

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND



P R I M A R Y
T E A C H E R ' S
H A N D B O O K

Book 1

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

**SABBATH SCHOOL
TEACHER'S
HANDBOOK**

PRIMARY GRADE
BOOK 1

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Committee on the Instruction of the Young
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PREFACE

THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

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The Committee on the Instruction of the Young

Primary Course – Suggested age 7-10 years

This book, which covers one year of the three year Primary Course, was produced to help teachers prepare for and present their Sabbath School lessons. It is meant merely as an aid to and not a substitute for the teacher's own efforts. Biblical references are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.

The material for each lesson consists of (a) Teacher's material and (b) Pupil's worksheets - copies of which are found in a separate section at the back of this book.

In the Teacher's material the Scripture passages for study are given at the top of each lesson. Teachers should familiarise themselves with these passages before commencing to teach. For most lessons 'Background Notes' have been provided. The purpose of these is to explain the meaning of certain words and passages as well as giving the teacher a good background knowledge of the topic under study by setting the passage in its historical and Scriptural context and/or explaining the custom of the time.

Each lesson has a 'Lesson Aim' and teachers are advised to pay particular attention to this as it is only when the teacher has a clear view of what the objective is that the lesson can be properly taught.

Specific suggestions have been made as to how the lessons should be presented and also when the pupil's worksheets should be used. Of course, each class will have its own particular needs depending on the abilities and interests of the pupils, and teachers should be aware of these and where necessary adapt a lesson to suit these needs. It is important for teachers to get pupils to see the importance of the lesson being taught and its relevance to everyday life. To help with this an application section has been included at the end of most lessons.

The Committee sincerely thanks the many members of the Church who wrote and prepared these materials for publication. It is our earnest prayer that they will be used by the Holy Spirit to build up our young people in their knowledge of God and what He requires of them in the way of repentance, faith and new obedience.

LESSON 1

God's Word

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH WHAT HE HAS MADE

Scripture Text - Genesis 1 and 2

AIM OF LESSON

To show that God created the world, everything in it, and that man was a special creation.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The word 'created' means 'made out of nothing'. 'In the beginning' means 'at the start or commencement of time'.

VISUAL AIDS

Six pictures - each portraying what God made on the creation days:-

Day 1 - day and night

Day 4 - sun, moon and stars

Day 2 - sky, clouds and water

Day 5 - birds and fish

Day 3 - land, sea, flowers and trees

Day 6 - animals and man

Small items made from various things - wood, stone, metal, cotton, picture of man and animals.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Tell the children you are going to make a pair of trousers. You have in front of you an empty box. Shake it, and command all the necessary materials to appear in it. Then take off the lid to see what has happened. Ask your pupils why it did not work. Try again to make the trousers. This time put material, thread, buttons and zip into the box. Shake it, take the lid off, turn it upside down on a table and wait expectantly to see if a pair of trousers will be below the box. Ask the children why the contents have not changed. Why did it not work? Make sure the pupils realise how silly it is to think that anything could happen by itself, or without careful planning.

Talk about the different things in the world and how God made them - look at the various items made from stone, metal, wood, etc. God made them all.

Outline

A long time ago God made a plan. He decided to create a beautiful world and put people in it to look after it. God is so wonderful that He was able to make it all out of nothing - that is what the word 'create' means. He also had only to 'speak' and it happened.

God took six days to create the world. Let me tell you what He did on each day.

On the first day God said 'Let there be light', and there was light. (Show picture 1) This is how we have our day and night. God called the light 'day' and the darkness God called 'night'. Ask the class what they do during the day and at night. So God planned that in daytime we are awake and at night time we are to rest and sleep.

The second day God spoke, the sky and the clouds were made. (Show picture 2) There was nothing but water to be seen everywhere.

God spoke again on the third day. The water was divided. Dry land appeared. God called the dry land 'earth' and the water He called 'seas'. (Show picture 3) Ask the class how many of them have ever paddled at the sea-side or climbed up a mountain. Where did they go and who went with them? We live and walk about on the dry land which God called Earth. God spoke and things grew out of the earth - trees, plants and flowers. God made big tall trees and tiny little flowers. How many of the class have climbed a tree or made a daisy chain? God made all these growing things for us on the third day, just by speaking.

On the fourth day God made the sun, moon and stars. (Show picture 4) God set the sun to light the earth by day and the moon and stars to light it by night. Talk about what your pupils like to do on a warm sunny day. Ask how many have ever looked out at the stars before going to bed, on a clear night, just to see the many many stars God has made.

Birds and fish were next in God's plan. (Show picture 5) Ask how many of the children have goldfish or budgies for a pet? God just spoke and He made the birds, big birds and little birds. God also made all the creatures that live in the sea - large fish and small fish. Ask the class to name some of these.

On the sixth day God made the animals. (Show picture 6) Ask each child to name an animal God has made. God made the sheep with woolly coats so that we can have warm clothes. Ask the children to think of any other animals that help us in any way - cows: meat, milk, leather etc.

This sixth day was also a special day, because God made man. The first man was called Adam. Adam was different from us. He did not have a mother or father and he was never a baby or 'little' boy. God made him 'grown up'. And God did something very special to Adam which He had not done before - He breathed His own breath into him, so Adam became alive in a special way.

After a little while God saw that Adam was lonely - the animals were not enough company for him. So He decided to make a companion for Adam. He put him to sleep and made a woman out of his ribs. (Show where the ribs are) When Adam woke up God brought the woman to

him and he called her Eve.

Adam and Eve were very happy together. God had made a lovely garden for them to live in and they were to look after it for Him.

Summary

Go back over the story very briefly holding up the appropriate pictures and having the pupils tell what they mean. Finally ask the pupils what was so special about the sixth day? - man was made.

N.B. - You could mention here that there are seven days in one week. God made nothing on the seventh day. He rested from all His work but not because He was tired!!

APPLICATION

As we look at the sky and see the beautiful shining stars and the moon, and as we look at the mountains, the sunshine, the birds, the trees and the flowers, we know that God made all these. No-one but a very powerful and wise God could create all these things. So the world speaks to us about God.

Since God has made the whole world, we must take care of it. How can we do this? - by looking after our pets; taking all our litter home and not dropping it; feeding little birds in winter. Next time the children find a bird's feather suggest they look at it carefully. They will see how well God has made it even though it may be very tiny. Discuss these ideas with the children and ask them for other suggestions.

LESSON 2

God's Word

GOD'S WORD TELLS ABOUT SIN

Scripture Text - Genesis 3

AIM OF LESSON

To show that sin spoils and God punishes sin. Disobedience is a sin.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The serpent - a real creature, used by the devil as his mouthpiece.

VISUAL AIDS

Take 3 postcards and on the front of each card write.

Card 1 - Do not touch

Card 2 - Do not drink

Card 3 - Do not come near

Then on the back of the cards write:-

Card 1 - Wet Paint

Card 2 - Poison

Card 3 - Dangerous Animal

Show side one first.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Tell a simple story -

One day Mummy and Peter were out shopping. Mummy was very busy as she had lots of things to buy, and her baskets were beginning to fill up with parcels. Then when she had almost finished her shopping she remembered one other thing, Daddy had asked her that morning to buy a note-book for him. When Mummy looked at the long queue of people waiting to pay for their goods she thought of poor Peter. So she told him to stay where he was and look at the toys in the shop window. He was not to move, Mummy was just going over to the other side to pay for the note-book.

Ask the class what they think Peter did. He did not want to stand any longer looking at the toys. He wanted to see the bicycles which were just a little bit further away from the toys. He did not think about what Mummy had said.

When Mummy came back to where she had left Peter, he was not to be seen. Mummy looked around but there were so many people it was hard to see. Poor Mummy! Eventually after much looking Peter was found. Mummy was cross with him for not doing as she told him.

She knew that if he had stayed where she left him, at the toys, there would have been no fuss at all. Now show the postcards and elaborate a little on them.

Outline

Ask the pupils if they remember who the first man was and if they can remember why they were special (because God breathed into Adam).

All was going well for Adam and Eve. They were having a lovely time in the garden. Their home was wonderful. They had lots of lovely things to eat. The only thing God had asked them to do was not to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, otherwise they would die. This was an easy thing to do because there were many other good trees to eat from.

Then one day when Eve was in the garden she saw a snake. It was really Satan using the snake. He said to Eve, 'Why don't you eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden?' and Eve said, 'God has told us not to eat it or we will die'. But Satan caused her to doubt God's word and Eve picked the fruit and ate it and gave some to Adam. Ask the children if their Mummy ever told them not to eat any more sweets because it was nearly dinner-time and yet they disobey her and ate another? As soon as Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit they knew they had disobeyed God. Sin had come into the world. When they heard God calling them they were afraid and hid in the garden. Ask the children if they have ever hidden from their Mummy or Daddy after they knew they had done something wrong, e.g. written on the wallpaper or something else?

God knew all the time what Adam and Eve had done, but He wanted them to tell Him. Adam tried to blame Eve saying it was all her fault. Ask the children if they ever said that at school to the teacher, 'It was all her fault', or 'He started it'.

God was angry with them and had to punish Adam and Eve because they had disobeyed Him. He put them out of the garden and told them that they would now grow old and eventually die, just as He had said at the beginning. Also they would have to work very hard to live because weeds and nettles would now grow on the ground.

To keep Adam and Eve out of the garden, God put an angel with a flaming sword at the gate. Poor Adam and Eve. If only they had listened to God. Sin had spoilt their lives and the whole world around them. Since that time everyone who has been born has sin in them.

God wants us all to obey Him. If we do not He has to punish us. Yet God's love for us is so great that many years ago He sent His Son Jesus to save us from our sins.

Summary

Recap on the story involving as many pupils as possible. Have each tell a little part. Finally, ask what lesson do we learn from this story. God wants us to obey Him; if we do not He has to punish us. Sin is doubting and disobeying God's clear Word, even though we may think we have good reason for doing so.

APPLICATION

We must learn to do what God tells us. Also we must obey our Daddy and Mummy too. If we do not we will be punished.

The Bible tells us what God wants us to do and what He wants us to be like.

LESSON 3

God's Word

GOD'S WORD TELLS ME HOW TO LOVE AND OBEY HIM

Scripture Text - Exodus 19 and 20

AIM OF LESSON

To show the children that God's word tells them how to obey Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Three months after the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites camped in a desert at the foot of Mount Sinai, the highest mountain in the area. Here God chooses to give a further revelation of the Covenant with His people, and Moses is the mediator. God in His grace, seeks the welfare of His people, whom He has carried 'on eagles' wings' to Himself (Exodus 19: 4). Other birds carry their young in their talons but the eagle carries her young on her wings so that even archers who shoot them in flight cannot shoot through the eagle to hurt her young. Such is the wonderful tenderness God has shown to His people, in bringing them from captivity into covenant communion with Himself. The Israelites for their part must accept His sovereign rule over their lives to enjoy the benefits of the Covenant and be His people. (Exodus 19: 5).

A covenant is a bond uniting two parties in mutual obligation. Biblical covenants, however, are somewhat different. God, acting out of grace and mercy, always takes the initiative. This is no agreement between equal parties. Its basis is the undeserved favour of God. God draws up the terms, makes them known, and He alone guarantees their keeping. We enjoy the blessings of the Covenant in so far as we obey God's commands.

One of the most important Old Testament revelations of the Covenant is that at Sinai. Though Sinai is commonly thought of as the occasion when God's law was made known to Israel, in fact the law-giving was only one part of a much larger event, the call of Israel to be a holy nation owing exclusive allegiance to the Lord. The arrangement creating the new relationship was termed a covenant.

The revelation made at Sinai was the decisive step in the creation of Israel as a nation; all subsequent covenants looked back to Sinai as their model and in a sense were regarded as renewals of it.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class to imagine they are Israelite boys and girls living in Egypt. All their families were slaves and worked very hard until that night when everyone escaped. Remember how,

instead of going to bed, they had a special family meal and their fathers put some blood of the roast lamb they ate on the door-posts and lintel of their houses. At midnight God's angel killed a child in every household in Egypt that didn't have blood on the door-posts and lintel and suddenly all their family and the families they knew were packing and leaving this terrible land of slavery. No-one seemed to know where they were going but Moses was leading and there was a cloud in the sky put there by God to direct them. For a terrible moment everyone thought they were going to be recaptured by the pursuing Egyptian army and brought back to Egypt, but God opened up the sea and let all their people pass through and when the Egyptians followed they were drowned. God was certainly looking after all the Israelite families and it was wonderful that no-one would have to work in the brickyards any more in the blistering sun. The food was short in the wilderness but God sent food from heaven. They enjoyed collecting it in the morning. Even the problem of water was taken care of, for God told Moses to hit the rock and water ran out.

Let the children help you revise God's dealings with the Israelites up until now, emphasising His mercy and grace to them, thus laying a basis for today's lesson.

Outline

Three months after the Israelites left Egypt, the cloud stopped over a desert and so the people camped there at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses climbed the mountain to talk to God. God told Moses of the Covenant He was about to make with the Israelites. He said to Moses, 'Remind the people of what I did to their enemies, the Egyptians, and how I rescued them from danger'.

God wanted the Israelites to be a very special nation belonging to Him. He wanted to bless them and do them good, but the Israelites must obey God. Moses told the people what God said and the Israelites all agreed to obey God. Moses told them to get ready to hear God's words to them.

The people all had to wash their clothes and prepare themselves to meet God in three days. God was going to appear on Mount Sinai and Moses put a fence round the foot of the mountain and warned the people that they must not go past the fence or they would be killed. Everyone got ready.

Early on the third day there was loud thunder and lightning. No one could see Mount Sinai because there was thick cloud covering it. Everyone was frightened by the thunder and wondering what would happen when they heard a loud trumpet blast. Then Moses led everyone out of the camp to meet God and the people all stood at the foot of the mountain. The mountain looked like a great roaring fire with smoke bellowing from it because God had come down on to the mountain in a fire. The trumpet blast got louder and louder and the mountain

was shaking. Then Moses spoke and God answered him. God warned Moses again that the people must not come any nearer, so Moses alone went close to God, and all the people stayed outside the fence.

God spoke to the people and told them how He wanted them to obey Him. He said, 'I am the God who brought you out of Egypt. I alone am to be your God. Do not make any statues or pictures to worship, or you will be punished. Do not use My name wrongly or carelessly. The Sabbath is to be a special day of rest, a holy day to Me. You must love and obey your parents. You must not murder or love another person's husband or wife. You must not steal or tell lies about other people. You must not want anything belonging to someone else.'

The people stood trembling, looking at the fiery mountain and Moses came back to speak to them. 'God wants you to understand how powerful He is and how important it is that you should learn to fear Him. That is why He has spoken to you from heaven like this. Now you know what He wants you to do. God will keep His part of the covenant to bless you. You must also keep your part by obeying Him.'

APPLICATION

Ask the children to imagine they received a new model kit for their birthday which was supposed to make a fantastic sailing boat but the manufacturer forgot to enclose a picture of the boat or give any instructions, or to imagine they wanted to make pancakes and their Mum said, 'All the things are in the kitchen, dear. Just go and make them.'

God is not like that. He wants us to be happy as His people. It is a very wonderful thing to belong to God but in order to enjoy being God's people we have to obey Him. He has given us a book of instructions which tells us all we need to know to obey Him. This book is called the Bible and it tells us what we must do to be blessed by God. Stress the importance of reading it often and being careful to do what God says.

LESSON 4

God's Word

GOD'S WORD TELLS ME HOW TO COME TO HIM

Scripture Text - Leviticus 16:1-22

AIM OF LESSON

To show the children how God has made it possible for sinners to come into His presence.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The day of Atonement was the one day in the year when the High Priest was permitted, under the conditions God laid down, to enter the Holy of Holies and obtain forgiveness for the entire people of Israel. He put aside his decorative high priestly apparel and wore instead the linen clothing of the ordinary priesthood, a dress for this day of humiliation.

The practice of sacrifice, the shedding of animal blood goes back to the beginning of God's dealing with sinful man in Gen. 4: 4, (perhaps even to 3: 21) and pervades the Old Testament. It forms the basis for our understanding of Jesus' death.

Lev. 17:11 explains that sacrifice is something God has given to man. It is His provision for human need. Firstly, blood atones - it pays a price, a ransom price. It provides a price sufficient to pay off a debt of sin before God. The wages of sin is always death. No sinner can approach an utterly Holy God. To be cut off from God is death. Only if the price can be paid, the penalty taken, the sentence borne, can sinful man be forgiven and come into God's presence. This is precisely what the blood does. Secondly, the blood atones, 'by reason of the life' (Lev. 17:11). 'Blood' means death, the termination of life. In the sacrifice life was terminated. The flowing blood was the symbol and proof that life had been taken in payment for the sins of the guilty and as a substitute for his own guilt-stained life.

Animal sacrifice was the type - the reality took place in the death of the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament the people had a God-given preview of the shed blood of Jesus, His substitutionary death on our behalf, for our sins, the just for the unjust, once and for all. (Lion Handbook to Bible, J. A. Motyer - Meaning of Blood Sacrifice). Read over Hebrews 9 and 10 if possible.

Make sure the children understand the true meaning of heart - as being really the centre of our lives, of us.

VISUAL AIDS

1. A large bag, containing a bar of soap, a scrubbing brush, toothpaste, shampoo, tin of Andrews salts.
2. A model of the Tabernacle - much simplified. Suggest taking a cardboard box, a

chocolate box, and a large matchbox or equivalent. Cut the short end off each and affix kitchen roll or paper handkerchief with cellotape to make a curtain.

Make a stand-up figure of Aaron, and a stand-up bull and 2 goats - or use plastic farm animals if you have them. The outer court contained the altar of burnt offerings and a bath for the priest to wash. The Tent of Meeting contained the golden altar of incense, the table with shew-bread and the 7 branched candlestick. The Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant, which had the manna, the tablets of the law and Aaron's rod inside it; above the ark was the mercy seat with the cherubim. It is good to familiarise yourself with the set up. The common people could go into the outer court, bringing their animals and offerings. The priests could enter the Tent of Meeting. Only the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, once a year only, and he had to enter carrying blood. (You could carry your model in on a tray).

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Tell the children that in the bag you have a collection of things to make you clean. Ask if anyone can think of anything that you might have. Go through the items one by one, stressing how we make ourselves clean outside and even inside (using Andrews salts!). If we were going to visit an important person we would probably use most of these things to get really clean and look our best. The Bible tells us that when God looks at us, He looks not only at the outside of us but at our hearts. We cannot come close to God to pray to Him because our hearts are not clean. No amount of soap or toothpaste (hold up the items again) can clean our hearts. Tell the children that today we are going to learn how God made a way for men's hearts to be made clean, so that we can come close to Him.

Outline

Ask the children if they remember what happened last week. Pause and allow for a brief summary. God told the people of Israel how they were to obey Him. Even while Moses was up the mountain talking to God, the people of Israel were already forgetting that they had promised to obey God and were doing things God had told them not to. They were full of sin, but God loved them even so and He had a plan to deal with the sin of the people. He told Moses what to do.

Moses' brother was called Aaron. He was the High Priest, and he had special duties to do for the people. This is what God said Aaron must do to deal with the sins of the people and also his own sins.

First Aaron had to take off his special High Priest's clothes and put on instead the plain linen tunic the ordinary priests wore. Then he was to bring two male goats, a ram as a burnt offering and a bull, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting. This was the special place where God met

with His people in the wilderness - a bit like our churches today.

Describe briefly the model of the tabernacle, emphasising how only certain people were allowed in, and especially explaining the Holy of Holies where God dwelt between the cherubim above the mercy-seat. Place the stand-up Aaron in the outer court with the animals and move him about as appropriate in the rest of the story.

Aaron was firstly to kill the bull, as payment for his own sins and those of his family. He was then to take some of the burning coals and some finely ground sweet smelling powder called incense and go into the Holy of Holies with them, set the coals on the floor and then throw the incense on them so that the room became full of smoke. Then he was to come back out and take some of the bull's blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle it on the mercy-seat and in front of it.

