministry of Moses that he always listened to receive instructions from God. This should challenge Christian leaders today to avoid their own self-will but learn to listen to God and let Him lead in every decision and action in the church.

Question 2: Point out the reasons/purpose for ordering the camp of Israel.

We can easily discern the reasons and purpose why God commanded that the children of Israel should be ordered in their camps. One to enable the Israelites to identify or locate their respective positions in the camp. This is because the camp of Israel must have been very large, going by their estimated population. Since the fighting men alone were counted to be 603,550. Then if we add the number of women, children below twenty years, the aged as well as the

camp of the Levites, it was most likely that the children of Israel were about two or three million in population. Such a large population of people, together with their animals and personal effects would certainly cover a vast space. In such a case, there would be the need to have a definite pattern of arrangement so that, if, for any reason, anyone leaves his position he can always locate and return to the place afterwards. Two, it was done for easy identification and "location of individuals in the camp. It was this kind of order that enabled Joshua to easily identify Achan and single him out for punishment. Very easily the messengers followed him to his tent and recovered the stolen items (Joshua 7:14-26). Three, the need for security and defence. The ordering of Israel and their encampment behind their tribal/family standards would make any spy or intruder in their midst an odd person. Such an intruder would be easily spotted out because he would not have any standard to camp under. Moreover, the very method of their encampment was security-based, Four, it ensured proper organization and orderliness in the camp. The arrangement allowed the administration of justice, tribe by tribe, family by family and house by house. It also ensured that, when the children of Israel moved their camp to a new location, each tribe/family or house would know where to pitch their tents. There was no confusion or disorderliness, which would have been the case if the people were not ordered in a particular way.

Question 3: State some lessons a believer can learn from God's command to order the Israelites.

There are important lessons believers can learn from the commandment to order the Israelites into camps. One, God's order depicted the children of Israel as an army to be arranged and placed under commands.

This is illustrative of believers as God's army, engaged in spiritual warfare under the command of Jesus Christ our Captain. Two, God appointed the location where each tribe or family should pitch their tents. He also appointed the people to lead each camp. This tells us that God, in His wisdom, appoints for us our place and rank both in life and ministry; therefore, we should have no strife or complaints about our place. Instead, we are to remain in our position, discover the reason why God put us there and fulfill it. Three, we should maintain orderliness in the church. Each member should know his position and responsibilities. Also, during church services we should do everything decently and in order. Four, we observe that some tribes were camped together under the name of others, yet there was no complaint or murmuring. They did not struggle to have their names mentioned. For instance, Issachar and Zebulun were placed in the camp of Judah; yet there was no struggle for supremacy among them, because they knew it was God who appointed it that way. In the same manner, we should be willing to work under other people and forget about our ego. If, while working for God our names are mentioned or known, we praise God – and watch against pride; and on the other hand, if we remain non-descript we rejoice – and also resist the temptation to complain or seek attention. Five, the Israelites were to pitch their camps far off around the tabernacle. This implies that they were to have the honour of God in mind and not to crowd upon that which symbolized His majesty among them. This teaches us, as believers, to always have the honour and fear of God in our hearts. We should not be so familiar with spiritual things to the extent that we hold them with loose hands or regard them with contempt. We should reverence the house of the Lord, His name and His ministers.

THE CAMPS AND CAPTAINS OF GOD'S ARMY (Numbers 2:3-31; 3:23,29,35,38; 24:2,5,6)

God gave Moses the lay-out of how the tribes should pitch their tents. Each camp and every tribe/family within their respective camps were given their specific location to pitch. He also appointed a leader for the camp of each tribe. These leaders were also the same people who led the numbering of the army in chapter one of Numbers. The Bible says the leaders that rule well should be counted of double honour (1 Timothy 5:17).

Question 4: Describe the lay-out of the camp of Israel.

The tabernacle, which symbolized God's presence, was pitched at the center of the camp and the Levites camped around it. The camp of the Levites consisted of Moses and priests who camped towards the East, the Gershonites to the West, Merarites to the North and Kohathites to the south. After the camp of the Levites, then we have the four camps of the twelve tribes arranged in a rectangular fashion around the Levites. Towards the east was the camp of Judah which was made up the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. To the south was the camp of Reuben which comprised of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad. Towards the West was the camp of Ephraim, consisting of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin. The camp of Dan was towards the North, comprising of the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naphtali.

Question 5: What lessons can we learn from the arrangement of Israel's camp?

From the arrangement of Israel's camp we learn some important lessons. One, the tabernacle was centrally placed and the people encamped around it. This position was quite significant in that it allowed all the

Israelites to have equal access to the tabernacle and at the same time it portrayed the fact that the presence of God was the central focus in their lives. This teaches us, as believers, that we should make God's presence in our lives the greatest pursuit and goal in all our endeavours. God should be the epicenter of the circumference of our pursuit. The divine presence was the source of comfort and assurance for the children of Israel, especially whenever they were in trouble. This is what the psalmist alluded to when he said, **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.... God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early"** (Psalm 46:1,5). If we have the consciousness that God is present with us, then we shall not fear any evil and at the same time, we shall live holily because we will not want to offend God or flout His commands. Two, the camps were formed in such a way that the tribes that were mostly related by birth were grouped together. For instance, in the camp of Judah we have the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun who were all sons of Leah; the camp of Ephraim comprised Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, all from the side of Rachael. So also we see Dan, Naphtali and Asher in one camp because they were all sons of Jacob's concubines. Then the tribes of Reuben and Simeon, sons of Leah were camped with Gad, son of Leah's maid. From this we are not to infer that we should cluster or relate together on the basis of tribal sentiments; rather, we should see that in a spiritual sense, it is easier for us to walk together if we are all born again and able to trace our origin to Christ. Those of us who are born again have God as our Father and we belong to one family.

Three, the army of Israel were more or less evenly distributed towards the four cardinal points. This was a military strategy that ensured tight security in

all directions in the camp. Four, we also see that the square arrangement of the tribes resembled what is commonly referred to as “hollow square” in military tactics. This arrangement afforded the whole camp the best security and defence and it gave maximum protection to the tabernacle and the Levites, which were at the center of the camp. From this, we learn that God wants us to defend His honour and jealously guard His interests in the world. He also wants us to take the security of His people seriously especially when we gather for retreats and special programs. Five, each tribe or family had a standard or banner behind which they pitched. The banner served for identity and guidance. For example, when a person left his tent to go out of the camp, he could easily return and still locate his tent by looking for the standard was also a kind of military emblem which showed the regiment to which each soldier belonged. In this sense, God’s covenant name “Jehovah Nissi” is very significant.

<p>Question 6: What is the significance of God’s covenant name, “Jehovah Nissi”?</p>

The name Jehovah Nissin means “The Lord our banner” When we identify with that name, it means we are fighting in God’s regiment, we are in His camp and He is our rallying point. The implication of this is that since the Lord can never lose any battle then we, who belong to His camp and who are fighting under His banner, can never lose in the battle of life.

In the Old Testament dispensation, believers knew the importance of having God as their Banner or standard in the time of trouble or calamity. Concerning such times, David said, **“The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee... we will rejoice in the salvation and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the**

LORD fulfill all thy petitions' (psalm 20:1,5). The Old Testament saints knew the name of the Lord as a mighty tower, a terrifying banner against the enemy. Isaiah also said, **"so shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him"** (Isaiah 59:19). This means that as we engage in spiritual warfare, the name of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord shall raise a terrifying signal against the enemies of our souls. The Holy Spirit shall arise to confront the enemy and let him know that we are fighting under God's regiment. Then the enemy, seeing God's banner lifted up over us, must either retreat or else suffer heavy casualty.

How important then that we recognize and fully identify with the name of the Lord, our standard.

In the New Testament, we do not carry literal banner or standards anymore. Jesus is our standard or banner. He is also our Captain. His name and His blood are the emblems that instill fear and dread in the camps of the enemy. At the name of Jesus, every knee must bow, and also the shed blood of Jesus is the token of defeat for Satan and his demons. Therefore, anyone who, by faith takes a stand behind the banner of Jesus Christ cannot be defeated.

THE CONFIGURATION AND CONTROL OF GOD'S ARMY WHILE MARCHING (Numbers 2:9,16,24,31; 10:12-28)

Just as God commanded the ordering of the children of Israel while stationed in their camps, He also instructed Moses on their configuration or arrangement while marching from one camp location to another. We remember that God guided them by the pillars of fire and cloud both night and day.

Whenever the pillar rested at a point, they remained encamped at the place, but when it moved then they followed it to the next camp location. This implied that the children of Israel must be ever ready to fall in line and march on to the next place or location that God would lead them to. For this reason, the order of their march was already fixed and each person knew his position on the marching line so that, at short notice and without wasting time, the entire nation could get into their formations without any confusion.

Question 7: Describe the arrangement of the army of Israel while marching in the wilderness, and point out the lessons we can learn from it.

God commanded that the camp of Judah should take the lead in the front rank, followed by the camp of Reuben in the second rank. After these two camps, **“Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp: as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place by their standards”** (Numbers 2:17). Then after the Levites, the camp of Ephraim followed in the third rank while the camp of Dan came in the fourth or last rank.

There are many lessons we can learn from this order of the Israelites in their march. First, we see the orderliness of their march. The camp was broken in a systematic and orderly manner, devoid of any confusion or pandemonium. We should observe that the camp of Judah on the eastern side broke camp first and fell into line. The other camps followed suit in a clock-wise fashion, with the Levites and the tabernacle (which they dismantled and carried) in the middle. Once again, God will have us know that He cherishes orderliness and proper control. Our personal lives, families, churches and ministries must be well ordered and free from any form of

confusion. Second, the order of Israel's march shows that our God, the God of Israel is a military strategist. Already we have observed that the ordering of the camp was in line with, and even better than, most known military formations. Now looking at the advance of Israel's army, they were divided into ranks and placed under different captains. The first rank, that is the camp of Judah, was the strongest both numerically and in terms of capable men of war. Then, the camp of Dan, which was next to Judah in terms of military strength, took the rear guard. This strategy of positioning the strongest ranks in the front and rear is an age-long military tactic. With this arrangement, the enemy would meet very stiff resistance and cannot easily overrun the army either from the front or the rear. As Christians, we should learn to develop appropriate strategies in our evangelistic campaigns. We are also to learn from the way God applied effective strategies in the ordering of His people. Any project or programme we embark upon in the church will only succeed if we plan and use the right strategies. Moreover, as we continue in our spiritual march to heaven we should ensure that our rear, that is our past, is well secured and covered by the blood of Jesus. We should not harbour any unconfessed sin or have any outstanding restitutions which can weaken us spiritually. Then, we must also develop our faith, which is our front guard in dealing with all exigencies of the future.

Thirdly, the fact that Judah led the army of Israel had a prophetic significance. It was a partial fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy that the Messiah would come from Judah (Genesis 49:8-10). The prophecy will be fully fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as He leads His end-time army of believers in their march against the hordes of hell. Fourth, the Levites, bearing the tabernacle and the Priests,

bearing the ark, marched in the middle of the army with two ranks in front and two ranks behind. This suggested that whether they were at rest in the camp or in transit, God's presence was central and they were to jealously guard that presence. It also reminded them that no matter how formidable their army, they could not win any battle unless God's presence and the intercession of His ministers attended them. How we need to learn from the Israelites that we too can do nothing except the Lord abides with us. Fifth the orderliness of Israel's march enabled them to detect any true soldier who might be missing from his place; or an intruder who might want to sneak into their ranks to wreak havoc. It also enabled the captains to pass information to the soldiers speedily, even while in transit. This informs us of the need to keep the order in our church so that we can monitor one another and avoid backsliding among our members. In the House Caring Fellowship or the zone, we should take note of all our people and ensure that everyone keeps his rank and position.

Finally, it is instructive to note that **“the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the hours of their fathers”** (Numbers 2:34). This is a challenge to us today as believers. We must learn to obey the Lord and carry out the simple instructions He gives to us through our leaders. During church services, retreats and special programs, we should avoid acts of disobedience and disorderliness because that will hinder our blessing. It is only when we walk the path of obedience that we can enjoy the blessing of God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Peter	3	Job	22-23
TUE	"	4-5	"	24-26
WED	2 Peter	1	"	27-28
THUR	"	2-3	"	29-30
FRI	1 John	1-2	"	31
SAT	"	3-4	"	32-33
SUN	"	5	"	34-35

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

344 Lesson

JOHN'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: " And many resorted unto him, said John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true" (John 10:41).

