



LESSONS *from the* BOOK OF LIFE

FROM EDEN TO ETERNITY - PART 2
July - November 2019

*"So shall my word be that goeth forth
out of my mouth; it shall not return unto
me void, but it shall accomplish that
which I shall prosper in the thing
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Isaiah 55:11

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EDITORS' NOTE

Greetings Sabbath School,

Welcome to the second in the two-part series of Lessons entitled **'From Eden to Eternity'**.

The topics presented in the series, are geared towards helping us to further understand how God worked through the ages to preserve His initial plan for mankind – to live in fellowship and harmony with Him and with each other.

In this quarter the Lessons will focus on those individuals, events and happenings involved in or surrounding the appeasement for sin to the proposed establishment of God's Kingdom here on earth.

It is hoped that as we study, we will be motivated to align ourselves to be part of this great family of God.

Happy Studying!

LESSON 1

APPEASEMENT FOR SIN

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- To inform/remind that after Adam and Eve sinned an appeasement process was facilitated by God.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 9 | **KEY VERSE:** Hebrews 9:22

INTRODUCTION

Adam and Eve violated God's rule in the Garden of Eden by eating from a tree which He forbade them to partake. This violation would have resulted in utter destruction of the human race, had God not intervened by giving Jesus, His only Son, to die as a once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Since Jesus was not to have come during that dispensation, however, there arose a need for mankind to appease (make peace with) God after having sinned against Him. This lesson seeks to give attention to the route that was taken in this appeasement process.

THE LESSON

Although the Bible does not reveal when the offering of sacrifices began, nor when God initiated this appeasement strategy, one notes that Cain and Abel were the first Bible-recorded cases in which sacrifices were mentioned (Gen. 4:1-5). Apart from Cain and Abel, many other significant Bible characters featured in offering sacrifices at some time or other during their lives; they include Abraham, Jacob, Noah and Job. In each case the players, either sought favour from God, showed some appreciation or atoned for wrongdoing.

In the initial chapters of Leviticus, God outlined the provisions related to blood sacrifices, which He instructed Israel to pursue as appeasement for sin. According to Leviticus 4, when different categories of individuals, or the assembly of Israel sinned, whether knowingly or

through ignorance, the appropriate animal(s) had to be presented for the priest to offer as sacrifices. In other transgressions or dishonest dealings, the prescribed offerings were to be made as directed by God. For example, when one dispossessed someone of his/her property, the offender had to make restitution and acquire a ram which was to be taken to the priest for use as a trespass offering (Leviticus 6:4-7). The use of blood for purging and for remission of sins, is also highlighted by Paul in Hebrews 9:22.

Leviticus 16 also gives a wealth of information concerning the Day of Atonement which was a yearly activity administered by the High Priest. On that day multiple blood sacrifices were offered for the cleansing of the entire congregation, including all categories of sanctuary workers. The atonement also extended to the places of worship in which the Holy Sanctuary and the Tabernacle of the Congregation were cleansed (Lev. 16:33; Heb. 9:21).

Of note is that after Jesus came, shed His blood and died for man's sin, animal sacrifices and other physical offerings were no longer necessary. Now that the emblems which featured in the appeasement process are no longer effective, we should thank God that He always finds a way to accomplish His purposes while He continues to work on the bigger picture - our lives.

Home Study: Joshua 2-6

LESSON 2

RAHAB'S REWARD FOR SAVING THE SPIES

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- For those who study to recognise that God's purpose for an individual is not determined by his/her past.

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 6:12-25 | **KEY VERSE:** Joshua 6:25

INTRODUCTION

In the book of Joshua, we are introduced to a faithful woman known as Rahab. She is one of the only two women named in the 'Hall of Fame' in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter of the Bible. Rahab was a non-Jew and a harlot or prostitute who lived in Jericho, a Canaanite city. Her amazing story portrays how God accepts and uses a person regardless of his or her background (1 Samuel 16:7).

THE LESSON

Prior to the Jews entering Jericho, Joshua sent two spies to 'scout out' the land. In their quest, they went to Rahab's house to garner information. By this time, the King was informed of the two Israelites who had entered the city and had lodged at Rahab's house. The King therefore sent soldiers to Rahab demanding that she release the men into their custody. She however, kept as a secret, the fact that she had hidden them among the stalks of flax on the roof of her house.

She then bargained with the two spies for the safety of her family and herself, when the city would have been destroyed. The spies agreed to her request, giving her three instructions:

- she must distinguish her house from the others by hanging a scarlet rope out of the window so the Israelites would know which house to spare;
- her family must be inside the house during the battle, and

- she must keep their business a secret (Joshua 2:12-21).

The spies on returning, told Joshua of their encounter and the agreement with Rahab. Joshua, in honouring the agreement, told the soldiers to look for the scarlet cord which would have been used to mark the house. This was to ensure that no harm would come to those within that house. During the destruction of the city, as agreed, Rahab and her family were spared.

Rehab (Rachab) acted in faith, was spared, lived among the Israelites and became part of the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1 & 5).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some possible reasons the spies chose the harlot's house?
2. What can you learn from Rehab's action?
3. In what way was Rehab's faith exercised?
4. How did God work through Rehab to preserve His initial plan for mankind?

HOME STUDY: Read up on the Judges of Israel

LESSON 3

JUDGES OF ISRAEL: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. understand that it was necessary for God to appoint leaders
- ii. appreciate the roles of Judges appointed to guide Israel

SCRIPTURE: Judges 2 | **KEY VERSE:** Judges 2:16

INTRODUCTION

For every period in history there have been varied forms of government. Some eras and geographic locations gave rise to monarchs, prime ministers or presidents. There was, however, a critical period in the history of the Israelites when they were led by Judges appointed by God. As the book of Judges opens, it is noticed that the tribes were not at all unified and were continually at risk from surrounding nations.