Then he was to kill one of the goats to pay for the sins of the people and take some of the blood of the goat into the Holy of Holies, sprinkle it on the mercy-seat and in front of it.

The Tent of Meeting was also to have some of the blood sprinkled on it and also the altar outside the Tent of Meeting. Everything must be made clean with the blood. No-one else was to be in the Tent of Meeting at all while Aaron was doing this. Aaron's sins, the sins of his family and the sins of the whole people must be dealt with before anyone came near.

When Aaron had done all this, he was to take the live goat, put both his hands on the goat's head and confess aloud before God all the sins and disobedience of the people of Israel. All the sins were put on to the goat, and the goat was taken away into the desert, and let go. Just as the goat went so all the sins of the people were gone into a place where no one could find or remember them.

APPLICATION

Point out that the children of Israel were very like us. They knew God wanted them to love and obey Him. They knew too, God had done wonderful things for them, rescuing them from their enemies and feeding and caring for them but still they sinned against Him. God, however, never stopped loving them. God is holy and no sinful person can ever come near to Him so God told Moses how the people's sins could be removed with the blood of an animal. Then the people could come close to God and God could live among them. The tabernacle no longer exists but boys and girls today have the same problem that the Israelites had. God never changes. He is today the same holy God. Our hearts are full of sin just like the Israelites but God wants us to have our sins dealt with and forgiven so that we can be close to Him. Jesus died for the sins of God's people and His blood washes away our sins. Because of what Jesus has done we can come to God, not just once a year as Aaron did but at anytime.

LESSON 5

God's Word

KEEPING GOD'S LAW - SAUL

Scripture Text - 1 Samuel 15

AIM OF LESSON

To help the children understand that God expects us to obey Him and keep His law.

To show how Saul's disobedience was punished by God.

BACKGROUND NOTES

King Saul's reign which had started off so well and with such promise began to deteriorate. He had already disobeyed God on one major occasion (see 1 Samuel 13: 8-14) and Samuel the prophet had warned him that God would give his kingdom to another.

In Chapter 15 Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites, one of the tribes of Canaan which inhabited the deserts in the south from Judea to Egypt. They had been sentenced long ago for their wickedness to Israel (see Deuteronomy 25: 17-19).

Verse 3, 'Utterly destroy' refers to the irrevocable giving of things to the Lord, often utterly destroying them. Saul would have understood exactly God's command and what it entailed.

VISUAL AID

Make hand puppets, one to represent Samuel and the other Saul. Using one on the left hand and the other on the right, move the figures at the appropriate time during the story - much of which is direct speech. A paper bag approx. 7" x 8 1/2" may be used for each puppet.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Tell the children that today we are going to learn about 'doing what we are told' and ask if they can give another word for that. Obedience. Sometimes we do not really like doing exactly what we are told to do and we try to do it our own way and perhaps leave out something important.

Give the following illustration:- Let's pretend Mummy has asked you to go to the shop for some messages. She tells you exactly what she wants, and says, 'Now, when you've bought them, come straight back home.' So off you go and buy all the things mummy has asked you to, you put the change carefully in your purse and start off home. However, on the way you think it would be nice to call in with your friend and so you go into her house for a while. After some time you leave and go on home. Mummy isn't very pleased. 'Why did you not do

as I told you?' she says. 'But I did', you reply, 'I bought you exactly what you wanted and I've brought you back the right change.' Mummy says, 'But I told you to come straight home. You didn't really do what I asked you. I'm not very pleased.' You see, you did obey but only a bit of the way, so really you were being disobedient.

Tell the children that our story today is about a man who thought he could obey God just as much as he wanted to and he thought God would be pleased with him.

Outline

The two main people in the story are Samuel and Saul. Ask the children some questions to help them understand who they are.

After Saul had reigned for some years over Israel, Samuel the prophet came to him with a special message from God. In those days this was one way that people knew what God wanted them to do. A man of God would come to them and pass on to them God's command.

So Samuel told Saul, 'God says you are to go to war with the Amalekites and you are to completely destroy them and everything that belongs to them. You are not to spare anything at all.' In this way God was going to punish the Amalekites for evil things they had done to the Israelites many years before.

So Saul collected his soldiers and organised his army. He knew exactly what he must do and he fought a great battle and won a victory over the heathen people. So far he had done what God commanded him, but then, instead of killing all the people, he spared the life of King Agag. His army did not wish to kill all the cattle and sheep, so they left the best of them. Perhaps they thought, 'What an awful waste of good animals. We couldn't kill all those.' However, God had seen what they had done and He was very angry. He spoke to Samuel, the prophet, and said, 'I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not obeyed me.' This made Samuel very sad. He knew he had to go and see Saul and take this message to him.

Early next morning, after crying in distress to the Lord all night, Samuel went to meet Saul but when he couldn't find him, he was told that Saul had gone on to Carmel and had set up a monument to himself and was preparing to worship God. Saul was proud of his deeds and pleased with what he had done and he does not seem to have realised how serious a thing it was that he had disobeyed God's instructions.

Saul met Samuel quite cheerfully saying, 'Blessed are you of the Lord, I have done all that God commanded me.' The king expected Samuel would praise him but the prophet said, 'If you have, why do I hear bleating of sheep and roaring of cattle? Surely you were to destroy everything?' King Saul tried to bluff his way out of it and put the blame on others. He said, 'My soldiers spared the best of the cattle and sheep to make a sacrifice to the Lord your God.'

'We have completely destroyed all the rest as God said.' 'Saul', said Samuel, 'Listen to me. I shall tell you what the Lord said to me last night.' 'I am listening', said King Saul. 'At one time you were humble, you were from a poor family, and did not think much of yourself. God made you very important and king of Israel. But now, you have become proud and think you can disobey God if you choose. Why did you not do what God told you?'

'But I did obey', said Saul. 'I completely destroyed the Amalekites and spared King Agag, and the soldiers brought back the best of the animals to sacrifice to the Lord'.

Saul was trying hard to make excuses for himself. He had obeyed God but only part of the way, and so he was really disobedient.

Samuel said, 'Do you think that the Lord is as well pleased with sacrifices as with obedience? To obey is better than to sacrifice. Because you have disobeyed God, He will not let you and your family be the kings of Israel, and even now God has chosen another person to be king.'

Saul suddenly began to feel very sorry for himself when he realised God was really angry. 'I have done wrong', he said, 'I have disobeyed God but I was afraid of the people and what they would say. I'm sorry. Please forgive me and come back with me to worship.' But Saul wasn't really sincere, and God knew that deep down he didn't mean it and he would go on disobeying Him again and again. If Saul had been truly sorry God would have forgiven him. So Samuel left Saul and didn't see him again, although for a long time he was very sad that Saul had been rejected as king.

APPLICATION

Ask the children if they think God was very hard on King Saul to punish him so severely. After all, he had done a lot of what God had told him and he seemed to want to worship Him. The important thing to remember is he did not really obey God, he only partly obeyed and that is not enough for God. Just like the little girl in the story whose mother was displeased that she had not done all she was told, so we displease God when we disobey Him and He will punish us. However, point out that if Saul had been truly sorry God would have forgiven him. So it is with us. Because Jesus Christ died for our disobedience and was punished in our place we can be forgiven if we are truly sorry.

Remind the children that it is very easy to disobey God and do wrong things and so we need to ask Him everyday to help us to keep His laws.

LESSON 6

God's Word

LEARNING GOD'S WORD - EZRA TEACHES

Scripture Text - Nehemiah 8

AIM OF LESSON

To stimulate in each child a desire for diligent study of God's Word.

BACKGROUND NOTES

When Jerusalem was destroyed, the Israelites (Jews) were taken into exile in Babylon. Seventy years later, soon after Cyrus became King, he allowed them, and helped them, to go back to Jerusalem.

Ezra returned some eighty years later to teach his people God's law. (The first five books of the law). When he arrived in Jerusalem he found that the people had slipped back into the very sins for which God had judged them.

Ezra was saddened and ashamed as he saw how little the people had profited from the chastisement of the Lord. As he confessed the sins of Israel many gathered about him in repentance.

When the city walls were completed and temple repairs made, the people asked Ezra to read the book of the law in their midst. The Levites assisted Ezra in translating the Word and making it clear and understood.

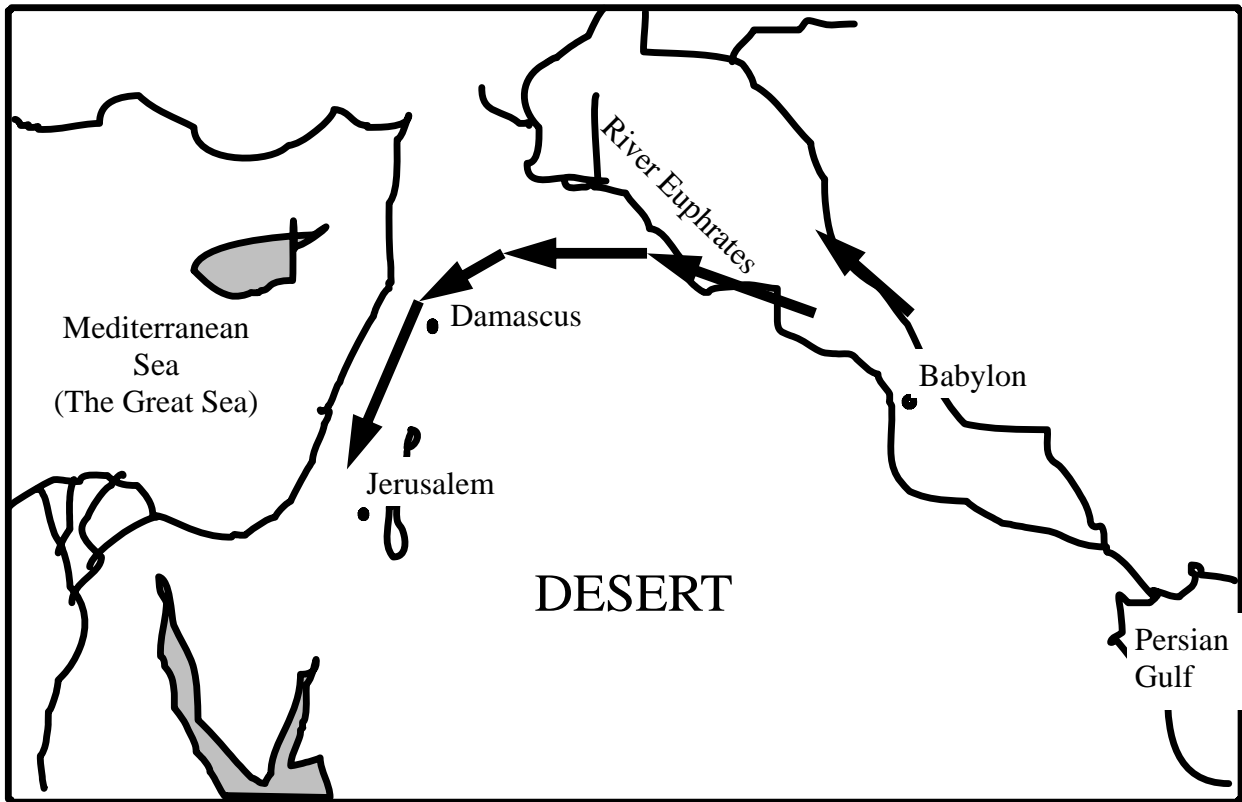
While Ezra read, the people were overcome by a sense of great guilt and shame. However, they were encouraged to rejoice rather than to mourn and to celebrate the joyful feast of tabernacles - an autumn festival at the end of the fruit harvest (Lev. 23: 33-43). The people lived for seven days in shelters made of branches - essentially as an agricultural thanksgiving, but also as a reminder of their tent dwelling days in the wilderness. It was regarded as a 'holy' occasion when all ordinary work stopped. The people made solemn vows of obedience before the Lord. The Levites led them in their pledges of obedience.

VISUAL AIDS

Map of the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. A 900 mile journey which took four months.

Scroll of the Word. The people did not have Bibles of their own. They all gathered around to hear Ezra read the Word to them.

EZRA'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM



SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

There are lots of different books in the world. Ask the class what their favourite books are and what they think is the best book of all (the Bible). Point out that the Bible is a special book for God's children. It is the one book in all the world that is the Word of God. It is the one book in which God Himself speaks.

He tells His children all they need to know about Him and all they need to know about how to please Him. It tells them how they may come to Him by trusting His Son who died to save His children from their sins. It tells them how to have everlasting life.

God's children want to do what is pleasing to Him. They want to keep from sinning, from doing the things that do not please Him. They are glad God has given His Word to help them. They are glad to hide His Word in their hearts, so that they remember it whenever Satan tempts them to do wrong.

Outline

Tell the children that today they are going to hear a story about a teacher and how he taught the people from a book which he, himself, had been studying for many years. Ask them which book they think he was using to teach the people. The teacher's name was EZRA. In those days they did not have all of the Bible as we know it. They only had the first five books. Ask if anyone knows the names of the first five books. (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.)

When Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon he took most of the people prisoners. They were taken to Babylon (Show map). Seventy years later there was a new king, King Cyrus, and he allowed them to go back to Jerusalem. He was kind and helped them to go back. When they got back they had to rebuild the city. This would take a very long time.

Ezra was still in Babylon and he had been studying and learning God's law. God had helped him to understand the law and he wanted to teach all the people who had returned to Jerusalem so that they, too, would know God's law and not forget His commandments. Ezra needed permission from the king. This king too, was kind and he allowed Ezra to go back to Jerusalem and many people went back with him.

In Jerusalem all the people gathered together to hear Ezra teaching them from the Book of the Law. The people did not have Bibles as we all have. (Show the scroll). Ezra stood in a big wooden pulpit away above all the people so that they all could see him. All the people listened while Ezra read. He read from early morning until mid-day.

That was a very long time to listen. Not all the people could understand what was being said. Perhaps they did not speak the same language. So the Levites (their names are given in verse 7) went about helping the people to understand the Word.

The people were sad and started to cry. Ask the children why they think the people were sad. They had forgotten God's commandments and many of the leaders had disobeyed God's law. They had made friends with people who did not love God and who worshipped idols. They realised how wicked they had been to forget God who loved them so dearly. They had forgotten all His goodness to them and deserved to be punished.

But Ezra and the other leaders said, 'Do not cry. Do not feel sad today. Be glad because you are hearing God's Word. Be glad that His Word shows you your sins and shows you how to please God. Go now and prepare a happy feast. Get food ready for the poor so that they may join you at this happy time.' The people went to prepare for the feast.

The Levites stayed with Ezra to learn more. They found written in the law that the Lord had commanded them to have a festival time and live in shelters made of branches seven days. 'We must celebrate,' they said, 'so that we will remember how God cared for His people when they lived in tents, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.'

News about the coming festival spread up and down every street. Little children helped their mothers and fathers to break the branches from the olive trees, palm trees and other leafy trees. They had a happy time for seven days and they lived in the shelters made of branches. They built shelters on rooftops and in the courtyards. Ezra read every day out of the law of God. The people made a solemn promise to God to walk in His law and to keep all His commandments. Ezra was happy that God had spoken to the people through His Word and had called them back to Him.

APPLICATION

God's Word tells us that the Bible will help us to keep from sin but it also tells us that none of God's children can ever please Him perfectly. Many times we do not remember God's Word. Sometimes we listen to Satan's lies.

But the Word of God is precious to His children at such times too. It is then that the Word of God speaks to our hearts and tells us of our sins. It invites us to ask God to forgive us. It tells us God still loves us.

We are blessed that we have so many to teach us about God. We all have Bibles of our own. We are privileged to be able to go to church every week and to hear God's Word. It is important to listen to our ministers and to learn more. We should read the Bible regularly and learn from it.

LESSON 7

God's Word

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD - PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Scripture Text - Matt. 13: 1-23

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the truth of the parable of the sower, that not all who hear the Word receive it.

To encourage each child to hear God's Word and to obey it and to bring forth fruit in his life.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Parables were an effective teaching method. Jesus told parables using scenes from the routine of everyday life. While they captured the interest of the listener and presented spiritual truth in an illustrative manner, their meaning was not obvious to the curious and idle. Only those with spiritual insight and willingness to search for the meaning would benefit from them.

VISUAL AIDS

1. Picture of different types of ground e.g., 'The Lion Handbook to the Bible.' p. 504.
2. A tray representing the different types of ground:-
 - (a) brown paper - the path
 - (b) small stones - stony ground
 - (c) some thorns / weeds - the same
 - (d) good soil - the same
3. Pictures of different types of ground and the response to each one.
4. A selection of seeds - flower, fruit, vegetable.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Tell the children that we are going to talk about seeds and how they grow. Ask what seeds need for them to grow? (Show selection of seeds). They do not grow in the bag. They need to be put somewhere special to grow. They are put into the ground, where they get food, moisture and sunshine. Ask if any of the children have planted seed and where they planted them. Different seeds are planted in different ways. Talk about seeds relevant to the time of year, spring, summer, autumn. There are flower seeds, fruit seeds, vegetable seeds. Some are planted one by one, each seed put carefully into the ground and covered over by soil. Sometimes there are thousands of seeds planted at one time in large fields. When seeds are planted they need to be watered and looked after. Discuss how are they watered. In this country we usually have enough rain to provide moisture for the plants. The growing plants need sunshine too. So plants require to be looked after if they are to grow into healthy plants which, in turn, provide food.

Outline

One day as Jesus was down by the Sea of Galilee He told a story to many people who had come to hear Him. There were so many people that Jesus got into a boat, rowed a little out to sea and talked to them from there. Then all the people could see Him. Jesus began to tell a story about seeds, about a farmer who went out to sow seeds. This was a very long time ago and farmers did not plant seeds the way they do these days. (Ask if anyone knows how they were planted.) The farmer carried a big basket full of seed and threw out a handful at a time. The wind helped to scatter it. The fields did not have nice neat hedges around them. There were paths dividing the fields, stones along the paths, and thorn bushes and weeds. (Show the visual aids). As the farmer sowed his seed not all of it fell in the very best places. Remember what the fields were like. As the farmer walked along some seed fell on the path, some on the stony ground with only a thin layer of soil, some fell among the thorns and weeds and some fell on the good ground. The seed that fell on the path could not begin to grow so it lay there until the birds came along and ate it. The seed that fell on stony ground grew a little bit and then it could not grow any more because its roots could not grow down through the stones. It shrivelled up and died, scorched by the sun. The seed that fell among the thorns and weeds could not grow as the thorns and weeds took all the moisture and food and the small seedlings were choked out. But the seed that fell on good ground where the farmer wanted it to fall grew well for him. The rain provided moisture, the sun helped it to grow, and it grew its roots deep down into the healthy ground. The seeds grew, the harvest ripened and provided food.

This story which Jesus told is a parable. A parable is a special kind of story using things on earth which we can see and touch to help us understand more about God. Jesus often spoke to the people in parables. He used a parable to teach us an important lesson. (Ask what important lesson we can learn from this parable which Jesus taught.)

Jesus said that the seed is God's Word and the ground is like the people who hear it. People are different in the way they receive God's Word when they hear it.

Ask the children what type of ground was first mentioned. Sometimes we are like the path. In church or in Sabbath School, God's Word is being taught, but we are not listening and our minds are full of other things.

Ask what the second type of ground was and what the children think it represents. In the stony ground the seed grows a little bit then shrivels up and dies. This is when we hear God's Word but remember it for only a little while. We feel happy and are full of promises to be good but when the next day comes and everything seems hard going we just give up and forget about God.

The next type of ground, the third type, was the thorny ground where the thorns and weeds

choked the seed. Ask the class what type of people they think this represents. It is when we hear God's Word but have so many other things to do that we forget about God and serving Him. Soon all our own interests choke out the Word of God, just as the weeds choke out the tender plants of grain.

