

tennit For CHILDREN

Bible Lesson Quarterly

Year 2 - 2nd Quarter - "FAVORITE BIBLE STORIES"

In this quarter of lessons we are going to retell some of your favourite Bible stories and learn lessons for our own lives from them. For our Bible lessons we are going to use the King James Version of the Bible, just like the boys and girls used to use to learn to read from in the pioneer days. There will be some texts to look up for each day and you should practice your memory verse until you can say it without looking. Don't forget to learn the text too.

Weekly Bible Lesson #1: "SAMUEL, THE BOY PROPHET"

MEMORY VERSE: "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men." 1 Samuel 2:26.

Sunday

Text: 1 Samuel 1:27 "For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there."

In the days before Israel had decided to be like the heathen nations and have a king, there lived a man and his wife Hannah. Now Hannah didn't have any children and this was very sad, especially in those days. So, although he loved her dearly, her husband, Elkanah decided to take a second wife. He could do that in those days, but it was never God's wish for a man to have more than one wife and it always leads to trouble!

The new wife had children and she made fun of poor Hannah. Every year at a certain time, the family went up to the tabernacle and brought offerings and made a thanksgiving feast before the Lord. And Elkanna would give portions to his second wife and her children and an extra portion to Hannah

as he loved her very much, but the second wife would mock her.

Hannah left the table in tears and went into the tabernacle area to pray to the Lord in her sadness, and she asked the Lord for a son. And she did a very special thing; she promised that if God would send her a baby son, she would give him back to the Lord to serve Him all the days of his life!

The Priest Eli saw her praying and because of the emotional expression of her silent prayer, he thought her drunk. He asked her when she would give up her drinking. She softly replied to him, "Please don't think I am a bad woman, I have a heavy heart and I am pleading before the Lord."

Sure enough, the Lord heard the prayer of this faithful woman and at the proper time she had a baby boy. "I will call him Samuel", she said, which means 'asked of the Lord.' Lovingly she nursed him and carefully she trained him, for he was to serve the Lord all the days of his life.

Thought - Even though Hannah loved her son so much, she did not forget her prom-

ise to lend him to the Lord!

Monday

Text: 1 Samuel 1:26, 27 “And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.”

As soon as little Samuel was old enough, and had enough training to know how to take care of himself and do little tasks to help others, Hannah and her husband took a special offering to the Lord and went to the tabernacle at Shiloh. There they offered their offerings and Hannah took the young child to Eli the Priest and told him the words in our verses.

Now the unselfish, God-loving act of Hannah was a rebuke to Eli, who had been careless raising his own children; his heart was touched and humbled at this great gift of the godly woman and he knelt down and worshipped God. This child was Hannah's very heart, she loved him more than life itself; but she kept her promise gladly because of her even greater love for God.

She knew also that no greater work could ever be done by her son than to serve the Lord faithfully all his life. She had carefully trained him and taught him all the wonderful Bible stories and how God had led Israel and the promised Saviour to come that the sacrifices of lambs represented.

She also taught him how to help and do his work carefully and faithfully, whether it was a big or little job, and whether it was something he enjoyed or not. He had learned to be honest, obedient and polite. He learned to be quiet and thoughtful, respecting God and authority. She raised him to know what a great honour was his to be 'lent to the Lord!'

Thought - Think about how strange it

must have been for little Samuel to be there at the tabernacle with the old priest Eli instead of being home with his mother.

Tuesday

Text: 1 Samuel 11, 12; 17,18 “And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. 17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD. But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.”

Eli had made a bad mistake in raising his sons, because he thought he loved them so much, he did not like to teach them or correct their bad habits. He really did not like to go to the bother of taking the time and effort to train them right, and when they clamored and fussed for something, he had given in and let them have their own way.

This was very wrong in the sight of God, as these children grew up to be selfish teenagers, and finally into rebellious and wicked men. Different times God sent warnings to Eli to discipline his sons, but he would just talk to them in a kind of half-hearted way and that was it. The young men knew their father wouldn't really do anything about their wicked ways, so they ignored him.

This was all bad enough, but Eli allowed these selfish, spoiled men to serve as priests at the sanctuary! This was a terrible mistake, as when the people saw these bad boys serving before the Lord, they were turned away from the precious service of God and His truth. It helped Israel to turn towards heathen worship and even the heathen commented on these wicked 'priests'.

When the special thanksgiving offerings were brought by the people, they were to kill the animal and then burn all the fat before the Lord for an offering, then the animal was

cooked, and the priest was to receive a certain portion for his own use, for he and his family to eat.

But these wicked men saw a chance to make money off the service of the Lord, and they would come and make the people give them what they wanted of the animal, raw! Before even the fat was burned before the Lord. If the people refused, they would beat them up and take it anyway. They were getting all this valuable meat and then running a meat-market selling it to make money.

The people were disgusted and God's Holy Name was dishonored. How could the people ever think about the coming Lamb of God, with wicked priests like these?

Thought - Eli should have removed his wicked sons from the priesthood, but he didn't want to be publicly embarrassed; he didn't seem to care about what embarrassment it was bringing to God and how His name was dishonored!

Wednesday

Text: 1 Samuel 3:9, 10 "Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

God tried once more to get Eli to do something about his wicked sons; he sent a man to him with a message that his sons would both die in one day, his family would be dishonoured and God would raise up a true prophet and priest. Eli again warned his sons but he did not do what he could have done; remove them from office.

Eli was old now and feeble, but even though the godly and faithful ways of the boy were a constant rebuke and a lesson to him, he loved Samuel and Samuel loved the old priest and helped him in many ways.

Samuel had gone to bed one night when

he heard a voice calling his name, "Samuel, Samuel." He got up and ran to Eli as he thought the old man needed him for something. Eli said, "No, I didn't call you, go back to bed, dear boy."

But it happened again, and again he ran to Eli, thinking the man must be ill. Again he sent him back to bed assuring him that he had not called the boy. When it happened again the third time Eli realized something wonderful was happening, God was calling Samuel to talk to him!

"Go back", he said, "and when you hear the voice again, you say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Samuel did this and immediately God began to talk with him. He told him about what was going to happen to Eli and his sons because of what the sons did and Eli had failed to do. He told the child about sad, bad things that would happen to Israel as a result of the wickedness of the house of Eli. God said it was so bad that the ears of people who would hear about it would tingle!

Thought - God can even use a small child in His work if that child loves God and faithfully obeys His Word. But he cannot use the selfish, and those who just want their own way.

Thursday

Text: 1 Samuel 3 16-18 "Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good."

The next day Eli knew that Samuel had received a message from God but Samuel had tried to sort of avoid Eli, he did not really want to tell the old man the terrible

message, and because God had not commanded Samuel to tell Eli, he didn't.

Finally Eli called him and asked to know the whole story. Samuel told him and all Eli would say was, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good." He STILL did not act to have his wicked sons removed from the priesthood! He could have, because even though he was feeble and old, he was still the ruling power in Israel, and if he had told the leaders of Israel to remove these men, his instructions would have been followed and great suffering would have been prevented. But he just left it for God to take care of.

From that day on, God often talked to Samuel, the people got to know that there was once again a prophet of God in Israel, and they were glad to know it. Samuel did not get boastful or proud because of being the one that God sent messages to, he remained humble and faithful and God blessed him.

The day came when the Philistines attacked Israel and killed thousands. The people were very disappointed as they thought that because they were 'God's chosen people' their enemies should never beat them; but God cannot bless anyone if they refuse to obey Him and follow His will! Belonging to a group, a nation, or a church means nothing; God's 'chosen people' are always those who obey Him and follow His will. If Israel had been faithful, the heathen could never have defeated them, but they were following the ways of the heathen and were doing what they pleased instead of following God's Holy Word.

So the next day, the 2 wicked sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, brought the ark of God out of the sanctuary and into the camp of the soldiers. God had not said to do this; it was a terrible wickedness! The people shouted with a great shout as they felt their god had now come to help them. They were thinking about the ark the way the heathen did about their idols. Now they thought they could force God to help them.

It was not so; Israel was beaten and 30,000 were killed, including the two wicked son's of Eli. And the heathen captured the ark!

Thought - There are people who tell you that God will take care of sin in the church and in the leaders, and we should not do anything about it; just wait for the Lord to take care of it. The Lord did finally take care of Eli's wicked sons, but THOUSANDS of Israelites were killed at the same time and evil seeds were planted in hearts that led to Israel's later destruction. How much better to obey God and put away sin right away!

Friday

Text: 1 Samuel 4:18 "And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years."

Eli, 98 years old and almost totally blind, was sitting by the side of the road desperate to hear the news of the battle. A messenger came running but ignoring the old priest ran on into the city and told the people. What a wailing and crying rose up as they heard of the terrible slaughter and that the Ark of God had been captured!

Eli heard the sound and called out to know what was happening. The man came and told him that his sons were dead and the ark captured. Overcome with grief, Eli fell off his chair, and so broke his neck and died. How different things might have been had Eli raised his sons as carefully as Hannah raised Samuel!

Samuel was now priest and prophet and soon he was also chosen by the people to be the judge of the law in Israel as well. He remained faithful and judged the people with the wisdom of the Lord for many years.

Readers, you too can be faithful like Samuel. You can get to know God and walk with Him every day. You do not have to be 'grown-up' to obey God. But you have to give

your whole heart to Him and seek every day to learn from His Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. As you learn His will, you must determine in His power to do it faithfully. Then you can walk with God and know Him, just like Samuel did.

But if you think that getting your own way and doing just what you please is fun, then you better think about Hophni and Phinehas, who lived rotten, shameful lives and died while still young men. Also they will not be saved in heaven, but will receive the reward of their wicked lives, eternal death.

And Eli, who thought he was too loving to punish and teach obedience to his little boys; do you think he was really loving them?

No way, he was loving his own selfish ease as it would have taken too much work to teach them the way of God rightly. His boys could have been Samuels, but instead their names are thought of with disgust forever.

Who really 'loved?' Hannah, who trained her son and 'lent him to the Lord'; or Eli, who indulged and pampered his boys and, by this, put them into the hands of the devil?

Thought - Children, I urge you, learn to obey your parents, be faithful in your tasks and above all, read and obey God's word; you will be so much happier being a Samuel, than you would ever be living like Hophni and Phinehas! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #2: "DAVID, THE SHEPHERD BOY"

MEMORY VERSE: "...For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7.

Sunday

Text: 1 Samuel 16:11,12 "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

Samuel had served God faithfully all his years, but as he grew older, the people, wanting to be like the heathen nations demanded a king. Saul had been chosen of God, and as long as he stayed humble before God he was blessed. But Saul became so disobedient that finally God rejected him and sent Samuel to anoint someone else who would one day be the King of Israel.

He was sent to Bethlehem, and he took a young cow with him, to offer a sacrifice so Saul would not be suspicious and have Samuel killed. It shows that the people still

respected the prophet of God very much, because when they heard he was coming the people of that town were afraid and worried. They thought something was wrong, but Samuel assured him he was there on a peaceful mission to offer a sacrifice and he invited the rulers to come to a feast and also a man named Jesse and his sons.

The sacrifice was offered, but before Samuel would sit down to the feast, he asked to see the sons of Jesse and one by one they came before him. When he saw the first one he thought, 'Wow, surely this must be the one, as he is such a handsome and noble-looking man!'

But God said to Samuel the words of our memory verse, and told him that He sees the heart and this man's heart was not right before God. Finally all six of Jesse's sons had passed before Samuel and he was puzzled because God did not accept any of them. So he asked Jesse if he had any more sons.

"Oh, there is just the youngest one and he takes care of the sheep." Jesse said.

"Send someone to fetch him", said

Samuel, "For we won't sit down to dinner until he comes."

When the messenger came running to David, out in the fields with the sheep, David was startled and surprised. He left quickly to hurry to the town to meet with Samuel the Prophet.

When he appeared, Samuel could see he was different from the rest. He saw with pleasure the handsome, manly, modest shepherd boy, the voice of the Lord spoke to the prophet, saying, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." David had proved himself brave and faithful in the humble office of a shepherd, and now God had chosen him to be captain of His people. Samuel took the oil, and anointed him from among his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. The prophet had accomplished his appointed work, and with a relieved heart he returned to his home at Ramah.

Thought - We must be careful in admiring people who may seem to be so handsome, witty, beautiful or popular- if their heart is not right with God, we can be misled.

Monday

Text: Acts 13:22 "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will."

Centuries before Jesus was born, David, in the freshness of boyhood, kept watch of his flocks as they grazed on the hills surrounding Bethlehem. The simple shepherd boy sang the songs of his own composing, and the music of his harp made a sweet accompaniment to the melody of his fresh young voice. The Lord had chosen David, and was preparing him, in his solitary life with his flocks, for the work He designed to commit to his trust in after years.

When Samuel anointed David, he did it

secretly and no one else knew about it. David must have wondered how it would ever happen that he would go from his job as shepherd out on the hills, to the throne of a king.

David had been one to think much on spiritual things and after he was anointed, he was even more guided by the Holy Spirit. David was also a prophet, and in the Psalms that he wrote there are many wonderful prophecies about Jesus and even last day events. Be sure to read and learn the 23rd Psalm as he there teaches lessons about Jesus love by comparing the work of a shepherd.

Being a shepherd was not an easy job. It was a solitary and lonely life but it tended to make David depend more on God. Any emergency that would arise, he had to handle himself, as there was no other people handy to help him. Lions, bears, wolves and other dangerous animals would try at times to attack the sheep, and a shepherd had to quickly fight with staff and slingshot to defend his flock. Strays had to be found and brought back, sick or injured animals had to be patiently cared for. So he learned to pray much and depend on God and also to be alert and quick to figure out ways of doing things.

The simple life in the fresh air and sunshine also helped him to grow strong and healthy. Watching the things of nature helped him to learn more about nature's God.

Thought - Around a thousand years after David kept the sheep on the hills of Bethlehem, other shepherds were doing the same thing and they heard the angels tell of the birth of Jesus, the Redeemer.

Tuesday

Text: 1 Samuel 16:21-23 "And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came

to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

David did not long have to wonder how God was going to prepare him to be the king of Israel. Saul, now that he knew that he had been rejected by God as king, had terrible fits of rage and depression. He was tormented by evil angels.

The Bible has some wording here that needs to be rightly understood. It says ‘evil spirit from God’, now God does not SEND evil spirits to torment, however, when we refuse to obey God and refuse to humble our hearts and admit we are wrong in choosing our own way over the will of God, then God cannot fully protect us from Satan’s evil hosts, and they are allowed to harass us.