TEXT: John 3:22-36

In our study today, we encounter the most decisive tests of the quality of service. The genuineness of such services must, as demonstrated by the words and attitude of John the Baptist, be gauged by: (i) a proven commitment to those services for the glory of Christ alone; (ii) the sincerity and depth of our joy when perishing souls are drawn to Christ in salvation; and (ii) willingness to debase ourselves, which is expressed in private or public sacrifices in order that Christ may be exalted the more.

We learn from the testimony which John the Baptist bears that Christ is alone in His class, different and apart from the greatest of the prophets by whom God at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke to the fathers (Hebrews 1:1). Those prophets were servants and could not abide forever, but Christ the Son "**abideth ever**" (John 8:35). As he who builds a house has more honour than the house, so is Christ infinitely more honourable than the prophets. Christ's doctrines are in substance and language higher than those of the prophets as heaven is higher than the earth. All through the ages, no one has in the minutest way been able to challenge the validity and truth of these doctrines, yet how lamentable that only a few embrace them today!

Question 1: What lesson does John's exemplary dedication to the commission teach us?

JOHN'S EXEMPLARY DEDICATION TO THE COMMISSION (John 3:22-26; 5:35).

John the Baptist neither thought it appropriate to lay aside his ministry as soon as Christ commenced His, nor did Christ wait until the Baptist stepped down to enter into His. John's service of pointing to Christ had not been fully accomplished. The expression, **"For John was not yet cast into prison"** (verse 24) suggests that but for his incarceration John would have continued in his ministry long after the manifestation of Christ notwithstanding Christ's growing success. We have some lessons here.

First, we see the need to continue in whatever possible capacity the work of the Kingdom until the Lord calls us away from it or redeploys us.

The work of God's kingdom is not similar to secular jobs in the sense of retirement from service on account of age or length of service. As the Lord Himself puts it: **"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work"** (John 9:4). Age and experience may indeed fit us into other services but never draw us away to idleness or retirement from divine service.

Secondly, Christ's superior, more successful ministry did not render unnecessary the ministry of the Baptist. Neither our Lord nor John felt the need to terminate a less effective ministry upon the advent of a superior one. It teaches us that it is unwise to discontinue or become discouraged in our calling just because others appear more successful in the same calling than we are. Both the servant that received five talents and the one that was endowed with

only two were called to account for them, and were commended in exactly the same words: **“well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter into the joy thy Lord”** (Matthew 25:21,23). The words of commendation were exactly similar in both cases and no recognition was given to the quantity of the talents gained. It does appear that what the Lord of those servants saw and commended and applied as yardstick for reward was their faithfulness, not necessarily the physical scope or apparent degree of success in the eyes of men.

Thirdly, our text does not paint a picture similar to what appeared in the earlier period of John's ministry when John **“saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism”** (Matthew 3:7). The crowd had thinned down considerably yet, John was not discouraged. Ministers and Christian workers must keep up good courage though the harvest for the present appears scanty. We are told, **“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other...”** (Ecclesiastes 7:14) but never to abandon our post.

“There then arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying” (John 3:25). Judging from the sequel of John's disciples' complaint to him about Christ's growing popularity, it would seem that the controversy here centered around the superiority of baptisms as between that of Christ and John. Such an argument was uncalled for since the one baptism was a necessary preparation for the other, and both complemented each other in much the same way as a foundation of a house and the super-structure do. Arguments over religious issues are often about superiority of one sect or religion over

another. Such arguments are sterile and in the end benefit neither of the contending parties.

Question 2: What should be the believer's attitude towards arguments bordering on the superiority of religious sects?

The Lord does not want us to waste precious time arguing on which religion is better than the other. The right attitude to such religious arguments is to avoid **“foolish and unlearned questions”...“knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but gentle unto all men”** (2 Timothy 2:23,24). Although we are to contend for the faith, we must avoid wasting precious time on arguments. We should prayerfully seek moments of soberness to humbly introduce God's only plan of salvation which is by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. We should never manifest a holier-than-thou attitude or religious pride.

John's disciples came to him with an envious complaint of Christ's growing popularity. Because the people flocked to hear Him, John's disciples feared that he would be forsaken and number and influence of his followers diminished. They seemed less concerned about the quality or truth of Christ's doctrines. Their complaint was a manifestation of lack of basic understanding regarding the ministry of the Baptist and the baptism they themselves had received. They spoke as if it was a sign of ingratitude on the part of Christ to have entered into a ministry which was an exclusive preserve of John the Baptist. Their ignorance consisted in not knowing that: (i) the voluntary condescension of Christ to be baptized by John was a great honour to the Baptist and not a favour to Christ. (ii) Christ's reputation and popularity was not derived from John's baptism. In fact, John's association with Christ reflected more honour to the Baptist than Christ received from it. Christ would

still have been successful without John, whereas John's success was only to the extent granted him for the sake of the glory of Christ. **"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me"** (John 5:36).

Question 3: Explain what you learn from the ignorance displayed by John's disciples.

The truth is that it is wrong to view the "greater" success and the "more excellent" gifts manifested by other believers as an indication of our own inferiority. As the Scripture puts it: **" But all these (gifts) worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will"** (1 Corinthians 12:11). There is therefore no room for envy and carnal comparison among brethren. We must be content to leave it in the hands of God whose perfect judgment must decide who to honour or employ to what service and to what extent.

JOHN'S EXEMPLARY HUMILITY AND SELFLESSNESS (John 3:27-30; Matthew 3:11; John 1:15,26,27).

Rather than wallow in the self pity of his resentful disciples, John the Baptist's response to their concern revealed, a mind-frame showing that the very thing they resented was his prayer and desire. "Ye yourself bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him" (verse 28). John cashed in upon this occasion to restate his earlier testimony concerning the exceeding superiority of the One "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11). He cheerfully transferred all his interest in the gospel project to the glory of Christ.

Question 4: What does John's confession teach believers and ministers today?

This example is most worthy and teaches ministers and all Christians: (i) to be willing to lose even legitimate things so as to make Christ's glory manifest; (ii) to strengthen our submission to Christ's Lordship by resisting the temptation to relish in flattery and applause of men; (iii) to be on our guard against appropriating the honour and glory that are rightly Christ's only.

John the Baptist totally rejected any thought of rivalry between himself and the Lord. “ **John answered and said, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven**” (verse 27). In other words, no man is capable of appropriating any real honour unto himself. This is why we should not envy those who appear to be better gifted than we are. Our displeasure would only imply lack of faith in God's wisdom and justice (Matthew 20:15). He also implied that whatever we seek to have must be sought through prayers (James 1:17). Also, as we preach to sinners we must back it up with prayers, knowing that they need God's grace to understand and believe the gospel.

John further stated his submission to Christ's supremacy by comparing himself to the go-between, a friend to the bridegroom in a marriage situation whose only interest and joy is to see the bride joined to the bridegroom. **He (Christ) must increase, but I must decrease**” (verse 30). He spoke of Christ's increase as affording him great joy. It is also the experience of all true believers that the more the glory of Christ comes into our heart, the more it outshines the deceitfulness of sin and false glories of the flesh, the world, and Satan.

THE CREDENTIALS OF CHRIST AND FATE OF UNBELIEVERS. (John 3:31-36; 1:14; Hebrews 1:8-10; Revelation 2:13-18; Genesis 3:16; 12:2-3; John 6:28,29; Hebrews 2:16).

To further distance himself from any comparison or rivalry with Christ, John reflected on the distinctive of Christ. **“He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from above is above all” (verse 31).** This testimony speaks of the divinity of Christ. Who else can show the world the way to heaven but He who came from there?

<p>Question 5: Mention some of the uniqueness of Christ as revealed in the testimony of John the Baptist.</p>
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John’s testimony confirmed the sovereign authority of Christ. He is above all persons and all things. His honour and glory defies any human expression.

Concerning the certainty of the truth and purity of Christ’s doctrine, John affirmed that their incomparable superiority was guaranteed by the unmeasured fullness of the Spirit in Christ. Christ’s words were the direct revelation of the mind of God and should therefore be of the highest interest and concern to all men. The Baptist lamented that such patently infallible doctrines were rejected by most people. While his disciples thought that **“all men come to him”** John thought them to few.

“He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (verse 33). The implication is that by receiving Christ, a person confirms his belief in the faithfulness and truthfulness of God in keeping His promises. These include the promise of the advent of the Seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) whose mission would be to bruise the head of the serpent (Satan) and that in the seed of Abraham

(Christ) shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 3:16; 12:2-3). Those who believe in Christ. God honours such with everlasting life. On the contrary, those who reject Christ make God as a liar and heap on themselves eternal damnation. They thereby willfully condemn themselves to the horror of eternal punishment which divine justice demands and which their sins deserve.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 & 3 John		Job	36-37
TUE	Jude		"	38-39
WED	Revelation	1-2	"	40-42
THUR	"	3-4	Psalm	1-4
FRI	"	3-4	"	5-7
SAT	"	7-8	"	8-10
SUN	"	9-10	"	11-14

345 Lesson

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA ENCOUNTERS JESUS

MEMORY VERSE: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14)

TEXT: John 4:1-30

Today, we are continuing with the study of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to individuals. We have examined His ministry to a man but here, He is seen crossing racial barrier, defying all odds to successfully reach out to a woman who many in the Church would have written off. How He challenges us today with His indomitable zeal and resolute will in reaching out to a needy soul even when He was “**wearied with his journey**” (John 4:6)! This study, therefore, affords us the opportunity to learn from the Lord’s evangelistic campaign, namely, the person-to-person evangelism. Many times, golden opportunities have been lost as a result of our failure to explore necessary strategies when there were openings to reach the unreached for Christ. Pray, from today, our churches will become a soul winning church with greater zeal and effectiveness!

MOVEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SOULWINNERS
(John 4:1-5; Matthew 10:22-26; 12:15; Acts 8:1-4; Proverbs 11:30; James 5:20; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

Although opposition especially from the Pharisees had started mounting against His ministry, Christ would not be deterred by any of such distractions. His teachings and popularity had begun to upset their evil system but because His ministry was a young one, He decided to leave Judea for Galilee which was

northward. Everything the Lord did has a spiritual significance for the church and the world.

Question 1: What do we learn from Lord's relocation from Judea?

The Lord's relocation from Judea to Galilee teaches some valuable lessons. We learn that one, there is nothing strange about faithful ministers experiencing hardship on the field of service, Two, when they experience great success in the ministry, they should bear in mind that such success will generate malice, envy and hatred from Satan and his wicked workers, Three, it is neither cowardice nor unbelief in ministers of Christ retreat in the face of life-threatening persecutions. The Master counsels, "**But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another**" (Matthew 10:23). There is, of course, wisdom in this as the action of preservation from and prevention of danger to few labourers available for service is necessary. Seeing there are lots of services to render, believers should not expose themselves to danger; they should not foolishly plunge themselves into unnecessary and avoidable sufferings. This wise act does not only further the gospel, it also deprives persecutors of their evil design.

Four, that the loss of one city is the gain of another as "**they that were scattered abroad** (as a result of persecution that arose against the church in Jerusalem **went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them**" (Acts 8:4,5). If the disciples had not fled from Jerusalem, how would Philip had taken the gospel to Samaria?

HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE SOLWINNING (John 4:6-9,11-15,17,20; Acts 18:24-28; 13:7-12;19:11,12)

Question 2: Who were the Samaritans? What feud existed between the Jews and Samaritans before this time and why?

After the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, with its capital, Samaria, in the firm grips of the Assyria army and many Jews were carried captives to Assyria, foreigners were brought in to Israel to help as peace-keepers in the conquered territory (2 Kings 17:24). As the foreigners began to intermarry with the remnant Jews in the land, a mixed race ensued. In the opinion of the Jews who lived in the southern Israel, these people of the mixed race (the Samaritans) were impure. So they were hated by the pure Jews who felt that, through intermarriages with foreigners, they betrayed the Jewish nation and people. And to avoid possible taunting, the Samaritans put in place an alternate worship center (John 4:20). The racial discrimination was so strong that the Jews did everything possible to avoid interaction with the Samaritans. Also, this woman was so engrossed in tribal sentiment that she was unable to comprehend the great opportunity being presented to her. Tribalism and prejudice could sometimes be so damning that it could lead to loss of a life-time opportunity.