Last of all, there was the good ground. Ask the children what sort of people are like the good ground. This is when we listen carefully to God's Word, understand and remember it. We also believe God's Word and obey it.

On the good ground the seed grows healthy and strong and provides food for the farmer. God tells us in Gal. 5: 22, 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.' Discuss how we can bear fruit for God - helping, caring, sharing.

APPLICATION

When we believe in Jesus for the very first time it is like a little seed coming into our lives. If we continue to listen, to read the Bible and to pray, our lives will grow more like Jesus every day. Our love for Him will go on growing and we will learn how to share, how to help and how to care.

LESSON 8

God's Word

LOVING GOD'S WORD - JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Scripture Text - Luke 2: 32-52

AIM OF LESSON

To show how the boy Jesus demonstrates His love and understanding of God's Word and to encourage each child to love and understand the Word as Jesus did when He was a child.

BACKGROUND NOTES

After Jesus had been presented to the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, Simeon took Him in his arms and blessed Him and prophesied of His future ministry and sorrow. Also a prophetess, Anna, a widow who never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying, thanked God for the child Jesus and spoke about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel. After this we find very little about the childhood of Jesus. We do know from the Bible (Luke 2: 40) that Jesus grew and became strong, and that He was filled with wisdom and God's grace was upon Him. Concerning those developing years nothing is recorded save the incident in the temple at Jerusalem when the child was twelve years old.

VISUAL AIDS

Obtain a map showing location of Jerusalem and Nazareth and the journey involved.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Explain to the children that Jesus' parents were godly people who were careful to obey God's Word and Law. Every year they went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. This feast would have reminded them of God's goodness to a past generation in taking them from Egyptian bondage to a promised land. Many times Mary and Joseph would have taken the child Jesus and told Him about the Passover. Mary would have told him how each man was to take a lamb without blemish for his family. On the fourteenth day of the month at twilight it must be slaughtered and the blood put on the sides and tops of the door - frames of their houses. That same night they had to eat the meat, roasted over a fire. They were to eat quickly and so be ready to go.

Outline

Jesus looked forward to going to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. There was so much to see which He had often heard and read of in the Scriptures. He and his friends from Nazareth travelled with their parents to Jerusalem. This was a journey of sixty miles. As they passed through cities and villages on their way, many others joined the people from Nazareth. There

was a great procession of people on their way to keep the Feast.

After several days of travelling, the company from Nazareth reached Jerusalem. For seven days they celebrated the Feast. At the end of the week they started for home again.

Unknown to his parents Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. His parents thought that He was with relations or friends. Mary and Joseph travelled on for a day thinking all the time that Jesus was in their company. When Jesus failed to appear His parents got a little worried, just like any other mother or father. They began to search for Him, first among their relatives, then among their friends but they did not find Him. There was only one thing to do and that was to return to Jerusalem and look for Him there. They had a whole day's walk back to the city.

Mary and Joseph searched everywhere in Jerusalem for Jesus but could not find Him. They asked many people if they had seen Him. No-one had seen anything of Jesus. Joseph and Mary decided to go to the temple and look for Jesus there.

On entering the temple Mary and Joseph found Jesus sitting amongst the learned men, called doctors of the law. He was listening to them and asking them questions. All the teachers were amazed to think that a twelve year old boy could give such wise answers to the questions they asked Him and could ask them questions which were so difficult to answer. Jesus' parents were astonished to see and hear Him. Mary, his mother, could wait no longer. She said to Him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking everywhere for you and have been very sad that we could not find you.'

Jesus answered them, 'Why have you been looking everywhere for me? You should have known that I would be in the temple, learning more about God's Word. Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?' Joseph and Mary did not understand this. Jesus meant that He must begin to do the work of His Heavenly Father.

Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents and always obeyed them. Mary his mother hid all these things in her heart and often thought about them. Mary loved her son very much.

Jesus continued to grow tall and strong, He became more wise and His life pleased His Father in Heaven.

APPLICATION

There were many wonderful things to be seen in Jerusalem. Things, perhaps, which Jesus had heard about in His earlier years when listening to stories relating to Israel's history. But there was one place Jesus loved to go more than anywhere else. That was the temple.

It was here that Jesus would learn more about God and His Word. It was here He could inquire and receive answers to His questions. He would listen intently as someone spoke about God's dealing with Israel in past generations. Jesus loved to hear God's Word read and explained.

Are we like Jesus? Do we love most of all the place where we can hear God's Word? Do we love to go to church, to Sabbath School, to learn more?

Jesus must have known a lot about God's Word. We are told in the Bible passage that everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers. Do we love God's Word so that we come to understand it more and more? Do we spend part of each day reading the Scriptures and trying to understand what we read? Do we ever ask our parents or pastor questions about God or His Word?

We should try, by God's help, to love His Word just like Jesus did. Because Jesus loved God's Word, it helped Him to grow in wisdom and in favour with God and man. Knowing God's Word helped Jesus live a life which was pleasing to His Father in Heaven.

LESSON 9

God's Word

BELIEVING GOD'S WORD - MAN BORN BLIND

Scripture Text - John 9

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jesus met the physical and spiritual needs of the man born blind. To guide each child to believe in the Son of Man who gives salvation through believing His Word.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The reason for this man's blindness -

The blindness presented a puzzle to the disciples. They wanted to know whose sin was responsible for this. According to Scripture physical afflictions can be traced to various causes:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| (a) the sin of Adam | Rom. 5: 12-21 |
| (b) the sin of parents | Exod. 20: 5 |
| (c) one's own personal sins | Ezekiel 18: 4 |

The Jews exaggerated (b) the sin of parents, out of all proportion. Jesus rules out (b) and (c). If a cause must be mentioned, the sin of Adam, our representative head, would be the answer. However, Jesus is not even interested in this at the present time but tells them that it happened so that the work of God might be displayed in His life.

2. Jesus' spittle and His use of clay -

Just why Jesus used this particular method we do not know. An answer which seems plausible is that He used this method in order to produce the right attitude of heart which results in the carrying out of a seemingly foolish command. (See a reliable commentary on John's Gospel).

3. The Pharisees -

The Pharisees were a very patriotic party. They were willing to lay down their lives for the independence of their country. They hated the foreign yoke and despised other races. They believed themselves to be the special favourites of heaven because they were descendants of Abraham. They substituted external observances for the grand distinctions of love to God and love to man. The name Pharisee means 'separated,' and this they were. The Pharisees intensely hated Jesus, who in turn denounced their great hypocrisy.

VISUAL AIDS

Prepare three strips of paper and print the following titles:-

- (1) JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND.

(2) THE PHARISEES QUESTION THE BLIND MAN.

(3) THE MAN BORN BLIND BELIEVES JESUS' WORD.

Present these strips on a board at the beginning of each stage of the story.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask for a volunteer/s. With his/her consent blindfold them. Speak a little about the problems of being blind. Remove the blindfolds and ask the volunteer/s what they think it would be like to be blind from birth. Ask the rest of the class. Suggest some things yourself, e.g. the person would see nothing of the beauty of God's creation.

Outline

(Stick up on a board strip (1) JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND.) Jesus and His disciples came across a man who had been blind since birth. He was also a beggar. He wore shabby clothes and looked very sad. The disciples were puzzled about the blind man. They asked Jesus, 'Why was this man born blind? Was it because he had sinned or because his parents had sinned?' (Perhaps someone in the class has asked a similar question when they have witnessed someone crippled, or without limbs or even blind.)

Jesus knew that sin came into the world and brought sickness, sorrow and death. This all happened when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Jesus did not give them this answer. He said, 'This man is blind, not because of his own sin or the sin of his parents. He is blind so that God can show His wonderful power and love in this man's life.' The Bible tells us that God loves to show His power through the weak and despised people of this world (1 Cor. 1: 26 and 29).

Jesus did a strange thing. He spat on the ground and made some soft clay from the wet earth. He put this on the blind man's eyes and said, 'Go and wash in the pool of Siloam.' The blind man may have wondered what good this clay would do to his eyes. However, he did as Jesus had said and washed, and came home seeing. (Ask the children what they think was the first thing he saw - the beautiful clear water or perhaps his own reflection in the water.)

People who knew him were amazed. Some could not believe that it was really the same man. One group asked him how it was that he could now see. 'The man they call Jesus, put mud on my eyes and told me to wash it off at Siloam, so I went and washed and now I see,' he replied.

(Present second strip - THE PHARISEES QUESTION THE MAN BORN BLIND.) Not everybody was happy at the healing of the blind man. He was brought to the Pharisees. The Pharisees were very strict and hard-hearted. They questioned the man born blind. 'How did you receive your sight?' they asked. 'Jesus put clay on my eyes, then I washed and now I see,'

he replied. After he had said this some of the Pharisees shouted, 'Jesus is not from God because He healed this man on the Sabbath.' They did not understand that it pleased God when people in need are helped on the Sabbath day. Another group asked, 'How can a sinful person do such a great miracle?' Then they asked the blind man 'What do you think of Jesus?'

The Jews refused to believe that the man had been blind from birth so they sent for his parents. 'Is this your son who was born blind? How is it that he can now see?' they asked his parents. 'He is our son and we know he was born blind, but we don't know how his eyes were opened,' they replied. Then they told the Pharisees to ask him because he was old enough to answer. They said this because they were afraid of the Pharisees.

The Jews called the man who had been blind. They wanted him to admit that Jesus was a sinner. The man born blind couldn't say that. All he knew was that once he was blind but now he could see. They asked him again how he came to see. He refused to tell them this time. The Pharisees were angry with him and called him Jesus' disciple. He answered them, 'God does not listen to sinners, He listens to the godly man. If Jesus were not of God He could not have made me see.' This enraged the Pharisees. They could listen no longer to him, a sinner from birth, and they threw him out. (Ask the class in what ways Jesus was different from the Pharisees.)

(Present third strip - THE BLIND MAN BELIEVES JESUS' WORD.) Jesus heard how the man born blind had been treated. When Jesus found him He asked a very important question. 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' Ask the children what Jesus meant by this question.) We may put Jesus' question like this, 'Do you depend completely - for life and death - on the Son of Man? Do you trust Him and give yourself entirely to Him, so that He can look after you?' The man wanted to know who the Son of Man was so that he could believe. Jesus told him that He was the Son of Man. The man born blind said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshipped Jesus. Jesus had done something else for this man. He had opened his heart. He now believed Jesus' Word. He knew that Jesus was the Saviour whom God had sent to save him from his sin.

APPLICATION

Ask the class to suppose for a moment that Jesus came into the class. He told about the blindness which sin causes in our hearts and why He came into this world and died on the cross. Then He asked, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' That is, 'Do you depend upon Me for eternal life? Do you trust Me and give yourself completely to Me, so that I can look after you and give you all that you need?' What would they say to Him? Would they be like the Pharisees? Or would they be like the man born blind and believe Jesus' Word?

LESSON 10

Loving the Saviour

MEETING THE SAVIOUR - JOHN THE BAPTIST

Scripture Text - Matthew 3: 1-17

AIM OF LESSON

To understand that John the Baptist came to prepare men to meet the Saviour by telling them to seek forgiveness for their sins. To help the children understand that each one personally must confess his sins and ask forgiveness.

BACKGROUND NOTES

John the Baptist came as a forerunner of the Messiah. He was the son of Zacharias (Zachariah) and Elizabeth. God announced the coming of John hundreds of years before his birth (Isaiah 40: 3). 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."' In this story John was living and preaching in the wilderness of Judea. This was a large area which was not cultivated but which was probably poor ground only suitable for grazing.

VISUAL AIDS

1. A pair of heavy gloves.
2. A thin piece of cord.
3. An ear of a crop or other plant.

Tie some knots in the piece of cord. Ask the children to undo the knots while wearing the gloves. Obviously it would be easier to undo the knots without wearing the gloves. Relate this to Isaiah 40: 3. We must remove anything that will inhibit us from responding to Jesus. Use the ear of the crop to demonstrate the grain and the chaff.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the children if they remember the story about the old couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth, praying to God for a child. God miraculously answered their prayers and gave them a son named John. God promised that John would be great in His sight and that he would turn many people to Him. This story tells us about John preaching to the people and baptising them in the River Jordan.

Outline

John the Baptist went into the wilderness and told the people that they needed to ask God to forgive them for their sins. Years before, Isaiah, the prophet, had talked about John the Baptist and how he would prepare the way for Jesus' coming when he said, "The voice of one crying in

the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40: 3). Though he calls for them to make a straight path he does not really mean them to start building a straight road. He means that they are to straighten their own lives and remove anything that would stop them from responding to the Saviour, Jesus.

John lived a rough life in the desert. He didn't have fancy clothes or even rich food. His clothes were made from camel's hair and he wore a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. A locust is a kind of insect. He obviously lived a very simple life.

When the people of Jerusalem and Judea heard about him they left their homes and went out to hear him preach. A lot of these people confessed their sins and were baptised by John in the river Jordan. Baptism indicated that the person had confessed their sins.

When John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him he denounced them as being hypocrites, of saying one thing and doing another. These men wanted to be baptised like everyone else but they had not really confessed that they were sinners. They thought that as they were descendants of Abraham that they didn't need to confess their sins.

John said that he would baptise with water anyone who repented of their sins but that there was a person coming after him who was greater than he. This was Jesus. John also said that just as the wheat can be separated from the chaff so Jesus will separate those who believe in Him from those who don't. No one will escape His judgement.

Then one day Jesus arrived from Galilee. He asked John to baptise Him. John hesitated as he realised that Jesus did not have any sin to confess and that He didn't need to be baptised with water. He said to Jesus, 'Why are You coming to me to be baptised? It is I who should be going to You.' Jesus answered, 'Do it now, My Father (that is, God) requires that this be done.' John then agreed to baptise Him.

After Jesus was baptised God showed that His Spirit was with Jesus. The Holy Spirit came down just like a dove and rested on Jesus. Then God said, 'This is My Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased.' This shows that God was well-pleased with Jesus for His obedience in His life so far.

APPLICATION

Today's story was about John telling people that they needed to repent from their sins. He pointed out to the Pharisees and Sadducees that it was not enough that they were descendants of Abraham. It is the same for us - we will not be forgiven our sins just because our fathers or mothers are Christians. Each one of us must personally ask God to forgive us our sins. It is of no use to say we are Christians if God has not changed our hearts and lives. An outward

symbol like baptism is not enough either - God must have dealt with our hearts.

Also in this story John points out that no one will escape judgement. If we are not trusting in Christ and prepared to meet God when we die. He will cast us out just as the chaff is cast away from the wheat when it is being threshed.

LESSON 11

Loving the Saviour

BELONGING TO THE SAVIOUR - NICODEMUS

Scripture Text - John 3: 1-21; 7: 45-53; 19: 38-42

AIM OF LESSON

To show that everyone must have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ if they ever intend to get to heaven and to show that we should not be ashamed of Jesus.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Nicodemus was a man of some importance as he was a member of the Sanhedrin. This would account for his reluctance to be seen openly approaching Jesus. Nicodemus recognised the stamp of God upon Jesus by the character of the signs He performed.

VISUAL AIDS

Make flash cards.

1. Born Again
2. New Heart
3. Always good

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class if they care what their friends say about them. Not many people want their friends to think they are silly. Today's story is about a man who worried very much what his friends thought about him. So much so that he did not want his friends to see him going to talk to Jesus and went in the middle of the night.

Outline

When Jesus was on earth He went about healing the sick and preaching. People listened eagerly to His preaching. Among those who listened to Jesus was a man called Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews and a Pharisee. The Pharisees were men who kept the law of Moses very strictly and they kept many other rules as well which they made up themselves. They were very proud of their strictness and thought that they were better than other people, even better than Jesus. So they would not listen to Him.

Nicodemus was not like the other Pharisees. He heard Jesus teach and saw the wonderful miracles. He wondered what kind of man this Jesus was. Nicodemus did not dare to speak openly for fear of the other Pharisees. He wanted to know more about this teacher who talked so much about God and the Kingdom of God. He went to Jesus one night, perhaps when he thought that no one would see him. He said to Jesus, 'Teacher, we know that God sent you for

no man could do these miracles that you do unless God were with him.'

Jesus said to him, 'No one can get to heaven unless he is born again.'

That was a strange answer! Nicodemus did not understand. He would like to go to heaven when he died. But he was a grown man, so how could he be born again? Could he become a baby again?

Jesus said to him, 'Unless you are born of water and of the Spirit, you cannot enter heaven.' Then Jesus went on to explain, 'Not one of you can be a child of God without a new heart.' We cannot understand how the Holy Spirit gives us a new heart, just as we cannot understand how the wind blows. But we know that God graciously works in us.

Now Nicodemus was a good man. He kept the law of God carefully. But that was not enough to get him into the Kingdom. Being good does not get us into heaven. Nicodemus listened carefully. He had never heard such wonderful words. He could not understand. But when he went away he thought about it over and over again.

Later in Jesus' ministry we twice hear about Nicodemus again. It was the custom for the Jews to hold a feast for one week every year in Jerusalem, known as the Feast of Tabernacles. This time was a happy season of rejoicing and praising God for His goodness in giving good harvests.

A great many Jews went up to Jerusalem to the Feast of Tabernacles. Some of the Jews wanted to hear Jesus preaching again. Others had listened to the Pharisees and said, 'He is not a good teacher, for he does not keep the Law of Moses. He deceives the people.'

The soldiers who had been sent to arrest Jesus went back without Him. The Pharisees and chief priests asked, 'Why did you not bring him to us?' They answered, 'There never was a man in all the world who preached like this man.'

Then Nicodemus tried to take Jesus' part and said, 'You don't judge a man until you let him speak.' The other Pharisees were shocked at Nicodemus. They never thought that one of their leaders was a follower of Jesus!

Later, when Jesus was crucified on the cross, a disciple called Joseph, who had never dared to serve Jesus openly, for fear of the priests, went to Pilate. He begged him for permission to bury the body of Jesus and Pilate gave him this permission.

In a garden near Jerusalem was a grave that Joseph had intended for himself when he died. It had been carved out of solid rock like many of the Jewish graves. It was here that Jesus' body

was laid by his sad friends. At this time Nicodemus was present and he brought spices to put on the dead body.

APPLICATION

In to-day's story we see Jesus explaining to Nicodemus how a person is born again. He listened to Jesus even though he was a teacher in Israel. After Jesus was crucified Nicodemus helped in preparing His body for burial.

If we are born again Jesus is with us all the time to give us strength to serve Him. We must put our trust in Jesus while we are alive on this earth for then we are ready to go to heaven to be with Him when we die.

LESSON 12

Loving the Saviour

BRINGING OTHERS TO THE SAVIOUR - THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Scripture Text - John 4: 1-26; 39-42

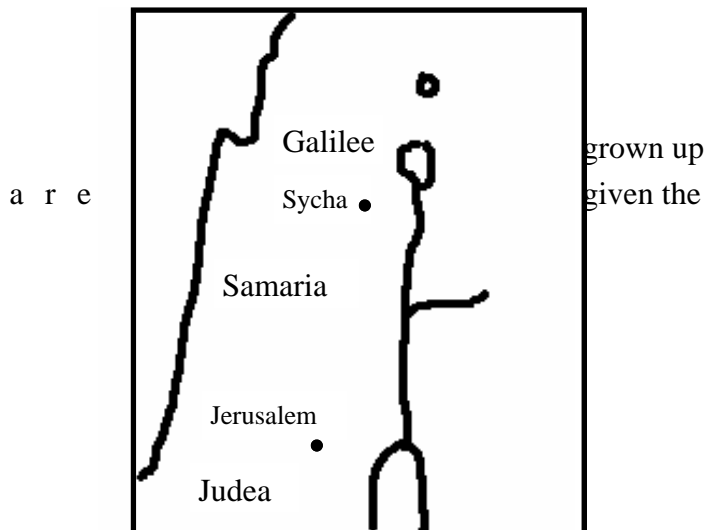
AIM OF LESSON

To show how the Samaritan woman came to trust Christ as her Saviour and then told her friends about Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The multitudes were now flocking to hear Jesus instead of John the Baptist. In order to prevent a premature crisis with the leaders in Jerusalem, Jesus left Judea for Galilee, passing through the province of Samaria.