Saul was in rebellion against God, he thought he had been treated unfairly and instead of humbly accepting what God had said, and seeking to obey Him from that time forward, his proud spirit raged and brooded until he was at times mentally ill.

It was thought that some beautiful sacred music might help the king to have more peace. So someone who knew about David the shepherd, son of Jesse and his lovely sacred music, told King Saul about him.

David found himself in the very court of the King, where he was able to learn about the ways of royalty, and the many temptations that surrounded a king. He played his heaven-inspired music for Saul and as the king’s mind was brought into thoughts of the goodness of God, he found peace and felt better.

This was also a way that God was using to plead with Saul to humble his heart and repent of his rebellion. But although while listening to the music, his heart turned a bit to the Lord, he quickly returned to his pride and rebellion again.

When not needed at the King’s palace, David still returned to his work, and the

young shepherd went from the king’s house to the fields and hills of his pasture with a sense of relief and gladness.

Thought - When we rebel against God and refuse to humble ourselves and truly repent, Satan can harass us and torment us. It is better to truly repent of our sins, obey and walk with God.

Wednesday

Text: 1 Samuel 17:17-19 “And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.”

Saul and the armies of Israel were at war with the Philistines. David’s three oldest brothers had joined Saul’s army and were camped in the valley of Elah. David was at home caring for his father’s sheep. There were no radios, TVs or telephones in those days and so news had to be carried by person. His father called David and asked him to go and take a gift to his brothers and see how they were doing.

He left the sheep with a servant and started out on his long journey to see his brothers. When he arrived at the camp, he left the presents he had brought with someone and ran to say hello to his brothers.

As he was talking to them what should he see but this Giant Goliath, standing up on a hill and shouting insults about Israel and Israel’s God. And he could see that all the soldiers of Israel were afraid and trembling as they saw the giant. This had been going on for forty days and the giant said if a man would fight him and beat him, then the Philistines would serve Israel. All the army of Saul was depressed and afraid. David

spoke up and asked why someone didn't do something about this wicked man who was insulting God. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" V.26

At this his older brother, Eliab, was angry with David and said, "Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." But David said, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

In other words, 'Why are you mad at me? Isn't there a reason for me to say this?' David would not let the matter rest. He would not stand by and listen to this heathen insulting and defying the God of Heaven.

David's brothers had a problem similar to the brothers of Joseph had; they were jealous of David. They remembered that Samuel had come to see David privately, but David was their little brother, and they were afraid of his being honoured more than they were. Eliab also knew David was right, Israel should not be fearful before this heathen giant, but it made him angry to be told so.

Thought - We must always guard against having jealousy toward anyone who we think is being honoured more than we are. Jealousy is a terrible thing that will destroy all who keep it in their hearts.

Thursday

Text: 1 Samuel 17:3,4 "And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span." (over 9 feet tall)

It wasn't very long before King Saul heard about what David was saying and had the young man brought before him to talk with

him. Now Saul knew that what David was saying was true, and there was a time when he would have had that kind of faith.

Saul listened with astonishment to the words of the shepherd, as he said, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul tried to talk David out of the idea, but the young man was not to be moved. He replied in a simple, unassuming way, and told that while guarding his father's flocks he had fought and killed a bear and a lion, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Saul now commanded that his own armour be put on David for the battle. But when David put it on and started to walk towards the place where the Giant was challenging, he soon turned back. People watching thought he had 'chickened out', but not so. He just told the king that he could not fight with the king's armour on, as he wasn't used to it.

Soon the watching soldiers saw the amazing sight of a young man, dressed as a simple shepherd, armed with only a staff, a leather bag, and a sling, heading out to do battle with the giant who was wearing fantastic armour and armed with sword, shield and spear. No one doubted that he would surely be killed.

And the one who was most sure of this was Goliath of Gath, who saw this person coming towards him and roared, 'Am I a dog that you send out someone against me with a stick and stones?' He was insulted to bits at the thought of what was coming so boldly to fight HIM, the mighty champion of the Philistines!

Thought - It seems a common mistake for people, when they start looking to the power of man, to forget all about the POWER of God.

Friday

Text: 1 Samuel 17:45,46 “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”

All eyes were fixed on the youth and he strode down the hillside towards that giant, who was working himself into a frenzy yelling curses and insults at Israel, Israel's God and especially that 'boy' heading out to fight him. No one believed he could win, and yet in the hearts of some there was the thought, 'Maybe? Just maybe, there really was a God of Israel.'

They saw him stop; awe, yes, he was going to turn back! But all he did was look around the stream at the bottom of the hill where he selected five smooth stones. David had spent many hours in target practice while on the hills of Bethlehem caring for the sheep, and he knew just what kinds of stones were best to use in a sling. All shepherds needed these skills to defend their flocks.

Slipping four stones into his bag, he put one in the sling and shouting out the words

of our text he raced up the hill towards the foul-mouthed giant. Goliath can't believe his eyes! For forty days he had been enjoying watching the hosts of Israel hide and slink around like whipped pups and now here is this youth heading boldly up the hill towards him without any hesitation at all.

In his pride, rage and self-confidence he made his fatal mistake; he pushed back his huge, brass helmet, perhaps to take a better look, and exposed his forehead as he started towards David, intending to make mince-meat out of him.

The sling whirled and Zing! went the stone through the air. It struck the giant between the eyes and all watching gasped as they saw the huge warrior put his hands out before him as if he were blind. Then he staggered and fell head-long.

Quick as a flash, David, who did not even have a sword, sprang to the giant, grabbed Goliath's own sword from the sheath, and cut off his head. The hills echoed with the shout of triumph from Israel's army. The Philistines were confused and terror stricken and they ran in fear for their lives.

The armies of Israel chased after them and a great victory was had that day.

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”
Proverbs 18:10

Thought – It was pride that caused Saul to be rejected as King of Israel and it was pride that caused the downfall of the boastful giant of Gath, Goliath. Do you have pride in your heart? If you ever do, plead right away for Jesus to take it out! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #3: "JOASH, THE BOY KING"

MEMORY VERSE: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Ecclesiastes 12:1

Sunday

Text: 2 Chronicles 24:1,2 "Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem... And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest."

Most of us have Grandparents who dearly love their grandchildren, but the poor little baby sons of King Ahaziah didn't. Athaliah, the mother of the king, was an idol worshipper who hated the true God of Israel. As soon as the word reached Athaliah that her son, the king, was dead, she sent soldiers to kill all her little grandsons as they innocently played in the royal nursery.

Quickly, Jehosheba, the babies' Auntie, managed to grab one little baby boy and hide him safely in a secret place until the wicked people had done the terrible deed of killing the little princes and had gone away. As soon as she could, she had baby Joash and his nurse taken to Jehoiada, the Priest at the temple where he could be safely hidden until he could grow up. He taught little Joash to serve the Lord.

All this while the wicked grandmother, Athaliah, was ruling as Queen. When the little Prince was just seven years old. The Priest with the leaders of Israel made careful plans. The priests and Levites acted as a bodyguard to little Joash because they were terribly afraid that the wicked queen would find out and kill the last little Prince. They stationed the army in certain places around Jerusalem and secretly announced the coronation of the little King.

Then on the chosen day they took little Joash and anointed him and put the royal crown on his little head, and they all shouted, "God save the King!"

Now wicked Athaliah heard the shouts and the trumpets and she ran out of the palace in a fury, shrieking "Treason! Treason!" But the guards caught hold of her and took her out of the city and executed her. So her cruel scheming and wickedness came to a bad end.

Joash, of course, was too young to know how to rule as king all by himself, so the priest Jehoiada helped him for the first years. Right away the Priest working with the little King, started to get rid of all the idols and wicked worship of Baal in the country and encouraged the people to come back to serve the God of heaven.

Thought - Greed and selfishness make people very cruel!

Monday

Text: 2 Chronicles 24:4,7 "And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD. 7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim."

One of the valuable things that Joash did in his early reign was to arrange to repair and restore the temple of God, which had been damaged, robbed and neglected during the reign of Athaliah and those who went before her.

He told the Levites to get busy and set things in order in the temple but they did nothing about it. If they collected money, they just kept it for their selves. So Joash sent for Jehoiada the Priest and asked him why he did not tell the Levites to fix up the temple. He responded that they needed much money to do this.

Joash had a good idea; he took a locked chest and made a hole in the top where people could put in their offerings for the repairing of the temple. This box was set in the entrance to the worship area and everyone was told what it was there for. Soon it was full and the money was taken out and work started on repairing and cleaning the temple and the box was put back to gather more money.

They even got enough that they could replace the tools and dishes and vessels of the temple, which had been stolen to use in the worship of Baal. All the days that the High Priest Jehoiada lived the services of the temple were carried on as God have commanded and Joash was faithful in worshipping God and obeying him. Things were much better for the people as they turned back to worshipping the true God.

Thought - We should always honor God and worship Him in the way He has told us to worship Him.

Tuesday

Text: 2 Chronicles 24:15-18 **“But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house. Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.”**

These verses introduce one of the saddest stories in the whole Bible! Joash, who had faithfully served the Lord as long as Jehoiada lived to influence him, had a terrible change when the old priest died.

This is how it happened: Young princes

from Judah came to Joash and flattered him. They told him, “Now that Jehoiada is dead, you can finally run the country the way YOU want to run it! You don’t have to be a slave to that old priest any more.”

Joash listened, and I guess there must have been a spirit of rebellion in his heart. Maybe he had never really got to know God for himself and just had been following what Jehoiada told him, but whatever it was, Joash turned right around and began to worship Baal and seek to do away with the worship of God!

God sent a message of warning to Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada and he began to warn the people and the king not to do this terrible thing and turn away from the true God to worship idols.

Joash was so angry that this man, who had likely been raised almost like a brother to him, should speak against what he was doing that he ordered him to be killed! Joash’s own heart told him he was wrong and wicked in what he was doing and he had the same kind of hatred in his heart that Cain had for Abel, who tried to get him to obey God.

Poor Zechariah was stoned to death right in the temple. History tells us that his blood stained the floor and no matter what they did to try and remove it, it would not wash away!

Thought - The rest of Joash’s reign was a sad tale of wickedness. Finally he was wounded in a war and as he was sick in bed, his servants murdered him. What a sad end to a life that began so well!

Wednesday

Text: 1 Kings 13:2 **“And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places**

that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee."

There is another story about a boy king and it has a much happier ending. This king was foretold in prophecy, long before he was born. Josiah came to be king when he was just 8 years old after his father, Amon, was killed by his own servants. The people executed the servants who had done this, and made the boy, Josiah, king.

Josiah decided to study and learn the truth about what was really important in life and what made some kings to be blessed and others, like his father, to be cursed and hated. He read the history and saw that when the people worshipped Baal and idols instead of the true God of heaven, things were bad.

He made up his mind that he would serve the Lord all the days of his life. The first thing he decided to do was to see to it that the temple was again repaired and the services carried on. He told the Priest to take the temple money and give it to workmen to clean and repair the House of the Lord. And so it was done.

Now as they were all busy there cleaning and tidying the temple and going through the rooms, they found an old-old scroll-book. The Priest gave the book to the king's scribe and he realized it was a copy of the book of the Law! This was the book of Moses, like the first 5 books in our Bible.

The people had been following the heathen ways for so long, they didn't even know about what the Bible said anymore, and copies of it had almost disappeared. The Scribe read the book and then he hurried to King Josiah, all excited.

Thought - We can see in the life of Josiah that he served the Lord because he had given his heart to God, not just because someone else told him to.

Thursday

Text: 2 Kings 22:10, 11 "And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah

the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes."

As the scribe read the words of the book of the law to Josiah, he began to see just how far his people had gone away from obeying God. No wonder God's blessings could not come to them, when they were so disobedient! He was so sad that he tore his clothes and cried.

Then he sent for the Priest and said, 13 "Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

So they went to the prophetess, Huldah and she prayed to God and sent the message to the king that God gave to her. God told Josiah that the nation would be overthrown because of all the wickedness they had done. It was too late to save it. But because he was seeking to serve the Lord, and had humbled his heart before the Lord, the trouble would not happen in his life.

Josiah was encouraged and determined to do all he could to help the people to know and serve the God of heaven. He told all the people to come to an important gathering. There he stood up and read the book of the law to the people and he made a pledge in front of them all to obey God. The people joined with him in this pledge also.

Then Josiah really began to 'clean house'. He led the people as they tore down idols and got rid of the fancy gardens where the idols were worshipped.

Thought - It is important to notice that the king did not try to force the people to obey God but instead set them an example and encouraged them to follow. The use of force is the way Satan's followers work.

Friday

Text: 2 Kings 23:4 "And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel."

Josiah got the priests to get all the things of Baal worship out of the house of God. And then he kept going through the land; some wicked priests of Baal were killed; places where vile deeds connected with heathen worship were committed, were destroyed, the place where people offered their children to Molech was gotten rid of and people connected with heathen worship were either executed or sent out of the land.

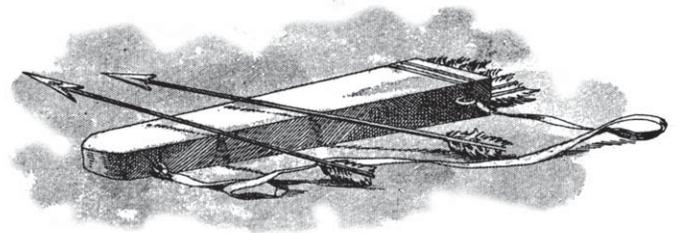
As he was going through the land, he came to the altar at Bethel, where the man of God had pronounced the warning, "O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." And BEFORE he even read about that, he destroyed the grove and burned the bones of the priests upon that altar.

Then he saw the grave of the man of God and asked what it was. They told him about the man of God and what he had said. Josiah was amazed to find out that he had just fulfilled the prophecy of God.

Josiah kept on getting rid of idol worship in the land, and he got rid of the witches, and psychics and wizards and fortune-tellers also. Then they celebrated the Passover for the first time in many years. What a wonderful Passover it was!

Some may wonder why, after Josiah did all these things, that God still said that Judah was going to be destroyed and it was too late to stop it? Well if you look at this text below, you will see why. Josiah's sons did not continue the work of their father, they turned away from God and would not obey Him or listen to the prophets God sent to warn them. One of Josiah's sons, Zedekiah, was the last king of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem.

Thought - verse 25 "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him". = ^ .. ^ =



Weekly Bible Lesson #4: "BALAAM'S DONKEY"

MEMORY VERSE: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?" Numbers 23:8

Sunday

Text: Numbers 22:3,4 "And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time."