Question 3: Enumerate some of the hindrances to effective soulwinning.

The following are some of the hindrances to effective soul-winning (i) Persecutions against the preachers of the gospel (John 4:1-3). Jesus had just relocated from Judea in order to continue the ministry of preaching the gospel. Some believers would have gone on sabbatical in Galilee having escaped the threats of enemies of the gospel in Judea. (ii) Restrictions to the preaching of the gospel. While laws, edicts may prohibit public preaching, it has been discovered that in such places, the gospel can still be declared by person- to -person soulwinners. (iii) Racial prejudice. Samaritans were a people of the caste system in the

common wealth of Israel. The woman being conscious that Jesus was a Jew, marvelled at His request for a drink and asked, "**How is it that thou being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?**" Prejudice against any race for whatever reason is not acceptable to God. If we, as believers, join or promote racial discrimination in any way, we create difficulty for the preaching and acceptance of the gospel. This negative attitude if allowed has the tendency of blurring our vision and limiting the spread of the gospel message, hence God Himself corrected it in Peter so he could reach out to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-23)

(iv) Considerations of self above the gospel. The Lord could have for His tiredness put off reaching out to this woman. (v) Suitability of the locale. The place Jacob's well was situated, to some preachers, would have been unsuitable for the preaching of the gospel (vi) Digressing arguments (John 4: 11,12) The woman digressed with unnecessary argument. While some respondents may be brought to the Lord through logical presentation of arguments, many others have been lost through digressing arguments. The soulwinner will have to be wary of distracting arguments while presenting the gospel. (vii) Misunderstanding of the gospel message (4: 15) The woman did not understand what Jesus meant by "**living water**". While the Lord referred to things of eternal value, the woman was concerned about meeting temporal needs. How many respondents have misunderstood salvation from sin for healing, plenty of money, church membership and observation of religious rites! (viii) Religious affiliation. This woman had religious affiliation to an important and recognizable religious organization: she knew some religious places, rites and observation but she was not righteous. (ix) Avoidance of those labeled as "great"

sinner. When sinners are categorized and placed in the class of great sinners, they are often made to feel there is no hope of being saved. This woman had several reasons to be placed among 'great' sinners. She was a Samaritan, a member of the hated mixed race; she was known to be living in sin unlike other decent women. People in this category are often bypassed in the presentation of the gospel. (x) Opposition from Satan and his co-horts.

These and several other hindrances are impediments to effective presentation of the gospel and they must be worked on and removed if we want our presentation of the gospel to be effective. But as concerned soulwinners, we should through godly wisdom, work our ways through these difficulties by fervent prayer of faith and present the gospel to bring sinners out of sin.

THE PLACE OF GODLY WISDOM IN EFFECTIVE SOULWINNING (John 4:6-26; Proverbs 11: 30; James 5: 20; Daniel 12:3; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22; Proverbs 4:7; James 1:5)

The condition under which this Samaritan woman was when she came in contact with Christ, no respectable Jewish man would want to talk with her. Many would have counted her as out of the radius of the gospel. Of course, none of the disciples of Christ would have been able to reach her. They, through resort to primordial sentiments, tribal prejudice and religious biases, would have lost the opportunity to reach her. But since the gospel is for everyone irrespective of race, position or past sins, the Lord preached the gospel to her. This He did in wisdom. Like Christ, we must be prepared to take the gospel at any time and in any circumstance to every place and people, and that wisely.

Question 4: What is the importance of wisdom in the ministry of soul winning?

There are many people in our communities that have not been reached as a result of inability to apply wisdom required for soulwinning. Almost everyone can argue but only very few can win souls. It takes the wisdom of God to pull a prejudiced sinner out of his shell of self-conceit into the kingdom of God, Here Jesus demonstrated the necessity of divine wisdom in the art of soulwinning. This wisdom is sometimes manifested in simple, straightforward and seemingly 'harmless' question or sentence, which the Holy Spirit eventually uses to open up the sinner preparatory to conviction and conversion. Some of such questions and sentences are found in John 4:7,13,16; Acts 8:30;26;27; In wisdom also, Jesus cleared the woman's confusion by making her understand the great difference between the water from Jacob's well and that from Jesus ' fountain (John 4: 10'13-15) We need constant dependence on the Holy Spirit to put wisdom, the right word, sentence or question in our mouths at the right time and to the right individuals as He has promised, for then would the work of soulwinning be found very rewarding.

Question 5: What lessons can we learn from the way Jesus opened up the woman's heart to the gospel?

Believers must be prepared to share the gospel at any time and it any place. If Jesus crossed all barriers to take the gospel to all who needed it, we cannot do anything less, if indeed , we are His followers. Therefore, we must do all we can to take the gospel to the regions unreached. This will demand that we (i) create an opportunity. Opportunities to preach will not always be there but we are the ones to, like the Lord , create an opening when there appear to be none. (ii) Use a created opportunity. If we are fortunate to

have an opening already created , we are to use it to reach the lost and bring them to Christ. (iii) Be gentle and patient. If the Lord was ungentle and impatient, the woman would not have been saved. In spite of the hindrances she posed to the presentation of the gospel, she was won to the Lord. Likewise, we must be gentle and patient in our presentation. (iv) Avoid being judgmental; don't condemn . The Lord knew that the woman was an adulteress but He did not call her by that name. If the Lord engaged in name calling or mud-slinging, she would not have been saved. (v) Use our respondents' register or words they can easily relate to. The woman was reached in the language she understood best. Common words or words that can easily be understood are better used in communicating the gospel so that our efforts will not be in vain. Avoid words that impress but distract from your purpose of reaching him/her (vi) Avoid being keen on winning an argument. It is not worth it. (vii) Avoid being distracted by digressions. (viii) Be factual, don't threaten. When you talk about the consequences of sin, ensure to be factual. If you are seen to be threatening, they may be more hardened in sin. (ix) Let love be the motivating factor for our soulwinning . (x) Avoid primordial sentiments. (xi) Be willing to lead the seeking soul to the Saviour. (xii) Rather than being distracted by current affairs or events, let it lead us to the message of salvation.

THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE EFFECTIVE SOULWINNER (John 4: 10,13,14,26; Ephesians 2:8; Isaiah 12:3; 41:17,18; Jeremiah 2:13 Zechariah 13:1; Revelation 22:17; Isaiah 55:1)

Question 6: What is the central message in soulwinning?

The fact that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and the Source of **“living water”** (Isaiah 12: 3; 41:17,18; Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 13: 1; Revelation

22:17;) should be central to all messages of the soulwinner. In other words, the soulwinner's message is incomplete without the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. In declaring that He would give living water to quench man's thirst for God, Jesus was actually saying He was the Messiah as only the Messiah could do this. By so declaring, He means He is the One who fills us with His grace and truth (John 1:14) and grants unto us constant refreshing (Revelation 7:17). It should be noted that the Great Gift of God is not water, but Christ Himself. He is God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15; John 3:16) who was given to rescue man from the bondage of sin. In spite of this truth, many sinners are yet to know that He is God's bestowed special Gift. This is why this central message must be emphasized.

It should be added that the reviving and regenerating effects of the Holy Spirit are best described as living water (John 7:37-39). As none deprives himself of food and water when hungry and thirsty, so none should deprive his soul of the Living Word (Jesus Christ) and the written Word (the Bible), which satisfy hungry and thirsty souls. Therefore, we should impress it on **"every one that thirsteth, (to) come ye to waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"**(Isaiah 55:1) Every sinner must be reached with the message of Christ the Saviour so that they can decide to accept Him now as Saviour.

RIGHT RESPONSE TO CHRIST THE GREAT SOULWINNER (John 4:27-30; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

A great light dawned on the Samaritan woman on hearing the greatest revelation of all times: **"I that speak unto thee am he"** (verse 26). Not even the doctors of the law in the Temple had known about the messiahship of Jesus Christ as yet. What a

great revelation! The simple statement from Christ eventually led to the breaking of the Samaritan woman's religious guard. She was so penetrated with the great truths which Jesus had declared that she forgo why she came to the well. In fact the conversation with the Messiah was too sacred, and the effect on the woman too overpowering to allow for its continuation. This already accomplished, she left her water-pot and went to the city. Her leaving "**her waterpot**" is of great significance to all. The living water was already beginning to spring up within her.

Question 7: Describe the right response to the gospel presentation using the Samaritan woman as an example.

She not only yielded herself to the Lord as a result of Christ's message, but also became an instrument of blessing to many in her city. Having been convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, she went immediately to make Him known to others. This woman heard it just once and responded without hesitation but there are those who have heard it severally but are undecided. What have you done with the message you have heard? Have you surrendered your life to Christ, the Saviour? Learn from this woman. Make Him your Saviour; and make Him known also to others.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Revelation	11-12	Psalms	15-17
TUE	"	13-14	"	18
WED	"	15-16	"	19-21
THUR	"	17-18	"	22-24
FRI	"	19-20	"	25-28
SAT	"	21-22	"	29-31
SUN	Matthew	1-2	"	32-33

346 Lesson

TESTIMONY OF THE SAMARITANS

MEMORY VERSE: " And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42)

TEXT: John 4:31-54

Our Lord Jesus Christ was on a journey from Judea to Galilee with His disciples when, out of exhaustion, He stopped over at Jacob's Well in Sychar or Shechem to rest. Sychar was in Mount Ephraim, a province of Samaria formerly occupied by the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel under king Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:28-43; 12: 1-25). It was here that the bones of Joseph brought down from Egypt were buried (Joshua 24:32). But idolatry, disobedience and sin plundered their heritage and made the Lord to reject " **...all the seed of Israel and afflicted them and delivered them unto the hand of spoilers until he had cast them out of his sight...So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria** (2 Kings 17:20-23). By the year 722 B.C. the northern kingdom had lost its territory in the Promised Land. In their place "...the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the, children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof" (2 Kings 17:24). The whole territory of Samaria came under the possession of Assyria with mixture of the Jews. These foreigners made their own gods and worshiped them according to their nations (2 Kings 17:29-33).

At the time Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well the relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews of the two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) of the southern kingdom was that of discrimination, rivalry, contempt and hatred against one another. While the Samaritans boasted falsely of being descendants of the holy fathers and claimed to belong to the patriarch Jacob (John 4:12), the Jews saw them as a mixed multitude unworthy of the Abrahamic heritage. Christ was however determined not to allow this age-long animosity hamper His mission to the lost, Samaritans inclusive. God expects true Christians today to put aside all racial tribal and man-made divides and reach out to all and sundry with the gospel and true fellowship of the brethren.

Question 1: Mention some of the reasons the Jews and Samaritans do not worship together.

CHRIST'S PURPOSE-DRIVEN MINISTRY (John 4:31-39- 9:45 Philippians 3: 13-16).

The Samaritans adopted the ceremonies of the law and professed the worship of the God of Israel. This form of worship was corrupted In many ways and became a constant cause of dispute between them and the Jews (John 4:20). The simplistic claim to the worship of the true God by many people is the bane of today's religion. This false worship by many religious people and church denominations has left many lives devoid of the grace of God and the necessary Christian virtues. Jesus knew this pitiable state of Samaria and was determined to reach them with the gospel. The woman at the well presented a ready opportunity for Him to do so.

"In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat". (verse 31). Christ's consuming passion and propelling desire for the salvation of

perishing souls constrained Him to set aside His personal comfort. He temporarily ignored the urge for food to enable Him minister to the spiritually hungry. He felt that the need to eat cannot be compared with the urgency this opportunity to rescue a dying soul presents. It is a wonderful challenge to us that in spite of His fatigue and hunger He refused to eat until He had finished this assignment. **"... I have food to eat which you know not of".** The work of the Father was His delight and happiness. He set aside His eating and drinking to do first that which matters most. He had now in His hand a rare opportunity which might pass away and He embraced it and said to His disciples. **"... My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"** (Verse 34).

To Christ, the will of the Father comes first. If we would truly follow His steps it becomes expedient for us not only to devote ourselves diligently to the service of God, but also to do so passionately so that we might gather in the end-time harvest before wastage sets in.