VISUAL AID



Children feel very
when they
opportunity of looking at a
map. Draw this on a larger
sheet of paper or card.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class if they remember the name of the man in last week's story. Nicodemus was a very good man and very religious and yet he needed to trust in Christ. In to-day's story Jesus meets a Samaritan woman who had done many bad things. They both needed salvation and Jesus was able to save them both.

Outline

Jesus left Judea and went towards Galilee. He had to pass through the province of Samaria to get to Galilee. As Jesus and His disciples walked along they came to a very old well near the

town of Sychar in Samaria. This well had been dug by Jacob many, many years before.

In that hot and dry country water was very precious. There was usually only one well in a whole village. Every day the people brought their water pots and drew as much water as they needed. Jacob's well probably had a low stone wall around the top to keep people from falling into it. This wall made a good seat. Very likely a few palm-trees grew over the well and made the spot shady. As Jesus was tired from the journey He sat down by Jacob's well to rest while the disciples went to the village to buy some food. While Jesus was sitting there a woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water. Jesus was hot and thirsty, as well as tired. He asked the Samaritan woman to give him a drink of water.

The woman looked surprised that Jesus, who was a Jew, should ask a drink of her, a Samaritan. The Jews hated the Samaritans and would have nothing to do with them because the Samaritans knew very little about the true God.

The woman asked, 'How is it that you are willing to ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?'

Jesus said, 'If you knew who I am, you would ask me to give you living water.'

The woman said, 'Sir, the well is deep, and you have no pitcher to let down into it. How then can you get that living water?'

'Whoever drinks this water from the well will be thirsty again,' replied Jesus. 'But whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never be thirsty again, for the water I shall give him will give him eternal life.'

Jesus was not speaking of water which one drinks. He meant that He would put His Spirit into her heart, and her soul would be refreshed by His Spirit as her body was by water.

The woman did not understand this. She said, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty, nor have to come to draw water.'

To make the woman realise that He was not an ordinary man, Jesus told her several things about her life. She was startled, for how could this man tell her all about her past life? He had never seen her before! He was from another part of the country! She said to Him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet.'

Then she asked him something which had troubled her. 'Our fathers,' she said, 'always worshipped on this mountain; but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the only place where men ought to worship. Which is right?'

Jesus always tried to teach the people about His Heavenly Father. When the Samaritan woman

asked this question, Jesus answered it in such a way that He taught her more about God than she had ever known.

'God does not command us anymore to worship Him in a special place,' He said. 'It is in your hearts that you must worship Him. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'

Once more the woman realised that she was talking with a remarkable person. She said, 'I know that Christ is coming, and when He comes He will tell us the truth about everything.' Even this Samaritan woman, who knew little about the true God, was longing for the promised Saviour. Jesus said to her, 'I am the Christ.'

The woman couldn't keep this splendid news to herself. In her excitement she left her water jar by the well and hurried into the city. 'Come with me and see a man who told me everything that I did in my whole life,' she told the people she met. 'Could this be the Christ?'

The men were stirred by her excitement. Many of them went with her to the well to see for themselves. Some of them believed in Jesus because of what the woman had said. They begged Him to stay with them so that they might see His miracles and hear His words of life.

For two days Jesus stayed with the Samaritans. Many accepted Him as the Christ. No longer did they believe only because of what the woman told them. After they heard Him, they knew truly that this was the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

APPLICATION

When the woman heard that this man who knew all about her was really the Christ she ran to tell her friends. Many of her friends trusted Christ. We too must trust Jesus as our Saviour and tell others about Him. Ask the children who they could tell.

LESSON 13

Loving the Saviour

THANKING THE SAVIOUR - THE TEN LEPERS

Scripture Text - Luke 17: 11-19

AIM OF LESSON

To urge true gratitude to God, especially for salvation in Jesus Christ, contrasting it with the ingratitude that is common today.

BACKGROUND NOTES

For the third time, Luke informs us that Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem (chapter 9: 51, 52; 13: 22). Jesus cannot, it seems, cross Samaria, the shortest route to the capital city. So He turns eastward toward the Jordan River, walking between his home country of Galilee and the region of Samaria. The Samaritans were half-breed descendants (1) of the Israelites who remained after the deportation to Assyria in 721 BC, and (2) of various foreign groups implanted in the region by the conquerors. While animosity between Jew and Samaritan was real, they sometimes were forced together by circumstances, as, apparently, were these nine Jewish lepers and their Samaritan fellow-sufferer.

The word translated 'leprosy' included far more than the modern word communicates and so we cannot be sure what these ten men experienced. But it was a sufficiently serious skin disease for them to be kept apart from others, including Jesus, to whom they spoke 'from a distance' (v.12). Jesus sends them to the local priests who were responsible for administering the purification laws of the Old Testament law.

VISUAL AIDS

Large sheet of paper with drawings and pictures of basic items of everyday life like clothes, house, parents, food etc.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Show the visual aid to the class. Ask them to name some things for which we should give thanks to God and add to it by writing other items the children mention. Ask them if they have ever thanked God for giving these kinds of things to them. Have they thanked Him in the last week? It is so easy to take from God without ever returning thanks to Him. When someone hands us a plate of food at the dinner-table, we say, 'Thank you'. Do we always say, 'Thank you' to God for the things He gives us?

Outline

When Jesus was on the road to Jerusalem ten men, who suffered from a horrible skin disease called 'leprosy,' met Him. It was dangerous to go near them. If you touched them you just might get the same disease. So from a distance they cried out to Jesus, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us'. Jesus noticed the lepers, and He had compassion on them. He told them, 'Go, show yourselves to the Jewish priests.' This was a strange command when they wanted money or perhaps hoped for one of Jesus' miracles. But they did what they were told and turned and went off.

Suddenly one of the men realised that he had been healed of his leprosy. He began to shout the praises of God who had healed him through Jesus. He rushed back to Jesus, approaching Him closer than he would have dared before. The man threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him for what He had done.

The former leper knew that Jesus had special power from God, power that no other person had, to heal the sick, even of such a dreadful disease as leprosy. But this man wasn't a Jew. He was a foreigner, a Samaritan. Yet he recognised that Jesus was deserving of all the praise that he could give. Jesus asked him, 'Were not all ten of you cleansed? Where are the other nine? They were all Jews, but this man, a foreigner, is the only one who returns to thank God for what has happened to him.' The others were so happy at being healed that they forgot how that healing had taken place. They simply were not thankful for God's good gift.

Jesus turned again to the healed man lying at his feet. 'Rise and go, friend. Your faith has made you well.' All ten men had been healed in their bodies but Jesus was interested in doing more. He was concerned about their souls, the part of us that we cannot see or touch or feel, the part that is not physical. This Samaritan showed by his thankfulness that he wanted to be right with God in his soul and so Jesus told him that his faith had made him well in his soul as also in his body. God loves someone who thanks Him for all that He does.

APPLICATION

God gives us many things, in fact, everything we have. We must be thankful most of all for the greatest gift that God gives, His Son, Jesus. After Jesus left the village where He healed the ten lepers He went to the capital city of Jerusalem and there He gave His life paying the penalty for sin. One of the worst sins is forgetting to thank God for what He has done for us.

If we have put our trust in Jesus Christ then He has healed us from the terrible disease of sin. We want to be sure that we are thankful to God every day for this. Ask the children to name items for thanksgiving.

LESSON 14

Loving the Saviour

TRUSTING THE SAVIOUR'S POWER - THE PARALYTIC

Scripture Text - Luke 5: 17-26

AIM OF LESSON

To show that it is just as easy for God to forgive our sins as it is for Him to heal our bodies.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Jesus had already come into conflict with the Jewish authorities, so it was quite natural that the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law should observe all His doings carefully. While they were watching Him with suspicion, Jesus again revealed Himself as the divine Physician (see also Luke 4: 38-44; 5: 12-15).

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the children if they know anyone who is paralysed and not able to walk. Today's story is about a paralysed man who was not able to walk.

Outline

After teaching in many of the towns of Galilee, Jesus went into the city of Capernaum again. As soon as the people of the town heard that Jesus was there they ran to see Him. There was such a crowd that the house could hold no more people and even outside the door there was a large crowd.

In that city there was a man who was paralysed. He had to lie on a mat all the time and his family had to care for him. This man must have heard about all the people whom Jesus had healed on His first visit to Capernaum (Luke 4: 31-41) but he had not been able to go to see Jesus then.

As he lay on his bed, four of his friends came in. Each of them took a corner of the mat on which the paralytic was lying. They carried him out of the house and along the street until they reached the place where Jesus was. They could not even get near the door of the house because of the great crowd. What a disappointment for the poor man and his friends.

Having come so far, they were determined to reach Jesus somehow. At last they thought of a plan. Outside the house there was a stairway leading to the roof. In that country such stairways were very common. The houses were only one story and the people often spent much time on the flat roofs of their homes. Sometimes they even slept there on hot nights.

Up this outside stairway the friends of the paralysed man carefully carried him until they were on the roof. They laid him down and began to pull the tiles off the roof. When they had made a large hole they tied a strong rope to each corner of the mat. Then, with one man at each corner, they very carefully lowered the bed right down into the room in front of Jesus.

Jesus was glad to see that these people were eager to have their friend cured. Even more, He was glad to see that they truly believed that He could heal them. So Jesus did not say to the sick man, 'I will heal you.' He said something more wonderful, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

Among the great crowd of people round about there were many Jewish scribes and Pharisees who had come to see Jesus and listen to Him. When they heard Jesus say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' they began to grumble among themselves saying, 'What right has this man to say such things as this? No one can forgive sin except God.'

Of course they were right. Only God can forgive our sins. What the Pharisees would not believe was that Jesus is God and so He is able to forgive the sins of those who believe in Him. In fact, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' in order to make them understand that He was God. Jesus could read the thoughts of the Pharisees and scribes. Knowing that they were finding fault with His words, Jesus said, 'Why do you think that I have no right to forgive sins? I will prove to you that I am God with the right to forgive sins. I shall do something that only God can do.' Turning to the paralysed man He said, 'Rise up, take your mat and walk to your home.'

The paralytic who for so long had been unable to walk, got up, rolled up his mat and walked away. No doctor could have cured a man in this way. Only God could have. So Jesus had shown Himself to be not only man but God. Being God He could forgive sins.

APPLICATION.

The sick man in the story needed more than to be healed in his body. He needed to be healed inside, in his soul, for all the wrong things he had done. Every one of us needs the same forgiveness if we are to live happily now, and later, after we die, in heaven. We, too, will find forgiveness by coming to faith in Jesus and asking Him to forgive us. Then we, too, will be ready for heaven.

LESSON 15

Loving the Saviour

THE SAVIOUR FINDS A SINNER - ZACCHAEUS

Scripture Text - Luke 19: 1-10

AIM OF LESSON

To display the power of Jesus to change lives through personal contact, even with the despised of society.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Jericho was situated on the main road leading south-west to Jerusalem and Jesus is on His final journey to the capital city when He passes through it. He finds time to be entertained in the home of one of the tax-collectors who must have been very unpopular in such a busy roadway in the days of exorbitant road taxes. These tax-collectors, employees of the unpopular Roman state, took more than was their legal right so they were doubly hated. Zacchaeus was one of their chiefs and had made himself wealthy.

The Jewish religious leaders scrupulously avoided any formal contacts with tax-collectors; probably Zacchaeus had heard that Jesus of Nazareth was quite different, associating with terrorists ('zealots'), prostitutes and other tax-collectors.

VISUAL AIDS

Map of Palestine.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the children when it is hard to be small. Have they ever wished that the lady with the big hat sitting in front of them in church would move so that they could see around her? Small people, whether young or old, sometimes find it hard to see what they want to see.

Outline

Once there was a man who wanted to see Jesus but couldn't. It wasn't that Jesus wouldn't come to his town because Jesus did. It wasn't that the man was too busy working when Jesus passed through because this man could work when he liked as he was wealthy. It wasn't that the man was blind for he could see his money very well indeed. It wasn't that Jesus came through his town in the dark or in disguise for Jesus went through during the day and many people saw him. Why, then, couldn't this man see Jesus? Because he was so small that the crowd hid Jesus from his view.

This man's name was Zacchaeus and he came from a town called Jericho, which Jesus passed

through on His way to die in Jerusalem (indicate on map). Ask the children if they remember what happened when Joshua and the Israelites came to Jericho over 1000 years before Jesus? (God performed a great miracle on behalf of His people. He was going to perform a very different kind of miracle this day.)

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he couldn't. What would he do? Suddenly Zacchaeus had an idea. It wasn't very becoming for someone of his wealth and position but he climbed up into a fig tree, sometimes called a sycamore tree. This tree had a short trunk and strong low branches, so it was perfect for climbing in. Perhaps some of the boys and girls of Jericho had worn down the wood of the lower branches by playing in the tree over the years. Imagine a grown man and a wealthy respectable man at that, climbing up into the tree!

When Jesus passed below He looked up and called out to Zacchaeus by name. 'Zacchaeus,' he said, 'come down immediately. I must stay at your home today.' The Jewish religious leaders wouldn't go into the home of a tax-collector but Jesus acted differently.

Zacchaeus was overjoyed. For once, somebody showed some interest in him as a person. Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his home and he listened carefully to the message that Jesus proclaimed. A crowd gathered outside but they were there to criticise not to listen.

As Jesus spoke, a change came over Zacchaeus. Before, all he could think about was money and how he could use his position as an official of the Roman government in Israel to make lots of money. Now he realised that this was stealing and that stealing and many other things he did brought him under the judgement of God. He was a sinner and hell was all that awaited him when he died if he continued on as he was. What could be done to change that?

Jesus showed him that He Himself had come into the world to die for sinners. As God's Spirit worked powerfully in Zacchaeus' heart this truth came home to him. God's Spirit converted him from love of money to love of God, Jesus, and other people. Zacchaeus stood up and announced to Jesus, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything I will pay back four times the amount.'

The change was so complete that Jesus realised that God's Spirit had been at work in Zacchaeus' life. He rejoiced, 'Today, salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.' Abraham had long before given up everything he had in his own country, Ur of the Chaldees and he had travelled to Palestine to be the father of many believers. Zacchaeus had given up everything to follow Jesus. He was a true son of Abraham.

APPLICATION

The Lord Jesus had come to seek and to save those who were lost in sin and thus separated

from God. Here He had found someone who was truly lost. Nobody else was trying to reach out to Zacchaeus but contact with Jesus and His message transformed him. And so it is with us. Jesus has power to change our lives, and when He does, we are really changed.

Ask the children if we need to climb up into a tree to see Jesus. He is now in heaven where we cannot see Him with our eyes. But in the Bible we can see Him, especially when our minister preaches from that Book, and we can find that Jesus is seeking us and saving us from our sin. And that means change. But do we realise that we are sinners, lost, in need of someone to seek us out and save us?

Sometimes we cut off people from the good news of being saved from sin through faith in Jesus like the Jews cut off Zacchaeus. Sometimes we look down on those who are different from us because of their skin colour, or because they are poorer than we are, or because they seem so bad. We think we are so much better and we leave them as they are.

We must seek those whom Jesus might save and that means everybody, for all are lost and need Him. No matter who they are, or how much we don't like them, in love we should point them to Jesus.

LESSON 16

Loving the Saviour

A GOOD EXAMPLE - MARY OF BETHANY

Scripture Text - Luke 10: 38-42; Mark 14: 1-9

AIM OF LESSON

To teach how Mary came to love the Saviour and how she showed that love in acts of personal devotion and sacrifice.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the children what happens when someone comes to their house for tea and how they help their Mummy to get everything ready. What needs to be done? The house needs to be tidied, toys need to be put away, perhaps the furniture needs to be dusted and the carpet vacuumed, the food needs to be prepared for the meal and the table needs to be set. There is so much to do. Today we're going to hear the story of a home where Jesus was the visitor. It was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany.

Outline

Mary and Martha were very busy getting their home ready and getting the meal ready because Jesus was coming to visit them. He was an honoured guest and they wanted everything to be just right. No ordinary meal would do, it would have to be special. They spent all day getting ready but they had so much more to do when a knock on the door was heard. It was Jesus. He was invited in and given a seat. Martha was busy preparing. Mary, however, sat down to talk to Jesus. Perhaps now and again Jesus could hear the noise of pots and pans rattling as Martha worked in the kitchen. But Mary was paying so much attention to Jesus that she didn't hear anything else.

Martha said to Jesus, 'Don't you care that I have to do all the work and Mary isn't helping? Tell her to help me.'

Jesus answered her gently and said, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.' Mary was interested in the things that matter most of all - the things of God. Jesus went to Bethany often and He loved to stay in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

Some time later Jesus went to Bethany once more. He knew that as soon as He went to Jerusalem, the Jews would arrest Him and hang Him upon a cross to die. But Jesus knew that

this was why He had come. He had come to die for the sins of God's children. Just now He was happy as His friends gathered round Him.

Mary was trying to think of some way that she could show her love to Jesus. She could not think of the right words to say. Then she thought of an idea. She had a stone jar of sweet-smelling oil. It had cost her a lot of money to buy so she kept it safe. When Jesus was having a meal she brought the oil and poured it over His head and feet. With her long hair she wiped His feet. The fragrance of the oil filled the whole room.

When some of the disciples saw what Mary had done they were annoyed and said, 'This is a waste. It could have been sold for a lot of money and given to the poor.' So they scolded her. But Jesus replied, 'I am glad that Mary has done this. You always have poor people around you that you can help any time, but I will not be with you much longer, for I will soon go to be with My Father in heaven. Mary has shown her love to Me while I am still here.'

APPLICATION

Jesus is now in heaven and we cannot show our love to Him in the way that Mary did. Ask the children how we can show our love. We can tell Him we love Him as we speak to Him in prayer. We can sing praise to Him using the Psalms and we should always remember to think about the words we are singing. We can listen to His Word when we read it at home or at Church. We can obey God's Word cheerfully. We can help other people. These are all ways of showing our love of Jesus.

LESSON 17

Loving the Saviour

WILLING TO WORK FOR JESUS - FOUR FISHERMEN

Scripture Text - Matthew 4: 18-22

AIM OF LESSON

To show the children that God can use anyone of us in His service no matter how few talents we have. We must be ready and willing to follow Jesus when He calls.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Peter and Andrew were brothers who came from Bethsaida (which is north of the Sea of Galilee). They had met Jesus before and therefore they knew something about Him and His work (John 1: 35-42). This had occurred after Jesus was baptised in the wilderness by John (Matthew 3: 13-17). Andrew had been a follower of John the Baptist (John 1: 35f).

VISUAL AIDS

Obtain photographs of fishing nets. Explain to the children the scene at the Sea of Galilee.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

This story is about how Jesus called His first four disciples. Ask the children if they know their names. (Peter, Andrew, James and John.)

Outline

One day Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and He saw two men casting their nets. They were Peter and his brother Andrew. Casting nets was a very skilful task. When the fishermen threw the net over their shoulders it spread out, forming a circle as it fell into the water. Then, because of pieces of lead attached to it, it quickly sank into the water capturing the fish underneath. That was what Peter and Andrew were doing when Jesus, walking along the sea-shore, came to them.

Jesus said to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Ask the children what they think Jesus meant. (Jesus was really asking these two to leave their work and their family behind and follow Him. They would spend all their time with Jesus and learn about God and His ways. Then they would tell other people about the great kingdom God had prepared and how He had sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to be our Saviour.)