Israel was camped on the borders of the promise land. Already they had begun to conquer some of the heathen nations and some of the mighty kings had been destroyed. But our dear Father in heaven is very kind. He told Israel that they were not to bother certain people because God wanted them to have some more time, hoping that they would learn of Him and stop their cruel, heathen practices.

Moab was one of these nations God had told them to leave alone. The Moabites were descendants of Lot and lived in the land of Ar. Now the Israelites were not bothering Moab at all, but Balak, their king, heard they were nearby, and how they had destroyed wicked nations already, and he was afraid. He also talked to the Midianites who were close by, he said that they would eat Moab and Midian up like a cow eats grass.

What could he do? Then he got an idea—he would send for Balaam, who was a magician and thought to be a prophet of God. He would pay him lots of money and get him to put a curse on Israel and then, he thought, Moab and Midian would be able to destroy Israel! He believed in magic and not the true God of heaven. So they sent messengers to the land of Mesopotamia where Balaam lived to ask him to come and curse Israel.

Thought - Balak was worrying about something that wouldn't even have happened.

Monday

Text: Numbers 22:5,6 "He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

Off the messengers went on their long journey to the home of Balaam. They carried rich gifts for the prophet and even richer promises if he would come and do what Balak wanted.

Now Balaam had once been a true prophet of God, but he had turned to magic and sorcery. He was greedy and covetous, but he still claimed to be a prophet of God. When the messengers came to flatter him and ask him to curse Israel, he knew this was not right and he should just refuse. But he wanted the money and the honour, so he tried to do what many people today are trying to do — serve God and yet serve the world as well for money and honour. Instead of sending the messengers away, he asked them to stay for the night and he would 'pray about it'.

That night the angel of God told him "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not

curse the people: for they are blessed.”

Now when he got up the next morning he sent them away “Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.”

The messengers returned to Balak they did not tell the king that God had told Balaam not to come. He thought Balaam just wanted more money, so what did he do but send them back again with even greater promises of money and fame. He sent the message for Balaam to let nothing stop him from coming to do this job.

Balaam wanted so much to go with the men, he knew it was wrong, but he told them again he would ‘pray about it’. He had no business to pray about it when God had already told Him ‘No!’

The angel came again and told him “If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.” God told him this because Balaam was determined to have his own way.

But when he got up in the morning the messengers had already left. Now this was another signal to him. They had NOT called him but had just left. God had even removed the temptation. Would Balaam stop now and obey God?

Thought - You may have noticed that people today often say they will ‘pray about it’, when they really know what God wants them to do already—It is wrong to ‘pray’ and ask God about what we already know God wants us to do. There is a time to pray and a time to obey!

Tuesday

Text: Numbers 22:21,22 “And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, (donkey) and went with the princes of Moab. And God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against

him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.”

Balaam was determined to go with the messengers no matter what God said, so he saddled his donkey and headed down the road after them. He was urging his poor little donkey to go as fast as she could, to catch up with the messengers from Balak.

But “the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him.”

And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and she turned out of the way, and went into the field. Balaam beat the donkey, and made her get back on the road.

The second time the donkey saw the angel she swerved against a wall and Balaam’s foot was crushed against the wall. He was really angry now and beat his poor donkey again and kept going. He was so blind with rage and greed that the donkey was a better prophet than he was—she could see the angel!

Then the poor beast saw the angel again in a narrow place—right in front of her and she could not turn, so she fell right down trembling with terror. Balaam was furious. He wanted to kill his poor little donkey and began to beat her cruelly.

Then God allowed the donkey to speak with a human voice! She said, “What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?”

Now this is really amazing, Balaam was so blind with anger at not getting his own way that he answered the donkey back and never realized that something was very strange here. “I wish I had a sword,” he shrieked, “And I would kill you!”

Here was a ‘great prophet’, and a magician, going off to say words which were supposed to hurt or destroy a whole nation of people, and yet he didn’t even have the power to kill his own donkey! So much for the claims of magic!

The donkey replied, “Am not I your donkey, upon which thou hast ridden ever since

I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?" Balaam stopped for a minute, "Nay", he answered and then he saw it! An angel with a drawn sword right in front of him! Now HE fell to the ground on his face!

"Why are you beating your poor donkey?" the angel demanded, "I came out to stop you because your way is displeasing to me. I would have killed you, if your donkey had not turned aside, and saved her alive. She saved your life!"

Now Balaam tried to make an excuse, and offered to go right back home. But the angel said he could go with the men, but he would only be able to speak the words God wanted spoken.

Thought - How stupid, anger and greed make a person to be; Balaam didn't even notice he was arguing with his donkey!

Wednesday

Text: Proverbs 12:10 "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

Balaam showed the kind of spirit that controlled him, by his treatment of his donkey. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Proverbs 12:10. Few realize as they should the sinfulness of abusing animals or leaving them to suffer from neglect. Our Creator made the animals also, and He cares about them, "His tender mercies are over all His works." Psalm 145:9. The animals were created to serve man, but we have no right to cause them pain by harsh treatment, neglect or cruelty.

It is because of man's sin that suffering was brought into the world. Suffering and death came, not only upon the human race, but upon the animals. Because of this, we should seek to lighten, instead of increasing, the weight of suffering which our sin has brought upon God's creatures. He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant. A char-

acter that likes to cause pain, whether to our fellow men or to the animals, is satanic.

Many think nobody knows about their cruelty and it will never be known, because the poor dumb animals cannot reveal it. But could the eyes of these men be opened, as were those of Balaam, they would see an angel of God standing as a witness, to testify against them in the courts above. A record goes up to heaven, and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures.

The tendency, even among Christians it seems, is to say, "Oh, It's only an animal, it's only a bird, it doesn't really matter." But God sees the little sparrow fall, and He also sees the one who threw the stone that felled it! All such deeds are written down by the angels and the holy watchers in the books of record. When tempted to be cruel, remember, "God seeth me!"

Thought - Always do what you can to prevent people from being cruel to God's creatures, do not agree with those who excuse cruelty, and never go along with those who love to cause pain and torment other creatures.

Thursday

Text: Numbers 23:10-12 "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?"

When Balaam arrived at Balak's kingdom the king had come out to meet him. But Balaam sadly said, "I can't say what I want to, I can only say what God tells me to say." He knew the restraining hand of God was on him and he wasn't very happy about it.

Balak took him up to the high place in the mountains where Baal was worshipped and there he could see all the tents of Israel in the valley below; all neat and orderly, with the pillar of cloud there in the middle over the sanctuary. It was beautiful.

Balaam knew something about the sacrifices of the sanctuary and he thought if he had the king offer a real big sacrifice, the God of Heaven might decide to be on Moab's side. In this idea, he had become like the idol worshippers, who thought their sacrifices were gifts from them to their gods. His wicked and selfish choices had made him stupid.

He had them set up 7 altars and offer sacrifices on each, and then he prayed and stood up to say what God told him to say and he pronounced a blessing instead of a curse. Three times it happened and each time all Balaam could do was bless Israel.

Balak was furious at Balaam and told him to get out of his land. Balaam left disappointed but not before God had once again spoken through him to bless Israel and pronounce a wonderful prophecy. Then he went home like a whipped dog.

Thought – If Balaam would have listen to what God spoke through his own mouth at that time and repented and turned from idolaters and worshipped God, all would have been well with him, but he was too greedy and proud to admit he was wrong.

Friday

Text: Numbers 23:20, 21 “Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.”

If only Balaam would have repented and obeyed God, but even after this, when he got home, he was still determined somehow to

get honour and riches by harming Israel. The Spirit of God left him and Satan controlled his mind.

He knew if he could get Israel into sin then they would lose God's blessing. So he thought up a wicked scheme. He went back to Moab and told them to hold a big feast to their idol gods and send beautiful Midianite women into the camp of Israel to invite them to come to the party. Balaam even joined in to invite them, and because he was known as a 'prophet of God' many decided it was OK to follow his idea.

The camp of Israel was quiet at this time as Moses and the leaders were making the plans for the battle to take the rest of the land of Canaan. The people were at this time supposed to be praying and searching their hearts to get rid of all sin, so God could really bless them, but instead, some became 'bored'. Also, they thought they needed to be friends with the other nations or how could they 'win them to the worship of God?'

When the pretty girls arrived and started to invite them to come and see the feasts and join in the holiday cheer, some began to go along with it. The music was exciting and they got caught up in the beat. The dances hypnotized their minds and before long many in Israel had actually joined the Midianites and Moabites in their idol worship and did many things that were evil in the sight of the Lord. At these feasts the people were seduced by these wicked but beautiful women and they committed adultery with them as well as joined in the idol worship, and drunken festivities

God had no choice but to punish Israel and a terrible plague broke out and thousands of people died of sickness. God also commanded the magistrates of Israel to put to death the leaders in this terrible sin that Israel had committed.

But the Midianites were also punished by the order of God. Israel made war against them and in the war, Balaam the wicked 'prophet', who was not as wise before God as his own donkey, was killed.

Thought - Balaam was like Judas; they both wanted to use their connection with God

as a step to getting rich and famous; and they both lost their souls! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #5: "JOSEPH THE DREAMER"

MEMORY VERSE: "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him; and delivered him out of all his afflictions." Acts 7:9,10

Sunday

Text: Genesis 37:3,4 "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

The story of Joseph is so important in the Bible that several chapters talk about it. It is a wonderful story and as a child I never tired of reading it.

Jacob, whom God had given the name 'Israel', ended up with four wives. He had only wanted to marry one of them, but he was tricked or manipulated into the others. Rachel was the one he loved, and had worked 14 years for, but she did not have any children until later on, when she had Joseph and then Benjamin. She died when Benjamin was born and so these two boys from his beloved wife were very precious to Jacob.

It is never God's will for a man to have more than 1 wife and it always leads to trouble and problems in the family. Jacob was unwise because he let his special love for Joseph be seen in the family circle and this made his other children jealous.

When he gave Joseph a special coat of many colors one day, the brothers were really jealous. They were afraid that Jacob was going to pass the birthright to Joseph instead of to Reuben, the oldest son from one of the other wives.

When Joseph one day told his father about some wickedness the brothers had done, this made them hate him even more.

They wouldn't even talk nice to him after that.

Then he had a dream that he and his brothers were tying sheaves of grain in the field and all their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. He told his brothers about it, and they hated him some more.

He had a second dream in which the sun, moon and 11 stars bowed down before him and he told his father and brothers. "Shall we indeed bow down to you?" they said and even his father seemed displeased about it. But he kept it in his mind and wondered what it would mean, while the brothers were meaner than ever to poor Joseph.

Thought - Never let jealousy come into your heart over anything; it is like a worm to eat out your spiritual life. Then the spirit that controlled Cain comes in!

Monday

Text: Genesis 37:13,14 "And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem."

Jacob had large flocks and often the brothers had to go long distances to find enough grass to feed the animals. The 10 brothers had been away for a long while this time and Jacob wanted to know how they were. He got the idea to send Joseph to get the news and come back and tell him of how

his sons were.

With a joyful heart, Joseph parted from his father, neither the aged man nor the youth dreamed of what would happen before they should meet again. When, after his long and solitary journey, Joseph arrived at Shechem, his brothers and their flocks were not to be found. Upon inquiring for them, he was directed to Dothan. He had already traveled more than fifty miles, and now an additional distance of fifteen lay before him, but he hastened on, forgetting his weariness in the thought of relieving the anxiety of his father, and meeting the brothers, whom, despite their unkindness, he still loved.

The brothers saw him coming, and their hearts were so hard that they never thought how tired their little brother would be, and how they ought to welcome him. No, they got a cruel idea in their hearts that Satan put there; "Let's kill him!" they snarled, "We'll be rid of him and nobody will ever know."

Poor Joseph when he ran panting the last of the way to where he saw his brother's camp, his heart was joyful to see them, but they grabbed him and ripped off his special coat and would have killed him then and there, but Rueben got them to throw the poor boy into a deep pit instead. He meant to come back later and let the boy go home to his father.

No doubt Joseph had carried some goodies from home for the brothers to eat, and so they sat down to eat leaving Joseph, tired, cold and hungry in the pit. Rueben had gone away from the others, as he was afraid they would find out he intended to release Joseph. While he was away, a caravan was seen coming.

It was Ishmaelite merchants traveling to Egypt to trade and make money. Judah suggested they sell Joseph to them as a slave and get some money. So they took him out of the pit and sold their own brother for 20 pieces of silver.

Thought - Have you ever walked a mile or two? Then imagine walking for 50 miles and then 15 more!

Tuesday

Text: Genesis 37:31-33 "And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."

Poor Joseph, how he pleaded with his brothers not to sell him. It was a fate worse than death to be a slave, as they were often treated very cruelly, and their owner could do anything his wanted to with them. These men had let the worm of jealousy and hatred eat out their hearts until they were as cruel as Satan himself.

When Rueben sneaked to the pit to let Joseph out, he found him gone and ran to the others to find out what they had done. He couldn't get Joseph back, so he agreed to join in with the lie to Jacob and they killed a kid and soaked the coat of many colours with the blood and took it home to Jacob.

Jacob was heart-broken and so upset that nothing would comfort him. "I will go down to the grave mourning for my son", he cried.

As the caravan went on its way, with Joseph now part of the 'goods' they had to sell, it passed by the hills where he knew his father had his camp. His heart was in great grief and terror. The picture of his brothers' angry looks rose before his eyes, and their harsh words echoed in his ears. The future looked dark and fearful.

Then he remembered the God of his fathers Whom he had been raised to trust in. Now all these precious lessons came vividly before him. Joseph believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. He then and there gave himself fully to the Lord, and he prayed that the Keeper of Israel would be with him in the land of his exile.

Joseph did some fast growing up on the back of the camel that day; he went from a somewhat spoiled son of a rich man, to a confident believer in the true God of heaven in a few hours. God would be with him, he knew it, and God would bring good out of what had happened!

Thought - No doubt while Jacob was weeping over his son's coat, Joseph was passing within a few miles of his tents.

Wednesday

Text: Genesis 39:1-3 "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

Deciding to trust in God made a great difference to Joseph, instead of being afraid and cringing, he had confidence and dignity even though he was a slave. He thought about how he could best honour God in all that he did. Every task he was given to do he did it well and was honest and careful in all his duties.

Bit by bit Potiphar, his master, learned he could depend on Joseph and also that Joseph's God blessed whatever Joseph was involved with. Soon he trusted the running of his whole house to Joseph, and everything seemed to prosper.

One thing that Joseph was careful about was to stay away from Idol worship and the sinful indulgences that surrounded him there in the rich man's house. He did not try to hide his religion or to go along with the parties and practices of the Egyptians. He was faithful to his God in all things.