<p>Question 2: Why was Jesus' passion to minister to the Samaritan woman stronger than His physical need of food?</p>
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The average minister today is more preoccupied with non-essentials than with the will of the Father. A Christian writer aptly captured the real situation of many ministers today when he said, *"Many have zeal to carry them out at first, but not zeal to carry them onto the last"*. Christ was wholly given to advancing the cause of God's Kingdom: restoring lost souls to life, spreading the light of the gospel and bringing salvation to a spiritually famished world (John 8:12). As the law of God was sweeter to David than honey and the honeycomb, so was the publishing of glad tidings of the gospel and the calling of sinners to repentance to Christ. Believers today must not do otherwise.

Question 3: Mention some of the reasons some believers do not give preaching the urgency it demands.

The Lord pointed to the urgency of the need to harvest multitudes of famished souls into the Kingdom of God before they get lost eternally, hence He saw no other business more inviting and urgent than the preaching of the gospel. He tells those who feel there is still time to reach out to stop procrastinating as farmers were urgent on reapers to hurry before the harvest is destroyed. **"Say not ye..."** He warns.

The challenge of spreading the gospel is ever growing as human population is growing and the coming of the Lord draws nearer. Today, multitudes of people are yet to hear or accept the message of salvation. The spiritual corn field is ripe already for harvest; let us arise and do the Lord's bidding. Delay on the part of the Church in reaping the ripened harvest of souls will lead to irrecoverable loss.

The Lord reminds us that "...he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:36). As the gospel work leads to the eternal salvation of precious souls, the Lord tells us that the task is not without its proper rewards, both here and in eternity (Mark 10:30; Daniel 12:3).

Question 4: What does the principle of personal evangelism teach believers?

The principle of personal evangelism promotes a rapid multiplication of disciples for Christ. As the people of Samaria were ripe for harvest, Jesus employed person-to-person evangelism to reach them. How effective personal evangelism can be if believers would follow the example of Jesus. By preaching to one woman the gospel spread to the

whole town of Sychar. The testimony of a single woman set the whole community on fire of the gospel and teaches us that believers in every community can profitably employ the same method to reach families, whole communities and even nations for Christ. A simple testimony of our conversion has the potential to turn large numbers of people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SAMARITANS (John 4:40-43; 1 John 4:14,15; Luke 1:77-79).

"...Now we believe ...and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (Verse 42) The Samaritan woman, kindled by a burning zeal of her new-found Messiah who told her all that she ever did, dashed into the town to give testimony of her discourse with the Lord. Though still a new convert, she went to call the attention of her kinsmen to the Saviour. This teaches us that we do not have to tarry for months or years after we have been converted before we begin to share our testimony with other people. As soon as we become partakers of the life that is in Christ, we should go forth sharing the same with our friends and neighbors. The apostle Paul did the same after the Lord met him, **"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God"** (Acts 9:20).

<p>Question 5: How soon should a believer begin to preach the gospel after conversion?</p>

We should not allow the knowledge of God and the possibility of being saved lie buried in our hearts without sharing it with other people. The psalmist says, **"I believed, therefore have I spoken ..."** (Psalm 116: 10). A small spark of faith in the woman of Samaria sent her spreading the fame of Christ throughout the whole city. What a challenge this

is to young converts and all believers today! The average believer today burns with an intense desire to acquire physical possessions at the expense of the Lord's command to reach the lost. Many of us have relegated the preaching of the gospel to the bottom rung of our life's priorities without weighing properly the concern of the Lord for His creatures. The clarion call to everyone of us is to wake up, take the torch that lights men's darkness and wave it far and wide (Ephesians 5: 14; Romans 13: 11).

At the invitation of the Samaritan woman, the people trooped out to hear Christ themselves. Her confession was **"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did..."** Jesus exposed the woman's sinful past, yet she was happy to invite others to Him. And the people came too, not minding the fact that Christ could do the same to them. Many today flock to preachers who would tickle their itching ears with great but false promises of prosperity without giving them the all-important message of conversion and salvation from sin. Yet, **"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3; Proverb 28: 13).

The Samaritans were happy to have Christ expose their sins. And many of them believed on Him, and their uniform testimony was that **"...this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world"**. Oh that humanity would believe the testimony of the Samaritans that Christ is the One and only Saviour from sin! (John 14:6, Acts 4:12).

Man must first be saved from all sin, only then can he be saved from hell when he crosses over unto eternity. The fact that religion cannot save man from the clutches of sin and Satan today is a clear evidence that religion cannot avail man any escape route from the judgment of God.

SICK SON OF A NOBLEMAN HEALED (John 4:44-54; Psalms 107:20; 103:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:22).

Jesus arrived Galilee after a two-day stop-over in Samaria and was gladly received by the Galileans. They had been witnesses of the miracles He performed in Jerusalem during the feast and took advantage of His presence to welcome Him warmly. He avoided Nazareth and instead went to Cana of Galilee because His own people denied him honour out of familiarity having been raised among them.

While in Cana a certain nobleman travelled several miles from Capernaum to seek healing for his son who was sick and at the point of death. He had heard of Christ's notable miracles and believed that if he could come face to face with the wonder-worker his son would live. Whatever we have heard that Christ did in the past, He can still do the same today if only we believe. No matter how critical our situation Jesus is the same yesterday, and today and forever. All that is needed on our part is to meet Him by faith and His power will avail for us.

The nobleman pleaded with Christ to hurry down with him to Capernaum because of the critical condition of his son. He did not know that distance is not a barrier to the King of kings and Lord of lords. He was unlike the centurion who **"answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed"** (Matthew 8:8). The Lord gently rebuked him for seeking after signs and wonders instead of the word of God. Let it suffice us to believe that we can receive our needed miracles from the Lord by faith. The things we have read and heard that Jesus did in the past He is still able to do among us today. It was a common problem with the Jews that even after seeing diverse miracles performed by

Jesus to sufficiently prove His divinity, they found it difficult to believe in Him.

The nobleman persisted in his request saying, "...**Sir, come down ere my child die**". Though faith does not give God conditions, yet it persists until the answer comes. Jesus responded to the request of this man by uttering a word of authority saying, "**Go thy way, thy son liveth**". The man believed and his son was healed the same hour.

How true God's word is! "**He sendeth his word and healeth them and delivereth them from their destructions**" (Psalm 107:20). Christ's word brought healing to the dying child and wrought deliverance in the whole family as "**...himself believed and his whole house**" (Verse 53). Here we see the effect of faith and the efficacy of the word of Christ: whenever the Lord offers His benefits to us, His power will always readily accomplish whatever He has promised provided we do not shut the door to our blessing through unbelief.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Matthew	3-4	Psalms	34-35
TUE	"	5	"	36-37
WED	"	6	"	38-40
THUR	"	7-8	"	41-43
FRI	"	9	"	44-45
SAT	"	10	"	46-48
SUN	"	11	"	49-50

HEALING OF THE IMPOTENT MAN

MEMORY VERSE: "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk, And Immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath" (John 5:8,91)

TEXT: John 5:1-18

Our Lord Jesus Christ went up to the Passover in Jerusalem as a mark of obedience to His Father's command (Deuteronomy 16: 16). This is reckoned as the second Passover since the Lord started His public ministry. Not only did Jesus show His obedience to the law by attending these feasts, He also seized the opportunity of the occasions to make the gospel known to multitudes that gathered in Jerusalem for the same purpose.

THE TRAVAILS OF MANKIND (John 5: 1-7; Romans 8:22-23; Deuteronomy 28; 15-29)

Question 1: Mention the various areas the devil afflicts people today.

The consequences of sin for the human race cannot be over-stated. It has been a great yoke from which man is unable to extricate himself. Lamenting, prophet Jeremiah says, **"The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall ... from whom I am not able to rise up"** (Lamentation 1: 14). And the Lord God states categorically what follows a life of sin and iniquity: **"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments... The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods and with the scab, and**

with the Itch... with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart" (Deuteronomy 28:15, 27, 28. The dreadful reality of sin is that it attracts God's judgment which can affect the physical body, the mind and the soul. Sin has plunged the whole of humanity into untold hardship bringing with it diverse sicknesses and diseases, some without cure. A look at our society today paints a grim picture of the Bethesda experience where the halt, the blind, the paralysed, the maimed, look helplessly for cure in their own "house of mercy". The scourge of HIV/ AIDS is very much with us and medical science is yet to find a cure for it. Multitudes have been sent to their untimely grave because they lived carelessly in sin. Except the God of heaven shows us mercy, the consequences of our sinful lifestyle will remain catastrophic.

God often uses distressful situations to turn our attention to Him or draw us to Himself. But most people rarely understand this merciful intention of a caring Creator when they are afflicted one way or the other. To the believer, chastisement is a corrective measure to call us to order when we err in conduct before our Father.

Question 2: How can we avoid the consequences of a sinful life?
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The infirmities of the people at the pool of Bethesda had no human remedy. Therefore, it took the intervention of an angel who **"went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water"** (verse 4) to bring healing to the sick. Through this divine gesture many of the sick have been relieved of their infirmities. What a distressing wait it had been for many of them. This readily highlights the untold hardship men have been subjected to before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The pitiable condition of one of the sick people at the pool caught the attention of our Lord Jesus. By divine knowledge. Christ knew that the man had been sick for thirty-eight years. Christ asked him if he would be made whole. This is not because the Lord does not know but first, to stir up his faith and kindle in the man a desire for the upcoming favour. The Lord wanted to know if he had faith to be healed. Second, to reveal Himself as the expected Messiah. Miracles, as we know, have a way of bringing to light the miracle worker. Third, to create an avenue to preach the gospel of God's grace. Fourth, to know if he was fed up with his present condition and wanted immediate healing. All these were to prepare the impotent man for his miracle.

Question 3: Why does God want us to ask before we receive?

Jesus, with power and authority commanded the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years to "Rise, take up thy bed and walk" (Verse 8). And instantaneously the man's strength returned and he was able to rise and walk. The man that had been long disabled was ushered in the glorious liberty and full state of health. Here Christ demonstrated His power over sicknesses and diseases and confirmed one of His major ministries on earth. The gospel of Matthew states: **"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses"** (Matthew 8:16,17). It does not matter how long men's problems have lingered or how bad the situation, Christ is able to heal them all.

Christ's mission on earth is to save, heal and deliver those that are oppressed of the devil. He was

manifested to take away our sins, sicknesses and infirmities. Every infirmity presents an opportunity for Christ to demonstrate His power over the works of Satan. As many as would look up to Him today will surely have the works of the devil destroyed in their lives (I John 3:8). Christ bore our sin by the merit of His death, and bore our Sicknesses by the miracle of His life.

God could have cured the whole multitude of these infirmed people in a moment, but as His miracles have their design, they also have limits. Many widows were famished in Israel during the time of drought but Elijah was sent to relieve only one of them (1 King 17:9; Luke 4:25, 26). And there were many lepers in Israel at the time of Elisha but only Naaman, the Syrian was cured of his leprosy (2 King 5:10; Luke 4:27). The manner of the cure shows plainly that nothing is more unreasonable than that men should subject the work of God to their own judgment. In order to render us more obedient to Him by faith, He often presents to us those things which contradict our reasoning.

Question 4: Why is it difficult for all the sick people of the world to be healed?

The deliverance of this man from impotency took place on the Sabbath and therefore was unlawful, according to the Jewish tradition. But Jesus wanted them to know that He was Lord of the Sabbath and what had been unlawful without His command become lawful by it. Neither was Jesus' action against the sense of the law. The law only prohibited civil labour and carrying of burdens for wages and trading for profit. It did not forbid works of goodness, mercy and charity towards a needy neighbor (Matthew 12:10-12).

Jesus disregarded the danger posed by the Jews and healed the impotent man to make the miracle more widely known and create an opportunity for the beautiful discourse which He delivered immediately afterwards. He had at hand a just defence, by which, though He did not pacify the ungodly, He abundantly refuted their evil conspiracy.

On many occasions the threat of religious sinners prevents believers from declaring the message of the gospel. But our Lord defied all empty threats of sinners and all danger posed by their attitude to the truth and sought every opportunity to enlighten His hearers and bring them to His saving knowledge. Believers should not do less, rather, we should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. We should seek every occasion to disabuse the minds of people from religious falsehood and misinterpretation of the sacred Scriptures.