Peter and Andrew immediately put their trust in Jesus, left their work as fishermen, and

followed Him. Instead of catching fish for the table, they would now be helping Jesus to win men for the Kingdom of God. Peter and Andrew had met Jesus before this day and they knew a little about Him and His work. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist and knew that Jesus was the One whom John had referred to as the promised Messiah.

After Jesus had spoken to Peter and Andrew they came across James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a ship with their father mending their nets. These two were not fishing like Peter and Andrew but were preparing for another fishing trip by mending their torn nets. They received the same call as the other two and they obeyed it as quickly as Peter and Andrew had. They left not only their work but also their father and willingly followed Jesus. They, like Peter and Andrew, would not have known all that was involved in following Jesus but they were willing to leave everything and put their trust for the future in the hands of Jesus.

Jesus must have had a great influence over the minds and hearts and wills of these men so that when He called they followed immediately. It was marvellous that He was willing and able to take such common people as four fishermen and change them into men He could use to bring the message of salvation to others.

Ask the children simple questions such as:

- (1) Who were the first two disciples?
- (2) What were these two men doing when Jesus called them?
- (3) What were the names of the second two disciples?
- (4) Why do you think these men were willing to leave all to follow Jesus?

APPLICATION

Jesus called four fishermen to be His first disciples: Peter, Andrew, James and John. He didn't go to some well-educated or wealthy men; he went to the men who followed a simple and common occupation. Fishing was a very popular occupation in their area for the Sea of Galilee had many fish. Jesus needed someone to help Him to spread His word among the people.

Just as Jesus needed His disciples to help Him while He was on earth so He needs disciples now to share His good news. He needs people to tell others that He came from heaven into our world to die on the cross to save us from our sins. We don't need to be special or have any special talents before God will call us. Just as He called these four ordinary men to be His first disciples He calls us to follow Him.

LESSON 18

Loving the Saviour

THE SAVIOUR GIVES HIS LIFE - THE CRUCIFIXION

Scripture Text - Matthew 27: 1-38

AIM OF LESSON

To show the children that Christ gave His life for them on the cross so that they could be saved from their sins.

BACKGROUND NOTES

This story took place when Christ had been betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, and delivered to Pontius Pilate for judgement. Jesus had been held in imprisonment somewhere in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. Jesus had to be led before Pilate because the Sanhedrin had no right, without Roman approval, to carry out a sentence of death.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the children if they remember what the angel said to Mary when she was going to have a baby. The angel told her what He should be called. Ask if they remember His name and why He was called that. ('You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.') Jesus was the Son of God, and all along He knew that one day He would die on the cross for the sins of God's children.

Outline

The morning after Peter had denied Jesus, Jesus was taken from the house of Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. When Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, realised that Jesus had been condemned to death, he was immediately sorry for what he had done and rushed up to the chief priests. Judas said, 'I've done wrong in betraying Jesus.'

Judas flung the thirty pieces of silver on the floor and rushed out and hanged himself. Meanwhile, Pilate said to Jesus, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'You said it.'

While the chief priests and elders accused Jesus, He didn't answer them at all. Pilate then said to Him, 'Don't you hear all the accusations they are bringing against you?' Yet Jesus didn't say a word.

Pilate began to realise that Jesus was innocent and did not deserve to die. He knew that it was because of envy the Jews had brought Jesus to him. At this time of the year, the Feast of the Passover was being celebrated and it was usual for one prisoner to be released as part of the

celebrations. Pilate offered the Jews the opportunity of choosing between Barabbas and Jesus. Barabbas was a murderer. Contrary to Pilate's hopes and expectations the Jewish people, urged on by their leaders, chose Barabbas. Pilate then asked the people, 'What do you want me to do with Jesus?' They answered, 'Crucify him!'

Pilate did not oppose the wishes of the people but he did wash his hands in front of the crowd. This gesture was to show that he would not be held responsible for Jesus' death. He released Barabbas to the crowd and he had Jesus whipped. The soldiers took Jesus away and put a scarlet robe around Him. They placed a crown of thorns on His head and a stick in His right hand. Then they knelt in front of Him and mocked Him saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They also spat on Him.

After they had finished mocking Jesus they took off the robe and led him away to be crucified. They forced a man called Simon (who was from Cyrene or Libya) to carry Jesus' cross to a place called Golgotha, outside the city of Jerusalem. The soldiers offered Jesus vinegar and gall to drink in order to drug His body so that He would not feel all the pain. Jesus, when He tasted it, would not drink it. He would bear all the pain Himself.

After they had crucified Jesus they divided up His clothes among themselves. The words, 'This is the King of the Jews' were written on a board and placed above the cross and two robbers were crucified on either side of Him.

APPLICATION

Jesus suffered a lot of humiliation when He was being tried by Pilate and mocked by the soldiers before He was led away to be crucified. Yet He didn't say a word against anyone. (See Isaiah 53: 7).

More than the pain of humiliation and the terrible suffering in His body was the pain that Jesus endured because He was suffering for our sin. Ask the children if they have ever been very naughty and when their Mummy and Daddy smacked them and said, 'You have disappointed us,' the pain of disappointing their parents would have been worse than the smack they received. That is how Jesus felt on the cross. However, He had not done anything wrong, but the Father treated Him as if He had. He was bearing the sin of all who believe in Him, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.' (Isaiah 53: 5)

LESSON 19

Learning to Obey God

OBEDIENCE BRINGS JOY

Scripture Text - Joshua 7:1 - 8: 29

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the children that obedience is the only way to be truly happy.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Read Chapter 6 to give the background story for this week's lesson. Note particularly verses 17-21. A stern warning was given to the people against taking any spoil for personal use. See Leviticus 29: 28 and 29.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Talk a little to the children about obedience. (Make sure they understand the word). Have them recall times when they have known they've disobeyed - perhaps their parents or teacher. Ask how they felt - even if they got away without being discovered for a while, did they really feel happy deep inside? Has their disobedience ever made other people unhappy, perhaps by getting them into trouble. Today's story is about how much unhappiness one man's disobedience caused.

Outline

Things were going really well for Joshua. God had just given the Israelites a mighty victory over Jericho. People all over the country had heard of it and Joshua was becoming famous. However, Joshua didn't know something that God knew and was very angry about, something that was going to bring a lot of sorrow to Israel so he went ahead to plan the attack on the next city in the land of Canaan - Ai. He was full of trust that God would help him just as He had at other times.

Before he could attack the city of Ai Joshua had to find out what it was like and so he sent some spies to see. When they came back they told Joshua that this wasn't a great city like Jericho, there would not be much trouble defeating it, and he should send only some of the army. So Joshua took their advice and sent off a small number of soldiers but they got a nasty shock for the men of Ai chased them and easily defeated them, killing thirty-six men.

This was a great blow to Joshua and the people of Israel were terrified. Did this mean God had forsaken them? In great distress Joshua fell on his face before God to find out what had happened. He did not want God's great name to be laughed at by all the heathen nations round about.

God soon told him what was the matter. It was all because one of the Israelites had

disobeyed and had stolen some goods out of Jericho when God had clearly commanded that nothing should be taken. God said, 'Until this is removed you won't be able to stand against your enemies. I will not be with you any more unless it is destroyed. You must find out tomorrow who it is.'

The next day Joshua brought all the people together and under God's direction they singled out a man called Achan. You can imagine how terrified Achan must have been, knowing that at any moment he was going to be discovered. When Achan stood in front of Joshua he had to confess what he had done. 'It is true,' said Achan, 'I have sinned. When I saw some of the beautiful things in Jericho I took them and hid them in my tent. I took a beautiful robe, some silver and some gold.' Messengers were sent to search his tent and sure enough, there they were, just as Achan had said.

Obedying God's instruction, Achan and all his family were then put to death.

When all this was done God came to Joshua with new instructions. 'Don't be afraid,' He said, 'I will deliver all of the city of Ai into your hands. Just do as I command you.'

God then gave Joshua a very clever plan. This time he was to use the whole army but only send a small number to march up to Ai. All the rest were to hide near the city. When the King of Ai would see the small number of Israelite soldiers he would think 'Here they come again, we'll soon chase them and defeat them.' This is what they did, but as soon as the men of Ai had left their city, those soldiers in hiding ran into the city and set it on fire. In the meantime the fleeing Israelites were leading the men of Ai further and further from the city. When Joshua and his men saw the city on fire, they turned on the Ai army and attacked them, while at the same time the Israelites left the burning city and attacked from behind so the army of Ai was caught in the middle and could not escape.

Israel won another great victory and there was great rejoicing among the people.

APPLICATION

Consider with the class these questions, 'Do you think Achan was happy after he had stolen the goods from Jericho? Do you think he enjoyed having them?' He possibly lived in terror of being discovered. He probably would never have believed that his disobedience would have caused so much sorrow to the whole of the Israelite people. Sometimes, just as in Achan's case, our disobedience hurts other people as well as ourselves.

It was only when Joshua followed God's commands completely that the people of Israel were able to rejoice.

God is to be obeyed in everything we do although often it seems that it would be much easier to disobey. Obedience is often hard, especially when we are tempted, but it is only when we obey that we are truly happy.

LESSON 20

Learning to Obey God

USING GOD'S GIFTS

Scripture Text - 1 Kings 3

AIM OF LESSON

To help the children realise that God has given them individual abilities to use for Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In purely worldly terms knowledge and skill equal wisdom, i.e., knowing what to do and having the ability to do it is wisdom. In the Bible wisdom involves a knowledge of God's will and the ability to put it into practice - hence God alone is the source of true wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 12 we see that God has given His children gifts for the benefit of the whole body, the Church.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Consider the following with your class:

I wonder if you have ever been asked a question by your mother, or your teacher in school and given a really silly answer. Maybe then your mum or teacher turned round and said, 'Oh David, use your head, you silly boy' or something like that. When people say 'use your head' they mean God has given you a brain, use it, and think properly. Today we're going to hear a story about a man who could really think and find out the answers to many difficult problems. He was a very wise man and he used his wisdom to serve God. But he wasn't always like that.

Outline

You probably all remember King David? He had a son called Solomon, who became king after his father died. He built a very special palace for himself and the queen and he also built a temple for people to worship God. He loved God and obeyed Him as David his father had though he sometimes offered sacrifices to God at places God had not commanded.

On one occasion he went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices to God and that night he dreamt that God spoke to him and asked him what he would like to be given. Solomon told God how pleased he was that God had made him king over Israel but that he didn't know how to be king over so many people. He said to God, 'Please make me wise, and help me to do the right thing. How could anyone rule all these people?'

God was pleased because Solomon hadn't asked for money or a long life or anything selfish. God said He would make Solomon the wisest person that ever lived and give him lots of

money as well. Solomon woke up but he remembered all God said to him when he went back home to Jerusalem.

One day two women were brought into the king's presence. They lived in the same house and each had had a baby recently. One of the women had accidentally smothered her son by lying on him while she was sleeping. So she took the other woman's child when she was asleep and put her dead child in its place. When the other woman woke up she realised that it was not her child who was beside her. She couldn't do anything to get her own child back and no-one else could tell who the living child belonged to. So they brought the two women and the one living child before the king. They argued all the time in front of the king.

The king listened. Then he said, 'Bring me a sword. Now cut the living child in half and give each woman half a baby.' The mother of the living child immediately cried out, 'No! Don't do that! Don't kill him! Better give him to the other woman alive but don't do him any harm.' but the woman whose child was dead didn't care what happened and said, 'Just cut the child in half and then neither of us will have a child.'

It was obvious who was the true mother for she loved the child and would rather lose him than see him harmed and so the king said, 'Give the child to the first woman. She is his mother.'

The whole kingdom of Israel heard the king's ruling and knew God had made him wise to make right decisions.

APPLICATION

Now Solomon was a special person and God gave him a very special gift when he made him wise. Suggest to the class that they aren't likely to be as wise as Solomon but God makes each one of us different and each of us can do different things for God. We all have two hands and can make things. Maybe they can make something for someone else.

We can all walk. Ask the children if there is something they could do for someone who can't walk. Perhaps they could do the shopping for an old person or visit someone who is sick. Our health is something God wants us to use for Him, not just to enjoy ourselves.

God has given us different gifts to use and He wants us to use them just as Solomon did.

LESSON 21

Learning to Obey God

OBEDIENCE IS TRUSTING GOD

Scripture Text - 1 Kings 17

AIM OF LESSON

To show that obedience to God's Word is trusting God.

VISUAL AIDS

Draw the following stages of the story or use flannelgraph material. See pupils' worksheet.

- (i) Elijah at the brook being fed by the ravens.
- (ii) The brook dried up.
- (iii) Elijah meets the widow of Zarephath gathering sticks.
- (iv) The widow bakes a cake.

To emphasize the seriousness of drought and famine show the children some pictures of the effect that famine has on people's lives.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

King Ahab was a bad king. The Bible tells us that 'Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him' (1 Kings 16: 30). Ahab married a woman called Jezebel who worshipped a false god called Baal. Ahab set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal. He made God very angry. God was going to punish Ahab and those who followed him. It was Elijah the Tishbite who was to take the message of judgement to Ahab.

Outline

Elijah was a brave prophet. He took God's message to Ahab. The message was that there would be no dew or rain in the next few years. What would this mean for the people living in the land?

God was going to look after Elijah. He told him to go and hide at the brook Cherith and God would command ravens to bring bread and meat. After some time the brook from which Elijah drank dried up and Elijah realised that if he stayed there he would die.

Nevertheless, God was looking after Elijah and He told him to go to a place called Zarephath. There God had commanded a widow to give Elijah food. Elijah did as God said and when he arrived at Zarephath he saw a widow gathering sticks. He asked the widow to bring him some water and as she was going to fetch it he called out and asked her to bring him a piece of bread. The widow must have felt really sad when she heard this because all that she had left was a

handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. This was to make their last meal. Consider the position of the widow. Remember that God had commanded her to give Elijah food. The widow must have found this command hard to obey. God's commands sometimes seem hard to obey. Perhaps the widow thought that God was being very harsh. Maybe she thought of disobeying God.

God did something special for this widow. He gave her a wonderful promise. First, Elijah told her not to be afraid, but to go and make him a small cake and to bring it to him. She was also to make something for herself and her son. Elijah then told her what God would do. The jar of flour would not be used up and the jug of oil would not run dry until the day that the Lord would give rain again. God is very good. He doesn't need to give wonderful promises but He very often does.

The widow did as Elijah had told her. She obeyed God for it was God who had commanded her. She trusted that God would fulfil His promise and supply her needs and God blessed the widow for her obedience. The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry. The widow's obedience showed her trust in God. Obedience is trusting God. The widow was asked to do something very hard. Satan may have whispered to her that if she did this there would be no food left and she and her son would die. She believed and obeyed God's Word. This was trust in God. When we obey God's Word we are showing how much we trust Him.

Elijah also shows us that obedience is trusting God. Twice in the passage God commanded him to go to a certain place. First to Cherith where ravens would bring him food and secondly to Zarephath where a widow would feed him. Elijah obeyed, showing his trust in God.

God was good to the widow of Zarephath. He gave her food and later on, while Elijah was staying with her, her son became ill and actually died. Elijah prayed to God and God restored life to the widow's son.

APPLICATION

God still commands us to do things today. When we read His Word, He is speaking to us and telling us what to do. We might be like the widow and find some things hard to obey. Satan might whisper in our ear and tell us that it doesn't really matter or that we will lose our friends. If we obey God our friends may laugh at us or leave us but this shows that they are not really friends at all. These are our opportunities for showing how much we trust in God. Let us be like the widow of Zarephath who, despite having so many things against her, (little food left, being poor, etc.) showed her trust in God by obeying Him.

LESSON 22

Learning to Obey God

SPEAKING FOR GOD

Scripture Text - 1 Kings 18

AIM OF LESSON

1. To show the children how Elijah was enabled to speak out boldly for God even when his life was in danger.
2. To encourage the children to obey God even when they feel afraid.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The children of Israel had turned from worshipping God to worship Baal. Baal worship was the worship of the sun which was thought of as the Lord of Heaven. Baal means Lord. This religion had some very evil practices including human sacrifices. Often children were burnt alive in the worship of this idol (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6). Drunken orgies were also part of the 'worship'! King Ahab had led his people into this sinful state, encouraged by his wife Jezebel. However, God had not forgotten His people and Elijah, God's prophet, was sent to warn Ahab that there would be no rain. This was a punishment for the nation's sins. Elijah had been staying with the widow at Zarephath since the beginning of the drought. Now God tells him to go again to King Ahab.

VISUAL AIDS

'Elijah and Elisha' - A Ladybird Bible Book published by Scripture Union and Ladybird.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the pupils how they would feel if they heard people at school saying horrible things about their parents. Would they be sad? Maybe cross? Would they speak up for their parents? Probably they would let the people know that what was said was a lie. They would tell them and show them the good things their parents do for them. Elijah felt like this when the Children of Israel had forgotten about God and turned to worship Baal. He wanted to show them that God was the only true God and they must not disobey Him.

Outline

King Ahab was the King in Israel and this meant that he was a very important man. He was even more important than the headmaster in a school. King Ahab was the leader over the people. What he said was law and the people obeyed him. He could have been a very good leader if he had obeyed God's laws. The Bible tells us that sadly King Ahab did more to make God angry than all the kings of Israel who had lived before him. Ahab forgot about the Lord

God of Israel. He worshipped an idol called Baal. This was a very wicked thing to do because it was disobeying God's first and second commandments.

As Ahab was the king, the people followed his example so he needed to be warned about his sin. God had chosen a man called Elijah to be His prophet. A prophet's job was to tell the people what God wanted to say to them. Elijah warned King Ahab that God would send a drought. That means there would be no rain for a long time. This was to punish the people and to remind them that God is the only true God and He must be the only one they worshipped. When Elijah told Ahab about the drought the king was very angry.

Three long years passed without a drop of rain. Maybe you think it would be fun not to have to wear boots and coats and hats to keep you dry. It wasn't fun because soon the trees and flowers died, the grass turned a yellow colour and the ground was very hard. The animals became ill and died and the people didn't have enough food because the crops didn't grow. After this long dry time God told Elijah he must go back to the wicked king. This time Elijah had good news - God was going to send rain.

Although Elijah knew that King Ahab would not really want to meet him he trusted God as he set out. Ahab still hadn't learned his lesson for he blamed Elijah for the drought. When he met the prophet, King Ahab said, 'You're the cause of all our problems, you troublemaker.' Elijah answered this wicked king boldly, 'It's you, King Ahab, and your family who are the cause of the trouble. You have broken God's commandments and turned to an idol instead of the true God! Now listen carefully. Tell all the people to meet me on Mount Carmel. Don't forget to bring the 450 prophets of Baal.' The people travelled to Mount Carmel in great crowds. They wanted to know what was going on. What was all this about? Elijah didn't take long to tell them. 'How long will you take to make up your minds? If the Lord of Israel is God then follow Him; but if Baal is God follow him!' The people just stood there not knowing who was their God. Elijah told the people, 'Get us two bulls for sacrifice.' In those days, before Jesus was born, the people sacrificed animals to God. This was not strange to the people. Indeed God had commanded this. Elijah let the prophets of Baal choose their bull. The bull was prepared for the fire. It was set on an altar. An altar is like a high table built with stones with wood in the middle for burning. There were two altars, one for Baal and one for God.

Usually the wood was lit and the dead bull would be burned, but not this time. This was to be a test between Baal and God. Elijah said, 'Now you call on your god and I will call on the name of the Lord. The God who answers by fire - he is God.' The people agreed and the prophets of Baal called on their god first from morning until mid-day. 'O Baal answer us', they shouted. They danced round the altar but nothing happened. Elijah said 'Maybe he's sleeping, shout louder.' He said this to show the people how foolish they were. The prophets of Baal even cut themselves. This was how they worshipped Baal. This went on until evening but no-one

answered. No fire appeared under the sacrifice. Of course there was no answer. Baal was only an idol.