THE LESSON

The book of Judges records a cycle of disobedience which saw the children of Israel engaging in repeated acts which were contrary to the will of God. The book is characterized by disobedience, repentance and then a return to disobedience time and time again. For example, Judges 2:11 & 16 state, “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:”; “Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them”. The Judges of Israel therefore had very clear roles and responsibilities. Among these were:

- i. delivering messages from God to the Israelites;
- ii. maintaining order;
- iii. rescuing Israelites from their captors, and
- iv. leading the Israelites to repentance and reconciliation.

Contrasted to the time of Joshua, the repeated and consistent violation of God's laws were more prevalent. However, it is felt that this may have been a shift in generation in which the forefathers did not sufficiently teach the young to be obedient to their only True Leader - the God of their fathers (Judges 2:10).

The Judges therefore had a very specific role in governing the people in a theocratic way (through straight directives from God). This was necessary to ensure the continuity of His people through this difficult period of their wanderings.

This disconnection from God was driven by the fact that:

- i. they inherited a land which was jointly occupied and therefore became victims of the sins of their fathers, for not driving out all inhabitants of the land;
- ii. the older generations failed to teach the younger generation;
- iii. they failed to learn from their own mistakes and
- iv. they did not know God for themselves.

Despite this, a loving Father was willing to save them from total destruction (Leviticus 26: 44).

This was done through the instrumentality of the following Judges:

- Othneil (Joshua 15:13-17; Judges 1:9-21; 3:8-11; 1Chron 4:13)
- Ehud (Judge 3:12-30)
- Shamgar (Judges 3:31)
- Deborah & Barak (Judges 4:1-5 & 8-9)
- Gideon (Judges 6:1-8)
- Tola (Judges 10:1-2)
- Jair (Judges 10:3-5)
- Jephthah (Judges 11:1 & 12:7)
- Ibzan (Judges 12:8-10)
- Elon (Judges 12:11, 12)
- Abdon (Judges 12:13-15)
- Samson (Judges 13:1-16)

Each had a critical role to play on the journey from “Eden to Eternity”. It is for this reason that spiritual Israel may now find redemption and a path to eternal life.

ACTIVITY

Choose any 4 of the Judges from the Lesson, outline the circumstance(s) under which they were chosen to lead and highlight their successes and challenges.

LESSON 4

RUTH – FOREPARENT TO THE MESSIAH

PURPOSES OF THE LESSON

For study participants to:

- i. realize that God acknowledges those who are faithful;
- ii. be aware that God used one who was faithful to aid in the structure of His plan for mankind.

SCRIPTURE: RUTH 4 | **KEY VERSE:** RUTH 4: 17

INTRODUCTION

Ruth is better known as that faithful young woman who followed her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehemjudah, despite the latter's entreaty for her to remain in the land of her nativity, following the death of her husband (Ruth 1:5) As a Moabitess, she risked ridicule and rejection and gave up the false god her people worshipped. In following Naomi, Ruth learnt the ways of worshipping the true God and accepted the Israelites as her people (Ruth 1:16).

THE LESSON

On reaching Bethlehem, Naomi who knew about the harvesting custom of Israel (Lev. 19:9-10), allowed Ruth to go in the fields to secure food. As the record tells us, Ruth began reaping in the fields belonging to Boaz of the tribe of Judah, a close relative of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech (Ruth's father-in-law). Boaz was attracted to her and after making enquiries, told her to remain with his team of workers and instructed the young men how to assist her (Ruth 2: 4, 5, 8 &15). Ruth took food home to Naomi who was very pleased and asked of the happenings that day (Ruth 2:19).

Under the Mosaic custom (Deut. 25:5) the next of kin would have been responsible to take care of the inheritance of Elimelech, which

included taking Ruth as wife. As that kinsman refused to do so, Boaz assumed the responsibility and made Ruth his wife. Their union produced a son, Obed, who begat Jesse, who was the father of David (forefathers of Jesus Christ). Thus Ruth, because of her diligence to her mother-in-law and her willingness to be led in the ways of the Israelites and undoubtedly in the way of the Lord, is numbered among the ancestors of Jesus (Matt. 1:1 & 5).

The lesson for believers today is that God will work out His purposes through whomsoever He will. Like Ruth we should be willing to relinquish anything that would hinder us from being a part of His Plan.

LESSON 5

DAVID – THE MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 16:1-13 | **KEY VERSE:** Acts 13:22

INTRODUCTION

David is one of the most notable characters in the Bible. Born into the tribe of Judah, he lived a multifaceted life and played many roles including that of shepherd, warrior, musician, psalmist, prophet, and king. He is also often quoted and referred to in the scriptures.

THE LESSON

We see the first mention of David in Ruth 4:17-22 where he is named as a great grandson of Boaz and Ruth. The fact that he was named last in the genealogical list was an indication of his coming greatness. This greatness began, as recounted in the scripture passage for this lesson, when God led the prophet Samuel to anoint him to be the next king of Israel after Saul. He further rose in prominence in 1 Samuel 17 when God used him to defeat Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, thus securing a victory for the Israelites in their battle against that nation.

David became king in Israel after Saul died, and ruled for forty years. During his reign, he had more victories in battle against Israel’s enemies, defeating the Ammonites and capturing Jerusalem from the Jebusites. He was not satisfied that the Ark which represented the presence of God was being moved from place to place and arranged for it to be brought to a permanent home in Jerusalem. 1 Chronicles 28 tells how he also had a desire to build a house for the Lord, but God prevented him from doing so because he had been involved in too many wars. Being the God-fearing king that he was, David eventually became the standard by which the kings who came after him were judged as can be seen in such passages as 1 Kings 15:3, 1 King 15:11, and 2 Kings 16:2. David had a number of challenging experiences in his life. There was a time when King Saul, out of jealousy, sought to

have him killed. On another occasion, his wife expressed disdain at the way he danced in praise to God, as while doing so part of his garment fell off. There was also an incident in which he had to pretend that he was mad to avoid being captured by his enemies. On top of all this, his own son, Absalom, turned the hearts of the people against David so that he had to leave Jerusalem for a while to save his life. Despite these and other trying circumstances, David kept his relationship with God at a high level.