If he would have been ashamed of his different religion and tried to be as much like

the pagans as he could, so he wouldn't get in trouble, he would have fallen into temptation and God would not have been able to bless him!

Thought - Always remember, that God does not bless us just because of who or what we are, but He blesses those who live a life of obedience and faithfulness to Him.

Thursday

Text: Genesis 39:7-9 "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, ... how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Potiphar's wife saw Joseph working around the house day by day, and she was attracted to him. She decided she wanted to have relations with him, only meant for husband and wife to have. She kept trying day by day to lure him to sin, but he refused.

Joseph knew that if he kept refusing her, she would get him in trouble sooner or later, but he did not care about that, he would be true to God and let God take care of the results.

Potiphar's wife schemed and arranged to catch Joseph alone one day when Potiphar was away. She took hold of his garment and insisted that he come to bed with her. Joseph knew trouble was coming, but he slipped out of his coat and ran away from her saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

So for the second time poor Joseph had his coat tore off of him. The woman screamed and the servants rushed in and she told a lie that Joseph had tried to harm her. Then she kept the coat and waited until her husband came home.

She told him the whole lie, and showed the coat to him. Now I don't think Potiphar really believed her story or surely Joseph would have been killed; but for peace in his house, he had Joseph cast into prison.

Thought - We must always obey God no matter what happens as a result.

Friday

Text: Genesis 39:20, 21 “**And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.**”

Joseph knew that God sees everything we do. Things may be kept secret from people but God sees us all the time. This was the secret of his being true to God and refusing to do wrong. Remember when Satan tries to tell you, “Nobody will ever know”, that God sees you everywhere and always. God also sees when anyone treats us cruel or unfairly and if we are patient and trust matters to Him, He will bring good out of it for us.

Now, once again, Joseph found himself treated unfairly. First his brothers had hated him for no reason and sold him, and now this wicked woman had set a trap for him and tricked him, and here he was in the prison. He could very easily have got feeling sorry for himself; don’t you think so?

But instead he just left things in God’s hands and set himself to do his best to be helpful here in the prison. He was cheerful and didn’t complain and tried to give courage and hope to others. And he was still fully faithful to the God of Heaven.

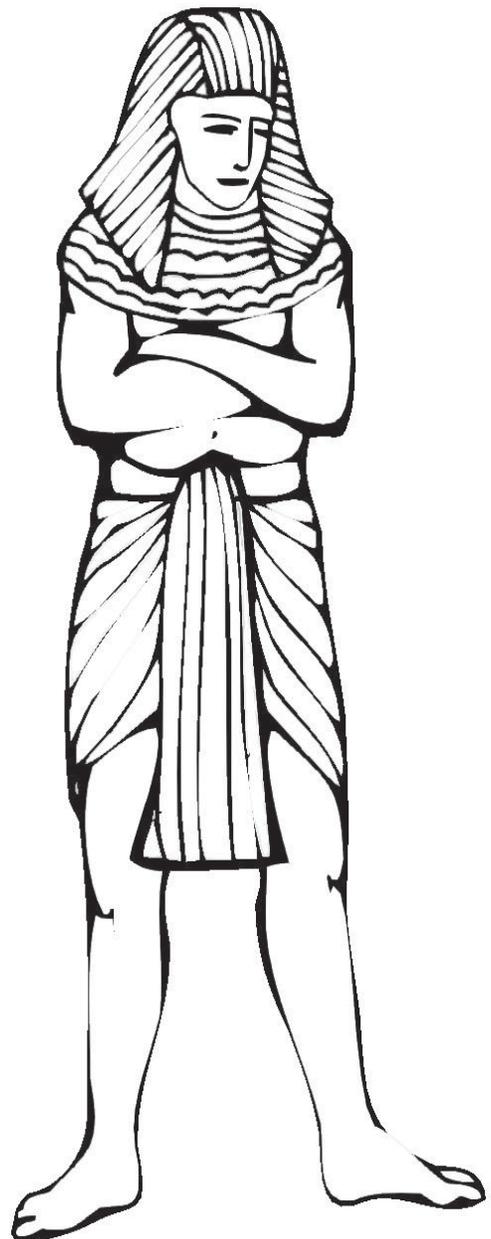
At first he was treated cruelly and put in fetters and chains in the dungeon. But Joseph bore it all with patience and trusted in God.

Soon the jailor found he could trust Joseph and after a while he let him be in charge of the prison. Still as Joseph continued faithful to God’s ways, God blessed his work and it prospered. It was because of his right atti-

tude that the way was eventually opened for him to come out of the prison to the throne.

When you think you are being treated unfairly, instead of fussing and yelling, “Not Fair”, and sulking, try and be as helpful and kind as you can, and God will surely bless you also.

Thought - It is better to be blamed or even put in prison for something bad you did not do, than for something bad you did!
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Weekly Bible Lesson #6: "JOSEPH 2 - MORE DREAMS"

MEMORY VERSE: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." Proverbs 22:29

Sunday

Text: Genesis 40:1, 2 "And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers."

In our last lesson we left Joseph in the Egyptian prison, not because of anything he did wrong, but rather because he refused to do wrong. We saw how he still did not give way to feeling sorry for himself, but instead busied himself to be as helpful in the prison as he could. Soon, the jailer began to trust Joseph with duties in the prison and after a while he was in charge of a lot of the tasks there and the jailer knew that whatever Joseph did was blessed and prospered.

Then came the day when Pharaoh got mad at two of his personal servants, his chief butler and his chief baker, and he had them thrown into prison. They were brought into the very prison where Joseph was kept. Because he had certain duties in the prison, he was put in charge to serve these men.

When he saw them this one morning, he found them both looking very gloomy and worried. So as he was waiting on them, Joseph asked, "Why are you sad this morning?"

"We have dreamed dreams and there is no one to tell us what these dreams mean", they replied sadly.

And Joseph said unto them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you."

You can see that Joseph did not boast or claim to be able to tell the dreams himself, but at the same time, he had confidence in God, that God would provide whatever information he needed.

Thought - It is important to realize in the story of Joseph that it was his own choices that allowed God to be able to bless him and work out things for his good.

Monday

Text: Genesis 40:9-11 "And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

The Chief Butler told his dream to Joseph. He saw 3 branches and grapes grew on them. He picked the grapes and made juice out of them for Pharaoh, put it in Pharaoh's cup, and he gave the cup of juice to Pharaoh to drink.

Joseph told the man, "This is what your dream means, the three branches are three days. In three days Pharaoh will send for you out of the prison and you will give him his cup as before." In other words, in three days, the butler would get his job back.

The Butler was much cheered by this information, and Joseph asked him to do a favor. "Please remember me when you get your job back. Tell Pharaoh about me, as I am here for no fault of my own. Maybe he will bring me out of this prison."

Then the Chief Baker, who had heard the Butler's dream and its good ending, decided to tell his dream to Joseph also:

"I had three white baskets on my head, and in the top basket were lots of cakes and cookies and rolls for the king. But the birds

came and ate them all up, out of the basket.”

Joseph told him that the three baskets also meant three days, but in three days Pharaoh would send for him and he would be executed and hung on a tree and the birds would eat him up. It was a sad meaning to have to tell the man, but Joseph gave him the truth.

Sure enough, in three days it was Pharaoh’s birthday. He sent for the two servants out of the prison. He gave the Butler back his job, but the baker was executed.

In the prison, the Butler had promised to tell Pharaoh about Joseph, but as soon as he got his job back, he was so excited he forgot all about Joseph.

Thought - I can just imagine how Joseph would have waited for a while, thinking that help would come to him through that Butler’s promise. But as nothing happened, he realized that he was just forgotten. He felt sad but still kept his faith in God.

Tuesday

Text: Genesis 41:1- 4 “And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.”

Two more years went by and Joseph must have had times when he thought he would be there in the gloomy prison forever. The thought, that the Butler had forgotten his kindness, added to the sting of unfairness to Joseph. Then one night—

Pharaoh had strange dreams. When he woke up he was all upset and wanted someone to tell him the meaning of his dreams.

He called for the magicians of Egypt, and the wise men. The king thought that they would soon help him to understand these dreams, for they claimed to be able to solve these things. The king told his dreams to them, but was greatly disappointed to find that with all their magic and boasted wisdom, they could not explain them.

The king was very upset and finally the Butler remembered something he had forgotten for two whole years; Joseph! The man in the prison who had interpreted his dreams correctly!

“Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day.” He then told the king the dreams which he and the chief baker had, which troubled them as the dreams which now troubled the king, and said, “And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.”

Thought - When God gives a revelation, only God’s servants can properly understand it. Magicians and astrologers work by Satan, and so they can’t understand the truth from God.

Wednesday

Text: Genesis 41:14 “Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.”

Quickly the word went out from the throne-room of the king to the gloomy prison to bring Joseph unto the Pharaoh! Imagine Joseph waking up thinking it was going to be just another day in the prison for him, and the messengers rush in all out of breath— “Come with us”, they say and hurry him away to where he is washed and shaved

and dressed properly to appear before the King.

Soon Joseph finds himself in the bright throne-room of Pharaoh. Was he embarrassed or shy? No, because he knew the God of heaven was with him.

Pharaoh looked at him and said, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

Now Joseph could have said, "Oh yes, I can do this kind of thing, I do it all the time." But instead he was quick to answer "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." He made it clear that only the true God of heaven could interpret dreams.

Thought - Joseph needed to be clean and properly dressed to appear before the earthly king, how much more should we be clean and properly dressed when we go to worship the great King of the universe!

Thursday

Text: Genesis 41:22-24 "And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me."

Pharaoh told Joseph the two strange dreams he had dreamed:

First he saw 7 fat cows, sleek and healthy. Then he saw 7 thin, sick cows and the thin cows ate up the fat cows, but they were still thin.

Then he saw 7 ears of corn, or wheat, and they were fat and good. Then 7 ears grew up which were thin and wilted, and they ate up the fat, good ones but they were still thin and wilted.

Joseph told Pharaoh the meaning of the strange dreams:

The two dreams are the same meaning, the 7 good cows and the 7 good ears of corn meant 7 years that would come. In those 7 years that would come, there would be real good crops and everything would do very well in the land.

But the 7 thin cows and 7 bad ears of corn were 7 years that would follow. These 7 years would be famine years, and things would not grow. The 7 bad years would eat up all the extra from the good years and there would be nothing left!

Joseph also told Pharaoh that because he had two dreams about it, it would certainly happen and very soon.

Thought - Even a slave, who is a faithful child of God, can stand before a king with confidence.

Friday

Text: Genesis 41:33-35 "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities."

Now Joseph, inspired of God, went right on and advised Pharaoh what he needed to do to save his people from starvation in the terrible famine that was going to come. Pharaoh thought it was very good counsel.

He said to Joseph, "Where could I find anyone better and wiser than you to do this work? You shall be next to me in the kingdom and by you shall all the people be ruled. 42, 43 "And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the

knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.”

He called Joseph ‘Zaphnathpaaneah’, which meant ‘Revealer of secrets’. He gave him a wife and a palace of his own to live in.

Joseph proved to be just as faithful in a high place as he had been in a low place and set out to do a good job on the task Pharaoh had given him. He had great storage bins made, and gathered a part of all the grain and foods produced in the land and had it carefully stored up. They kept track of it all until they had so much they couldn’t count

it.

The wisdom Joseph had from his God was a blessing to Egypt. “As a faithful ruler he devoted himself to the interests of the people. He was devoted in his worship of Jehovah, and though brought in contact with the most learned men of the world, he preserved his integrity.” The Youth’s Instructor 03-11-97

Thought - I wonder if Joseph began to remember his own dreams he had had as a boy about people bowing down before him?
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Weekly Bible Lesson #7: “HIS DREAMS COME TRUE”

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Psalm 133:1

Sunday

Text: Genesis 40:46-48 “And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.”

The seven years of plenty passed quickly and Joseph did his job faithfully and well. Grain was gathered and stored up in storage bins; until there was so much that nobody could count it.

During this time he had two little boys born to him, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Then came the seven years of famine. The rains did not come and the crops did not grow. It affected not only Egypt, but also the countries for a long ways around Egypt. It affected Jacob and his family where he lived also.

Soon the people of Egypt came crying to

Pharaoh that they had no food, and Pharaoh sent them to Joseph, who opened up some of the storage bins and sold them food. He knew that it was important to sell the food, rather than give it to them, to prevent it from being wasted. It had to last for 7 years.

The people bought the grain with money, then they ran out of money and Joseph let them trade their starving animals for grain, when they ran out of animals he let them trade their lands to Pharaoh for food.

Soon the brothers of Joseph in the country of Canaan began to run out of food. They did not know what to do, but their father had heard a rumour that there was grain to be bought in Egypt, although he could not understand how that could be possible. So he sent down the ten brothers with money to buy grain in Egypt.

When they arrived, they were sent in to see Joseph to see if they were to be allowed to buy grain or not, after all, they were not Egyptians. Here was Joseph sitting in his throne room, busy at his work, and he looks up to see the next customer and there are his 10 brothers standing there! And what do you suppose they did? That’s right, they all bowed to show him respect, just like in

his dreams.

Thought - We should always be careful not to waste food or anything that might be of some use to others or ourselves.

Monday

Text: Genesis 42:21-23 “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.”

Now Joseph had been in Egypt for a long time. He was just a teen-ager when his brothers had cruelly sold him and now, dressed as an Egyptian and speaking to them through an interpreter, there was no way they could recognize him. But he sure could recognize them.

Now he knew that he had the power to have them all killed, if he wanted revenge, but as a true servant of the God of Heaven, he had no such ideas. But he did want to find out if they had changed, or were still mean and cruel, before he ever told them who he was. He did not see his little brother Benjamin, and wondered if they had got rid of him also.

He pretended to be angry and said that they were spies. They were very upset and tried to explain that they were not spies, by telling the ruler about their elderly father and other brother still at home.

Now Joseph told them that they were spies, and the only way that they could prove they were not, was to send one of them home to fetch their younger brother and then he would know they were not spies. In the mean time he had them all put in prison for three days.

Then he brought them out, and told them that they could go and take grain for their families, but they had to leave one brother behind in prison, until they brought back their other brother so that he would know they were not spies.

They were very upset and began to talk to each other thinking that Joseph could not understand them. They were very sure that this trouble was happening to them because of what they had done to Joseph.

As they were talking, Joseph left his throne because he started to weep. When he came back, he took Simeon, who had been the most cruel, and had him sent back to prison, while he ordered that grain be given to the others, and they be allowed to go home before their families would starve.