Now it was Elijah's turn. He repaired the altar of the Lord and dug a trench around it. He put the wood on the altar. 'Go and get four large jars of water and pour it on the bull and the wood,' said Elijah. The people did this and in fact they poured water from the jars on to the altar three times. The water ran down into the trench. Elijah prayed to God, 'O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you are God and that you are turning their hearts back again.' Elijah didn't have to keep crying to God, or dance, or cut himself. Just as he finished praying, the fire of the Lord burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the water! When the people saw this they were afraid and ashamed. They lay with their faces to the ground. 'The Lord - He is God, ' they cried, 'The Lord - He is God!' Now it could be seen clearly that the prophets of Baal were evil men who had encouraged the people to sin. Elijah commanded that all those wicked prophets should be put to death. Not long after this God sent the first rain in over three years.

Recap the story by asking the questions on the pupils' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Ask your class to complete the pupils' worksheet. Alternatively this may be done at home.

Elijah was God's prophet who spoke boldly for God. That doesn't mean he was like Superman or any other made up hero. The Bible tells us what he was like in James 5:17.

This means he could feel afraid just as we do. Elijah would not like being called a 'troublemaker' but that didn't stop him from obeying God. He told the people clearly what God had to say. We might think, 'I will never have to speak to the Queen so I'm not like Elijah' but we may have friends at school who don't try to keep the Commandments and don't know they are disobeying God. We could ask them to come to Sabbath School so that they learn what God has to say to them or we could lend them a Bible Story book so that they can read the stories for themselves. Some boys and girls will not want books or an invitation to Sabbath School but we can pray for them and ask God to help us to be brave like Elijah.

LESSON 23

Learning to Obey God

OBEYING GOD EVEN WHEN IT HURTS

Scripture Text - Jeremiah 26

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jeremiah obeyed God by speaking for Him, even though he knew he might not be very popular for doing so and that we too must obey God even if it hurts.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Jeremiah was a prophet in Judah from about 625-585 BC. He was the son of Hilkiyah, a priest, and came from Anathoth, a village about three miles North East of Jerusalem. He was called by God (Jeremiah 1) to go to a wicked people who had forsaken God (Jeremiah 2:13) and had turned to idols (Jeremiah 18:15). He was to bring God's message, not his own thoughts, to this people.

Some thirty years after God had called Jeremiah to this task, Jehoiakim became King of Judah. He was as bad as, if not worse than, all the kings before him, for he did 'evil in the sight of the Lord' (2 Kings 23:37). Shiloh was the place where the tabernacle was set up after the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 18:1). It became the centre of Israel's worship but was destroyed by God because of the wickedness of Israel (Jeremiah 7:12).

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Consider the following questions with your class. When Mum asks you to help with the dishes or Dad asks you to bring in some coal for the fire, do you always find it easy to obey? It's easier to obey and wash the dishes if you are not watching a favourite TV programme isn't it? It's easier to obey and get some coal if it is a nice, dry day but harder to obey if it is cold and wet outside. It is easier to obey if it doesn't hurt us or mean that we will miss out on something but harder if obeying means that we cannot do something we really want to.

Today we are going to hear about someone in the Bible who knew that he had to obey God, even though it might mean being killed for doing so. His name was Jeremiah.

Outline

Jeremiah was a prophet. This means that he was God's spokesman. He told the people, not his own thoughts or ideas, but what God told him to tell them. He lived a long, long time ago - many years even before Jesus was born, in a land called Judah, in a village about three miles from Jerusalem.

When Jeremiah was a young man, God spoke to him in a very special way and told him to go wherever He sent him and to tell the people whatever He commanded him. The people of Judah, although they were God's special people, had turned from worshipping Him as the true God and instead offered sacrifices to idols. They treated the poor people harshly, told lies, stole and even murdered. All this made God very angry and He sent Jeremiah to tell the people that they must be sorry for all the evil things they were doing. If they were not sorry, then God would destroy their country, but if they were sorry, He would not punish them as He had planned.

It was not long after Jehoiakim became king of Judah, that God told Jeremiah to take this message to the people of Jerusalem. Now Jehoiakim was a wicked king who disobeyed God and did many evil things. He had put to death a man who had already told the people the same things as Jeremiah was about to tell them. Perhaps Jeremiah knew about this but he also knew that he must do exactly as God commanded him and go to Jerusalem, even though the people there might not like what he had to say to them and might even harm him for saying it.

So Jeremiah went and stood in the courtyard of the Lord's house in Jerusalem and told the people all that God had told him to say. He said, "This is what the Lord says, "If you do not listen to me and follow my law and if you do not listen to the words of my servants, the prophets, then I will totally destroy this house of God and this city will lie in ruins.""

Just as we do not like being told by our parents that we have done wrong, the people did not like what Jeremiah told them.

As soon as Jeremiah had finished speaking, the people all crowded round him saying, 'You must die.' Discuss how Jeremiah must have felt surrounded by all these people who wanted to kill him. They were very angry that Jeremiah, as God's spokesman, should tell them that God would destroy the temple and their city. After all, the temple was God's House, so surely God would never destroy it! The people thought that they were safe in God's House and that just because they were there, God would be pleased with them.

There was such an uproar that some of the important men from the palace came to see what was happening. They were told, 'This man Jeremiah should be put to death because he has told us that God will destroy the Lord's House and this city.' Jeremiah, however, remained calm and told the people that God had sent him to tell them all these things. He said, 'Now change your ways and obey the Lord your God and He will not bring this disaster on you. 'As for me,' Jeremiah said, 'I am in your hands. However, if you kill me, remember that all the people who live in this city will be blamed for my death for I have done nothing wrong. I have only told you what God told me to tell you.'

Most of the people then said, 'Jeremiah should not be put to death. He has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.' Some of the most important men in the land also spoke up. They reminded the whole crowd about something which had happened when Hezekiah was their king. They said, 'A man called Micah told us the same things as Jeremiah has just told us. Did the king or anyone else put Micah to death? Indeed they did not! In fact, King Hezekiah was sorry for all the evil things that he had done and God forgave him. God did not then bring on us the disaster He had planned. However, be warned, we are now about to bring a terrible disaster on ourselves.'

The people listened to what these important men had said and did not kill Jeremiah. His life was spared.

Revise the story by completing No. 1 and No. 2 in the pupils' worksheet.

APPLICATION

Jeremiah brought God's message to the people, even though he was nearly killed because he did so. Sometimes we have to obey God, even if it hurts us. Look at the two stories in No. 3 of the pupils' worksheet. Discuss with the class the ways it hurt Ian and Kate to obey God.

LESSON 24

Learning to Obey God

OBEYING GOD BY BEING PURE

Scripture Text - Daniel 1

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the children that it is important to obey God in everything we think, or say, or do, no matter what our friends, or others do.

BACKGROUND NOTES

DANIEL - born into an unidentified family of Judean nobility; was among the select youthful hostages of the first Jewish deportation, taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC, the third year of King Jehoiakim. He was assigned the Babylonian name Belteshazzar, 'Protect his life!', thereby invoking a pagan deity.

JEHOIAKIM - second son of the godly Josiah, King of Judah. Reigned over Jerusalem from 608-597 BC. He was an oppressive and thoroughly godless king.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR - the great King of the Neo-Babylonian Empire who reigned from 605-562 BC. The booty he carried off from Jerusalem was probably placed in the treasure house of his god (probably Marduk) as a 'Thank Offering'.

It was oriental custom to feed officers of the court from the king's table, and this custom prevailed even in Israel. It was also custom that when someone entered a new position in life their name was changed.

VISUAL AID

'The Story of Daniel' by Ladybird

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Relate the following story to the class.

Pete was brought up in a Christian home and went to Sabbath School and Church every week. He loved to sing praises to God, pray to Him and listen to stories from the Bible, but most of all he wanted to obey God in everything he did. One Saturday Pete and two of his friends, Fred and Spike, were out walking on their way to town. Pete was so busy thinking about the shiny new 50p coin in his pocket and what he would spend it on, that he didn't notice the little old lady in front, pulling her shopping trolley. Just as she turned the corner, her shopping trolley bumped against a stone and her purse fell out. She hadn't realised what had happened but Fred and Spike had. 'Hey', shouted Spike running to the purse and picking it up. 'This is brilliant! Now we'll have more money to spend in town!'

'Yeh! Great!' agreed Fred, 'Divide it out quickly into three, and throw the purse over the hedge before the old lady comes looking for it!' Pete had awakened from his day-dream by this time and was feeling really sad and sick inside at what his friends were going to do. He knew what they planned to do was wrong. It was sinning against God. Yet if he tried to explain this to them, they would laugh and tease him, or worse still, refuse to ever play with him again or be his friends. Pete knew he was going to have to be very brave to stand up for what was right.

Outline

Tell the class that today's story is about a young man in the Bible who decided not to be part of the crowd and do what everyone else was doing, but to do what he knew was RIGHT and what would be pleasing to God.

Jehoiakim was king of Judah but he was a wicked king. God had warned him and his people that if they did not obey Him, they would be punished. But not all the people who lived in the land were disobedient. Some of them still wanted to serve and obey God and a young man called Daniel was one of them.

One day a king, called Nebuchadnezzar, from another country came and attacked Jerusalem, the capital of the land of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar won the battle and went back to his own country, taking with him some precious things from God's house and some prisoners. Among the prisoners was Daniel who was about 15 years old. Imagine how he would have felt being taken away from his mother and father to a strange, far-away country. He would probably have felt very frightened and wonder what was going to happen to him but he was sure that God knew all about his trouble and would not forget him. Daniel decided that, even in a strange land, he would not forget God.

Three of the other prisoners were royal princes like Daniel. Their names were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. When they all arrived at the king's palace they were told they had been chosen to serve the king. A man was put in charge of the boys and, for three years, he was to teach them the things which would make them good servants of King Nebuchadnezzar. They even had to learn a new language! The king probably thought to himself, 'These boys are still quite young. If we teach them how to speak and live like us, soon they will forget all about their families and their country and just grow up to be like our people.'

The people in Nebuchadnezzar's country were heathen. That means they did not worship God but worshipped idols made of wood or stone or precious metals. To try and make the four boys forget about God, their names were changed to names that would remind them of the idols the people in this country worshipped. But Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah decided that, even though their names were changed, their hearts would not change and they would still be true to God. They knew too that if they prayed to Him every day, God would help them to do

the right things, even though they might be tempted to do wrong.

One day Daniel and his three friends were tempted to do something that they knew was wrong and would not please God. The officer who looked after them, told them that they were very privileged because every day they would get some food and wine from the king's table to eat. Just imagine - eating the same sort of food as a king! It probably would have been the best in the palace and looked and smelled delicious. But Daniel and his friends felt that they should not eat the food.

A long time before, Moses had given the Jews rules or laws from God which forbade them to eat certain types of food. So if Daniel and his friends ate the meat the king sent, they would surely be breaking the Law. Furthermore, the people in this land were heathen and worshipped idols and to please the idols they offered up their food and drink as a sacrifice to them, before they ate it. So if the boys ate this food, people might think they loved and worshipped the idols too.

The boys had a choice. They were tempted to eat and drink things they knew they shouldn't. If they didn't eat it, the officer might report them to the king and their heads might be chopped off! If they did eat it, they would not be obeying God. Daniel knew all along that God was with them and He would help them to do the right thing. So Daniel politely explained to the officer-in-charge why they could not eat the king's food.

Now the officer loved the boys and was very kind to them. He did not want to make them do anything that would make them unhappy but he was also afraid of the king. 'Daniel,' he said, 'the king has told me to give you this food and if you don't eat it you will all grow thin and pale and perhaps become sick. The king will compare you with the other prisoners who will be well and healthy and I will be blamed. I might even lose my head!'

'Please allow us to eat just vegetables and drink just water for ten days and then see how we look compared to the other prisoners' said Daniel.

So the officer agreed to this and tested them for ten days. God blessed Daniel and his friends because of their obedience to Him and, at the end of ten days, they looked more healthy than any of the others who had fed on the king's food. So the officer allowed them to continue eating their vegetables and drinking just water.

God always honours those who try to honour Him. He helped Daniel and his friends in their studies and gave them understanding of very difficult questions. After their three years' training they were brought before the king to be examined and he found that they were ten times better at everything than all the clever men he had at his palace. The king was so pleased

with the boys that they were chosen to serve him in the palace.

Revise the story by asking:-

1. What was the name of the king who attacked Jerusalem?
2. What was to happen to the royal princes who were captured?
3. Whom did Nebuchadnezzar's people worship?
4. Why did the boys not want to eat the king's food?
5. Why was the officer-in-charge afraid to give them different food to eat?
6. What happened at the end of ten days?
7. What happens when we try to do what is pleasing to God?

APPLICATION

Sometimes we are tempted to do things that are wrong. It is very difficult at times to keep doing what is right and pure, especially if we know our parents aren't there to see us, yes, or our teachers, or any other grown-up. Perhaps at school, in the playground, we are tempted to say bad words or tell lies. What should we do when this happens? Should we just join in and do what everyone else is doing and say nothing? If we do this, we are not obeying God and our friends will think we are no different from them.

If we say, 'No! That would be telling lies / stealing', or 'I'm not going to join in playing with you, because what you're going to do is wrong,' some of our friends may laugh or tease us and make us embarrassed. Remember, by standing up for what we know is right, we are obeying God and pleasing Him. Remember too, that we don't have to do this in our own strength. Just as God helped Daniel to obey Him, He will help us too, if we ask Him.

LESSON 25

Learning to Obey God

OBEYING GOD COMPLETELY

Scripture Text - Daniel 3

AIM OF LESSON

To show the courage of the young men in being faithful to God and that we can be sure God is with us when we are like them.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The image, covered with gold and 90 feet high, was set up on a flat plain where everyone could see it. Nebuchadnezzar was trying to prove his power by demanding that all his people worship it.

The charge against Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego had deeper implications than the fact that they would not bow down to the golden image. As we saw with Daniel there were some who resented these men getting on well. They were obedient and loyal to the king as much as they could be but when the king's command ran counter to God's their position was 'We must obey God rather than men.'

VISUAL AIDS

Any pictures relating to this story, perhaps from a children's picture Bible.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class this question, 'Does anyone know what it means to obey?' It's really just another way of saying that you must do what you're told. Talk about some things that Mummy or Daddy might ask them to do. We are going to hear a story today about three young men who did what God told them to do. They obeyed God. Their names were Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego.

Outline

King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, wanted to show his people how powerful he was so he set up a huge statue of gold. It was enormous. He sent for all the important people in the land to come and worship it. There were rulers, governors and mayors who came from all over the land. Nebuchadnezzar said, 'When you hear the sound of musical instruments you must bow down and worship my statue. If you do not worship, you shall be thrown into a very hot furnace.'

As soon as the music sounded the people bowed down and worshipped the image. Nebuchadnezzar was feeling so proud for he was king over all these people and could tell

them what to do. Some men came and spoke to him. 'O King, live for ever.' They sounded as if the only thing they were interested in was the king's honour. They reminded him of the law that he had made and the punishment for disobeying it. Then they came to the point. 'There are three men who are Jews and who are rulers and they disregard you and do not serve your gods or worship the golden image you have set up.'

When Nebuchadnezzar heard that he flew into a rage. He ordered the three men to be brought before him. 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? I will give you one more chance. If you fall down and worship the image when you hear the music all will be well, but if you refuse, you will be thrown into the fire.' In case they were thinking that God would help them Nebuchadnezzar added, 'and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?'

What were Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego to do? The king had been good to them. Remember how he gave them food and educated them with all the learning of the day. Now they had been promoted so how could they refuse to do what the king commanded? After all, everyone else they could see was worshipping the image. Would it make any difference if they did too?

The three young men were sure about what was the right thing to do. The Lord God is the only true God and He does not allow us to worship false gods. Calmly they said to Nebuchadnezzar, 'We must obey God and He will look after us. But even if we have to die we will not disobey Him.'

As soon as Nebuchadnezzar heard that, he was even more furious and ordered that the fire be made even hotter. Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the fire. Indeed, the fire was so hot that it killed the men who threw the three in. What a horrible way to die! But God had not forgotten the three young men who had been so faithful to Him and He made a miracle happen. Instead of them being burned to death, as would have been expected, God protected them so that they were not hurt and not even their clothes were singed.

Then another amazing thing happened. As Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fire he saw, not three, but four men walking in the fire. 'Look,' he said, 'I see four men walking about in the middle of the fire without harm and the appearance of the fourth is like the Son of God.' So Nebuchadnezzar went near the furnace and shouted for Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego to come out. All the rulers and important people who were there saw what had happened too and Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego who delivered His servants who put their trust in Him and who went against my command so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make a decree that anyone who says anything offensive against God shall be punished. There is no other god able to

deliver in this way.'

APPLICATION

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were asked to do something they knew was wrong. What was it they were asked to do? Encourage the class to talk about times when they have been tempted to do wrong. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't obey Nebuchadnezzar but they obeyed God.

When we are tempted to do wrong things we should ask God to help us to say 'No.' King Nebuchadnezzar tried to give Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego a cruel punishment because they would not bow down to the statue but God was with them, as He is with us, all the time.

If we see a group of children doing something that we know is wrong and they ask us to join in, it would be very easy to do so. However, we must ask God to help us to stand up for what is right and not to join in.

Ask the children to suggest a short prayer asking for God's help in resisting wrong and obeying God in doing the right thing.

LESSON 26

Learning to Obey God

OBEDIENCE IS KNOWING THAT GOD RULES THE WORLD

Scripture Text - Daniel 5

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the children that to obey God properly we need to remember how great He is and we must be humble before Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Daniel chapter 5 gives a record of the events that occurred in Babylon on the night in which it was taken by the Medes and Persians. It is not known precisely at what time the city was taken but it may be supposed that Cyrus was making his approach while Daniel was interpreting the writing on the wall.

The identity of Belshazzar was for a long time unknown but commentators seem to agree that he was the eldest son of King Nabonidus and he shared the duties of the throne with his father. While Nabonidus was away from Babylon his son had sole authority there. The word 'father' is used with the meaning of 'forefather'. Actually, Nebuchadnezzar was not Belshazzar's father but his grandfather (v.10). The queen was probably the queen-mother, widow of Nebuchadnezzar.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class if anyone has ever sent or received a secret message that required a code in order to know what it said. Today we are going to hear a story about a king who received a message that neither he nor all his wise men could understand.

Outline

The king's name was Belshazzar and he gave a great feast and invited over a thousand people to it. They all had a merry time at the feast. As they were drinking the wine Belshazzar commanded, 'Bring in the gold and silver cups that my father Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem so that we can drink from them.' Now these were very special cups and were only used on important occasions for the worship of God and it was very wrong of Belshazzar to make this command. However, the cups were brought in and, as the crowd drank wine from them, they began to praise the false gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. Suddenly in the midst of all this, a hand appeared as if from nowhere. The fingers began to write a message on the wall. Everyone was terrified. The king turned very pale. He was so frightened that his knees began to knock together and his legs gave way.

The king called for all the wise men in Babylon and said to them, 'What does this message mean? I will give the person who can tell me the meaning of these words the very finest clothes and a gold chain and he will be made the third highest ruler in my kingdom.' The king's wise men all got together but none of them could tell the king the meaning of the words that the hand had written. Everyone became more and more afraid. Then the queen said, 'O king, don't be afraid. I know a man who will be able to explain the meaning of this message. He is a good and upright man. I remember your father thought he was a very wise man and he made him ruler over all the wise men. His name is Daniel. He can solve any difficult problem or interpret any dream.' So Daniel was brought before the king. The king said to him, 'Are you Daniel? I hear that you are a very wise man and that you can explain the meaning of dreams and solve difficult problems. I beg you to tell me the meaning of this writing. If you do I will give you the very finest clothes, a gold chain and make you the third highest ruler in my kingdom.' Then Daniel said, 'I don't want any reward, but I will tell you what this writing means. Now listen very carefully. The Lord God is the One who rules over the whole world and He allowed your father Nebuchadnezzar to be king and to have great power and majesty. Everyone who heard of him feared him because he could do what he wanted to them. But he became very proud and arrogant so he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him. He had to live as an outcast all by himself until he recognised that the Lord God rules the world and He appoints a man to be king. When Nebuchadnezzar recognised that, he was made the king again. But you, Belshazzar, have forgotten that. You have not humbled your heart but have exalted yourself against the Lord and have used the cups from God's house for your own drinking party. God has put this writing on the wall and this is what it means:

'MENE' - 'God will shortly bring your reign as king to an end;'

'TEKEL' - 'God has judged you and you have failed because you are too proud and you have not done the good things God wanted you to do;'

'PERES' - 'your kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.'