As a psalmist, David was a prolific writer. Nearly half of the Psalms are attributed to him. He is identified with the Psalms to the extent that many persons erroneously refer to ones not written by him as a 'psalm of David'. In the various Psalms which he wrote, he praised God for His greatness, thanked Him for His favour, sought His help, and pleaded for His forgiveness, among other things. Jesus' connection to David is mentioned repeatedly in the Bible. Matthew 1:1 state that Jesus is a descendant of David and the succeeding verses of the chapter, particularly verse 6, shows exactly where David fell in His genealogy. As Jesus ministered on Earth, many of those who reached out to him for help would cry out, "Jesus, thou son of David...", asking Him to have mercy on them. Jesus Himself, acknowledging his connection to David, declared to John in Revelation 22:16, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

David, the shepherd-king, was the progenitor of Jesus, the One who is truly the 'Good Shepherd' and the 'King of kings'. He played a major role in God's overall plan for man's salvation, and all who serve God can be strengthened and guided by the record of his life and writings. Indeed, he is fully qualified to be called the man after God's own heart.

ACTIVITY

Cite examples from the Psalms which show how David related to God.

LESSON 6

SOLOMON

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. gain more knowledge about Solomon
- ii. know that Solomon is included in the ancestry of Jesus

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 3:5-15 | **KEY VERSES:** Matt. 1:2, 6 & 7

INTRODUCTION

Solomon was the third and last king of the united kingdom of Israel. His ascendancy to the throne was not without controversy, but as it was God's will it could not have been different. It brings to the fore the words of the well-known song, "God moves in a mysterious way."

THE LESSON

One of the things which seem to take centre-stage as the story of Solomon is told, is the fact that he was the wisest man to have lived. This did not come about by chance but because of his humility as is recorded in 1 Kings 3:7-12. He is also remembered, among other things, for finding the right mother of the living baby (1 Kings 3: 16-28). Solomon being the son of David, is included in the genealogy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 1:1-16. One might wonder why God chose Solomon to be king. God must have seen in him, the requisite qualities for the position. In fact, even before his birth, God pronounced that he would be chosen (1 Chron. 22: 9-10).

At the onset of his reign, Solomon exhibited some commendable actions listed below:

- i. asking for wisdom and knowledge instead of riches (2 Chron. 1:7-10),
- ii. building and dedicating the temple (2 Chron. 3:1, 5:1 & 7:5)

iii. confirming to the Queen of Sheba, reports she had heard about his wisdom (2 Chron. 9:1-6).

Solomon's inclusion in the ancestry of Jesus proves that God will always stand by His word and will use whomever He chooses to fulfill His purposes.

LESSON 7

THE PROPHETS

PURPOSES OF THE LESSON:

For study participants to:

- i. understand what/who prophets really were
- ii. learn the role the prophets played in God's plan of salvation

SCRIPTURE: Deut. 13: 1- 11 | **KEY VERSE:** Isaiah 8:20

INTRODUCTION

Civilizations have survived or failed because of the vision or lack thereof, of those who lead. Secular history has recorded the efforts of individuals who have done well in guiding nations to success. These are called politicians, heroes, scientists, entrepreneurs etc. The history of Judaism/Christianity too, has records of men and women who helped to steer nations towards righteousness, hence, sparing people/nations from total annihilation. These individuals are referred to as Prophets and are described as:

- i. persons illuminated, inspired or instructed by God to announce future events (Webster's 1828 Dictionary),
- ii. teachers or interpreters of the Divine Will (The Little Oxford Dictionary).

THE LESSON

Prophets are mentioned in both the Old and the New Testaments. The roles of the Old Testament prophets differ somewhat from the roles of those in the New Testament. Those in the Old Testament era served mainly as God's mouthpiece to rulers and to Israel while in the New Testament, the prophets' roles concentrated more on explaining God's messages so that the people would understand. That role continues to a great extent in these days, the main aim of which is to keep the people focused on God.

One of the main challenges with which God's true prophets struggled, as they made efforts to declare His messages, was the interference by false prophets. Examples of this would be the prophets of Ahab in 2 Chronicles 18:5-13 and Hananiah in Jeremiah 28. Whenever the Israelites fell victim to the false prophets, God allowed His true prophets to call them to repentance (Deut. 18:18-22; 2 Kings 17:13, Jer. 7:1-5; 11:7; Matt. 7:15).

It is important that the prophets of today be fearless in fulfilling their God-given responsibilities as Paul advised in 2 Timothy 4:2. Let the preachers, who are also prophets of today be brave as this is not the time to compromise (1 Cor. 14:3).

ACTIVITIES

1. Examine the following, which will help in identifying the true prophets: People must benefit spiritually from the prophets' ministry (Jer.23:13-14; 1Peter 4:11).
2. The prophecies must be consistent with scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21; Rev. 22: 18-19).
3. The predictions come true at all times, (Deut. 18:22; Isaiah 55:11; Jer.28: 9).

LESSON 8

JEROBOAM

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

For study participants to understand or get a better understanding of:

- i. how Jeroboam became king;
- ii. the repercussions Israel faced from making him king

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 12 | **KEY VERSES:** 1 Kings 11:30 & 31

INTRODUCTION

Jeroboam was the first king to rule over the Northern Kingdom - ten tribes which revolted after the death of Solomon. The other two tribes remained under the direct control of the Davidic dynasty. This was a fulfillment of the prophecies contained in 1 Kings 11:29-32.

THE LESSON

This man Jeroboam was born to Nebat, a servant of Solomon (1 Kings 11: 26). Jeroboam too became a servant under Solomon and was given direct responsibility for the house of Joseph. He proved to be a mighty man of valour who was very industrious (1 Kings 11: 28). As time went on Jeroboam revolted and had to take asylum in Egypt to escape the wrath of Solomon. After the death of Solomon, he returned for the installation of Rehoboam as king to succeed Solomon (1 Kings 12: 3). Jeroboam led a delegation to Rehoboam and requested that the level of taxation be lowered.