But, he told them they would never see his face again if they did not bring their other brother to prove they were not spies.

Off they went, leaving Simeon behind in prison, they felt very sad but hurried home with the food they knew was so badly needed at home. On the way one of them opened his sack to give some food to his donkey and what did he see but his money wrapped up on top of the food. When they checked they found it was the same with all the sacks.

Now they were really scared; “he is going to say we are thieves and kill us when we come back”. When they got home and told Jacob about what had happened he was very upset. ‘You have robbed me of my children’, he cried, ‘Joseph is gone and now Simeon is gone and you shall not take Benjamin away!’

Thought - Now Jacob was doubly sad now as he thought that he would never see Simeon again either.

Tuesday

Text: Genesis 43:11-13 “And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down to the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man."

But the famine was very bad, soon Jacob told his sons that they must again travel into Egypt and buy grain for them so they would not starve. The reminded him that they could not go without Benjamin and he refused to let him go. Finally however he had to let him go or all of them would starve, including Benjamin.

It was a worried and solemn group that made their way into Egypt again. Soon they stood before Joseph and again they all bowed and showed respect to him. Joseph saw his brother Benjamin and wanted to run and hug him, but he still did not know if it was wise to tell the brothers who he was. Had they really changed?

Joseph thought of a test, and ordered that a wonderful feast be prepared for his brothers, and had the group taken to his house, there they found Simeon had been let out of prison and was there too. "Now see what is going to happen", they said, "He is going to make us all slaves!"

They talked to the Stewart of Joseph's house and they told them that they were so sorry because they had found their money in their sacks when they went home the last time and so they had brought twice as much money as before. He told them not to worry, that God had given them treasure in their sacks.

The Stewart brought them to Josephs house and there he gave them water and had them wash their feet, and gave food and care for their tired donkeys as well. The brothers made ready the presents they had brought for the Egyptian governor, and waited anxiously to see what was going to happen to them.

Thought - The bad memories about what they had done to Joseph really bothered the

ten brothers badly, but Benjamin knew nothing of their guilty secret.

Wednesday

Text: Genesis 43:26-28 "And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance."

Again Joseph's early dreams were fulfilled as he saw his eleven brothers bow to show him respect. They gave him the presents and then his eyes picked out Benjamin, whom he had not seen since he was a little boy, and Joseph had to leave the room again as he started to cry, he loved his little brother so much.

Now once he had recovered himself, he washed his face and ordered the meal to be served. He sat in a separate table as he was an Egyptian and they would not eat with other people.

The brothers were so surprised when they found they were all seated at their table in order of their ages. This was very spooky, how could that Egyptian ruler know their ages?

Then Joseph began to send tasty dishes to their table for each one of them, but to Benjamin, he sent 5 times as much food as for the others. He wanted to see if they were still jealous like they had been of him.

But they all ate and drank and enjoyed the meal very much. None of them showed any jealousy of Benjamin, indeed they seemed happy that he was so honoured.

After this they were given the grain they wanted and started on their way home with happy hearts. But all that was soon to change.

Thought - If you have brothers and sisters, always remember to be kind and unselfish to them, never pick on the little ones and make them cry or get angry. Jesus is very sad when such things are done.

Thursday

Text: Genesis 44:11-13 **“Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.”**

Joseph had set up one final test for his brothers that would tell him whether or not they were truly changed from the cruel men they had been, and to decide if he would tell them who he was. He had told his Stewart to put all the money back in their sacks and to put his special silver cup, which had been a gift from Pharaoh into Benjamin’s sack.

He waited for a while until the brothers would be well on their way and then he sent the Stewart after them with soldiers and told him to arrest the man who would be found to have taken the cup.

So he chased after them and when he caught up, he said, “Why have you returned evil for the good that my master did for you? One of you has stolen my master’s special cup!”

“Oh, no!” they all cried out, “We would never do that! You can search our sacks and if you find it in any ones sack, you can kill him and make all of the rest of us slaves.”

But the Stewart said, “No, whoever has the cup will be my master’s slave, the rest of you can go home.”

So they took down the sacks and one by one the Stewart opened them and searched them. The brothers were not worried, as they knew none of them had done this, but they all went pale when as the Stewart reached Benjamin’s sack, he reached in— and there

was the special cup!

They were horrified and tore their clothes and went back to Joseph’s house. He was still there waiting to see what they would do. When they saw him they all fell on their faces before him.

He said angrily, “Why have you done this? Did you not know that a revealer of secrets like me would find out and know what you had done? Now this man will be my slave and the rest of you can go home and take food for your families.”

Now Joseph knew if they were jealous of Benjamin, the way they had been of him, they would welcome the chance to leave him behind. But they didn’t, Judah came up to the governor and pleaded with him telling the whole story about the family and begging him to let him stay and be a slave rather than his little brother. He told him that his old father would die of grief if Benjamin did not return safe.

Thought - It was obvious that these men had truly repented of the evil deed they had done to Joseph all those years before.

Friday

Text: Genesis 45:3-5 **“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.”**

Now Joseph could wait no longer; asking all of his servants to leave the room and just leave him alone with the brothers, he broke down and wept aloud for a long time.

Then he said, “Come close to me, I am your brother whom you sold into Egypt, I am Joseph. Is my father yet alive?”

The 10 brothers were terrified, they could

not speak, and they just stood there!

Joseph asked his brother Benjamin to come close and he threw his arms around him and kissed him and wept with joy. Then he continued and told them that there were still going to be five more years of famine and they were to go back and bring their father and their families and come into Egypt, and he would take care of them.

He wept and kissed all his brothers and assured them that he had forgiven them. He told them to return to his father and tell him the truth that Joseph was still alive and about all his honor and glory that he had in

Egypt. Then he sent them on their way with many rich gifts and special things for his father.

Pharaoh heard about what had happened and he was happy, and also sent gifts and wagons to carry their families into Egypt. Soon the caravan was on its way, not now in sorrow but in great joy to bring the good news to Jacob.

Thought - They had one more hard task to face—they had to tell Jacob the truth about their wicked deed. He was startled, but then said “I will go to Egypt and see my son Joseph, before I die.” = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #8: “SAMSON, THE WEAK STRONGMAN”

MEMORY VERSE: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” Proverbs 16:32

Sunday

Text: Judges 13:6,7 “Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.”

Israel had again fallen into sin. They were now in their own land, but had gotten into worshipping idols and copying the heathen, so God allowed the Philistines to come into the land and oppress them. When trouble came, some of the people woke up to their sin and began to seek God and cry to Him for help.

An angel appeared to the wife of Manoah and told her she would have a little boy and he was to be special and do a great work for God in freeing Israel from its enemies. She had no children, so she was glad to hear

about this.

He gave her special instructions that she or the child were not to drink wine or strong drink and eat only pure clean foods. The child was never to have his hair cut and would be a Nazarite; this means he was especially given to the Lord for a special work. The lady ran to her husband and told him all about it and he prayed for the angel to be sent again so he could talk to him also.

The angel came again and repeated the instruction to Manoah and his wife. He asked if they could prepare a meal for him, but he told them, I will not eat your food, and if you want to offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to God.

They brought the food and set it on a rock as a burnt offering and the angel went up to heaven in the fire of the offering.

Now they really knew it was a messenger from God and they fell on their faces and worshipped God. They were determined to obey God faithfully as the angel had said. And they did just that. Soon a baby boy was born and they called him Samson, which meant a ‘little sun’.

Thought - True temperance means we don’t use anything harmful, and we don’t

overuse the good things either.

Monday

Text: Judges 14:2,3 “And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.”

Samson grew to be the strongest man that ever lived. But his strength was more than just his muscles; he had special strength from God. Sadly, when the boy Samson grew up, he wasn't as interested in carefully obeying the instruction of God as his mom and dad were. He often demanded his own way.

One day he came home and demanded that his father go and arrange a marriage for him with a Philistine girl. His father told him this was wrong but he insisted anyway.

The marriage took place and trouble soon started from it. At the wedding Samson told a riddle and offered thirty suits of clothes to those who could solve it. “Out of the strong came forth sweet and out of the eater came forth meat”.

One day a young lion had attacked him, and in the power of the Lord he caught the lion and tore him to pieces with his bare hands. When he returned a long time later, the carcass had dried up into sort of a shell and some bees had made a nest there and filled it with honey. This was the riddle's answer. But the Philistines got Samson's bride to ask him the answer to the riddle and tell them. She did this and they told Samson. He was enraged.

He went and killed thirty Philistines and gave their clothes to the men. Then he left his bride and went home for a while. He went

back later and found his wife married to someone else. He was so angry that he caught three hundred little wild foxes and tied them together in pairs by their tails. He tied a fire-brand to each pair and let them go. They ran terrified through the fields and set all the crops of the Philistines on fire.

The Philistines were so angry that they killed his former wife. But again he revenged himself and killed many of them. Then he tried to find someplace where he could have peace but the Philistines threatened the people of Israel unless they would turn Samson over to them. They tied him all up and turned him over to the enemies, but he broke those ropes like they were nothing, and taking the jawbone of a donkey, he killed a thousand Philistines.

Thought - Revenge and violence only lead to more trouble.

Tuesday

Text: 2 Corinthians 6:14 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

What a different story the life of Samson could have been if he had obeyed God in the matter of his personal relations. Many people make the same mistake today.

Most of you are too young yet to be getting married, but the idea of boy-friends and girl-friends gets into our heads very early. I want to tell you about a favourite trick of Satan; he likes to get people that love Jesus and want to serve Him, to make close friends and marry people that don't believe all the truth about the Bible and God.

Remember, the same power that gets people to be bad, can make them be very nice and sweet if Satan chooses. He can make a non-believer so nice and attractive and he can play with our feelings and give us the idea that this is the nicest person and we would be so happy to have them for a friend

or marry them.

But just as he can make the person so sweet and nice, he will make them very different once you are married to them. It makes it oh, so hard, to completely live for Jesus, when your husband or wife thinks differently about this.

People that have not given all their heart to Jesus, still belong to Satan, and are God's enemies, even though they don't know it. Satan can get them to do what he wants them to— and he will get them to make trouble for those who love and obey Jesus. Remember, Solomon was the wisest man and he became a fool —turned aside by his non-believing wives.

Thought - Ellen White warns us; "it is disobedience to God that fills so many hearts and homes with misery. My sister (or brother), unless you would have a home where the shadows are never lifted, do not unite yourself with one who is an enemy of God."

Wednesday

Text: Judges 16:2,3 "And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron."

Now, the Bible says that Samson judged Israel for 20 years, so maybe he learned his lesson for a while. But soon he was back again, making friends with a beautiful Philistine woman. He had no business making friends with God's enemies. He seemed to think that because he was so strong, he could get away with anything. He was very unwise

to take these chances.

He went to visit her and while he was sleeping, the men of that city closed and locked the huge doors to the city. They thought they could keep him trapped, and gang up on him in the morning, and kill him.

In the night, Samson woke up and when he found the gates shut and locked, he picked up the gates, posts, bar and all, and carried them away and left them on top of a high hill. These gates likely weighed a ton or more. When the Philistines saw this, they were afraid to chase after Samson.

Thought - Samson had repented of his sin that night and God gave him strength to escape.

Thursday

Text: Judges 16:15-17 "And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

Samson still didn't learn his lesson and the story gets even worse! He fell in love with another wicked woman named Delilah whose name meant 'the consumer'. She lived in a valley famous for vineyards and wine. Sad to say, Samson had broken that part of his vows also; he loved to drink alcoholic wine. This place was not too far from Samson's home.

Now the Philistines offered her a lot of money if she would find out the secret of his strength. So she asked him, and he told her a lie, that if she tied him with seven new

cords, he would be weak. She did this and when the Philistines tried to grab him, he broke them like a thread.

Again she asked him and he told her if he was tied with new ropes, which he broke. Then she asked him again and he said if you weave the seven braids of my hair and fasten it with a pin to the beam, I will be weak. So again she did it, and when the Philistines tried to grab him he got up and went away with the beam dangling from his hair.

Now stop and think how foolish this man had become. Just because he wanted his own way, he kept coming to visit this wicked woman. He had seen three times that she had tried to get him captured and yet he boldly came again.

She nagged him again and again, and said how could he say he loved her, when he lied to her. Finally, no doubt when he was drunk, he told her the truth, if his hair were shaved off, he would be weak. This was the last vow that he had not yet broken, and now he sold his relation with the Lord, for the sake of a wicked woman. Of course Delilah quickly shaved his head as soon as he was asleep.

Thought - When we start to disobey God, we become very unwise.

Friday

Text: Judges 16:20, 21 “And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.”

Awakened by the wicked Delilah, Samson thought he could escape as before, but the Spirit of God had departed from him, and his enemies dragged him away and put out his eyes. Delilah got her money.

They locked him in prison and made him turn the heavy millstones all day long, grinding the grain to flour. Now in this terrible situation Samson began to think and repented before the Lord of his wicked deeds. He realized more and more, how he had dishonoured God in what he had done. His hair began to grow again, but it is important to remember, that it was not really Samson's hair that made him strong; his strength came from God.

One day the Philistines were going to have a big feast to their god Dagon, the half man, half fish idol that they worshipped. They decided to bring Samson out of the prison so they could show him off like some kind of a caged lion. They were boasting how their idol god was greater than Israel's God, because after all, they had beaten Samson.

All the important men and powerful lords of the Philistines were there in the temple of Dagon for the feast. Thousands of people were there, worshipping the idol.

Samson asked if he could lean against the pillars that held up the roof as if he were tired. He prayed in sorrow and repentance and asked God to give him strength one more time. Then he put his arms around those two central pillars and bowed himself saying, “Let me die with the Philistines”.

The roof came crashing down, killing all the Philistines and Samson. The ‘little sun’ had set.

Thought - Physically, Samson was the strongest man upon the earth; but in self-control, he was one of the weakest. = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #9: "ESTHER, THE BRAVE QUEEN"

MEMORY VERSE: "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him." Proverbs 26:27

Sunday

Text: Esther 2:5-7 "Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, ... And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."

Israel had been carried into Babylon as captives because of their refusing to obey the Word of God and their joining with idol worshippers. They were in Babylon for 70 years, and then under King Cyrus the way was opened for the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem. Many went but many more just stayed in Babylon.

God sent prophets to encourage them to return, and he raised up other kings who issued decrees making it possible for them to return, again many did but many more did not. God could see that trouble was coming for the Jews if they did not leave Babylon and go back to their own country, but warnings did no good.