Belshazzar accepted Daniel's explanation of the message and he rewarded Daniel just as he had said he would. Daniel received the very finest clothes and was made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That night Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede became king.

APPLICATION

God was going to bring Belshazzar's reign as king to an end because he forgot about God. He forgot that God rules the world and we must obey Him. Belshazzar forgot that God is great, loving, wise and all powerful and he did just what he wanted. Ask each pupil to think about this question, 'Do you do just what you want to do?' and whether they obey their parents because when they do the things they ask, they are very pleased with them. There is Someone even more important than our parents who is pleased when we do what we are told and what is right.

God is so great. We must be humble before Him and obedient to Him. That means we must listen to what He says in the Bible and do the things that please Him. Although we can't see God, God can see us. He sees everything we do whether it is good or bad. Ask the class to consider this question, 'Would it make any difference to your life if you remembered that God hears everything you say, sees everything you do and knows everywhere you go?' Ask them to think for a few moments of some of the things they have said, some of the things they have done and some of the places they have gone during the past week. Would God be pleased with the things they have done and said?

Because God rules the world, let us each one, by our actions and by our words, do and say the things that we know will please God.

LESSON 27

Learning to know God's Son

ZACHARIAS BELIEVES BY FAITH

Scripture Texts - Luke 1: 5-25, 57-80

AIM OF LESSON

To show the children that God speaks to us today through His Word and that we should believe that what God says is true.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Zacharias was a priest. Every direct descendant of Aaron was automatically a priest. Priests were divided into twenty-four sections with over a thousand priests in each section. It was only at the Passover, at Pentecost and at the Feast of Tabernacles that all the priests served. For the rest of the year each section served for one week, twice a year, and the duties during this time were allocated by lot. Every morning and evening a sacrifice was made for the whole nation. A burnt offering of a male lamb, one year old, without spot or blemish was offered, together with an offering of flour and oil and a drink offering of wine. Before the morning sacrifice and after the evening sacrifice it was the job of the priest on duty to burn incense on the altar of incense so that the sacrifices might go up to God with a sweet smell. It was quite possible that many a priest would never have the privilege of burning incense all his life but if the lot did fall on any priest that was the greatest day of his life, the day he longed for and dreamed of. On this day the lot fell on Zacharias and no doubt he was very thrilled.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Consider with the class how often we have to talk. We would find it very difficult to keep from talking for any length of time. If we did stop talking our parents would wonder what was wrong with us. What is the name given to someone who cannot talk? We would refer to this person as being dumb. Ask, 'Does anyone know a person who is dumb?' Today we are going to hear about a person who was made dumb by God because he would not believe what God told him. His name is Zacharias.

Outline

Zacharias was a priest. He and his wife Elizabeth were very good people. They loved God very much and tried to do everything that was right. Although they loved God they were both very lonely because they had no children and they were both now old people.

One day Zacharias was in God's House burning incense to God and many people were gathered together praying in an outer room. Suddenly an angel came and stood beside Zacharias. When Zacharias saw the angel he was afraid but the angel said, 'Don't be afraid Zacharias. God has

heard you praying to Him. He is going to give you and Elizabeth a baby son. You are to call him John.' The angel continued talking to Zacharias and said, 'You will both be very happy with your baby and many other people will be glad when he is born. He is going to be a great person in the sight of God. You must not let him drink any wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit when he is born. When your son grows up he will turn many people to the Lord. He will teach them how to be good. Soon God is going to send His own Son into the world as Saviour and your son will prepare people for His coming.'

It was very difficult for Zacharias to believe all that the angel said. 'How can I be sure that all you have told me is true?' he said. 'After all, I am an old man and my wife is old and people don't have children when they are old.' The angel then said, 'I am Gabriel. God has sent me to you to tell you this good news and because you have not believed me God is going to punish you. You will not be able to speak until the baby is born.'

All this time the people were waiting patiently outside for Zacharias and they began to wonder why he was so long in coming out to speak to them. Finally, when he did come out he could not speak. He began to make signs to them and tried to tell them that he had seen an angel. When the service was over Zacharias and Elizabeth returned home and they eagerly waited for their new baby to come.

God kept His promise and gave Zacharias and Elizabeth a baby son. Everyone was very happy about this little boy. All the neighbours and relations said how kind God had been in giving them a little baby.

When the baby was eight days old it was time to give him a name. The people were going to call him Zacharias after his father. Elizabeth spoke up and said, 'No, he is to be called John.' Everyone was amazed and said, 'What! You have no relations called John. You must call him Zacharias.' Then they asked Zacharias what he wanted the child called and Zacharias wrote down, 'His name is John.' Then all of a sudden Zacharias could speak again. Immediately he began to thank God for all His goodness to Elizabeth and himself and he began to make up a song of thanksgiving to God because he was so happy. First he thanked God for keeping His promise and bringing salvation to His people. Then he turned to his son and said, 'You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Highest. You will have to go ahead and make ready the way for the Son of God.'

As this little boy grew God was with him and God helped him to prepare for the work he had to do.

APPLICATION

Use the visual aids described below to apply the lesson.

We have just been hearing a true story of how God spoke to Zacharias nearly two thousand years ago.

Pin on to a board a card, Card A, with the words, 'DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME TODAY?' written on it. Ask the class to consider this question.

God speaks to us if we are willing to listen to Him.

Produce another card with the drawing of an ear on it and pin it below Card A.

Produce another card, Card B, with the question, 'HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME TODAY?' written on it. Ask, 'How does God speak to us today?'

God speaks to us today through the Bible which is His Word.

Pin a drawing of the Bible and place it below Card B.

Pin on a board Card C, 'WHEN DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME?'

We have discovered already that God speaks to us when we read the Bible.

Ask the children how often do they read the Bible. Encourage them to give as many different times as possible (CHURCH, SABBATH SCHOOL, S.U. etc.) Ask how many use Bible Reading Notes? When we read the Bible with our parents, brothers and sisters, we call this FAMILY WORSHIP. Write these individual times (Church, Sabbath School, Bible Reading Notes and Family Worship), below Card C.

So, if we are willing to LISTEN (point to the drawing of the ear) God will speak to us through His WORD (point to the drawing of the Bible) when we are in CHURCH, SABBATH SCHOOL, S.U. when we read BIBLE READING NOTES or when we have FAMILY WORSHIP (point to each word in turn).

We must remember too that everything we hear from God's Word is true. Zacharias didn't believe, at first, what God said to him. He doubted God's Word. God punished him but he soon learned his lesson and believed what God had told him. We must not be like Zacharias but we must always remember that everything God says to us is true.

LESSON 28

Learning to know God's Son

KNOWING WHO GOD'S SON IS

Scripture Texts - Luke 1: 26-56; 2: 1-7

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The Jewish people had been living under Roman oppression for sixty years. Jerusalem had been taken by Pompey, the Roman general. Judea was ruled by Cyrenius, the Roman governor of Syria. The materialistic Jews were expecting someone to come and deliver them. The spiritual people all through the Old Testament had been looking forward in faith to the coming Messiah.

VISUAL AID

Map of the Roman Empire.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Discuss with the class the excitement there is when a baby brother or sister is born. Today we are going to hear about the most important baby that was ever born into the world.

Outline

In Nazareth, Elizabeth's cousin Mary lived. She was not yet married, but she soon would be, because she had promised Joseph she would become his wife. One day, when Mary was alone, the angel Gabriel appeared to her with a joyful message. God would give her the greatest honour that any woman has ever had. God would send her a son who would also be the Son of the most high God, a king who would reign forever. This was the child who had been promised when Eve was cast out of the garden of Eden. This was the child for whom all the godly Jews had been waiting.

Mary asked, 'But how can I have a child when I am not married?' The angel told Mary that her son would not have an earthly father. He would be the Son of God Himself. He would be holy and perfect. Since he was to be the son of God and of Mary, he would be both God and man. Mary said humbly, 'I am Your servant. You may do what You said.' Mary was so full of joy that she did not know what to do. She could not keep this wonderful news to herself. She felt that she had to tell someone.

The angel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was going to have a son too, (refer to last week's lesson) so Mary decided to go and visit Elizabeth.

As soon as Mary reached Elizabeth's home she told her the good news. Elizabeth was so excited when she heard the news, she shouted, 'Oh, you are a blessed woman! You will have a blessed child! It is a great honour that the mother of my Lord should come to see me.'

Mary answered, 'I am filled with love and praise for God. He has given me the greatest honour that anyone could receive. Although I am a poor girl, the whole world to the end of time will call me blessed.'

Mary and Elizabeth were so happy as they talked to each other about God and what He had done for them. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. Then she went back to her own house. She had to begin making clothes for the new baby. She had to tell Joseph about the wonderful thing that had happened to her.

It happened in those days that the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, made a law that all the people in his kingdom should be registered, according to their families. Joseph and Mary had to travel to the town of Bethlehem near Jerusalem to be registered. They lived in Nazareth but Joseph had descended from the family of David and David had lived in Bethlehem. It was crowded at this time for many people belonging to the family of David had come to be registered. By the time Joseph and Mary reached the town every house was full of visitors. No one had room for them. What were they to do? They surely could not stay in the street.

There was only one place they found a welcome, a stable where the animals sheltered. Here Mary and Joseph stayed. On that night, the Saviour of the world was born. God sent His own Son into the world to be Mary's baby.

How happy Mary was, now that she held the promised Child in her arms! Her heart was filled with love and adoration. This Child was her own baby, but He was also the Son of the great and mighty God. Mary would look at him tenderly for she knew that this baby was to be the Saviour of the world.

APPLICATION

The baby who was born to Mary was unique - that means He was different from everybody else. He is the Son of God. He is the perfect Saviour. He was a little baby and grew up just like we did, so He understands all our problems. He was without sin in His life. His death on the cross was a perfect sacrifice so He can forgive all our sin.

Isn't it wonderful that the Saviour was born into the world! Ask the class to consider if they are trusting in Jesus as their Saviour? **HE IS GOD. HE IS MAN. HE IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD. HE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON THEY WILL EVER KNOW.**

LESSON 29

Learning to know God's Son

THE JOY OF KNOWING ABOUT GOD'S SON

Scripture Text - Luke 2: 8-20

AIM OF LESSON

To show that there is great joy in knowing about God and that we should share this joy with others.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The background of this story has mostly been covered in the previous week's lesson.

Joseph and Mary had come to Bethlehem from Galilee to be registered. There was no room for them anywhere but they managed to stay in a stable. Here Mary gave birth to a baby boy. This child was the Son of God.

VISUAL AIDS

If possible, a picture of shepherds watching their sheep in Biblical times.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

A baby has just been born. Perhaps a member of the class has a baby sister or brother or a baby cousin. Lots of people come to see a baby when he is born to welcome the baby to the world and to give good wishes to his parents. Tell the class that today's story is about a special baby who was born a long time ago.

Outline

Last week we heard that a baby had been born in a stable and had been laid in a manger (A manger is a horse's feeding rack.) Ask 'Why was the baby born in a stable?' 'What was the name of the town where He was born?' Remind the class that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem from Galilee in order to be counted as natives of Galilee.

Not far from Bethlehem there were shepherds. Ask, 'What does a shepherd do?' Now in this country we have hedges or fences around a field and when we put sheep into the field we can close the gate so that the sheep cannot run away or get lost. In Eastern lands there are no hedges, just big open spaces where the sheep can wander off. So there were shepherds who stayed with sheep all the time. There were often a number of shepherds together so that they could take turns at watching and resting. They had to eat and sleep outside with the sheep.

One night some shepherds were watching their sheep when an angel of the Lord appeared before them and it really scared them. The angel spoke to them saying, 'Do not be afraid

because I am going to tell you some good news.' He told them, 'A baby has been born today in Bethlehem and this baby will be the Saviour of the world. He is Christ the Lord.' The angel then told them how they would know the baby. 'You will find Him in a manger in a stable.' Then suddenly there appeared a great number of angels who were all praising God.

When the angels went away the shepherds were left in amazement. They said to one another, 'Let us go and see this baby that we have heard about.' So immediately they left for Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph in the stable with the baby.

After they had seen the baby they told everyone about what they had heard and seen. They told people what the angel had said about this baby, about Him being so special and that He had come as the Saviour. Everyone who heard about the baby wondered if this was true.

The shepherds went back to their sheep, happy and pleased at hearing about the Son of God and being able to see this special baby. They then thanked God for having heard and seen these things.

APPLICATION

Discuss the following questions with the class. 'Have you ever heard good news at one time or another?' 'What did you do?' 'Did you just listen or just look?' 'Did you go away and forget about it and keep it to yourself?' 'Did you tell it to someone else, perhaps your Mummy, Daddy, brother, sister, friend, teacher, Sabbath School teacher or someone else you knew?'

Remind the class what the shepherds did after they had seen Jesus? They didn't go back to the sheep and forget about it. They told everyone they could. They told everything the angel told them about the baby and all that they saw. They shared their happiness with others. They shared the joy of knowing about God's Son and of seeing the baby Christ.

Discuss with the class. 'Have you ever told anyone what you know about God?' 'Have you ever told anyone what you learned in Sabbath School or in Church or what it says in the Bible?' 'Who did you tell?' 'If not, who could you tell?' 'What could you tell?' These shepherds were a witness to God. A witness is someone who tells people what they have seen or heard.' Can you be a witness for God?'

LESSON 30

Learning to know God's Son

JESUS WAS A LITTLE CHILD

Scripture Text - Luke 2: 39-52

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jesus grew as a child and to help each pupil to pattern his growth after that of Jesus.

BACKGROUND NOTES

This is the only incident recorded in Scripture in Jesus' life between His infancy and the start of His public ministry. The age of twelve was important for a Hebrew boy as it was about this age that a boy became 'bar mitzvah' (son of the law), that is, when he attained the age of maturity and responsibility with respect to the keeping of God's commandments. This was the first recorded time of Jesus attending the feast of the Passover, which was held in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

Verses 40 and 52 are key verses as they reveal part of the mystery of the incarnation. How little we comprehend the wonder of God's Son coming to earth and being subject to the limitations of man's life. He grew in body and mind, in His friendship with others and in His relationship with God. In each of these areas children, by the grace of God, should imitate Christ.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Begin by imagining what the scene may have been like in a typical Jewish home. Passover time had come! There would be excitement in every home in Nazareth. Parents would be busy making preparation for the long trip to keep the Passover in Jerusalem.

Outline

Although the journey was tiring, there would be times to rest and enjoy food by the wayside. At night they would camp out under the stars. Jesus was there among the happy crowd. He was twelve years old. There were so many things that made their trip a journey of joy. For Jesus, the visit to the temple of the Lord would bring the greatest joy.

Early the next morning, Jesus, along with Mary and Joseph, went to the courtyard of the temple to join hundreds of others in prayer while the priest burned incense and offered their prayers to God. When the day of the Passover came, Joseph would have bought and killed a little lamb and Mary would have roasted it over an open fire. When Jesus saw all the special Passover food - the flat, dry bread, the roast lamb and the bitter vegetables, perhaps He asked the question all Hebrew children asked their fathers, 'What is the meaning of all these things we do at Passover time?'

It might be appropriate at this point to remind your class about the Passover Feast. The bitter-tasting vegetables made God's people remember the bitter days so long before when they were slaves in the land of Egypt. The lamb reminded them of that night when the angel of death came to Egypt and killed the firstborn child in each Egyptian home. Not one child of all God's people was killed. Each father in Israel had obeyed God and had killed a little lamb to take the place of the firstborn in his house.

After the Passover feast had been eaten, the travellers from Nazareth began their long journey home. Again there was excitement as the busy fathers and mothers prepared for the trip but this time Jesus was not there to join in that excitement. He had found something much more important than that.

He had found the teachers in the temple. These were men who had studied God's Word and who were glad to answer questions that travellers asked. There were so many questions Jesus wanted to ask. Mary and Joseph had taught Him the things they knew but they were not able to answer all His questions.

'We will just have to go back to Jerusalem and look for Him,' they said. 'Where shall we find him in this great city?' The journey back to the city was not a happy one this time for the worried Joseph and Mary.

Once inside the city gate the search began. For three days they looked for Jesus. Up and down the streets they walked, asking people in houses and market places if they had seen the missing boy. There was one last place to look. Could He have gone to the temple again?

And that was exactly where they found him. There Jesus stood talking with the teachers. 'Son,' said Mary, 'Why have you done such a thing to Joseph and me? We have looked everywhere for you and we have been very worried.'

'Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know where I would be? Didn't you know I would be about my Father's business?' Jesus asked.

After this, Jesus went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and was obedient to them.

APPLICATION

Jesus knew He had come to earth to do the work God had sent Him to do. Look again at Luke 2: 49. Discuss briefly with your class how Jesus knew that He had come to earth to die.

Read Luke 2: 51 again. Refer to Eph. 6: 1, 2 and Col. 3: 20 and discuss with the class how they can be obedient to God and to their parents.

LESSON 31

Learning to know God's Son

JESUS LOVES CHILDREN

Scripture Text - Matthew 19: 13-15

AIM OF LESSON

To show how important children are to Jesus.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The disciples had the wrong idea concerning the value of the child and Jesus was displeased when they attempted to drive the children away. These parents had strong faith. They came to Jesus and were not easily discouraged. They desired a blessing for their children.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Discuss the following with your class. If important people were coming to your town, wouldn't you feel very excited. Many plans would have to be made. Their arrival in your town would be a very special day. Many weeks before their visit everyone would be making special preparations. Can the pupils imagine the disappointment they would feel on that day when they crowded into the streets or arena to see the important people on their walk-about and found signs everywhere saying 'NO CHILDREN ALLOWED'. Everywhere the authorities appeared shouting 'Go home children - the dignitaries are too busy with the grown-ups to be bothered with you.' Wouldn't such a thing be heart-breaking!

Outline

In today's story such a heart-breaking thing did happen to the boys and girls who had come to see Jesus who is far more important than any important visitor we might meet.

These children had come to see Jesus. Their parents had brought them to see Him but when the disciples saw the children with their parents, they said, 'Go away. Jesus is too busy with all the grown-ups to waste time with children. They are not old enough to understand.' Ask your class to imagine how they would have felt. They might have put on their best clothes and started out with their parents to join the crowds that listened to Jesus and then they were turned away!

Of course, the babies in their mothers' arms did not know that they were being driven away but older boys and girls knew. They knew that these disciples thought that they were not important to Jesus. These happy faces were no longer bright with joy and excitement. Perhaps they saw tears of disappointment in their parents' eyes as they pulled them back and started to walk

away.

But, all at once, the sad mothers and fathers heard another voice, 'Do not take your children away. Bring them back to me.' It was the voice of Jesus. Once more the fathers and mothers brought their children towards Jesus.

Jesus was not pleased with His disciples. 'Do not send these little ones away. I am not too busy for them. Don't you know that there is room in my family for babies and little children as well as for grown-ups.'

It was not hard to tell that Jesus loved the children as they gathered round Him. He wanted them to come to Him just as much as He wanted their fathers and mothers. As the disciples watched, they knew that Jesus really loved these little ones as He took them in His arms. Not one of them was too much trouble for Him.