Rehoboam took three days to consider the proposal as he consulted with the counsellors who served his father and some of his companions whom he had made counsellors. He did not follow the advice of the counsellors who served his father but heeded that of his young counsellors who told him to increase the taxation. This caused the division of the kingdom with ten tribes siding with Jeroboam and two

staying with Rehoboam, Solomon's son. It is worthy of note that Judah was one of the two tribes which remained with the Davidic dynasty to fulfill the prophecies concerning Jesus.

In order to keep the kingdom divided Jeroboam schemed to keep the people from going to Jerusalem to worship and sacrifice as he feared that, that could unify them once again. He set up two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan and ordained priests to lead the worship/ feast similar to those done in Jerusalem by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (1 Kings 12:26-28). Here begins the decline of God's special people as they gradually gave themselves wholly over to idolatry which led to them being scattered.

An important lesson that can be learnt is that God's people must always be careful who they follow as they might be led astray.

LESSON 9

REHOBAM

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- For those who study to understand that God's initial plan of eternal life still stands

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 12 | **KEY VERSE:** Galatians 6:8

INTRODUCTION

God's initial plan for mankind to have a relationship with Him, serving Him only and eventually have eternal life, may appear to have been in trouble when the united kingdom of Israel was divided into two Kingdoms which were later conquered by heathen nations.

THE LESSON

After King Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. Rehoboam refused the advice of the men who counselled his father and accepted that of his peers. Ten tribes of Israel revolted, appointing Solomon's servant, Jeroboam, an Ephraimite as their king, thus establishing the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The two southern tribes Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty and were called Judah.

Both the Southern Kingdom (Judah) and the Northern Kingdom (Israel) fell deeper into transgression against God's laws. The Northern Kingdom continued its descent into moral decay and sin with each king appearing to rival the wickedness of his predecessor. While the promise made to David that a descendant of his would always be on the throne was upheld by God, the kings were not always willing to adhere to God's instructions. There were those (Jehoshaphat and Jotham, among others) who through their willingness to obey and follow God's instructions (2 Chr. 20:32, 27:1-2) ensured that despite the wanderings of others, the law of God (the prescription for how mankind should live) was not utterly eroded.

Both nations eventually suffered from the consequences of their actions and the rejection of God's covenant; the Day of Doom had come. God's chosen people were led into captivity; the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians. It would appear that God had given up on his Chosen People through whom it was declared that other nations would be blessed.

God is a Master Planner, therefore His plan for mankind may have taken a different route but at a time appointed, it would be fulfilled. God ensured there was a remnant that would return to Judah from captivity (Nehemiah 1). This faithful few remained loyal to God's covenant amidst trying circumstances, thus guaranteeing that God's plan would be realized.

The plan of eternal life is being preserved throughout the ages so that peoples of all nations would have the opportunity to share in this beautiful plan devised for mankind. God's plan would be realized in the coming of His Son through the tribe of Judah.

Whether we choose to obey or disobey, God's plan is still the same and He will bring it to fruition. It is in our best interest to ensure that we are knowledgeable of and follow God's instructions to the letter so that we become or remain part of God's Plan of Eternal Life.

LESSON 10

JESUS' BIRTH FORETOLD

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For study participants to:

- i. become more knowledgeable of the prophecies concerning Jesus' birth;
- ii. understand that all the prophecies about the birth of Jesus were fulfilled as prophesied

INTRODUCTION

History (ancient and modern), has spoken of the lives of great men and women who have served their societies well, although their birth was never foretold. Nothing was even said or known of them at their birth. Their greatness was spoken of only after they achieved it. Amazingly though, religious history has predicted the birth of a few men who would be great such as Samson, John the Baptist and 'Immanuel' – Jesus, the most famous of all (Isaiah 7:14).

THE LESSON

The earliest prediction of the birth of the One who was to be called Immanuel (God is with us), was made in the book of Genesis (the book of the beginnings), stating that He would bruise the head of the serpent-Satan (Gen. 3:14-15). In fact, the Old Testament Books of the Bible record many instances of prophetic declarations which speak of the birth of One who would play the important role of offering eternal life to man as recorded in John 3:16-17.

It would be impossible in one lesson, to discuss all the prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus. The table below, however, provides a list of some of the significant predictions which upon careful study, will prove that all were made without any dependence on what was said before; and which were fulfilled to the letter.

#	PROPHETIC DECLARATION	REFERENCES
1	The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Indicating that Jesus would come through the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10
2	I shall see him...A star out of Jacob...to destroy all the children of Sheth.	Numbers 24:17
3	The Messiah would be born of a virgin; His name would be called Immanuel...; Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God...the Prince of Peace.	Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6
4	Born from the tribe of Jesse out of the house of David	Isaiah 11:1/ Jer. 23:5-6
5	There would be a great slaying of children at His birthplace.	Jeremiah 31:15
6	The arrival of One who would bring an end to the sacrificial offerings.	Daniel 9:26-27
7	Messiah would be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2

These precise predictions inspired by the all-knowing God demonstrate that He has perfect knowledge of all (past, present and future). We can therefore rest assured that He will make good on His promises to us that if we be willing and obedient, we shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19).

LESSON 11

JESUS IS BORN

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. understand the reason for Jesus' birth
- ii. realize that Satan is always ruthless in his efforts to destroy God's plan
- iii. be comforted in the fact that Satan will never get the victory.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-8 | **KEY VERSES:** Matthew 2:1-2

INTRODUCTION

God in His infinite love and mercy foreordained His plan of redemption for man through Jesus (1Peter 1:18-21). The promise of this Redeemer was actually made from the time Adam sinned (Gen.3:15).

THE LESSON

As all Israel eagerly looked for the coming of the Messiah, God sent Gabriel to a virgin by the name of Mary to inform her that she would give birth to a Son whom she would name Jesus (Luke 1:30-31). The angel confirmed the birth to Joseph and added that Jesus would save His people from their sins (Matt.1: 20-21). This was in keeping with the prophecy of Isaiah (7:14). Paul concurred when he said that God sent His son in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4).