Things had been good for the Jews during the reign of Darius, but under Ahasuerus, things began to change badly. There was a Jew named Mordecai, who worked for the king in the gate of the palace and there was a man named Haman, who wanted everybody to bow down and worship him like a god. Because Mordecai would not do this, Haman hated him with a bitter hatred. Haman did not want to just get Mordecai and hurt him or kill him; he decided to arrange a scheme to kill all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, who remained in Medo-Persia.

Satan was determined to defeat God's good plans for the Jewish people to be a

blessing to the world, by showing all, how serving the God of Heaven leads to great joy and prosperity. Because God had been warning the Jews in the area of Babylon, now ruled by the Medo-Pesians, to leave and go back to Jerusalem, and they refused to obey Him, they were leaving themselves in a position where Satan could do them harm. Satan was planning to work through Haman and get the Jews destroyed!

Thought - Whenever we refuse to do what God advises or commands, Satan can take advantage of us to do us harm.

Monday

Text: Esther 1:10-12 "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded ... the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."

There was a little girl named Hadassah whose mother and father had died. Mordecai, who was her cousin, adopted her as his own daughter. He named her Esther, a star, and she grew up to be a very beautiful young lady.

Now King Ahasuerus was a very rich king, and he decided to make a great feast and invite all the rulers of the land to come to it. The preparations for this feast were very costly, every one had their own specially made gold cup and the palace was decorated with the costliest materials.

The King's wife, Queen Vashti, also held a separate party for the ladies of the kingdom. Now after 7 days of drinking and feasting, the King sent his chief servants to bring Vashti into the hall where the men were drinking, so all could admire her beauty. But she, feeling that this was not a right thing for a queen to do, refused to come.

Now the Queen figured that when the King would sober up, he would be glad that she didn't allow herself to be displayed before the drunken men at the feast, and so it would likely have been. But the King had some unwise counsellors and they talked the king into removing Vashti from being Queen.

Then they came up with a scheme to please the king and get him a new queen. They decreed that all the lovely young girls in the country be brought to the Palace and the King could choose the one he liked the best and make her the new queen.

Thought - The king was too proud to back out and admit he had made a mistake to order Vashti to appear before the drunken men, so he went along with the plan.

Tuesday

Text: Esther 2:16,17 "So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."

Through the land all the pretty girls were collected up and brought to the palace, and among them was Esther. She was brought to the house of women in the palace and turned over to Hegai the keeper of the women. Mordecai walked by the house of the women each day to learn how Esther was doing, but he advised her not to tell them she was a Jewess.

The young girls had to go through a year

of ceremonies with different spices and perfumes before they would be brought to the King to see if he liked them or not. Hegai was sure that Esther was something special and the King would choose her and so he gave her special care and was kind to her.

After each girl went to appear before the king, she was sent to a different part of the house of women and unless the king called for her by name she would not see him any more. It was really a kind of slavery for these women.

When Esther's turn came to appear before the King, he was so pleased with her over all the other women, that he chose her to be queen. So it was that the little orphan girl, Hadassah, came to be queen in the land of the Medes and Persians.

Thought - Imagine what it would be like for those girls to have to leave their homes and stay forever in the house of women in the palace of the king. It was like being a bird in a golden cage.

Wednesday

Text: Esther 3:8,9 "And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries."

Now, Haman started to set his plot going to get rid of Mordecai and all his people. He went before the king and told him that there was a people in his kingdom that did not obey his laws and he asked for permission to have them killed. In fact, he paid the king money to be able to do this. The king agreed

and gave him the royal seal so he could do what he pleased.

Haman made the law that on a certain day all the Jews were to be killed. This caused Mordecai and all God's people to cry and weep before the Lord in sackcloth. Esther found out that Mordecai was in great distress near the gate of the palace wearing sackcloth. He could not come into the palace like that, because no one was allowed to wear sackcloth in the king's palace. Esther wanted to know what was the matter.

She sent a servant with a change of clothes to him, but he would not accept them. Esther needed to know what was going on, so she sent a trusted servant and thus she found out all about the decree.

"I have not seen the king for many days," Esther told Mordecai through the messenger, "and if I go to see him without permission and he does not hold out his sceptre to me, I shall be killed."

But Mordecai warned her that she herself would not escape this death decree, and that maybe it was for this very emergency that God had allowed her to become Queen.

Esther asked him to have all the people fast and pray for three days and she would seek the Lord also, then she would go in before the King, and she said, 'If I perish, I perish.'

Thought - Esther knew that she herself could do nothing; only God could save them now.

Thursday

Text: Esther 5:1,2 "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight:

and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre."

Esther dressed her best, and with a prayer in her heart, she went to the king's court and appeared before the King. She knew that if the king did not hold out his sceptre, she would be executed. But when the king saw her there, he held out his sceptre to her and she came and touched the top of it.

The king asked her what her request was, even to half of his kingdom. Esther, guided by the Holy Spirit as to what to do next, invited the King and Haman to come alone to a banquet that she would prepare for him that day. He agreed and told his servants to tell Haman to hurry up and come to the queen's banquet.

The king was well pleased with the banquet, and again asked Esther what was her request. Again, guided by the Lord, she asked that the King and Haman would attend another banquet on the next day, and she would tell him then; and he agreed.

Haman was so pleased with himself when he had come from the banquet of the queen, but he again saw Mordecai there in the Palace gate, his heart boiled with hate and he came home all in a huff. His wife asked the problem and advised her husband to ask the king to allow him to execute Mordecai the next day. He thought that a great idea.

He was so sure of his triumph now, that he had built a high gallows in his yard where he planned to have Mordecai killed. But now we see the hand of God spring into action to answer the earnest prayers of His people.

Thought - Notice our memory verse and remember the lesson if you are tempted to do something cruel or mean.

Friday

Text: Esther 6:1-3 "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the

king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."

God was working here; the king was not able to sleep and so he asked to have the history books read to him. He heard how Mordecai had saved his life when two of his servants had planned to kill him. Had any reward been given to this man, he asked?

When he learned there had not, he sent servants to see if any early people were in his court already, and who should be there but Haman, wanting to see the king as soon as he got up, to get permission to kill Mordecai! The king invited him in.

"What shall we do for the person the king wants to honour?" the king asked Haman. Now Haman thought the king wanted to honour him, so he said, "Let the king's robe and the king's crown be put on him and let him ride the king's best horse and be led through the city by a nobleman saying 'thus shall it be done to the man the king delights to honour'."

"Good idea," the king agreed, "You go do that to Mordecai the Jew." Imagine the shock

of Haman as he had to carry out this plan before the entire city! He had no sooner come home in shame from this task, than the servant was at the door to bring him to the queen's banquet.

At the banquet he began to feel better until Queen Esther told the king, that she and her people were wrongly sentenced to be killed and that Haman was the one planning to do it! The king was shocked and Haman was terrified.

The king went into the garden for a minute to gather his thoughts, and when he stepped back in, Haman had thrown himself on the queen's couch to plead for his life. When the king saw this, he said, "Will he attack the Queen right in front of me?" and he had Haman taken away with his head covered.

When the king learned of the high gallows Haman had built for Mordecai, he ordered Haman hanged on it. Then he gave Haman's job to Mordecai, and passed laws that the Jews could defend themselves if they were attacked. So the death decree was turned aside, and once again the Jews had favor in the land. Although not many Jews returned to Jerusalem at this time, many did later under the guidance of Ezra.

Thought - Even when a situation seems hopeless; there is help in our God! In the last days all will seem hopeless for God's people, but all those who trust in Him, will be saved out of trouble! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #10: "EZRA AND NEHEMIAH"

MEMORY VERSE: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

Sunday

Text: Ezra 7:6-8 "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king."

About 70 years after the first Jews returned to Jerusalem, a king called Artaxerxes Longimanus ruled Medo-Persia. It was during his reign that Ezra and Nehemiah lived. He is the one who in 457 B.C. issued the third and final decree for the restoration of Jerusalem. This is the decree that is the starting place to figure out the time prophecies of Daniel. His reign saw the return of a company of Jews under Ezra, the completion of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah and his associates. During his long rule he often showed favor to God's people, and in his trusted and well-beloved Jewish friends, Ezra and Nehemiah, he saw men that God had raised up for a special work.

Ezra was born and trained as a priest, but he wanted to know more and to serve God with all his heart. So while still in Babylon he studied history and scriptures to know why God had allowed the captivity of his people. He learned how important God's law was, and so he obeyed it and taught it carefully to others. The king knew about Ezra and helped him to go to Jerusalem to oversee the rebuilding of the temple.

He gave him treasures to take to the temple.

Ezra also gathered up all the scripture scrolls he could find and spent much labor carefully copying them. By studying and teaching and copying the sacred Word of God, he became a noble and wise man, blessed by God in his work for the people. When we work to help and teach others, God helps us to know more and understand more as we study.

Thought - The more we can read and study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy books the more noble and wise we will become also.

Monday

Text: Ezra 8:21-23 "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us."

Ezra had talked with the king and made many arrangements for help to all who wanted to return with him to Jerusalem, God had blessed and the way was made so easy; but when the call was given for all who wanted to come to meet at a certain place, Ezra was disappointed at how few showed up. Too many of them were comfortable where they were and didn't want to bother.

Also when Ezra looked over the ones who

had come, he saw there were no Levites there. So Ezra sent leading men with letters to invite the people again, especially do we need ministers for the house of God, he told them. The letters worked and many who had been not quite sure, made up their mind to come.

Soon they were ready to leave, but it was a long and dangerous journey that would take months and they also had much treasure with them. There were many robbers that could steal all that treasure and kill the people. Now Ezra could have asked for armed soldiers from the king to go with them as bodyguards, but he said that he felt ashamed after telling the king all about his wonderful God, to turn around and ask for human protection. So they fasted and prayed that God would watch over them, and then they left with confidence knowing they were safe under the care of angels.

Ezra and his band made the trip safely and it wasn't long before the temple was built and the services restored.

Thought - When we claim to belong to God and tell people about Him, what do they think if they see us always upset and afraid at everything that happens?

Tuesday

Text: Nehemiah 1:3,4 "And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."

Now the other man in our story, who God sent to help rebuild Jerusalem, was Nehemiah. He had an important job as the king's own cupbearer. Now this was a special job, and a king would try to have someone he was sure he could trust to do it. In those days it was common for people who

were jealous of the king or were his enemies to try and get a chance to poison him. So the cupbearer was the one who would protect the king's drinks and taste them to make sure they were not poisoned.

One day a relative of Nehemiah's came from Jerusalem and visited him and he told him about the mess the city was in because the walls were all broken and the gates burned up. The city had no protection from enemies and it was hard to travel around and get things done with all the heaps of rubble in the streets.

Nehemiah was so upset about this that he began to weep and pray to God that something be done to help the situation. God was placing in his heart this strong desire to do something to fix the problems. When God presses upon our hearts concern about something, we say we have a burden for this thing. Well Nehemiah had a burden to do something about those broken walls.

Now there is a rule about king's palaces that nobody who works there with the king is allowed to look sad or worried. If they do, they might even be executed! (That would worry me, wouldn't it worry you?) Well Nehemiah was doing his best to stay cheerful when he was waiting on the king, but one day the king noticed and said, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart."

Now Nehemiah was afraid, but he decided to tell the whole truth about what was worrying him. In his heart he prayed to God to help him. The king did not get angry; instead he asked Nehemiah what he could do to help him.

Nehemiah asked for time off to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls.

Thought - Always remember where ever you are, you can always dart a prayer to God for help and He will hear you.

Wednesday

Text: Nehemiah 2:11-13 "So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And

I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire."

Nehemiah asked the king for letters to the governors so he could get help and trees and things needed to do the work. He also was given captains and soldiers to go with him, as he was a special servant of the king. But Nehemiah knew that if he just showed up in Jerusalem and said, "Hey, the king has sent me and you have to do what I say" that the people would not want to do it. So he went by night and took a careful look at the situation all by himself, then the next day he called a meeting.

Verse 17 "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."

First he got them interested and excited about doing the job and then he told them about all the letters and help that the King had sent for them. So the people all got together and made a plan and began to work on the walls. What they did was, each family worked on the area of wall that was nearest to his home, and the women and children all helped by taking baskets and carrying away the rubbish and rubble.

Soon things began to shape up. But when the enemies of Israel saw that the Jews were building up the walls, they started to make fun of them and say that the people were rebelling against the king. Little did they know that it was the king's own special servant they were talking to.

Thought - It would have been fun to be back there and help with that job, wouldn't it?

Thursday

Text: Nehemiah 4:1-3 "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

Now the enemies of Israel came and offered to help in the project but Nehemiah knew that it was not what God wanted, for these enemies to be doing the work, and it would just give them a chance to cause trouble and stop the work, so he told them, "NO! You have no part with us in this work."

So then they started making fun and trying to discourage the people. When that didn't work they began to threaten to come and attack them. They said that with all the rubbish still lying around, they could easily sneak up and kill the workers.

So Nehemiah set people to watch every so far around the walls, and told the people to have their weapons ready to fight, if anyone should attack, and the work kept on as the people had a mind to work. In other words they wanted to see the job done.

Nehemiah had half of the workers stand and hold the spears and swords while the other half worked. From early in the morning they worked, until it was too dark to see. Then they lay down to sleep and didn't even take off their cloths at night. Everybody watched and worked and was ready to fight

if the enemies dared attack, and the walls went up and up.

Then the enemies tried a new trick, they tried to get Nehemiah to come to a meeting with them, and of course they planned to kill him. But he was wise in the Lord and told them, "NO! I am doing a good work here and why should the work stop while I come and talk to you?"

Then the enemies sent a letter and said, 'It is reported by the heathen and Gashmu has said it, that you are planning to rebel against the King.' Nehemiah just told them, 'that's not true, you are making it up.'

Thought - Notice ALL these tricks that the enemies of God tried to get God's people to give up and stop working— these are the same tricks that Satan and his helpers try against us today.

Friday

Text: Nehemiah 6:10,11 "Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

The next thing they tried was to hire a 'friend' of Nehemiah to talk to him and tell him to come and hide in the temple, because his enemies were going to kill him. Nehemiah knew that God had not sent this man, and that if he went and hid like that, all the people would be afraid and want to hide too; so he said the words in our text and the enemy was defeated again.

Soon the walls were finished and the great gates were put in place and were shut at night

and only opened in the main part of the day. Now at last the people of Jerusalem began to have some peace and were able to get busy and build up their houses and worship God in the temple.

Nehemiah did some other interesting things. He told the merchants they were not to come and sell things on the Sabbath, and if he caught them hanging around just outside the walls he would arrest them. He taught the people to honour God's Sabbath.