APPLICATION

Consider the following with the class. Perhaps you are thinking to yourself, 'Oh, I wish I could have been a child when Jesus was on earth.' Many people have wished that very same wish. Even though Jesus is not here on earth the way He was then, He is still calling boys and girls to come to Him. He is still saying, 'Let the little children come to me and do not tell them to go away.'

Jesus is glad today when a boy or girl comes to Him. Jesus welcomes each one who loves Him and trusts Him as Saviour. Remind your class that Jesus never turns anyone away who wants to come to Him.

LESSON 32

Learning to know God's Son

JESUS' UNDERSTANDS CHILDREN'S TEMPTATION

Scripture Text - Matthew 4: 1-11

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jesus dealt with temptation and how we should follow His example.

BACKGROUND NOTES

After the birth and boyhood of Jesus, the Bible tells us nothing about Him until His baptism by John. Following His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Remind the class how Adam and Eve were tempted to disobey God in the Garden of Eden. The devil whispered wrong things to Adam and Eve and made them sin. Because God hates sin He put them out of the garden and made their work difficult.

Outline

After Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, the devil tried to make Him disobey God. The devil tried to trick Jesus into sinning. Jesus had gone to a quiet place where He could be alone with God. After being without food for many days the devil came and said to Him, 'You are very powerful. Tell these stones to turn into bread so that you can have something to eat. If you do that, many people will follow you.' Jesus knew it was wrong to obey the devil. He answered the devil by using Scripture (Deut. 8: 3). Compare this verse with Matt. 4: 4.

The devil did not give up easily. He never does. When one trick failed, he tried another. This time he used Scripture to tempt Jesus. He took Jesus up to a very high place and said to Him, 'You have many angels looking after you. Jump over the edge to see how they will catch you in their arms.' Jesus recognised the trick and once again used Scripture to answer the devil. Compare Matt. 4: 7 with Deut. 6: 16.

Then the devil thought of another way of making Jesus sin. He took Jesus to the top of a very high mountain. You could see for miles and miles from the top. The devil said, 'I will give you all the land you see if you will kneel down and worship me.'

Jesus said, 'Go away Satan! It is written, "We must worship only the Lord our God."'

Compare Matt. 4: 10 with Deut. 6: 13.

When the devil saw that Jesus did not give in to the temptations he was putting before Him, he

left Him alone.

APPLICATION

We are descendants or children of Adam and Eve. Because of this, the devil is always trying to trick us the way he tricked them and we can see from our story that he does not give up easily. We have something that Adam and Eve did not have. We have the example that Jesus has set us and that is a perfect example.

In the lessons we have had over the past few weeks, we have noticed how Jesus was born into this world as a little baby just as we were. He grew up with other boys and girls and He knows how we feel when the devil puts wrong ideas into our minds. We should ask Jesus to help us when we are tempted. When Jesus was tempted He was able to reply with God's Word. It is very important that we should learn by heart parts of God's Word so that we, too, can answer the devil with what God says.

Discuss with the class the importance of learning God's Word. Encourage them to memorise Scripture. If you have time, learn one of the verses from today's lesson, e.g. Matt. 4: 10.

LESSON 33

Learning to know God's Son

TRUSTING JESUS' POWER OVER SIN

Scripture Text - Matthew 8: 28-34

AIM OF LESSON

To show that we should trust Jesus to help us overcome sin.

BACKGROUND NOTES

This miracle is recorded in three of the four Gospels - Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39. The account in Matthew is much shorter than the accounts in the other two Gospels. The account in Matthew has two men possessed with demons whereas Mark and Luke have only one man in their accounts, the man named Legion. There is no reason as to why there should be this difference in the accounts - it just seems to be a variation on reporting. The demoniac which Mark and Luke refer to is probably the spokesman and thus the other one was omitted from the account.

This miracle took place on a high hill sloping sharply into the Sea of Galilee and thus the pigs had no chance once they started to run over the edge - they just fell into the water. Why did the demons ask to be cast into the pigs? It could have been for a number of reasons: perhaps to cause destruction, i.e. that of the pigs. Jesus granted their request. Why did Jesus allow all these pigs to perish? It could have been to show the people of the area that the demoniacs were of more value than the pigs.

Another reason may have been that, according to the Mosaic Law, Jews were not allowed to keep pigs and so Jesus was teaching them a lesson. The herdsmen knew immediately that something supernatural had happened when the pigs ran wildly over the cliff edge. They wanted everyone to know what had happened to the pigs, maybe to have any chance of blame removed from them.

It was believed that the destruction of demons would take place at the last judgement and that was why the demons said that their time had not yet come.

The people of the area were so distressed by the loss of the pigs that they asked Jesus to leave at once. They never gave a thought to the healing of the man.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Just imagine if two fierce looking men approached you as you were walking along the road. What would you do? Would you just walk on by? Would you stop and talk to them? Would

you run away? I think you would run away. Why? Jesus met two such men along the road. What did He do? Here is the story.

Outline

Jesus and His disciples had just come across the Sea of Galilee in a boat. They arrived in an area called Gergesenes (or Gerasenes in some versions of the Bible). They set off walking away from the sea and suddenly two men came out from among the caves. These caves were used as tombs, i.e. where people were buried. These two evil men lived here. The devil ruled all their thoughts and all their actions.

They tried to scare Jesus and the disciples away. They always did this when anyone came near them. Everyone who lived in that area avoided going near the caves and children were not allowed to play there because their parents were scared of these two men. Of course, this meant that the men were always on their own and at times were very lonely as everyone ignored them, even their families. Ask the children to imagine living in a cave all on their own and nobody having anything to do with them. So here was Jesus being faced by these two men. The demons in these men knew Jesus because they called Him the 'Son of God'. They knew that Jesus had come to judge them.

Now there was a herd of pigs feeding not very far away. It was not just a small herd of pigs, there were about two thousand altogether. The demons in the men asked Jesus to send them out of the men and into the pigs. Jesus did what the demons wanted simply by saying 'Go', and immediately the demons entered the pigs causing such a stir and such panic that they all started to run wild and eventually every pig ran over the cliff edge and into the sea where they all drowned.

The men who had been looking after the pigs, and who had seen all this, turned and ran as fast as they could into the city and told everyone what had happened at the cliff. The people then came out to meet Jesus and they were so annoyed about what had happened to the pigs that they just begged Jesus and the disciples to go away from their country immediately.

APPLICATION

This story shows us that we should believe that Jesus has power to overcome sin. We can see that Jesus had power over the devil in these two men. He cast the demons out and into the pigs. The devil could not stand against Jesus. Why? Because (even though at times it looks as if the devil has a lot of power, as he did have over these men) Jesus has the devil under His control. But Jesus stands up to the devil as we saw a few weeks ago when the devil tempted Him. We too should stand up to the devil and not let him rule our lives. How can we do that? By asking Jesus to take control of our lives and so keep the devil from ruling them.

Perhaps we have a very bad temper, always being cross with people like Daddy, Mummy, brothers and sisters. Well, this is the devil ruling part of our lives. How do we get rid of this

bad temper? By asking Jesus to help us to be kind to others and not to be cross. We should always trust Jesus to help us and rid us of this evil, for if we ask Him to help us He will.

We can have other evils in our lives, such as laziness. We can be lazy about the house, too lazy to help Daddy and Mummy, too lazy to do our school work properly, too lazy to learn our Sabbath-school lessons. This is the devil at work in our lives. Jesus will help us do our work better if we ask Him.

Another sin is carelessness, where we do not care about anything we do, nor care for things, especially other people's belongings. Jesus will help us to be thoughtful.

Can the class think of any other sins in our lives which we should trust Jesus to get rid of?
(Discuss)

LESSON 34

Learning to know God's Son

TRUSTING JESUS' POWER OVER SICKNESS

Scripture Text - John 5: 1-16

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jesus reaches out in mercy to offer healing - physical and spiritual - to a helpless man at the pool of Bethesda. To guide each child to acknowledge his own helplessness and to see Jesus as the only remedy.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Lead into the lesson using the following:-

'Think of a place where you were some years ago. It is a place you probably won't visit again until you are a mother or a father. Inside the big glass window of this special place, there is a lot of crying - the crying of many little people all crying at the same time.

You've guessed it, haven't you? I'm thinking of a hospital nursery where new-born babies are kept in tiny cots. Not even the mothers and fathers are allowed inside that special room, only the nurses and doctors who care for the babies. You can imagine what a noisy place that nursery becomes when it is time for the babies to eat. Not one of them is strong enough to get up out of its cot and make a sandwich or raid the biscuit tin the way you can do. All they can do is cry, and cry, and cry until someone comes to help them. Unless kind nurses and doctors did things for them, new-born babies would die because they are so helpless.'

Outline

One the Sabbath day Jesus came to a place where many helpless people lay. They were not new-born babies who would eat and grow stronger day by day until they were big enough to care for themselves. No, these people were helpless because they were sick. Some were so stiff and crippled that they could not move at all; others were so weak and frail they could not walk or sit. Still others were blind and did not dare move from their mattresses for fear of falling.

Hour after hour these poor, helpless people lay waiting. Patiently they suffered on their mattresses that lay around the edge of a deep pool of water. Then, every once in a while, there would be great excitement. The waters of the pool would begin to bubble and churn and friends would hurry to put the sick folk into the water before the swirling stopped. Many times

the people who could get into the bubbling water were made well.

Lying beside the pool that day was a man who had no friends waiting beside him. How lonely and sad he looked, lying there all by himself. Perhaps, it was because he looked so lonely that Jesus noticed this man especially. Or perhaps, it was because Jesus knew all about him - that he had been sick and helpless for thirty-eight years. Jesus walked close to where the man lay and asked, 'Would you like to be made well?'

'Yes, of course, I would like to be well', he answered, turning his eyes toward Jesus. 'That is why I am waiting here beside this pool, hoping to get into the healing waters when they bubble up. But, as you see, I am here all by myself. No one cares for me. None of my family or friends has come to help me get into the pool and I am very weak and helpless. When the waters bubble, I struggle to drag myself to the water's edge but it is always too late. Others step in front of me, push me back, and then the churning stops. I guess I shall always be helpless and sick'.

What do you think Jesus did next? Do you think He said, 'My friend, do not feel so sad. I will stay beside you and help you into the water?' That would have made the man happy but Jesus did something even more wonderful, He simply said, 'Take up your bed and walk'.

The poor man didn't stop to ask questions; he just pushed himself up on his two legs, picked up his mattress and walked away. He hardly knew what he was doing; it all happened so suddenly. The poor weak legs that had not been strong enough to hold him up now carried him along in happy steps and his face was as bright as sunshine.

But not for long! 'Stop!' he heard someone call crossly. 'Don't you know this is the Sabbath day? Don't you know it is a dreadful sin to carry that mattress?' The angry men shook their fists at him as they shouted. Not a single one of them even seemed to notice that something wonderful had happened.

'Well', answered the man, 'I know it is wrong to carry things on the Sabbath, but the man who made me well told me to pick up my bed and walk and I obeyed. Surely someone great enough to heal me after thirty-eight years must be a good man'.

'Who was it that told you such a thing?' the angry leaders of the people demanded. The man could only shake his head. 'Indeed, I do not know. I only know I was lying there by the pool, sick and helpless, and someone very great and good said, 'Would you like to be made well?' I obeyed him, but I cannot see him anywhere'.

Even though the man thought he had seen the last of the stranger who had helped him, Jesus was waiting to talk to him once more. Jesus had something very important to say to him. 'You

have been made well and strong', He said, 'and now you will be able to walk, run and work the way others do, but your heart is sinful. Now you must turn away from your sin and ask God to forgive you. You must try to live to please God. Otherwise, something even worse than this sickness will come to you'.

The man knew that Jesus was right. He had sinned but he felt sure that Jesus could heal his sin-sickness just the way he had healed his sick body. The man knew that he could not get rid of his sin just as he could not make his legs well and strong. Only Jesus could help him. Jesus was the only one he could trust to take away his sin.

Now he knew who it was who had helped him, too for who else but God's Son would have power over sickness and sin? 'I have seen Him again', he said to the angry people. 'It is Jesus who has power to heal bodies and take away sin'.

The jealous leaders of the people looked at one another. 'So!' they scowled. 'It is Jesus who told you to break the Sabbath day. He even breaks it Himself by healing on the Sabbath.' The Jews, therefore, persecuted Jesus and wanted to kill Him.

But Jesus was not afraid. 'I am only doing what my Father in heaven is doing. He does not rest from caring for His world and His children on the Sabbath day. He is still healing men's bodies and working in their hearts to make them turn away from sin. I am doing the same kind of work my heavenly Father does on the Sabbath day.

Now they were really angry. Jesus had said He was God's Son. He had said He could do whatever God did. Now He surely deserved to die. But, even though Jesus knew the bad thoughts in their hearts, He did not run away. Instead, He went on to tell them that they were helpless, too, without Him. Unless they trusted and believed in God's Son, they could never, never be a part of God's family. No matter how hard they tried to keep God's law, they could never be good enough to please God unless they trusted His Son to take away their sin. Even though they didn't know it, they needed Jesus just as much as the poor, helpless man had needed Him.

APPLICATION

They needed Jesus just the way we need Him, too. Of course, we need Him to care for us and make us well when we get sick. We cannot make ourselves well and even the doctor cannot make us well all by himself. He needs God's help. But just as we cannot make our bodies well, we cannot make our hearts to be free from sin. We cannot even turn to Jesus to ask Him for help unless He calls us. He is glad to call helpless boys and girls to come to Him. He sends His Holy Spirit to help them see how helpless they are and how much they need a Saviour.

LESSON 35

Learning to know God's Son

TRUSTING JESUS FOR LIFE

Scripture Text - Matthew 9: 18-26

AIM OF LESSON

To show how Jesus has power over life and death and to encourage each child to put his / her trust in Christ for eternal life.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue so he was a religious man of authority, well known and respected. In addressing Christ he showed complete faith.

The miracle of the woman with an issue of blood is introduced in a parenthesis and illustrates for us the complete faith in Christ of two very different people. The 'issue of blood' was persistent haemorrhages which made it impossible for her ever to feel strong and healthy.

Matthew compresses the story and gives the impression that the child was already dead when Jairus approached Jesus. Mark and Luke state that she was at the point of death and she lay a-dying, (Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56). Jesus immediately arose, left His company and not only granted Jairus his wish, but went to his house to do so.

Musicians were hired as professional mourners, the idea being that the louder the noise, the greater the grief.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class if any of them have been sick at some time in their lives. What happened when they were sick? Probably their parents called the doctor to come to see them and, if they were very sick, he would send them to hospital.

If they had measles or chicken-pox, or any other disease which affects children, the doctor would not allow them to go to school in case they would pass it on to any of the other children at school. In today's story we have two very sick people - one, a lady with an incurable disease. She had been sick for twelve years and was not able to mix with her friends for that length of time. The second person was a little girl who became very, very ill, so ill that she died. We don't know her name but her father was called Jairus.

Outline

Jesus was preaching to the crowds when one poor man named Jairus managed to push his way through until he reached Jesus. 'Please, please, come to my home with me. I have just one little girl, only twelve years old and she is lying at home very sick. Oh, please, come and put your hands on her and make her well again. Oh, please hurry'.

Jesus looked kindly at the poor man and started to follow him through the crowd. But it was hopeless to try to hurry. The crowds of people pushed closer and closer.

Every eye was on Jesus when, suddenly, a woman touched the hem of His garment as she wanted to be healed.

This lady had had an incurable disease for twelve years. She had tried to find a cure from many doctors and in doing so had spent all her money. No doctor could cure her and she was getting worse and not better. Then she heard of the great miracles that Jesus had performed and she thought, 'If I could only get to this man and touch him, I know I would be cured'. She had such faith in Jesus that she knew without a doubt that she would be cured, but she did not have the courage that Jairus had to go and speak to Jesus and ask him to heal her. Jesus was pleased with the lady because she had the courage and the faith to believe in Him.

It was not hard to tell which house belonged to Jairus for as soon as they came near his home they could hear the sounds of sad music and the cries and sobs of sorrowing friends.

Jesus said, 'The little girl is only sleeping'. The people laughed so Jesus asked them to leave. Then the sad mother and father led Jesus to the room where their little daughter lay pale and lifeless on her bed. Jairus could plainly see that she was not just sleeping, but he remembered Jesus' words, 'Only believe, and she will be made well'. Then, as the father and mother watched, Jesus walked quietly to the girl's bedside, took her by the hand, and she arose.

Jairus and his wife hardly knew what to do. They didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Jesus watched the happy little family. Then Jesus spoke again. 'Give her something to eat'.

APPLICATION

We do not know of very many people who were brought back to life after they had died but, if a person is a child of God, they have been brought to life. God says in His Word that those who are not saved are 'dead' in their sins. He also says those who have trusted Jesus to be their Saviour are 'alive' and they have everlasting life. We can have 'everlasting life' too, just by trusting in Jesus, the One who died to give His children everlasting life.

LESSON 36

Learning to know God's Son

TRUSTING JESUS' POWER OVER ALL THINGS

Scripture Text - Matthew 8: 23-27

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the children the importance of giving Jesus complete control of our lives.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Matthew has just finished recording the Sermon on the Mount and at the beginning of Chapter 8 he goes on to relate some of the miracles of Christ which end at Chapter 9:34. This incident is also related in Mark 4: 35-41 and Luke 8: 22-25. Because of the position of the lake in relation to the mountains sudden and severe storms were very frequent.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the class if they have ever been really frightened by thunder and lightning? They may have watched lightning flash across the sky and have listened to the rumble of the thunder. It is very interesting to watch but if they are in the centre of the thunderstorm it may frighten them. Do they like to be out walking in very strong gale-force winds? It's much safer to be inside looking out. If they have ever been by the seaside during a gale they will have noticed the power of the waves and none of them would like to be out in an open boat in such conditions. Today's lesson is about some men who were really terrified by a storm on the water.

Outline

The Sea of Galilee is a big blue lake. Jesus liked to walk by the lake. He walked with His disciples and told them many things about God. One day, after Jesus had talked to many people and began to feel tired, He said to His disciples, 'Let us go to the other side of the lake so that we can have a rest'. So entering one of the boats, they began to sail across the lake and Jesus, glad of a little quiet and rest, lay down and fell asleep.

The other side of the lake was a long way off and when they were half way across, a great angry storm sprang up. It began to make big waves that splashed into the boat. The disciples had to take the sail down. They were afraid the boat would tip over. They began to row but it was almost impossible because the waves were so big. And Jesus was still sleeping!

The disciples tried very hard to row to shore but couldn't make any headway. The boat was almost full of water. The disciples thought they would surely be drowned. Finally, they wakened Jesus, calling to Him, 'Master! Master! Wake up! Don't you care at all that we are all

going to be drowned?'

Jesus opened His eyes. He sat up and saw the wild waves. He saw that the boat was almost full of water but He was not afraid. He stood right up in the boat and spoke to the wind and the waves. He said, 'Peace, be still!' At once, the wind stopped blowing and the lake became smooth again.

The disciples were so surprised! They said to each other, 'What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!'

APPLICATION

Ask the children if they are not surprised about the wonderful power that Jesus has? He is indeed a wonderful person. Over the past number of weeks the class has been learning to know God's Son better. Ask the children if they remember how He was tempted by the devil and still was able to say 'No'. He was obedient to God's Word. Remember when He was at the wedding in Cana and the wine was finished how He miraculously changed ordinary water into wine? Remember how He cast out the demons and allowed them to go into the herd of pigs; how He was able to say to the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda, 'Get up and walk' and how He was able to bring Jairus' daughter back to life again.

Today we see that Jesus has power over the wind and the waves. What a wonderful, powerful person He is! He has power over the sun, the moon and the stars and He has set each in its proper path. There is no situation too difficult for Him to control. Wouldn't it be good to have a friend like that? Jesus wants to be our friend. He will take control of our lives if only we ask Him. We cannot give Him control one day and not the next. He must have control every day and He must have complete control.