On the night Jesus was born, angels announced His birth to shepherds who visited Him while He was still in the stable resting in a manger (Luke 2: 15-16). Sometime after, wise men from the East who had learnt of the birth (years before He was actually born), visited, but at that time they saw Him in a house (Matt. 2:1-2 & 9 -11). Herod was not very amused about the birth of a king so he asked the wise men to report to him when they found the baby. He told them he wanted to worship Him, but he really wanted to kill Him as is brought out in

Matthew 2:16. The devil, knowing that Jesus would bruise his head was not taking kindly to His birth. He tried to woo Him to obey/ worship him. Think of what would have happened if Jesus had heeded Satan. The devil did not stop there though, he influenced others to try and kill Jesus (Examine Luke 4:28-31, and John 8:58-59). All efforts failed until it was time for Him to submit Himself to be crucified for the sins of the world.

Let us live with confidence knowing that Jesus was born to save us from sin and death thus making it possible for us to have everlasting life.

ACTIVITIES

1. According to Matthew 2:7 & 16, state about how long before the birth of Jesus did the wise men see the star.
2. What is the most important reason for the birth of Jesus? Matt. 1:21. Luke 2:30-32.
3. Discuss the attempts that Satan made to destroy baby Jesus and examine how God provided a way of escape.

HOME STUDY: LUKE 11

LESSON 12

JESUS' MINISTRY

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. appreciate Jesus' role in bringing redemption to fallen man;
- ii. recognize and appreciate that God continues to extend His grace and love through Jesus

SCRIPTURE: Luke 4:16-44 | **Key Verse:** John 3:17

INTRODUCTION

Since man sinned, God has made provisions for him to be reconciled to Him. This included the offering of animals as sacrifices which continued up to the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus started His ministry when He was about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23). Some commentaries state that although the ministry lasted only three and a half years, it was a powerful one.

THE LESSON

Jesus' main reason for coming was to die to save man from everlasting death. This was expressed by the prophets and other men of God who welcomed His birth. The testimonies of the man of God, Simeon, and the prophetess Anna, also spoke to it (Luke 2:25-33 & 36-38). Jesus started His ministry shortly after He was baptized. He was engaged in a ministry of teaching, preaching and healing, as well as setting an example of how mankind ought to live in order to please God. His first message was, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Matt.4:17) which proved to be the central theme of all His messages up to the time when He was crucified. Jesus preached of the importance of living free from sin and being in good standing with God. He also showed that He was the Son of God and had the power to forgive sins (Matt. 9:2-6).

Another important aspect of Jesus' ministry is that He was fearless and never sided with the established teachers in His days but denounced them because of their hypocrisies (recall Home Study). The people confessed that He spoke and taught with authority (Matt. 7:29, Mark 1:22), unlike some preachers both of those days and today.

In carrying out the will of His Father, Jesus taught that He had come to make the commandments more effective and meaningful thus He had not come to destroy any (Matt. 5:17). His ministry was not to do things to please Himself (John 4:34, 9:4). Jesus knew and accepted that the greatest part of His ministry was to give His life for sinful man, hence when the agony of death was upon Him, He prayed that God's will be done (Matt.26:38-39 & 42).

The church needs more men to minister like Jesus did, who will say, 'Here am I Lord'.

ACTIVITY

State your favourite parable/miracle that speaks to your experiences/ makes you feel encouraged in your salvation.

LESSON 13

JESUS IS REJECTED BY THE JEWS

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- For study participants to understand the implications of the rejection

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27: 1-26 | **KEY VERSES:** Isaiah 53:2-3

INTRODUCTION

The verb form of the infinitive, ‘to reject’ carries the presumption that an initial offer was made to a capable participant who actively refused, declined, turned down or denied the offer. If the offering is refused, then it may be termed a ‘reject’. This lesson focuses on Jesus, who was rejected by the Jews.

THE LESSON

The Jews were all cognizant of the fact that one would come as their King, so all waited with eager anticipation for His arrival. When He finally arrived, angels heralded His birth to shepherds who warmly accepted Him. However, there were those who did not cordially accept Him as John 1:11 emphasizes, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” One might be at a loss as to why the Jews rejected Him; could it be because of His lineage or lowly birth?

The religious bigots of the day tried to humiliate Him. They referred to Him as “this fellow” and attributed His miracle working power to “Beelzebub;” and still others spoke of Him as “the carpenter’s son” (Matt. 12:23-25; 13:55). In John 5: 39-40, Jesus told the Jews that they were actually searching the scriptures as they thought they would gain eternal life through them, but they refused to accept Him even though the scriptures testify of Him.

Paul alluded that the Jews were made partial spiritually blind by their rejection of Jesus (Rom.11:25). So intense was the rejection that they

had Him crucified according to Peter (Acts 2:22-23). While Pilate was willing to release Jesus, the crowd perhaps made up of more Jews than any other people, agreed to accept instead, the release of a common criminal - Barabbas - and asked that Jesus be crucified as they had only one king who was Caesar (Matt. 27:15-23, John 19:14-16). Bear in mind that the key verses state that He was despised and rejected.

Let the Gentile people not rejoice over the Jew but accept the price Jesus paid for their Redemption (Romans 11:17-21).

ACTIVITIES

In light of the lesson explain in not more than three sentences how the following passages speak to the Jew's rejection of Jesus:

- a. Acts 2:23
- b. Acts 7:51-52

Cite any other Bible passage which can be used to show that the Jews actually rejected Jesus.

LESSON 14

JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For study participants to recognize:

- i. that Jesus Christ was God's ultimate sacrifice for man's sin
- ii. that Jesus Christ was no transgressor although he was numbered among them
- iii. that God granted man a second chance via this great sacrifice

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27:27-50 | **KEY VERSE:** Romans 6:6

INTRODUCTION

When God created the world, He made it perfect. However, man sinned and as a result God enacted a plan for his redemption. The Bible records many instances in which God expresses His displeasure for sin. He, in many instances established guidelines to assist mankind to live sin-free. Under the Old Testament arrangement, there were many sacrifices that had to be made for man's condition to improve. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, however, was of great significance and was the ultimate sacrifice for man's redemption.