<p>Question 5: How can we help those who are willingly ignorant of the truth of the gospel?</p>
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A TIMELY WARNING AGAINST SINFUL LIVING
(John 5:14-18:8:11; Titus 2:11-14)

“Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple...”
This is a befitting place to be for all recipients and beneficiaries of God’s grace and favour. The impotent man, as soon as he was healed went straight to the house of God. Perhaps he has not been there for thirty-eight years because of his infirmity or that, and more probably, he has gone there to give thanks to God for His mercy. Whatever the reasons, it behoves all those who have received God’s favour to go back to Him and give thanks (Luke 17:15-18). Anything short of this is unacceptable to God. Gratitude to God demands that after He has blessed us we return to show appreciation. Or, if He has delivered us from

the hand of the enemy we give our life to Him in total service.

As soon as Jesus saw the man that was healed in the temple He **“said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee”** (verse 14). The implication of Christ’s statement is that sin had been the cause of infirmity which the impotent man suffered for thirty-eight years. How devastating and terrible the consequence of sin can be! Our sin makes our sicknesses our grief. Sin is both the cause and the sting of sickness. There is less wonder that Christ cautioned the man against any further meddling with it. Christ’s statement makes us know that sin is the usual cause of diseases in many cases of human affliction. Hence, the man was warned to stay clear of sin to avoid a more grievous consequence.

One would have thought that a thirty-eight year old infirmity would be enough warning for the man to flee at every appearance of sin but human nature being what it is, is prone to forget the past especially if the present is comfortable. Definitely, a more grievous infirmity than he had, might be the torment of hell fire. Christ message to all therefore is to **“Go, and sin no more!”**

A holy walk with God is the best preservative and surest security against the attacks of diseases and Satan.

“...Whoso breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him” (Ecclesiastes 10:8b). Sin exposes us to the attacks of the devil, demonic forces, witches and wizards. But God’s promise is that: **“...If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes,**

I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee... and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee” (Exodus 15:26; 23:25b). The decision to live a healthy or sickly life is entirely ours and depends on what we do with our lives.

Question 6: How can we live healthy, both spiritually and physically?
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Christ's caution was to remind the previously impotent man that he had been healed in order that he might live all his life to serve God. It is indeed a design both of our redemption and of all the goodness and gifts of God to keep us entirely devoted to God. Thus, by the stripes and pains of sickness God instructs and spurs us onto repentance so that we can fulfill His design and His will for our lives. The suffering and pain of sickness should render us more cautions against sin. Nay, these should drive us to the cross of Christ to seek transformation from a life of sin to righteousness.

The Jews persecuted Christ when they heard that He healed the impotent man and sought to slay Him. **“But Jesus answered, My Father worketh hitherto and I work”** (Verse 17). Christ did not argue with the Jews that the law in the Sabbath was temporary and would soon be abolished; rather, He maintains that He had not violated the law because His work was divine, humane and benevolent. What Christ insisted upon in that the holy rest which was enjoined by the law of Moses is not violated when we do God's work on the Sabbath. He declared that the soundness of body which had been restored to the diseased man was a demonstration of His divine power and that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

Question 7: What type of services can a believer render on the day of the Lord?

The Sabbath or rest of God is not idleness. Christ wanted them to know that He was not only equal with God, who daily sustains the perfect working of the universe but was also Lord of the Sabbath (Philippians 2:6; Mathew 12:8). He also wanted them to know that He is the Messiah, the Author of life and the Saviour of the world.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Matthew	12	Psalms	51-54
TUE	"	13	"	55-57
WED	"	14-15	"	58-60
THUR	"	16-17	"	61-64
FRI	"	18	"	65-66
SAT	"	19-20	"	67-68
SUN	"	21	"	69-70

MEMORY VERSE: "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (John 8:18).

TEXT: JOHN 5:19-47

This study derives its subject matter from the previous study in which Christ healed an impotent man on the Sabbath day. Christ had, on the Sabbath day, cured a man who had suffered thirty-eights year infirmity; who could neither help himself nor find a helper. Christ's action or exercise of mercy on the helpless, impotent man drew the ire of the Jews who reproached and reviled Him as a Sabbath breaker and destroyer of the law. They not only persecuted Him but also sought to slay Him. It was on this occasion that Christ, in response to their accusations, asserted His authority as Messiah and showed from the testimony of the Father, the Scriptures, John the Baptist, and His works that He came from God to save the world. He also used the opportunity to reprove the Jews for their obstinacy (verse 40), lack of love for God (verses 41, 42), rejection of Christ (verse 43) and disobedience to their own law (verses 45-47). Christ's example reveals the need for every believer to ceaselessly engage in acts of mercy and care for the needy without fear of opposition or persecution. In debunking the charge of breaking the Sabbath, Jesus testified that He did nothing, "but what he seeth the Father do". Both the Son and the Father therefore work on the Sabbath day like any weekday to care for the hurting and the needy. Indeed, He is Lord of the Sabbath day and would set aside the letters of the Law to do good or carry out works of mercy on the Sabbath (Mark 2:7).

Question 1: What should be our attitude in times of persecution and serious oppositions?

We, as believers, should learn to take advantage of negative situations to declare the word, mind and will of God rather than allow discouragement to paralyze us into inertia. Every negative situation should be seen as an opportunity to advance the cause of the gospel and expand the kingdom of God. At other times, in answer to a similar charge, He had pleaded the example of David's eating of the shewbread, the priests offering and of people watering their cattle on the Sabbath day. But here, He goes higher and declares the source of His actions and His divine authority.

THE DIVINITY, AUTHORITY AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE MESSIAH (John 5:19:30; 3:27-36; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10, 11, 20; Matthew 11:27; Proverbs 8:22-31)

The healing power Christ manifested on the impotent man proved Him to be the Son of God who worked with and like His Father. Besides, the fact that He could do nothing of Himself reveals eternal intimacy, unity and co-existence with the Father. He has no separate interest or action apart from the Father. He does everything in conjunction with Him as He possesses the same power, will and nature with Him. This does not portray any weakness in the Son or want of power to do anything Himself. Rather, it expresses His perfection as He does nothing in opposition to His Father's will and nature.

Since Jesus does whatsoever God does, then He is no creature – he can neither sin nor err. There is such a relationship between the Father and the Son which is neither by constitution nor appointment. It has existed from the dateless eternity. Christ Himself

said **“I and my Father are one”** (John 10:30). Jesus is God.

“For the Father loveth the Son...” He loved Him when He appeared in human nature and state of humiliation to atone for the sin of man, and more than once declared by a voice from heaven, that Christ was His **“Beloved Son”**.

Question 2: List the various ways in which Jesus Christ proved His equality with God the Father in His personal testimony?

In the opening verses of chapter one of St. John’s Gospel, Christ’s Deity is revealed as God who created all things. His pre-incarnate existence in heaven before taking on the nature of flesh for our redemption is clearly stated. Here in our text, He testifies to the Jewish accusers how He is equal with God, First, Christ is equal with God in power and works. **“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do”** Whether in the work of creation, recreation, redemption, preservation of human beings and all living things, the Trinity work together with equal power as partners. Such unity of purpose is what Christ expects of the church as He prayed for her oneness (John 17:21-23)

Second, Christ is equal with God in raising and quickening the dead. Christ has the power to quicken both body and soul. He did it in the cases of Lazarus (John 11:43,44), the widow’s son at Nain (Luke 7:11-15); and Jarius’ daughter (Mark 5:35-42). The power to raise the dead must be one the highest attributes of the Divinity, so the affirmation of Jesus as possessing this power “in the same manner” as the Father goes to proof His equality with God. He is the “quickenning Spirit” and has the ability to quicken and make alive, any part of the human body which does appear dead, even as the quickening of Abraham’s body and Sarah’s womb (Romans 4:17-19) He does

quicken and make alive from the grip of sin all who come unto Him (Ephesians 2:1) The Father makes no one a partaker of everlasting life except in Christ, in whom He is truly worshipped and whose voice, in the Gospel, the “dead” in sin hear and live. He quickens in a spiritual sense those who repent of their sins and are washed in His blood, and will raise them up on the last day to everlasting life.

Third, Christ claimed His equality with God in Judgment of the world. God will judge the world through Christ (John 5:22; 12:48; Acts 17:31). Fourth, Christ claims equality with God the Father in honour. He is to be honoured as the Father is honoured (John 5:23; Hebrews 2:7-9; Philippians 2:9-11) This is enough biblical evidence that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is worthy of both honour and worship, and should be so honoured by all men with the same honour given to the Father. If then it is idolatry to worship any creature, and yet the Son is to be honoured “even” as the Father, He must then be God to receive such worship belonging to God. God even commanded His angels to worship Him (Hebrews 1:6)

We honour Christ when we ascribe to Him in our hearts, words and actions, the worship due Him; esteem Him as He is, have the right view and feelings towards His Person.

So we honour Him when we regard Him as possessor of wisdom, goodness, power and eternity. Those who have contrary views can not be said to worship and obey the Father.

Fifth, Jesus Christ is equal with the Father as the source of eternal life, Jesus like God the Father, has life in Himself and so can give to those who exercise faith in Him (John 5:24-27; Ephesians 2:5-9; John

10:10b) Everyone who repents of sin and receives Him as Saviour receives His enabling power and grace to live a pure life. Christ, as Redeemer, is the originator of spiritual life.

Sixth, Christ testified that He is equal with God death and eternal destiny of man. He declared, **“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation”** (John 5:28, 29) Jesus, in His personal testimony revealed that there are two eternal destinies. There shall be the resurrection of the just and true worshippers of God down the ages to eternal life with God in heaven. This is the first resurrection. After this will be the resurrection of the unjust and all the sinners that ever lived, all backsliders and careless souls with those who spurned the way of salvation and eventually died in their sins who shall be brought face to face before the Judge of the whole earth at the Great white Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). All in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth “the good” to life and everlasting joy and “the evil” to damnation and everlasting shame.

The Messiah is the One the Father hath appointed as Judge, both of the living and the dead. This implies His ability to search and know the very secrets in the hearts of men and motives behind every action. Pre-existent with the Father, He judged the old world in the days of Noah and condemned Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins. He judged the people of Israel and often chastised them for their iniquities. This same Jesus is He who will eventually judge the whole world in righteousness at the last day as all judgments have been committed into His hand by the Father (John

5:27; Acts 17:31). Though He is a Judge with absolute power like the Father, His judgment is just, free from partiality, vindictiveness and corruption as obtains in human courts of law (John 5:30; 8:17; 9:39).

Suffice to say that to experience Christ therefore is to experience God (John 8:19; Mark 9:37) and to honour Him is to honour the Father (John 5:23). Those who reject Him do, by their actions, reject God and the hope of eternal life (Luke 10:16; 1 John 5:11-13).

CHRIST'S APPEAL TO POTENT WITNESSES (John 5:31-40; 1:29; 7:28; 8:18, 26; Matthew 3:17; John 8:28; 12:49; 3:27-36; 10:31-38; 8:17; 14:10,11)

Jesus is **“the faithful and true witness”**. His personal testimony would have been enough to prove His deity before the Jews. However in conformity with the Law, which prescribes hearing from two or three witnesses for any matter to be established, He had to appeal to four witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6).

<p>Question 3: Mention the four witnesses the Lord appealed to in His defence?</p>

Jesus declared, **“If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true”** (John 5:31). This He said, to comply with the legal requirement of two or three witness. It was not that His witness was not true or accurate, but that it might not be acceptable to others. He had to obey the legally established standard of the day.

The Lord's first witness is God the Father, whose voice declared Him as His beloved Son twice during His earthly ministry (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). He told the Jews that they had not heard God's voice nor had His word abiding in them. This was the main cause of their problem of unbelief in Christ. They carried

the Scriptures about, read and recited them but they were not in their hearts. This is why the Lord enjoined believers to abide in Him and let His word abide in them so as to avoid backsliding.

John the Baptist was His second witness. The Jews respected and accepted His ministry. He presented the Lord to them as the Messiah, **"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29b) but not many believed in Him.