One time he found out that many of the people and even the priests had married wives from the heathen and because of this, their children spoke half in the heathen language and half in Hebrew, and didn't understand the Hebrew language. When he found out about this, you'll never guess what he says he did! "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves." Nehemiah 13:25

Then he and Ezra made arrangements for all the people that had married heathen wives to send those wives away, back to their heathen families. If they would not do this, they were sent away themselves. It was a terrible mistake to make, for a follower of God to marry someone who does not believe the same. It is still a terrible mistake and we should never let Satan fool us into making it!

Nehemiah found that one of the heathen men was actually living in a room in the temple, and he went there and threw the man out, and all his furniture as well. Then he had the rooms scrubbed and the temple things put back in there.

Thought - We really need some brave people today who will be like Nehemiah and do right, and not let anyone stop him from doing what God wants done. = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #11: "ELIJAH, THE MAN WHO WENT TO HEAVEN"

MEMORY VERSE: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21

Story found in 1 Kings 17-18**Sunday**

Text: 1 Kings 17:1 "1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

There were sad bad days in Israel. Ahab the king had married a heathen princess, Jezebel and it was a disaster! Jezebel's name is known even today as a designing, crafty, malicious, revengeful, and cruel woman.

She was the first one to really organize persecution against the saints of God. Fearing neither God nor man, she was passionately devoted to her heathen worship, and was known for fierceness and violent temper. This would perhaps tell us why Ahab just allowed her to have her own way. She enforced Baal worship on all in Israel and killed many worshipers and prophets of the True God of heaven.

She spared no pains to uphold idolatry around her in all its splendour. Four hundred and fifty prophets ministered under her care to Baal, besides four hundred prophets of the groves ate at her table. The idolatry, too, was of the most debased kind.

You will see in Revelation 2:20, that her name is used to represent the cruel apostate church of the Middle Ages. Remember that Israel in the time of Ahab, was part of the 'chosen people of God', It was part of the Seventh-day Adventist church of those days, and yet, led astray by its leaders, it was now serving Satan and persecuting the real people of God.

Elijah's name meant, 'whose God is Jehovah'. He grew up in the wilderness areas

of Israel and he served God with all his heart. He prayed and did all he could to fight against the terrible wrong Israel was doing in serving Baal. One day God sent him to go to the palace of King Ahab and tell him that because of the wicked ways of Israel there would be no more rain or dew until he said so.

Thought - Jezebel is the first one in the Bible record to use make-up and eye shadow. "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window." 2 Kings 9:30. The original says she put her eyes in painting. Think about this if you are ever tempted to use such heathen things.

Monday

Text: 1 Kings 17:2-4 "And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

Can you imagine the scene? Here is Ahab on his throne doing the business of his court, and all of a sudden here stands this man dressed in the rough garments of a peasant right in front of the throne. God helped him to be able to walk right past the guards and there he was in front of the king.

Solemnly he announces the words God told him to say, "Because you have forsaken the God of heaven to serve Baal, there shall no rain or dew happen until I say so." The king was astonished, he didn't know what to do or say, and by the time he had recovered enough that he could have yelled for his guards to seize the man, the prophet was

gone. Quickly and quietly he walked, again past all the palace soldiers, and out of the city.

God sent him to a place in the wilderness where there was a sparkling stream of water and told him he would use the ravens to bring him food. Now I have heard some people say that the ravens brought him the meat that they would eat. The Bible does not say this at all; it says morning and night they brought him both bread and meat. Now I don't know about you, but I have never seen a raven baking bread.

So where did the birds get the food? Well I sort of imagine they got it in a very interesting place, I think they got it right off of Queen Jezebel's huge tables, where she fed her almost a thousand priests of Baal every day. We know that she spared no effort to keep her religion going in Israel. To feed so many, no doubt tables were set up out of doors and those pesky ravens would swoop down and select from the table some nice bread and roast, and away they would go over the hills to the little stream where Elijah was waiting for his meal.

Did you know there was somebody else who also was fed from the stores of food that Jezebel had planned for her Baal priests? Yes, the servant who was in charge of the food supplies in the palace, was Obadiah, and he was a true worshipper of God. When he learned of Jezebel's intent to kill all the true prophets of God, he took a hundred of them and hid them in two caves. Then he sneaked out every night and brought food to them from the palace supplies.

Thought - God can use the very plans of His enemies to help His people. He can turn a curse into a blessing for those who love Him.

Tuesday

Text: 1 Kings 17:8,9 "And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to

Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

Time went on and gradually things in Israel dried up. Ahab was looking all over for Elijah but he could not find him. Elijah was quite happy down by the little brook, but then the brook began to dry up and he was having a hard time to find any water.

He took the problem to God and was told to go out of Israel to Zarephath, where there was a widow woman who would provide for him. So he went and when he got there he saw a poor woman out in the field gathering sticks with her young son.

Now both the faith of Elijah and the faith of the woman were about to be tested. The woman sure did not look like anyone he would think could feed him during the famine, but he asked her for a drink of water. She went to get it and as she was leaving he called and said, 'Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.'

At this the woman turned back and said sadly, "As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

Now Elijah made a strange request, he asked her to make him a cake first and then make for herself and her son; "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."

Now it took faith for the woman to do this, but even though she did not know a lot about Israel's God, she believed in him, and so she did what he asked. Sure enough, every day there was always enough flour and oil to make bread for the three of them for the day. Elijah stayed there in a room in the loft.

Thought - God knew that this woman was more worthy of His blessings than most

of Israel because she lived up to all that she knew was right.

Wednesday

Text: 1 Kings 17:17,18 “And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?”

Now it seemed as if Satan wasn't happy to have the prophet of God so well provided for, and one day the son of the women got sick and died. The woman told Elijah the words of our text.

But he knew what to do, He took the boy to his room and prayed to God for his life to return and said, “O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?”

He stretched himself on the boy three times, praying earnestly, and the boy came back to life. He carried him happily back to the woman. And the woman said to Elijah, “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.”

Maybe the woman needed an extra boost to her faith so she would give up all her heathen ways, because you will notice she said that now she would believe all what Elijah was saying. It sounds like he had been teaching her more about the ways of the God of heaven.

Thought - The widow of Zarephath shared what little she had with Elijah, and in return her life and that of her son were preserved. And to all who, in time of trial and want, give sympathy and help to others more needy, God has promise great blessing. He has not changed. His power is no less now than in the days of Elijah. No less sure now than when spoken by our Saviour is the promise, “He that receiveth a prophet

in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.” Matthew 10:41.

Thursday

Text: 1 Kings 18:1,2 “And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.”

For three years no rain or dew fell in the kingdom of Israel. Conditions were desperate, animals and even people died. Even the king and Jezebel with all her prophets of Baal to feed were having a hard time.

There was great meaning in what the Lord was doing, for the idolaters claimed that Baal the sun god was the one that sent the rain and made things grow on the earth. You can imagine that during all this time these priests of Baal were trying every ceremony and sacrifice they could think of to get Baal to make it rain, but nothing happened.

Another thing that this accomplished is that Jezebel did not have as much time to think about hunting and killing God's true people. They did do everything they could think of to try and find Elijah, but they could not. Maybe also, some of the people smartened up and began to see that this idol Baal wasn't really a god at all, and they should go back and worship the real God of heaven. But most of the people just followed their leaders and believed what the leaders told them. They were afraid to step out and be different. The leaders told them that Baal was angry and would not stop being angry until Elijah was found and killed.

Now God saw it was time for a showdown, and Elijah went back into the dried up land of Israel to where he was shown where Ahab was. He met Obadiah, the king's servant who loved God, and asked him to tell Ahab he wanted to talk to him.

Poor Obadiah was afraid that he would

tell this to Ahab and God would hide Elijah again and the servant would be killed, but Elijah said not to worry, he would talk to Ahab that day.

Thought - No one will ever get to heaven by following any other leader but Jesus!

Friday

Text: 1 Kings 18:16-18 **“So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.”**

Now the famine was so bad that even the King with his head servant had gone out to try and find water! So Ahab was not far from where Elijah had met Obadiah. When Ahab learned Elijah wanted to see him he was terrified.

Ahab knew that Elijah would not have come to see him at risk of his life unless God had sent him and he was afraid that some more terrible thing was about to happen. So trembling and pale, and with his guards close around him, he went to meet the man of God. He hated Elijah but he did not dare to try and harm him. As he came face to face with the strange prophet, he blurted out, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?”

Elijah did not let that pass, but quickly replied that the king and his family had brought the trouble to Israel because they had left the God of Heaven and disobeyed Him to serve idols.

Now the prophet commanded the King to call all the people of Israel to meet him on a certain day on Mount Carmel, and that all the priests of Baal were to come there also. “Send,” he commanded, “and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table.”

Elijah seemed to stand in the very presence of God; and Ahab obeyed at once, as if the prophet were monarch, and the king a subject. Swift messengers were sent through the kingdom with the summons to meet Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth. In every town and village the people prepared to assemble at the appointed time. As they journeyed toward the place, the hearts of many were filled with fear. Something unusual was about to happen; else why this order to gather at Carmel? What new calamity was about to fall upon the people and the land?

Thought - It is very strange that when people decide to turn away from God and do wicked things and trouble comes to them, they always blame the true people of God who have warned them they are doing wrong!! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #12: "ELIJAH, & THE PRIESTS OF BAAL"**MEMORY VERSE: "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God." 1 Kings 18:39****Sunday****Text: 1 Kings 18:21 "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."**

After 3 ½ years of no rain or dew, the land of Israel was like a dessert. Then God sent Elijah to Ahab to call a showdown. "Have the people and all the priests of Baal, meet me on Mount Carmel" Elijah commanded and King Ahab, even though he hated the prophet of God, quickly obeyed, from fear of something worse happening, and messengers hurried through the land to call the people to the appointment.

There were altars to Baal on this mountain and before the drought it had been a most beautiful place, where the idol worshippers liked to have their holiday feasts in the groves of trees. Now the trees had no leaves and were withered. Way up on the mountain was an old altar to the God of heaven, long broken down and unused.

God had been greatly dishonoured by the people as they left serving God and worshipped Baal, and by the wicked things done in the groves on Carmel. He chose this area to show His power to them.

Early on the morning of the chosen day, the hosts of apostate Israel, in eager expectancy, gather near the top of the mountain. Jezebel's prophets march up in imposing array. In regal pomp the king appears and takes his position at the head of the priests, and the idol worshippers shout his welcome.

But there is dread in the hearts of the priests as they remember that at the word of the prophet, the land of Israel for three years and a half has had no dew or rain. They feel sure some fearful crisis is at hand. The gods in whom they have trusted have

been unable to prove Elijah a false prophet. For all these months they tried all the tricks they knew, but their frantic cries, their prayers, their tears, their magic rituals, their revolting ceremonies, their costly and ceaseless sacrifices all had done no good at all.

Thought - All the so-called power of heathen religions and witchcraft really only comes from Satan and is used to trick people into thinking they have secret powers.

Monday**Text: 1 Kings 18:22 "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men."**

I want you to notice something about the verse in yesterday's reading, it says, "The people answered him not a word". Now don't you think that some of those people knew down in their hearts that all this Baal worship and all the holidays and feasts and stuff that they were doing in worshipping Baal was wrong? Don't you think that down in their hearts they knew that only the God of Heaven was really worthy of their worship and that in turning from what was right and doing the heathen things they were sinning against the Creator of heaven and earth?

I am sure that many of them knew this, in fact maybe most of them did, but they would not stand up and speak out to honour the name of God! They were cowards and just followed their leaders even in what they knew was wrong. We must not be like this!

Now look at Elijah; Facing King Ahab and the false prophets, and surrounded by all the people gathered there, Elijah stands, the only one who is standing for the honor of Jehovah. The whole kingdom has tried to find him for all these months to kill him,

and here he is, apparently unarmed before the king of Israel, the prophets of Baal, the men of war, and the surrounding thousands. But Elijah is not alone. Above and around him are the protecting hosts of heaven, angels that excel in strength.

Unashamed, unafraid, the prophet stands before the crowd, fully aware of his task to carry out the divine command. Anxiously the people wait for him to speak. Looking first upon the broken-down altar of Jehovah, and then at the people, Elijah cries out in clear, trumpet-like tones, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

The people answer him not a word. Not one in that large crowd dares to show loyalty to Jehovah. Like a dark cloud, deception and blindness had spread over Israel. Not all at once had this fatal apostasy closed about them, but gradually, as from time to time they had failed to pay attention to the words of warning and reproof that the Lord sent them. Each going away from right doing, each refusal to repent, had deepened their guilt and driven them farther from Heaven. And now, in this crisis, they still refused to take their stand for God.

Thought - This can happen to us, if we choose to ignore what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy tells us is right, we will end up like Israel, doing wickedly until finally God destroyed that kingdom. People who won't stand up and speak for truth in such times, but just keep quiet are disgusting to God!

Tuesday

Text: 1 Kings 18:23,24 "Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the

God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken."

Read this story carefully and notice that Elijah gave them every advantage. He would leave them with no chance to say they had been treated unfairly. He let them have first chance, he let them choose the animal they wanted for their offering, and prepare it in any way they wanted to.

The test Elijah tells them about is so fair and so right that they all have to agree to it. The prophets of Baal dare not refuse to make the trial or they would show clearly to the people that they were frauds.

Outwardly bold and defiant, but with terror in their guilty hearts, the false priests prepare their altar, laying on the wood and the victim; and then they begin their incantations. Their shrill cries echo and re-echo through the forests and the surrounding heights, as they call on the name of their god, saying, "O Baal, hear us." The priests gather about their altar, and with leaping and writhing and screaming, with tearing of hair and cutting of flesh, they beseech their god to help them.

The morning passes, noon comes, and yet there is no evidence that Baal hears the cries of his deluded followers. There is no voice, no reply to their frantic prayers. No fire comes from Baal.

Now Elijah knows he has to watch them carefully, as if they could somehow cheat and set the fire themselves, they would! It is interesting that witches believe they can bring down fire, of course Satan can do this for them, but on mount Carmel, Satan was prevented from doing this. Satan has no power against God's true people, unless he can get them to disobey God, and then he can lead them into evil.

Thought - God has had heroes, and He has them now—those who, like Joseph and Elijah and Daniel, are not ashamed to say that they are His peculiar people.

Wednesday

Text: 1 Kings 18:27-29 “And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”

At last, their voices hoarse from shouting, their clothes stained with blood from self-made wounds, the priests become desperate. In frenzy they now mingle with their pleading, terrible cursing of their sun-god, and Elijah still watches intently for any trick.