THE LESSON

Jesus the Son of God, the only human being in all history, who was completely pure and without sin, voluntarily offered himself and was crucified as the atonement for the sin of mankind (Romans 5:6, 2 Cor 5:21, 1Peter 3:18). Imagine He who was without sin, was rejected by men and numbered among thieves in His death (Mark 15:27-28). Not only did He die a physical death but He even experienced separation from God while He was hanging on the cross (Matthew 27: 46, Mark 15:34).

When Jesus died the heavy veil of the temple was rent in twain thereby symbolizing that man now has direct access to God, no longer needing a human intermediary (Ephesians 2:14-18). The debt had been paid, the way back to the Father was open.

Jesus did not remain in the grave but rose victorious over death thereby guaranteeing us victory over sin. He ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of His Father making intercession for us (Rom 8:24).

LESSON 15

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

PURPOSES OF THE LESSON

For study participants to:

- i. understand/better understand the Old Testament Passover
- ii. appreciate Jesus as our Passover

KEY VERSE: 1 Corinthians 5:7

INTRODUCTION

God instituted a Passover for the Israelites which was observed the night before they were set free from Egyptian slavery. That night the angel of death passed over Egypt causing the death of the first born in the houses where there was no blood- mark on the door post. The Passover consisted of:

- i. a year-old male lamb, goat or sheep, without spot or blemish (Ex. 12: 5);
- ii. unleavened bread (Ex.12:8);
- iii. bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8).

Ancient Israel were told that they were to celebrate the Passover every year as a reminder of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Ex.12:14 & 17).

THE LESSON

The Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage and slavery after the 'Passover Lamb' was killed and the blood plastered on the door-posts and on the lintels. The blood gave protection to the Israelites and so they suffered no harm, none of their first born died. However, the Egyptians' first born died as they never had the protection of the blood.

In the key verse, Paul states that Jesus has become our Passover Lamb (Paschal Lamb) and has died for us. In fact, He was crucified at the time that the Israelites would have killed the lamb and celebrated the Passover (John 19:14-18, Rom. 3:24-25, 1 Cor. 5:7). Death was pronounced on man because of Adam's sin but the spotless 'Lamb of God', Jesus, became our Passover and gave His life, shedding His blood on the cross. Mark 14:24 amplifies the fact that the blood of Jesus is/has become the blood of the New Testament (no more animal blood). In Acts 20:28, Paul said that the Church of God was purchased by the blood of Jesus.

Just as how the blood, used on the doorposts saved the Israelites from the 'Destroying angel,' even so will those who accept the sacrificial blood of Jesus be saved from sin (1 John 1:7) and thus the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23fp).

Let us give thanks to God that Jesus was found worthy to be offered for our sins and has become our 'Passover Lamb.'

ACTIVITY

State with supporting scriptures how the lamb used in the Israelites' Passover could be likened to Jesus.

LESSON 16

THE COVENANTS: OLD VERSUS NEW

Purpose of study:

- For those who study to identify the relationship between the old and new covenants

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 9 | **KEY VERSES:** Hebrews 10:16 &20

INTRODUCTION

Several definitions of the word ‘covenant’ have been posited; one such is found in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, which describes a covenant as a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action. For the purpose of this lesson the definition provided by the Oxford Dictionary - “a solemn agreement held to be the basis of a commitment with God”, will be considered. Today we will examine two covenants, the Old between God and Israel with Moses as the mediator, and the New, between God and man with Christ as the mediator.

THE LESSON

The Old Covenant, having to do with animal sacrifices, was established between God and the Israelites after they were freed from slavery in Egypt (Hebrews 9:7). Its purpose was to show that they (the Israelites) were ‘God’s chosen people’. The New Covenant came about with the crucifixion of Jesus, and as was obtained in the Old Covenant, included the shedding of blood. This was a promise between God and mankind in which He would forgive sins and restore fellowship with man (Hebrews 9:14).

Under the Old Covenant, God’s chosen people, the Israelites were expected to be obedient to Him and observe His laws; in return He would bless them (Ex. 6:7 & Deut 28:1-2). This covenant entailed the sacrifices listed in the Mosaic Law and many rules of religious obser-

vance. God saw that in order for ‘His chosen people’ to be saved there had to be rules for them to follow. The Israelites were required to perform specific sacrifices to God depending on the nature of their sin.

The New Covenant, through the shedding of Jesus’ blood on the cross, made the way for mankind to be forgiven of their sins and to gain eternal life (Hebrews 9:15 & 1 John 1:9). Under the New Covenant, man is no longer required to bear the laws on stones nor on frontlets on their foreheads, but according to the Hebrews 8:10 & 10:16, are required to hide them in their hearts/minds. Thus, Jesus ended the old Covenant and established the new (Heb. 8:13).

Let us examine the following points:

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
Exposed sin (Gal. 3:19)	Offers forgiveness of sin (Rom. 4: 1-8)
Could not give life (2 Cor. 3:7)	Gives life (Gal. 3:11; 6:8)
Brought a curse (Gal. 3:10)	Redeems from the curse (Gal. 3:13)

With the shedding of Jesus’ blood both the Old and New covenants became interconnected in that the Israelites, “God’s chosen people” as well as all other people now have the opportunity of receiving salvation freely (Eph. 2:8). There is no longer the need for animal sacrifices; all that is required is for one to confess his/her trespasses/sins to God, turn from them and serve God with a true heart. We are required to exercise faith in Christ, who fulfilled the Law on our behalf and ended the sacrificial laws by His own sacrificial death. Jesus’ death made it possible for us to share in His inheritance of eternal life through the Holy Spirit. As a result, if believers remain faithful, they will enjoy a permanent relationship with God.

Be reminded that the new covenant is made possible only by faith in Christ, whose blood was shed to take away the sins of the world. Our responsibility therefore is to strive to live for God, so that we can be vessels of honour.