Third, the Lord appealed to His many works. He had performed many miracles, signs and wonders which are necessary credentials to prove that He is the Messiah. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to Him to confirm if He was the expected Messiah, it was the miracles He did that He told them were the confirmation (Luke 7:18-22).

The fourth authority Christ appealed to was the Scriptures (John 5:39-42). If the Jews had searched the Scriptures, they would have known Him through the writings of Moses and other prophets (Luke 24:27, 44). Believers today need to be close to the Scriptures as saints of old like the early Apostles and those in contemporary times. We cannot become intimate with Christ when we concentrate our mental energy on secular literature and entertainment stuff dished out through the electronic media by people who show quiet, and sometimes open, contempt for things of God.

Though He is the truth personified, the "Faithful Witness" and "Amen" whose record is true (John 8:13,14), His appeal to the testimonies of the Father (John 8:18; 12:28-30) John the Baptist (John 1:7,33), His own works (John 5:36) and the Scriptures (John 5:39) teaches believers to always present proofs to clear doubts especially before unbelievers where the

truth they affirm is not believed. As omniscient, Christ needs no witness. He said **“Though I bear record of my self, yet my record is true: for I know whence I come and whither I go...”** (John 8:14).

Question 4: Why did Christ have to present evidence to support his testimony in our text?

He needed to present these other proofs because the Jews took Him to be a mere man; hence His single testimony concerning Himself could not be admitted as authentic among them. But He here speaks of Himself as a divine personality in perfect union with His Father, with whom He is equal; and thus demands that His testimony be wholly accepted as firm and incontrovertible. The whole course of His life and ministry are all pointers to His divine origin (Hebrews 2:40; Acts 2:22).

REBUKE AND CONDEMNATION FOR UNBELIEF (John 5:40-47; John 1:11, 12)

The Jews lacked the true love of God in them and always sought the praise of men and as a result, did not come to Christ for salvation. This is the bane of many so-called Christians today who are neither hot nor cold as they seek to please the corrupt political, social and business elites while still trying to please Christ. It is obvious however that **“No man can serve two masters”**. The Lord who knows all things looked beyond His rejection by Jews to their acceptance of the antichrist who would come in his own name. The Lord taught that there would be many false teachers and antichrists but in verse 43 He refers to the Antichrist who would rule the world during the period of the Great Tribulation. Israel as a nation, He predicted, would enter into covenant with him (Daniel 9:27). Those who would not allow God to rule them will be ruled and ruined by the devil. Jesus rebuked

“the lost sheep” of Israel for their unbelief in Him.

Question 5: In what way does desire for honour of men contribute to unbelief in Christ and backsliding today?

“A good number of people who would have been Christians today have failed to do so because they love worldly honours and applause of men. Worldly associations, clubs material possessions, medals, certificates, national honours and titles have kept multitudes in the broad way. They think of what they would sacrifice in coming to Christ and the price seems too high to pay. Some believers also abandon the narrow way like Demas and Judas Iscariot did because of the love of this present world. The folly of it all is that honour of men does not last. Seeking earthly fame and honour at the expense of one’s relationship with the Lord is damnable. Seek to worship and honour God acceptably through repentance from sin, faith in Christ as Saviour and obedience to His word.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Matthew	22	Psalms	71-72
TUE	“	23	“	73-74
WED	“	24	“	75-77
THUR	“	25	“	78
FRI	“	26	“	79-80
SAT	“	27	“	81-83
SUN	“	28	“	84-86

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

349 Lesson

THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

MEMORY VERSE: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

TEXT: Psalm 139:1-16; Isaiah 40:9-29

Man is born with a God-conscious mind. There is an instinct in man that tells him that there is God. There are millions who have never read the Scripture but profess belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. This is because God, in His creation of man, put within Him the instinctive knowledge of the Almighty God. Through it, the infinite God is revealed to finite man.

Question 1: Why is it important to know God?

The importance of knowing God cannot be overstressed. Knowledge of His nature and attributes is important as it goes a long way in determining the kind of life we live. It has been observed that a people’s civilization, their progress, their attainments and their moral standards never rise above their concepts of God. Wherever individuals, nations and churches have a true concept of God prosperity, peace, progress, great exploits, material and spiritual blessings, growth and success are always their lots. Daniel rightly said, “... **the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits**” (Daniel 11:32). The more a person knows God the more spiritual he becomes and the more progress he makes spiritually and physically.

WRONG CONCEPT OF GOD (Romans 1:21-25; Ephesians 4:17, 18; 2:2, 12; Mark 12:24).

A wrong concept of God can make one not enjoy God's best in life but live miserably. The Bible gives us the reason the modern man follows these blind-alley beliefs: **"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God..."** (Romans 1:21). Modern man believes in agnosticism. Agnostics believe that the finite mind of man cannot grasp the infinite God. They therefore state that man cannot know God. They cannot be right. Although man cannot fully grasp or understand God, the Bible states that we can know Him perfectly with our finite minds or else, He would cease to be our object of worship. We can know God enough only as to help us understand His plan for our lives and His sovereignty over the universe. **"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"** (Deuteronomy 29:29).

Pantheism is another school of thought whereby modern man tries to evade the worship of the true God. The pantheist says that "God is the universe and the universe is God." This is another way of saying "God is anything and anything is God." What a folly to equate God with clouds, tress, birds, reptiles and rivers. Pantheists worship nature instead of worshipping the One who created the universe. Another group is made up of polytheists who believe that the universe is not governed by one force alone, but by many. Hence they believe that there is a god of peace, a god of war, a god of fire, a god of water, etc. Polytheists promote the worship of many gods.

Another wrong concept of God is Deism. The deist admits that God created the universe, but afterward, left it to be run by itself. Accordingly to this view,

there is no possibility for revelation, or the miracle-working power of God since He has gone away to somewhere nobody knows. A universe without an ever-present God is a universe without purpose. If God existed before but is now nowhere to be found then it is man who governs the world today. Natural man cannot be the final authority. God is alive and He is actively involved with the control of the universe. Men may be confused about God's presence and His active participation in the affairs of men, but His word reminds us that He rules in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17). The God who created the universe is alive today and He is in active control of all things.

Question 2: What do you understand by atheism?

Atheism, taken from two Greek words meaning "Without God" is another view that runs contrary to the teaching of Scripture on the nature and attributes of God. Atheism is not just an ungodly philosophy, it is also way of life that denies the existence of God. It is living as if there is no God. Actually, everyone has the consciousness of the existence of a Supreme Being. Men may try to brush away the fact that God exists, but if they will be true to themselves they will confess that they are only trying to disbelieve the existence of God, which they know instinctively and practically to be true. The Word of God describes the atheist as a fool: **"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God"** (Psalm 14:1). People who refuse to accept the truth of God's word concerning whom God is will find themselves holding to misleading, blasphemous, absurd and man-made theories. Atheists have become modern day idolaters. It is folly to stand up to propound theories about the existence of Almighty God, the Ancient of Days, instead of allowing God to reveal Himself to us. How apt are the Words of Jesus to the blind theorists of His days:

“And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? (Mark 12:24).

The Scripture says, **“... the world by wisdom knew not God”** (1 Corinthians 1:21). Man cannot know God except through God’s revelation of Himself to man. Whatever knowledge we have of God is given to us by revelation from God Himself. God has voluntarily revealed His nature to those who are simple enough to believe in Him. God will not make Himself known to those who rebel against His word. But as we throw all unscriptural views aside, the Lord will reveal Himself to us and show more and more of His nature and attributes. **“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord...”** (Hosea 6:3).

GOD’S NAME REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE (Genesis 17:1; Exodus 3:14; 6:3; 15:26; Psalm 83:18; Judges 6:24; Jeremiah 23:6; Ezekiel 48:35; Genesis 22:14).

Question 4: Mention four names of God and what they signify.

God’s nature and His attributes are inseparable. His nature is revealed through His name. God manifested Himself through different names in the Scriptures not for the purpose of confusing man but to reveal the different phases of His nature. And each name explains more fully the nature of God. “Elohim” is one of the names of God used in the Scripture. The name “Elohim,” translated God, is used about 2,500 times in the Old Testament and it means “The strong One.” The name is used whenever the creative power of God is described or implied. The name “Elohim” is a uni-plural noun which foreshadows the doctrine of the trinity of the Godhead.

God also revealed Himself as Jehovah. The Word “Jehovah” is derived from the verb “to be” and it

includes the past, present and future tenses. In other words, He is the One who was, and is and it includes the past, present and future tenses. In other words, He is the one who was, and is to come, “the Eternal one.” The French Bible always translates the name Jehovah as “I’ Eternal”, the Eternal One.

The Name “Jehovah” is really like a blank cheque. Sometimes in the Old Testament this blank cheque, the name “Jehovah”, is filled for us, while at other times we are encouraged to fill it ourselves, as we have need. Where there is need, there is God to meet it. Every now and then we come across Jehovah compounded with another word to form His complete name for that occasion. When Israel had need of God as their Banner to rally their drooping spirits and to lead them into victory against enemies that fought against them as they journeyed through the wilderness, Jehovah God came to their rescue. And so, after the victory over Amalek, they **“built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi”** (Exodus 17:15), which means, “I am thy banner.” As a believer, you can find comfort in knowing that in all your troubles, the battle is the Lord’s and He will raise a banner against your enemy.

God also revealed Himself to the children of Israel as Jehovah Rapha, the LORD that healeth. This is to show God’s people that healing of infirmities is God’s will and pre-occupation (Exodus 15:26). All who are sick today can look up to God for healing.

When Gideon feared for his life, having seen an angel of Jehovah face to face, the Lord said unto him, **“Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die.”** Thus it was discovered that Jehovah is peace, and to commemorate the new revelation he built an altar unto Jehovah and called it “Jehovah-shalom”, meaning, “I am thy peace” (Judges 6:24). Peace flows

like a river into the hearts and lives of all who belongs to the Lord.

The prophet, Jeremiah, says of the messiah who was to come, **“In his days Judah shall be saved, an Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”** (Jeremiah 23:6). God’s people shall dwell safely because Jehovah Tsidkenu shall stand for them, answering every accusation against them, becoming their surety and righteousness.

God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac for a burnt offering in the land of Moriah. Abraham obeyed. Just as Abraham was about to slay his son, God spoke to him and revealed Himself as the Lord who provides (Genesis 22:14). God speaks to his people as Jehovah-Jireh, for He is rich enough to meet the needs of His people.

The Lord is revealed as the shepherd in Psalm 23. David who himself was a shepherd, basked in the bosom of the Great shepherd, seeing Him as the fulfillment of all his needs for provision, security, peace, guidance, restoration, safety, comfort and anointing. Jehovah-Ra’ah is all the believer needs. He is the Shepherd of the weak, defenceless sheep. God also revealed Himself as Jehovah-Shammah or the Lord who is there (Ezekiel 48:35). This name indicates Jehovah’s constant presence with His people. He is the One who inhabits our praises, who is with us when we are in trouble and He is our very present help (Psalm 46:1; 91:15). We can rest assured in His ever-abiding presence for He says, **“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”** (Matthew 28:20).

GOD: HIS ATTRIBUTES AND NATURE (John 4:24; Psalms 139:7; 147:5; 99:9; Daniel 4:35; Deuteronomy 3:24).

It pays to become thoroughly acquainted with God's nature. The more we know him the more definite we shall become as regards what we expects from Him. A deeper understanding of God will also enlighten us concerning what he expects from us.

God is a Spirit. Although God thinks, feels, speaks, and acts, He is not subject to the limitations of those who possess a body. He cannot be seen by natural eyes of those who possess a body. He cannot be seen by natural eyes or limited to, physical elements. This fact shows the necessity of worshiping and communing with Him in spirit. We must be born again- of the Spirit – in order that we can fellowship with our Father who is a Spirit.

God is infinite, He is neither subject to, nor limited by earthly boundaries. In relation to space, He is everywhere (1 Kings 8:27). There is no place in all of infinite space where God is not. In relation to time, he is eternal. He was, and is, and ever shall be (Psalm 90:2; Revelation 4:8-10). This truth emphasizes the necessity of faith in our worship of God. There is no other way by which we may comprehend Him. Since God is infinite and there is no measuring of His greatness, He is certainly sufficient for our needs.

Question 5: What can we learn from God's sovereignty, omnipotence, omnipresent and omniscient?