Evening draws on. The prophets of Baal are weary, faint, confused. One suggests one thing, and another something else, until finally they cease their efforts. Their shrieks and curses no longer sound over Carmel. In despair they give up the contest.

All day long the people have watched the baffled priests leaping round the altar, as if they would grasp the burning rays of the sun to serve their purpose. They have looked with horror on them cutting themselves with knives, and have had time to think about how foolish idol worship is. Many in the throng are weary of the exhibitions of demonism, and they now await with deepest interest the movements of Elijah.

It is the hour of the evening sacrifice, and Elijah tells the people, “Come near unto me.” As they tremblingly draw near, he turns to the broken-down altar where once men worshiped the God of heaven, and repairs it. To him this heap of ruins is more precious than all the fancy altars of heathendom. He carefully repairs it following the rules God had given for His altars.

The priests of Baal watch quietly, they hate Elijah worse than ever, but they are helpless. The calm, quiet ways of the prophet of God are so different from the wild frenzy of the followers of Baal.

But now Elijah does even more; he digs a trench around the altar and then he puts the wood on it and prepares the bullock and puts the pieces on the wood. Then he did something that seemed crazy! He told the people to pour water over it all; four barrels of water, and he told them to do it three times, until the trench was full and everything was dripping wet. Humanly, there was no way any fire could burn that offering.

Elijah was making sure that no one could say that he cheated and set fire to the altar himself.

Thought - The ways of those who leave the God of Heaven are loud and flashy but the ways of God are calm and quiet.

Thursday

Text: 1 Kings 18:36-38 “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.”

Elijah calls upon the people to humble their hearts and turn to the God of their fathers, that the curse upon the land of Israel may be removed. Then, bowing reverently before the unseen God, he raises his hands toward heaven and offers a simple prayer. Baal’s priests have screamed and foamed and

leaped, from early morning until late in the afternoon; but as Elijah prays, no senseless shrieks resound over Carmel's height. He prays as if he knows God is there, a witness to the scene, a listener to his appeal. The prophets of Baal have prayed wildly, without making sense. Elijah prays simply and earnestly, asking God to show His superiority over Baal, that Israel may be led to turn to Him.

Silence, solemnly, rests upon all. The priests of Baal tremble with terror, aware of their guilt in deceiving the people.

Suddenly, flames of fire, like brilliant flashes of lightning, descend from heaven upon the altar, burning up the sacrifice, the water in the trench, and even the stones of the altar. The brightness of the blaze lights up the mountain and dazzles the eyes of the multitude. In the valleys below, where many are watching the movements of those above, the fire is clearly seen coming down from heaven, and all are amazed at the sight. It is like the pillar of fire that at the Red Sea separated the children of Israel from the Egyptian host.

The people fall on their faces in awe before the unseen God. They dare not continue to look at the Heaven-sent fire. They fear that they themselves will be burned up for their sins. They cry out together, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." The cry sounds over the mountain and echoes in the plain below.

At last Israel sees how greatly they have dishonored God. The character of Baal worship, in contrast with the reasonable service required by the true God, stands fully revealed. The people recognize God's justice and mercy in withholding the dew and the rain until they have been brought to confess His name. They are ready now to admit that the God of Elijah is above every idol.

Thought - The ways of the heathen are foolish, but when people want their own way and refuse to obey God, they can't see the truth any more.

Friday

Text: 1 Kings 18:41,42 "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees."

After this, Elijah ordered the prophets of Baal to all be executed. You see, they knew what they were doing was wrong; they knew they were lying to the people to get the people to serve the idols.

After this was over, Elijah told Ahab to hurry up and eat his picnic lunch because God was soon going to send a great rain, so things could grow again. Now when he said this there was not a cloud in the sky.

Now Elijah goes to the top of the mountain and begins to pray for rain. Notice he just doesn't say, "Oh, God will now send rain, I don't have to do anything about it." No, he goes and asks for the desperately needed rain. He prays and then asks his servant to go look and see if any clouds were coming. The servant said no, there was nothing.

Again Elijah prayed and again sent his servant to see whether there were any visible sign that God had heard his prayer. Each time the servant returned with the word, "There is nothing." The prophet did not become impatient or lose faith, but continued his earnest pleading. Six times the servant returned with the word that there was no sign of rain. Elijah did not give up and prayed again and sent him forth once more; and this time the servant said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand."

He did not wait for the whole sky to grow dark, he knew by faith God was answering his prayer. Quickly Elijah sent his servant to Ahab with the message, "Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."

It was getting dark and the rainstorm

burst upon the land. Ahab had not time to get home before it hit and now, God gave special strength to Elijah and he ran before the king's chariot guiding him safely to the gate of the city.

Thought - Even though he had just been used by God to perform a wonderful miracle, the Prophet did not refuse to turn around and do the work of a common servant.
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Weekly Bible Lesson #13: "ELIJAH, & THE FIERY CHARIOT"

MEMORY VERSE: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5,6

Sunday

Text: 1 Kings 19:1,2 "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time."

Elijah parted with Ahab at the gate of the city, and Elijah was now so very tired that he wrapped himself up in his mantle and lay down to sleep. Ahab went home and told his wicked wife all about what had happened on the mountain that day. Perhaps Ahab really thought that Jezebel would realize that the true God was not Baal but the God of Heaven and stop her idol worship.

But Jezebel was wicked to the core and would not repent or change. Flying into a rage, she declared that Elijah would die for what he did to spoil her religion. In doing this she was defying the God of heaven in a very bold way. She sent a messenger to Elijah saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

The messenger hastened to the weary prophet Elijah, where he was sleeping soundly and awoke him and told him Jezebel's threat. Now Elijah should not have been afraid of this wicked woman's words

but he was very tired and was awakened from a sound sleep. His first thought was that he must get out of there and go back to hiding. After all, he had been hiding from the queen for 3 ½ years at God's command.

No doubt disappointment hit him as well, as after such an obvious display of the power of the true God, it seemed unthinkable that this woman would persist in her idolatry, but she did. Elijah took off running and went to Beersheba and left his servant there and then headed out into the wilderness.

Thought - The messenger of the Lord has told us: "Had he remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel; and the impression made on the king and the people would have wrought a great reformation." Prophets and Kings pg. 160

Monday

Text: 1 Kings 19:4 "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Elijah thought that the people would

surely give up all their Idolatry after this display of God's power, and that Jezebel would no longer have influence over the mind of Ahab. He felt that now there would be a speedy reform throughout Israel. All day on Carmel's height he had toiled without food. Yet when he guided the chariot of Ahab to the gate of Jezreel, his courage was strong, despite the physical strain. But now here he is out in the wilderness, huddled under a Juniper tree so discouraged that he wants to die.

Have you ever seen a Juniper tree? Well, they are low to the ground and very prickly. You would have to crawl under their scratchy branches. So here was Elijah under the juniper tree. We all have times when things seem so dark and impossible to us that we are 'under the juniper tree' like Elijah was. At these times it is best to think about God's promises and just rest in His arms.

But God didn't get angry with the tired prophet. He did a very sweet thing for His discouraged servant. You remember that Elijah had had nothing to eat for a long time and he had gone through amazing physical strain. He had reminded the king to have some lunch, but he didn't have any himself. So now God sent an angel to help poor worn-out Elijah.

He felt a gentle touch and heard a kindly voice. He started up thinking that he had been found and must run again, but he saw the sweet face of an angel and there beside him was a bottle of water and on a little fire was some fresh cake. He ate and drank and went back to sleep.

The second time the angel awoke him and said: "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." So he had another fresh, warm cake and water and then he got up and went on his way. Those must have been wonderful cakes because the Bible tells us, "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

Thought - It is important to know that

when we have a time of a lot of excitement, it is always followed by a time of depression, and so we must not let either the 'ups' of life or the 'downs' of life shake our confidence in God. This is also a reason why excitement is not really good for us!

Tuesday

Text: 1 Kings 19:9,10 "And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Now God starts to talk to Elijah. He asks him a simple question, "What are you doing here? Who sent you on this hasty flight into the wilderness? What errand have you here?" Elijah tells God his sorrowful story, but God is about to teach His prophet a wonderful lesson that all of us need to learn.

"Go out and stand on the mountain," God said to him and he did. Notice how the Bible tells the story: "And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

Can you imagine a wind so strong that it would break rocks? But in all three of those terrible displays of power, Elijah did not find the presence of God! Then God spoke to him with a 'still, small voice', and Elijah covered his face and head with his mantle, as he knew the presence of the Lord was there in that small voice.

Once again God asks Elijah, "What doest

thou here, Elijah?” Once again Elijah tells God all about his troubles. Then God simply tells the prophet to get back to work. He gives him a list of jobs to do, and Elijah realises from the tasks given him, that God knows what He is doing. The evildoers were not going to get away with wickedness forever. But there was work for God’s faithful prophet to do.

God told Elijah to; “anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.”

“And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” So God showed Elijah that He still had quiet faithful ones that although hidden away, had not left the worship of the God of heaven. I am sure there were ‘home churches’ in Israel in those days!

He also made it clear that the wicked ones who refused to repent after all that God had done to show them their error, would meet with an unhappy end!

Thought - It is not the fancy speeches, the big media screens and illustrations; it is not the huge P/A systems and exciting music that bring hearts to Jesus, it is the still small voice of the Holy Spirit working on the heart! Noisy, exciting displays only drive the Holy Spirit away from us.

Wednesday

Text: 1 Kings 19:19,20 “So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and

then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?”

Elijah traveled until he came to a large tract of land where there were servants ploughing with oxen. Elisha, the son of the man who owned the land was working with them and ploughing with a team also. Along came Elijah and as he was walking past, he turned and threw his mantle over Elisha.

It was a test to see if the young man would recognise the symbol and respond to it. Quickly Elisha ran after Elijah and asked him to just wait until he said goodbye to his parents, and he would follow him. He recognised that the signal meant that he was to be the next prophet in Israel. Elijah tried to tell him he was wrong, and that he didn’t mean anything by it, but Elisha passed the test and had faith in what the Holy Spirit had told him it meant.

He did an interesting thing, he slew one team of oxen and using the yokes and plough in the fire, he cooked them up into soup and fed all the people and then went with Elijah to be his servant and learn from him.

Elisha stayed with Elijah after that and cared for him as a servant. He did not have the idea, ‘Well, I am called to be a prophet too, so I don’t have to do common work’. Oh, no! He was a faithful servant to Elijah. It is in the humble duties of our daily lives that our characters are formed for good or for evil.

When you are tempted to leave your bed or room in a mess, or to be sloppy about your clothes or books, leaving things where you finished with them instead of putting them away, remember that those, whom God uses for great tasks, first learn to be careful and faithful in little things.

Thought - Jesus said “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. Luke 16:10

Thursday

Text: 2 Kings 2:3,4 “And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth

to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.”

Elijah did many wonderful tasks for the Lord in the next several years and through them all, Elisha stayed by his side and served him faithfully. One day the Lord told Elijah that his work was almost finished. Elijah went on a journey to pay one final visit to the ‘Schools of the Prophets’ where the young people of the land were being trained to know and serve God. He repeated to the students the important lessons he had taught them before and urged them to remain true to God no matter what.

Again Elisha was tested, for as he visited each school, Elijah would say to him, “Stay here for I am going on to the next school”, but Elisha would say, “No, I will not leave thee!” God had revealed to Elisha that Elijah was soon to leave him and also the students in the school of the prophets told him they had been shown this also. So each time Elijah invited Elisha to stay behind and rest from all the tiresome travelling, he refused and stayed right with the prophet of God.

Finally they came to the river Jordan and they stood side by side on its banks while from far off, fifty students were watching what would happen. Again Elijah invited Elisha to stay behind but he wouldn’t. Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and smote the water with it, and the waters opened up and made a path for them to cross over just like the Israelites had done years before.

When they went over Elijah asked Elisha, “What shall I do for thee before I be taken from thee?” Now the younger man could have asked for money or fame, but he asked that he might have a double portion of the Spirit

that was with Elijah. By this he showed he knew that it was only the power of the Spirit of God that could make his work worthwhile.

Now Elijah could not promise this to the younger man but he told him that if he saw Elijah when he was taken from him, God would grant his request. So they walked on together talking a while.

All of a sudden “it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

Thought - It is interesting that in these schools, the students were not taught magic or how to work miracles, they were taught to work hard, obey God and be faithful to all His commandments.

Friday

Text: 2 Kings 3:11,12 “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

It was still again and all that remained on earth of Elijah—was his mantle. Elisha wept because he knew he was going to miss Elijah, and now he must take up the work himself, but gathering his courage, he took the mantle of Elijah and when he reached the river, he smote the water and prayed as Elijah had done. The waters opened up before him and he went back to where the students were watching in the distance.

When he came back to them they asked

him to let them go and look for Elijah. “lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley.” Elisha said no, but they begged so much finally he said they could go and look, and they searched for him for three days but he was not found. Just like what happened with Enoch before the flood.

“And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?”

Elijah represents the people who will be alive on this earth when Jesus comes and they will go to heaven with Him without ever dying. We call this ‘translation’. Elijah was one who was sent to speak with Jesus just before He went to the cross, on the mountain of transfiguration. Moses was there also, and he represented the people who will be raised from the dead and then go home with Jesus.

There is another important thing that we are told about Elijah, we are told that we who are faithful to God in these last days are going to have a message like the message Elijah carried to Israel!

What was Elijah’s message? He told the people that there was only one true God, the God of creation. And he warned them to turn from their idol worship and repent of their

selfish indulgence in heathen religion and holidays and serve God and He would forgive them and be their God. He told them to worship the true God and to obey Him in all things. He also warned those who would not repent, that they would have a terrible end!

This is the same as our 3 angel’s messages today, they call on all people to serve the God of Creation, that it is now a time of judgement and we are to repent and obey God. They tell us to come away from those who are not interested in obeying God’s Word, and they warn us that those who choose to obey men’s ideas instead of the God of heaven’s commandments are going to have a terrible end! But the message also tells us that if we repent, God will forgive us and teach us His ways.

Thought - “In such a time as this, every child of God should be actively engaged in helping others. As those who have an understanding of Bible truth try to seek out the men and women who are longing for light, angels of God will attend them. And where angels go, none need fear to move forward. As a result of the faithful efforts of consecrated workers, many will be turned from idolatry to the worship of the living God. Many will cease to pay homage to man-made institutions and will take their stand fearlessly on the side of God and His law.” Prophets and Kings pg. 171 = ^ .. ^ =