LESSON 17

ACCEPTANCE OF THE GENTILES

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

For participants to be aware that:

- i. God desires that all mankind obtain eternal life
- ii. there is only one prescribed way to be saved

SCRIPTURE: Acts 10 | **KEY VERSE:** Jeremiah 29:13

INTRODUCTION

The man Cornelius was a Roman centurion who was considered by many to be the first Gentile who was converted to Christianity. As stated in the lesson scripture, he feared God, was prayerful and gave willingly to the poor. These actions pleased God who had regard for his prayer, thereby concurring with the prophetic utterances in the key verse.

THE LESSON

According to Bible commentaries, the term Gentile is used to refer to anyone who is not a Jew (i.e not of the tribe of Judah). Salvation was thought to be for the Jews (John 4:22) and hence the Gentiles had no lot nor part in it. In the fullness of time God made a way for all to come to Him (John 3:16). This demonstrated that God is the God of mankind and not just of a nation. In Him there is neither bond nor free, Jew nor Greek (Gal 3:28, Col 3:11). He uses a nation to set an example, but He intends for all mankind to obtain salvation.

Peter, the first Evangelist to the Gentiles, was given the mandate through a vision to visit with Cornelius. He explained to him that it was not normal for a Jew to keep company with Gentiles, but God had showed him that he should not call any man common or unclean (Acts 10:28). Peter continued to inform the gathering that God is no

respector of persons, but will accept from any nation, anyone that fears Him and worketh righteousness (Acts 10:34-35).

It is important to note that the same actions that were required of the Jews in Acts 2 (repentance and baptism) in order to receive salvation were the same ones required of the Gentiles then and are still relevant for us today.

Peter along with the men who were with him were astonished to hear the Gentiles speaking through the Holy Ghost, things that they were able to understand. He then commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord, thereby creating access for the inclusion of the Gentiles. We give thanks today that we are included in this wonderful plan of salvation.

ACTIVITIES

1. Highlight lessons that can be learned from the life of Cornelius
2. What did Peter mean when he told Cornelius that God is no respecter of persons?

LESSON 18

GRAFTED ONTO THE GOOD OLIVE TREE: GENTILES INCLUDED IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- For study participants to be made aware of the process, value and consequence of being made heirs of the promises of God.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 11 | **KEY VERSE:** Galatians 3:29

INTRODUCTION

Olive trees were a significant part of the lives of the ancient Israelites and their neighbours. The trees and fruit were used for food (Deuteronomy 8:7-8), for building (1 Kings. 6:31-33) and in worship (Exodus 30:22 -25). No wonder they were used as symbols of blessing and prosperity (Psalms 52:8; 128:3 and Hosea 14:6). Given this familiarity, everyone from the surrounding regions, that heard or read the words of Paul recorded in Romans 11, understood the profound significance of the message he was sending when he spoke of the olive tree. This study will focus on the relevance of the comparison and draw from it the lessons Paul wanted to share with Israelites and Gentiles alike.

THE LESSON

Most modern commentary on the book of Romans highlight chapters 9-11 as a defence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This defence became necessary because many Jews, including some of the religious leaders, were unhappy that Paul claimed Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 13:45-50). This constant rejection led to Paul deciding to dedicate his effort to preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 18: 4-6). Chapter 11 begins with the affirmation that God still loved the Jews and had not cast them aside, but as it was in the time of Elijah, there remained a remnant who had accepted the Gospel message – the elect by grace (vs. 1-7).

The Jews that did not accept the message were not cut off forever but were being provoked to jealousy by the fact that the Messiah had welcomed the Gentiles (v. 11). Paul in fact made it clear that the rejection of these unbelieving Jews was not meant to be permanent but was simply the doorway that led to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the promise of salvation (v. 11-15). This gift to the Gentiles was, of course, the plan of God from the beginning of time; Abraham was called to be a channel of God's blessing to "all families of the earth" and Jesus sent His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations (Genesis 12: 2-3; Matthew 28:18-20).

Paul then compared the inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of salvation to the grafting of a branch from a wild olive tree onto a cultivated tree. This comparison was well thought out and brings forward many exciting and sobering aspects of our adoption into the family of God.

Firstly, the grafting process usually involves grafting a branch from a cultivated (good) olive tree onto a wild tree that was simply taking up space and not producing any fruit, not the other way around (v. 24). This was done to take advantage of the strength of the old tree's roots and the fruit production of the cultivated tree. However, in Christ, the branch from the fruitless wild tree (the Gentiles) is grafted onto the cultivated, fruitful and flourishing, tree (God's church) so that the Gentile can be supported by the roots of the tree, which is the strength of the faith of the patriarchs, in particular Abraham. The Gentiles conversion and acceptance into the church of God is a process of removing them from a useless, unproductive state and placing them where they can be nourished and ultimately become fruitful in Christ.

Secondly, Gentiles are cautioned against becoming proud about their status as spiritual Jews (vs. 11-21). The call to salvation, and the fact that it came at the expense of the unbelieving Jews, is not a reason to be boastful, but rather to fear (v. 20). The branches that were broken off for their benefit were part of the church of God; it is the Jews' lack of acceptance of Christ as the Messiah that led to their exclusion. Thus, if the Gentiles simply think that they are in a privileged position and fail to follow God's will, they too will be cut off (vs. 21-22; 1 Corinthians 10:12). It is only by remaining in His grace, that His blessing and promise of salvation are extended to the Gentiles (v. 22).

The final lesson to take from this passage has to do with mercy. The branches that were broken off still have the opportunity to access the salvation through Christ. Believers should believe that there are many who do not now believe but may one day believe and be brought into the church - or in the case of the Jews, be brought back into the church (v. 23-30). We are called upon to have mercy on non-believers as it is through our mercy that they will obtain mercy (v. 31). Recall that we were once “aliens from the commonwealth and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Galatians 2:12-13).

Believers are called to remember that they have been brought into the family of God and their salvation is dependent on their continued faith in Christ.