God is sovereign whether we recognize it or not. The sovereignty of God is one of the deepest thoughts in the universe. What a comfort to know that things in the world are not just left to blind chance but are following closely the pattern which God has decreed! He holds a position of absolute authority. Let us not forget however that God's sovereign will is exercised in perfect keeping with His nature. We should have no fear of his will for it is always the expression of His great love and mercy.

God is wise. God's wisdom is a combination of all His other attributes. He knows the end from the beginning, He is able to subdue all things unto Himself, and He is everywhere. He therefore rules and designs the course of events for He knows what will be the ultimate. How grateful we should be to have this all-wise God to direct and control our affairs! What a blessing to have the Ancient of Days as our Counsellor and Guide as we traverse this complex world!

God is omnipotent. His power knows no limitation. He is all – powerful. And there is nothing that He cannot do. **“I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee”** (Job 42:2). God's power is over all. In the world of nature, with the heavenly inhabitants and even with Satan, God is all-powerful. Every measure of power with which we are familiar, even the fantastic revelations of atomic or nuclear energy, is grossly inadequate to describe the power of God. Let us never limit the Almighty God. We can place all our problem and needs against His omnipotence and miracles will flow into our lives.

God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at all times. His presence fills the universe. This gives us both comfort and warning. We derive comfort in knowing that God's presence is always with us. But there is warning for those who attempt to run or hide from God. None can escape from the presence of God. There is no place Where a man may hide from the searching eye of God (Genesis 28:15; Psalm 139: 7-10).

God is omniscient. He is perfect in knowledge. He knows all things. He is all wise (Psalm 94:9; 139:16; Hebrews 4:13). God has perfect knowledge of all that transpires in human existence. He knows all that has taken place, what is taking place and will take place

is future. There is no problem that He cannot solve. It is precious to know that He who can see the end from the beginning, and who knows what will do us good, has promised to guide us step by step.

Question 6: What challenge does the holiness of God pose to every believer?

God is holy. If there is any attribute of God that stands out from the other in importance, it is His holiness. The holiness of God is the essential reason why He is our object of worship. When Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory, he heard an angel cry: “...**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts...**” (Isaiah 6:3). It was the holiness of God which drew forth the worship of his heart. The visions given to Moses, Isaiah and John place emphasis and importance on holiness, without which no man shall see God (Habakkuk 1:13; Hebrews 12:14). The fact that God is holy should greatly influence our approach to Him. Holiness is so much a necessity in the plan of God for man that God gave His only begotten Son to make holiness possible. Since God is holy, then only those who are holy can abide in His presence. There is no shortcut to fellowship with God. A holy God requires holy people to worship and serve Him. It is only sanctified souls who can best comprehend, appreciate and enjoy the nature and attributes of God. The amount of grace, love, power, and goodness you draw from God depends, to a large extent, on your understanding of His nature and your conforming with His nature.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Mark	1	Psalms	87-88
TUE	"	2-3	"	89
WED	"	4	"	90-91
THUR	"	5	"	92-94
FRI	"	6	"	95-98
SAT	"	7	"	99-102
SUN	"	8	"	103-104

350 Lesson

CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING

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

TEXTS: Genesis 5:22-24: 71:1

One of the negative end-time prophecies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is that the love of many Christians shall wax cold. Its fulfillment, as the Christendom is presently witnessing, spells grave consequences. It is obvious now that many who were once zealous and committed to the Lord are losing their first love and enthusiasm with which they served God. This is because the god of this world has enticed them with materialism into spiritual sleep and inertia, and sowed tares of discord, misfortune and sickness into their lives. Manipulated by the enemy, these Christians lose their conviction as their fellowship with God and His people become irregular. They have consequently become unstable and unpredictable in character, and unfaithful to God and His church. Outright backsliding has become rampant. With this development, Christ, who always knows what to do, charges fervent believers and the church to wake up to their responsibility of reviving despondent, weak, lukewarm and inconsistent believers. **“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent ...”** (Revelation 3:2, 3). Saved from sin or restored from backsliding, the believer needs to maintain a consistent life to qualify to enter

heaven.

THE CHARACTER OF HEAVENLY PILGRIMS

(Genesis 5:22-24: 17:1: Hebrews 11:5,6, 13-16; Philippians 33:20).

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

Enoch, son of Jared and the father of Methuselah, is mentioned in our text as one who maintained a consistent, God-pleasing lifestyle throughout his lifetime. According to scripture account, Enoch knew God at the age of 65 and he walked with God for 300 years. That he lived in the Old Testament period before the cross, strips inconsistent believers of excuses they give for rising and falling in the Christian faith. Enoch lived in this same wicked world infested with demons as we do today. Moreover, with the death and resurrection of Christ at Calvary, every earnest seeker can live a consistent Christian life. If it is not possible to live a righteous life, God would not have called Abraham to it (Genesis 71:1). However, the call to salvation precedes the call to consistent Christian living and perfection. Abraham had first responded to the call to come out of sin unto salvation and separation before this time. None is on pilgrimage to heaven until he/she is born again or genuinely saved from sin. Pilgrimage to holy lands and engagement in religious rites/duties do not set the religionist free from sin. Every sinner and backslider need to repent of their sins and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour to be free from sin.

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

Set free from sin that binds and inhibits spiritual progress, the believer begins to live a life of victory

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

Besides living in the consciousness of God’s presence, maintaining a consistent Christian life requires courage and faith. The heroes of faith grouped with Enoch and Abraham in Hebrews chapter 11, also regarded as **“strangers and pilgrims on earth”** all had their problems, difficulties, temptations, trial and challenges. Rather than give in, they exercised their faith in God and were victorious. The challenges we face as believers will not last; we will continue to overcome if we lean on the Lord.

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

<p>Question 3: What are the causes of inconsistency of believers in the faith?</p>

The heroes of faith focused their desire and attention on the city of God. **“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city”** (Hebrews 11:16). Just as they did not allow their challenges to overcome them, they were not divided in heart and aspirations like

Lot's wife. They forgot the sinful world and lifestyle that existed in it when they came out. To this end, Paul the Apostle, exhorted believers to set their affections on things above where Christ is. Demas was able to return to the world because he loved it just like some believers who have not burned the bridge that linked them with the world. They want to enjoy the best of two worlds. But Christ says no one can serve two masters and fervently love both at the same time. It is futile to try it. Therefore, those who seek to maintain a consistent life of holiness with God must be crucified to the world.

False doctrines are deadly to the spiritual health of the Christian. Beliefs in purgatory, unconditional security of saved souls, continuing to live on earth without any hope of going to heaven, etc. engender licentious, careless living. The antidote to being poisoned by false doctrines is diligence in acquiring the word of God in both personal and congregational study of the Word. **"Study to shew thyself approved, unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babbling: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some"** (2 Timothy 2:15-18).

The devil may allow a man to start the journey to heaven but he will do all he can to obstruct him from making heaven. In these last days, he uses scoffers to dissuade believers from continuing on the path of righteousness. **"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for Since the fathers fall asleep, all**

things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation... The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ... Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness..." (2 Peter 3:3-11).

The global economic recession is another factor that can divert the attention of the heaven-bound pilgrim. Many people will attempt to do a lot of things for economic survival. Many would even dare to deny the faith in an attempt to survive in these last days. But the Bible has warned: **"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"** (Luke 12:15).

Men are apt to forget God during promotion and prosperity (2 Chronicles 25:14). It is possible for a fervent believer to begin to become cold gradually until he loses all the good virtues he once had. Other causes of inconsistency in Christian living are fear of men (1 Samuel 15:24), evil association (1 Kings 11:4), stony hearts (Luke 8:13), spiritual laziness and emptiness (Zechariah 1:12), unbelief (John 6:64,66), love of the world (2 Timothy 4:10), lust of the flesh (Proverbs 7:6-27) and quest for materialism (1 Timothy 6:10).

Although Abraham was ninety-nine years old, he still needed to walk consistently before God for seventy-six more years. In view of what had happened to Abraham in the past and what lay ahead of him in the future, God needed His firm resolve to walk consistently before Him. His being brought into the realization of what God expected of him provided him

with a great impetus to consciousness, consistency and perseverance as it does to believers today.

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

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

God's demand for a perfect lifestyle and consistent holy living is not limited to any generation. God is holy: He desires as well as demands that all who worship and walk with Him live holily. **"Be ye therefore perfect, Christ demands of every Christian, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"** (Matthew 5:48). As He called Abraham to lead a perfect life so also has He called every believer to this same experience. **"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"** (1 Thessalonians 4:7). God's call to perfection or holy living is not limited to a particular day, week, month or period of time in our lives; we are to walk **"in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life"** (Luke 1:75). You can experience this holiness, sanctification or purity of heart through prayer and faith in the blood of Christ.

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

Our text gives us the antidote to backsliding. **"Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"** (Ephesians 6:10). Believers are enjoined to be strong in the Lord and to make use of divine ability. God's power is strong enough to keep all His children (1 Peter 1:5). It is the duty of every believer to ensure that he is strong at all times. A wise believer will ensure that

he does not have any careless moment. Many believers have fallen because the enemy attacked them in their careless moments. But it is the will of God that every believer is strong in the Lord. And this requires that the believer knows the devices of the enemy, take the entire spiritual armor provided by Christ and constantly engage in spiritual warfare. **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"** (Ephesians 6:12).

Principal agents - high-ranking wicked spirits and demons - have been mandated by the devil to wrestle with believers with the aim of weakening and if possible, overcoming them. No Christian can afford to trifle with the devil and his cohorts. The believer is in constant warfare with the devil and his agents. The devil is conscious of the fact that there is an on-going battle between his host and God's people.

Another thing that calls for constancy in the spiritual strength of the believer is the subtilty of the enemy. The methods of the devil are so complex that the believer needs to put on the whole armor of God at all times. The devil is at work night and day trying to entrap, enslave and ruin the careless believer. Consistency is synonymous with putting on the whole armor of God. The believer who constantly lives the victorious Christian life needs not fear the devil.

You need to remain unchanged as far as your commitment to the truth is concerned. Stand for the truth. Do not compromise. Compromise is sin. We are commanded to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Holiness is a great weapon in spiritual warfare. Holiness is a shield. It protects from backsliding. It is not possible to maintain a consistent walk with God without living a consistent life of holiness.

The Bible also commands believers to be consistent in winning souls to the Lord. Their feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Many believers have wondered why they have found it difficult to live victoriously. Such have forgotten that soulwinning is an important weapon as far as victorious Christian living is concerned. If you have discovered that you experienced more victory when you were actually consistently involved in evangelism than now when you have lost your passion for winning the lost to the Lord, it is an indication that you have lost one piece of your armors for victory. Also, you need to make use of the shield of faith. Develop your faith always. None can live the consistent Christian life without walking by faith.

Prayer is an important weapon for consistent Christian living, The Bible enjoins us to pray **"always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"**. The believer who wants to walk with God consistently needs to pray frequently. He will be able to "stand" unconquered by the enemy, Gluttony and talkativeness must not shut the believer's mouth from praying. Also, overmuch sleep leads to spiritual poverty, Men ought always to pray and not to faint. The righteous praying Christian is a powerful Christian. The believer who adds fasting to prayer of faith becomes impregnable: he will be able to abide in the will and word of God and have divine energy with which to do exploits for God. After all, the goal of consistent Christian living is to bear fruits of righteousness and soulwinning to the glory of God.

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

Believers who maintain a consistent lifestyle of purity will be peculiar treasures unto the Lord. They will experience increasing abiding presence of God. The pure in heart shall see God and shall receive divine intervention of answers and prayers. They shall see the move of God in their lives and ministry. They shall also see God in heaven.

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

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Mark	9	Psalm	105
TUE	"	10	"	106
WED	"	11	"	107
THUR	"	12	"	108-109
FRI	"	13	"	110-113
SAT	"	14	"	114-118
SUN	"	15	"	119

351 Lesson

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY GHOST

MEMORY VERSE: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37).

TEXT: Acts 2:1-40

The Holy Ghost power Jesus calls all believers to experience in our memory verse is as sure and real as heaven and earth. In the New Testament, it is a common requisite experience for every believer. Surprised at the weakness and fruitlessness of some ignorant Ephesian believers, Apostle Paul asked, "**Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost**" (Acts 19:2). The question, by extension, comes to the individual believer today. And for enlightenment, the Baptism with the Holy Ghost is a definite Christian experience, subsequent to sanctification, whereby the believer is anointed with the power of God and energized for service. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of the word of God.

Question 1: Why is the baptism with the Holy Ghost important?

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit plays a very vital role in the spiritual life and service of every believer. This third work of grace is vital and central to victorious Christian living and effective Christian service. Filled with power from on high, the feeble believer becomes dynamic, the lukewarm becomes aggressive in evangelism, while ordinary believer becomes a mighty instrument in the hands of God.

Without this experience-a good number of people have tried to live the Christian life in the energy of the flesh. Some who started in the spirit are now relapsing into formalism. Even believers who started out with enthusiasm, great expectations and “iron hot” zeal are now fagged out. They need spiritual (re) activation through the Holy Ghost baptism.

REVELATION CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Acts 2:1 - 4, 17,18,38; Romans 8:14,9; Jude 19; Ephesians 4:30-32; John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; Romans 8:2; 1:4; 1 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 10:29; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Peter 4:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18)

<p>Question 2: Who is the Holy Ghost? And what work does He do in believers?</p>

The Holy Ghost is the third person in the Trinity. He has a distinct personality as God. He thinks, teaches, talks, leads and can be grieved. As such, He, the Spirit of God leads and guides the sons of God the way they should go. This same Spirit that worked supernaturally in the life and ministry of Christ is also with us. He can also work in believers who receive him. He is called the (i) the Spirit of God (ii) the Spirit of Christ (iii) the Spirit of truth (iv) the Spirit of life (v) the Spirit of holiness (vi) the Spirit of faith (vii) the Spirit of power (viii) the Spirit of love (ix) the Spirit of grace (x) the Spirit of promise (xi) the Spirit of glory (xii) the Spirit of the Lord. These titles of the Holy Spirit reveal more His impact, work and ministry in believers’ lives and service.

As indispensable as He is, sinners and backsliders do not have, and cannot receive, the Spirit of God except through repentance. And He does not continue to abide in the believer who grieves Him. Likened to a dove in gentleness, His character conflicts with sinful

attitudes like bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice; and He does not dwell in any heart which harbours them. He is the Spirit of truth who is opposed to error. He does not energize those who perpetrate error. **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth"**. He quickens as well as dwells in the believer with the principles of life because He is the Spirit of life. He leads and inspires children of God to live a holy lifestyle. He is holy. Immorality does not originate from him. But as believers, we do have the Spirit of faith who produces faith in our hearts to be healed, received miracles and hold on to the promises of God. We receive Him as the Spirit of power when we pray to receive HIS baptismal measure of power.

He is the Spirit of love who helps us to demonstrate Christ-like love. Those who claim they are Spirit-baptised but who devise how to hurt others lie and need God's forgiveness. As the Spirit of grace, He does not only help us to know more about the grace of God but also gives us the grace we need as believers for every challenge that we face and in every situation. He is the same Spirit that Christ promised believers and by which they are sealed. The Spirit of God is also called the Spirit of glory. He reproduces the character of the Lord in us so we can be conformed to the image of the Lord. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is of great value. This is because it is through Him that we have a lively and enriching relationship with God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we live as victors as our prayerful life is also enriched by the Lord. The life of the believer who has the Spirit of God dwelling in him is positive, practical, purposeful and powerful.

POWER THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S BAPTISM (Acts 2:1-11; 1:8; Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 10:38; John 20:22; Acts 20; 4:19, 20)

Our text centers on Pentecost, one of the most important events in the history of the early Church and in the Book of Acts. It was that momentous event that precipitated all the acts which we read about in the Acts of the Apostles. The disciples were all prepared for the endurment with power from on high **"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).**

This same power that they received was what Jesus received before the commencement of His public ministry. The anointing of the Holy Ghost He received made Him to do mighty works of healing and deliverance by the power of the Spirit. He affirmed that, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord"** (Luke 4:18,19). "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). It is an idle dream for the believer in this dispensation to do similar works without experiencing baptism with the Holy Ghost. That was why the Lord told His disciples: **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you"**. The word translated "power" in the original is "dumanis". It is from this word we got the English word for powerful engine – Dynamo. The statement means that you will receive the dynamite of God that will make you an effective and powerful witness of the Lord's saving grace. When they were baptized and endued with power on the day of Pentecost, the disciples knew that it was in fulfillment of the promise of the Lord. **"And they**

were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance”.

When the early disciples were filled with Holy Ghost, the initial evidence was speaking in a previously unlearned tongue. Wherever the Holy Ghost is, He reveals Himself through supernatural utterances and manifestations. His utterances are not taught in the schools of men. He is God. To speak in tongues without any visible manifestation of His power in life and ministry is questionable as the experience is for fruitful service in God’s vineyard. **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8).

Question 3: What difference did Holy Ghost Baptism make in the life of the early disciples?

The point in that baptism with the Holy Ghost comes with accompanying supernatural manifestation of power. For instance, Peter, one of the disciples who had just received the Holy Ghost spoke with power, fresh anointing and unusual Spirit-imbued boldness. He made all the people – **“Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians”** – who were present in Jerusalem to worship God to understand that it was in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that the Spirit of God descended on the disciples. Thus, the early Church was launched with dynamic Christian living and ministry. The Baptism with the Holy Ghost made a great difference in the life of the

disciples of the Lord in that they were transformed into different men and women after the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. Before Pentecost, they were seen huddled together behind closed doors **“for fear of the Jews”**. But they could not even be kept behind prison doors after they received the Pentecostal power as they became as bold as lions and stood before their persecutors in the power of the Holy Ghost (John 20:19; Acts 5:17-20; 4:19, 20).

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SPIRIT’S BAPTISM (Acts 2:12-21; Ezekiel 37:25-27)

<p>Question 4: Mention pitfalls to be avoided when seeking to be baptized in the Holy Ghost?</p>

Peter’s defence was in response to the misconceptions of worshippers about the Holy Spirit’s baptism due to their spiritual ignorance. **“And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.”** Newly filled with the Holy Ghost, he clarified that it was in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and the faithfulness of God.

As it were, there are unscriptural extremes and fanaticism in some circles regarding the Holy Ghost baptism necessitating a balanced teaching on the subject. There is need for caution among Pentecostals on the doctrine of baptism with the Holy Ghost. We should go only as far as the Bible goes and no further. Our experiences and practice must conform with the principles and teachings of Scripture. There are Pentecostals who profess to be baptized with the Holy Ghost without its accompanying power. The “tongues” of some people are too monotonous, repetitive and shallow to be classified as the powerful evidence of the Spirit’s baptism. Some even go as far as copying the pattern of other people while others “speak in tongues” in such a way that is completely

unintelligible. Although those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit are supposed to speak in an unknown tongue yet this does not mean that every “speaking in tongues” is genuine, powerful and refreshing. Many people profess to be baptized in the Holy Ghost but are as cold as ice in their spiritual lives perhaps because they do not continue in and build up themselves in the Holy Ghost.

Many people only have testimonies of once-in-a-life-time experience when their hearts were warned by the Holy Ghost. They have not discovered the marvels of the refreshing power of the Spirit of God. There is more to the dynamics of the Holy Ghost than a once-in-life-time baptismal experience. Baptized believers should strive to dig deeper and enjoy the inexhaustible treasures of the Spirit baptism.

Question 5: Explain the difference between Holy Spirit baptism, salvation and sanctification.

It must be stated that baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the same as salvation or sanctification experience. There are those who deceive themselves by claiming that baptism with the Spirit happen automatically at the instant one receives salvation experience. It is also wrong for anyone to feel that because he has not received the baptism in the Holy Spirit that he has not been saved. The New Birth experience is different and distinct from baptism with the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that their names were written in heaven which means that they were saved. Yet He told them to tarry in Jerusalem so that they could receive the Holy Ghost.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is different from sanctification. Sanctification removes the Adamic nature. It brings about purity of heart, intention and purpose whereas the Holy Spirit baptism brings

power from on high for service. And truly we see that this mark of unity was manifested in the lives of the apostles after they were sanctified, in Acts 2:1: **“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place”**. One accord means unity of mind, judgment, intention, consideration for sacred things for the service of the Lord.

PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE SPIRIT’S BAPTISM

(Acts 2:22-40; Ezekiel 36:24-26; Acts 2:8, John 7:37; Luke 11:13; Matthew 7:8).

Question 6: What important Christian experiences must you possess before seeking Holy Ghost Baptism?

The Spirit baptism is a gift of God’s grace for His children. To receive this experience then, the sinner and backslider must repent of their sins and be saved. It is also indispensable to seek the experience of sanctification as the Holy Spirit does not descend into an ‘unholy’ life and heart. God has promised to grant these gracious experiences of salvation and sanctification/circumcision of heart to everyone who wholeheartedly seek. **“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh”** (Ezekiel 36:24-26). So, be sure that you are saved and sanctified before you ask for baptism with the Holy Spirit. When you are sanctified, you will have the unity of the Spirit with believers. There will be no envy or jealousy; there will be nothing within you

that defiles. Your heart will be pure and your life will conform to what the Bible teaches. The believer must of necessity live a practical life of obedience to His words and be passionate to win souls with a pure motive of bringing glory to God.

Finally, you must also thirst for this experience, for Jesus says: **“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”** (John 7:37). Are you thirsty? Do you want the Lord to fill you? Then call upon the Lord and you will receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Have faith in God. Jesus said: **“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” “For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”** (Luke 11:13; Matthew 7:8).

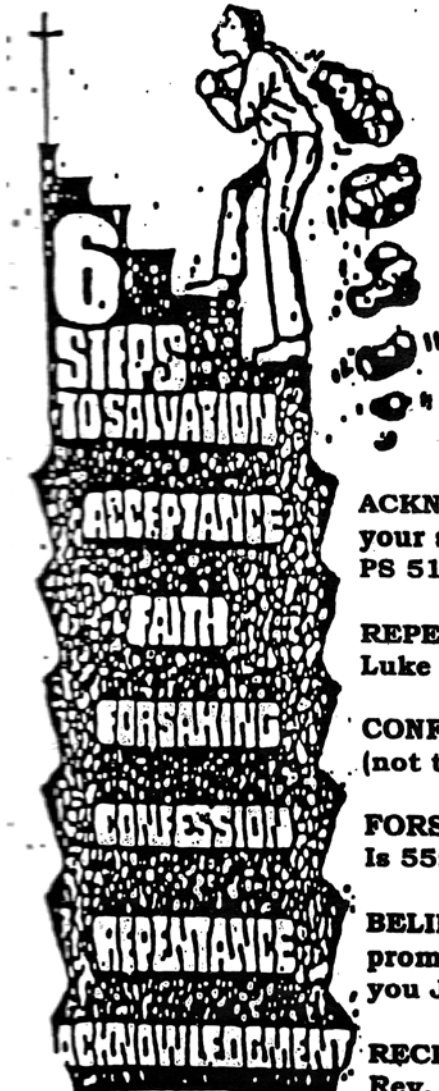
DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Mark	16	Psalm	120-126
TUE	Luke	1	“	127-134
WED	“	2	“	135-136
THUR	“	3	“	137-139
FRI	“	4	“	140-142
SAT	“	5	“	143-145
SUN	“	6	“	146-147

THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANY TIME). THEREFORE, ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.

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ACKNOWLEDGE
your sinfulness
PS 51:3-5

REPENT OF YOUR SIN
Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19

CONFESS them to God
(not to Priest) 1 John 1:9

FORSAKE all known sin
Is 55:7

BELIEVE that GOD is true to his
promise to forgive and clean
you Jn: 6:37 1 Jn 1:9

RECEIVE JESUS into your heart
Rev. 3:20 Jn 3:17



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DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

New Jersey	9:00 AM
Bronx/Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island	9:00 AM
Rockland County	10:30 AM

TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Bronx/Queens/New Jersey/Rockland/Co-op City and Staten Island	7:00 PM
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WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Brooklyn	7:00 PM
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FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

All the Church Locations	7:00 PM
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ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS

Bronx – First Friday of Every Month	7:00 PM
Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month	1:00 PM
Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
New Jersey – Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM

Pastor W.F. Kumuyi – General Superintendent
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