LESSON 19

PAUL'S TEACHINGS ON THE LAW

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For study participants to:

- i. realize that God wants people to obey His laws/commands just as He expected of Adam and Eve.
- ii. accept that if they disobey God's law, they will be shut out of the 'New Paradise'

SCRIPTURE: Acts 15:1-31 | **KEY VERSES:** Romans 7:7 &12

INTRODUCTION

News of killing, robbery and other lawless acts have driven fear in people all around the world. There is the cry for more laws, or for the existing laws to be updated to bring some semblance of order. It is an accepted fact that where people do not allow the law to guide them there will be chaos. Paul asserts that societies need laws; as where there is no law, no one can be charged for wrongdoing (Rom. 4:15).

THE LESSON

History has proved that in order for communities to survive, the need exists for the making/ upgrading, adherence to and enforcement of laws to curb people's behaviour. The One who created this world and made human beings to live therein, has given laws to govern their behaviour. Mankind has gradually deviated from God's laws and rejected the way God planned for them to go. There now seems to be a wholesale rejection, as man does what he pleases. It has become so blatant, that some persons, even theologians have claimed that the Laws of God are abolished.

Paul, during his time, struggled with many who were not making the distinction between the Moral Law written by the finger of God

and the Ceremonial Law, written by Moses (Exodus 31: 18, Deut. 31: 24-26). The problem was not whether the Sabbath or the Ten Commandments were to be observed, but whether the Gentiles who were accepting Jesus as Saviour, were to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic laws specific to the Jews (including circumcision) (Acts 15:1-2, 23 & 28-29).

The Galatian brethren were bothered by false teachers who told them to observe sections of the Mosaic Law. In order to correct that error, Paul told them that if they partially observed the Mosaic Law they would be under God's wrath and condemnation (Gal. 3:1-10).

As Paul continued his discourse on the law, he said that the law was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3: 24-25). That statement at times has been misunderstood. The schoolmaster is not the principal, but a most trusted family slave/servant to whom was given the responsibility of his master's son¹. This trusted family slave/servant would see to the child's well-being, just as the law would guide us in the right path – away from sin.

The law does not forgive sins, it points out sin. Forgiveness comes through Jesus. God is preparing a people for His eternal kingdom thus He has them observing the laws by which they will be governed in 'Paradise' - the earth made new.

ACTIVITY

Explain how 1 Corinthians 7:19 relate to this Lesson

¹ The Wycliffe Bible Commentary 1990 p.1292

LESSON 20

GOD MEETS WITH HIS PEOPLE PART 2

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- To re-emphasize the importance of God meeting with His people in order re-align the relationship which was broken in the Garden of Eden.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 7: 44-50 | **KEY VERSE:** Hebrews 10:25

INTRODUCTION

God's people are dear to Him. It is therefore critical that a line of contact and communication be maintained at all times, so as to ensure that mankind remains aligned with His requirements and expectations. The genesis of God's relationship with man was in the Garden of Eden. This relationship will undoubtedly continue until mankind transitions to the earth made new - an experience that will be unending.

Part 1 of this Lesson (studied in a previous series) highlighted some Patriarchs of old and instances when and where God met with them. Today's Lesson is a continuation those discussions and will outline other instances or scenarios God chose to meet with His people.

THE LESSON

The advent of Jesus and the empowerment of His disciples with the Holy Ghost after His departure brought further diversity to God's way of meeting with His people. The table below captures the various places where Jesus met with His people:

MEETING PLACES	REFERENCES
In the Synagogue	Matt 4:23 & 9:35
On the Mountain	Matt. 5
In a House	Matt. 8:14-18
Cities	Matt 11:1
By the Seaside	Matt. 13:1 & 2
In Desert	Matt. 14:13 & 14

Today God maintains His desire to have a relationship with His people. Paul in Hebrews 10:25, exhorts us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. In our time, this is done in churches which are buildings specially dedicated to God for this purpose. The opportunity is also available for us as God's children, to meet with Him daily, which is again supported by Paul in 1 Cor 6:19, when he tells us that that our bodies are the temple of the Living God, and therefore we should make ourselves available to Him.

One must not overlook the point that as individuals, we are God's children and thus we can meet with Him daily, as 1 Cor 6:19 suggests that our bodies are the temple of the Living God. Today, God still has a desire to meet with His people, and therefore exhorts, through the words spoken by Paul in Hebrews 10:25, that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. In our time, this 'assembling of ourselves together' is done in churches - buildings specially dedicated to God for this purpose.

We can be assured, that just as God has, over the years caused meeting places to be established to facilitate Him meeting with His people, He is preparing for us the ultimate meeting place, the earth made new.

LESSON 21

JOHN IN THE ISLE OF PATMOS

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. create a link between the garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem
- ii. explore God's plan of eternity for His chosen people.

SCRIPTURES: Revelation 20:1-6 & 21:1-27 | **KEY VERSE:** Revelation 1:19

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, the Lord has summoned men to carry out specific roles; in order that His purposes be accomplished and that His glory be seen. Having answered the call, God used them to enrich the lives of people, give warnings and make them aware of His power. In accomplishing the tasks, these men would encounter challenging situations which extended their faith and endurance.

THE LESSON

While exiled in Patmos, John was shown a vision of things past, present and future (Rev.1:19); this included the punishment of the ungodly, and the reward of eternal salvation for the Godly. This was necessary as God was showing that the earth would be returned to its original state, when Adam and Eve enjoyed Edenic bliss - before they sinned.

Eden was a paradise, where God had fellowship with Adam and Eve, before Satan interfered and led man astray. There was absolutely no way that God would have allowed the plan of Satan to override His. Sin had to be removed so that man could be reconciled. In order to make this reconciliation possible, Jesus had to shed His blood, as without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

Let us not lose sight of the fact that redemption is now possible so that man can have hope of eternal life. It is promised to every human being who have surrendered his/her life to God's will, and has been standing up for righteousness and truth. On the other hand, Rev. 21:8 tells of those who will not be in the earth made new, and of the fate that awaits them.

Let us, therefore, ensure that we are included in the first resurrection, when those who serve faithfully will rise to live eternally with the Lord.

ACTIVITY

Compare life in the Garden of Eden with the new Jerusalem that John saw in his vision.

