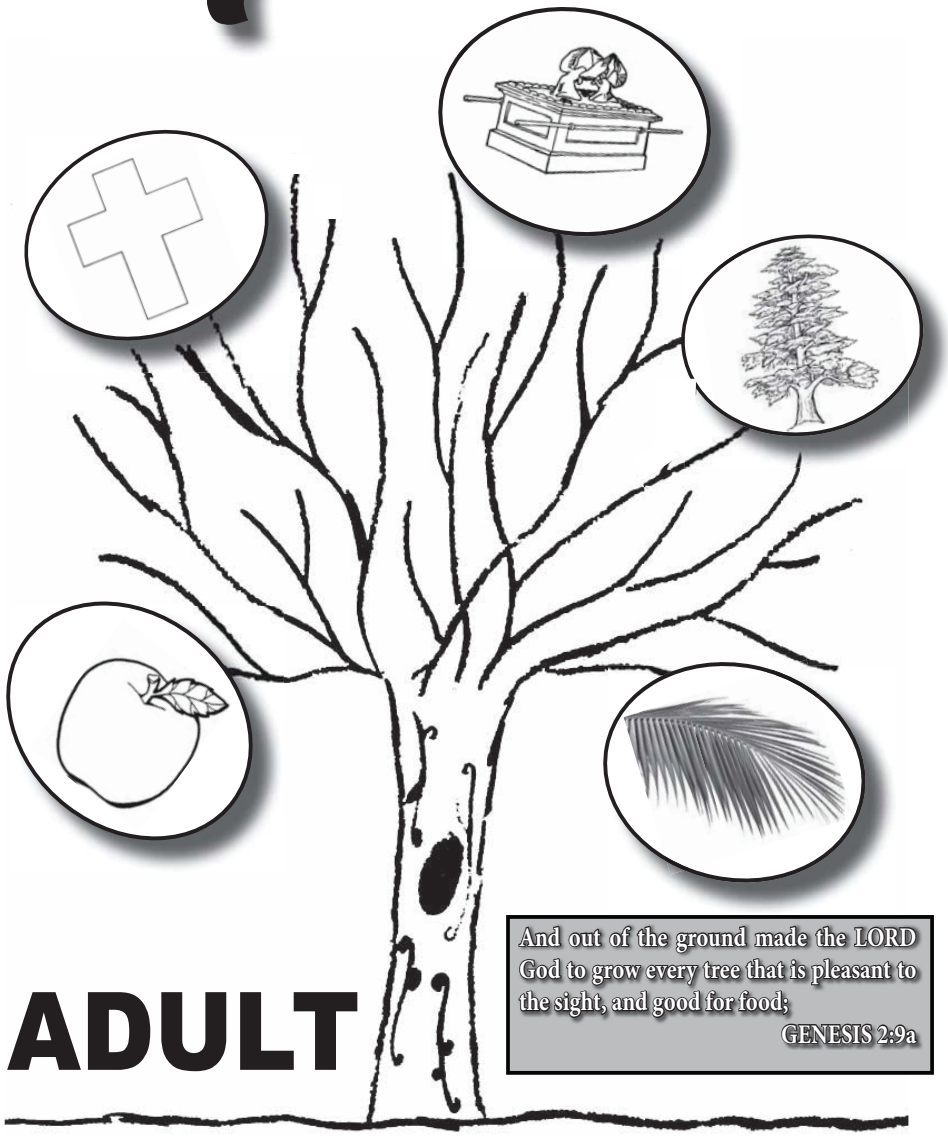
Trees



And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food;
GENESIS 2:9a

ADULT

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

Trees

Vacation Bible School Lessons for ADULT
Written by Brother Clifford Hayes

Table of Contents

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil . . . 4
The Cross 10
The Ark of the Covenant 16
The Cedars of Lebanon 21
Palm Trees 28

Chairman:
Brother Cory Glass

Chairman Elect:
Brother Rick Williams

Contributing Editors:
Elder Mitch Glasscock
Elder Jerry Miller
Elder Brad Wheeler
Elder Stephen Skinner

Proofreaders:
Sister Laura Beavers
Brother Danny Hayes
Brother Randall Henson
Sister Casey Rouse
Sister Deborah Williams
Brother Rick Williams

Booklet Design and Layout:
Brother Cory Glass

Written and published by the authority of Mount Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church

In Cooperation with Fairview Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, Faith Missionary Baptist Church, and Old Union Missionary Baptist Church

Price Per Booklet: $2.10

Treasurer
Brother Randall Henson
10022 Woodburn-Allen Springs Rd.
Alvaton, KY 42122

©2012 Missionary Baptist Bible School Literature/
Mt. Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church

LESSON ONE

The Tree of the Knowledge Of Good and Evil

LESSON TEXT
Genesis 2:16-17

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER CLIFFORD HAYES

Genesis 2:16-17
16. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

INTRODUCTION

It was not by chance that God waited until the evening of the sixth day to create man. Man was the crowning achievement of God's creation because he was fashioned in His own image. God created man that he might love, worship and adore Him, both in his heart and in his actions, both overt and concealed. . In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." It is my belief that the word Jesus used for love was Agape, the same as He used when He asked Peter, "Lovest thou me…" denoting a high, superior love. This is the love God has for us and that type of love should be reciprocated. (John 21:15). In Ephesians 2:10 the apostle writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." At the same time that our love is extended toward God, all our actions should be directed toward the worship of Him. These are the reasons God made man.. And knowing that His newly created man would need a complex system to sustain him, God first shaped this vast world into existence by the word of His mouth. It was all done for man's benefit, that he would have a place of habitation while he worshiped his maker.

In this newly made world scripture informs us that God set aside a place in Eden and placed man there to dress it and to keep it. There were few restrictions on the man. He could pretty much do as he pleased. The only constraint was in the food he ate. As noted in the lesson text all the trees in the garden was available to the man for food. Only the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was withheld from him. The penalty for eating of this fruit was death.

This lesson is about the fall of man that was a result of the lie that was told. It is about original sin and the effect that lie and that sin has had on the human race from that day until now.

THE TREE AND THE WORDS

What was this "tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? Was it an actual tree like other trees in the garden? Or was it, as some have suggested, merely a symbol of something to teach readers a moral? According to biblical resources the Hebrew word used here for tree is the same word used for ordinary trees in all 25 uses in the book of Genesis. There is no exception. So the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was clearly an actual type of tree. Similarly, the word for knowledge is the ordinary word for knowing or awareness of something. There is not the slightest indication that we should look for another meaning for knowledge. What about the words for good and evil? The word for good is the same one used throughout Genesis chapter 1 when God pronounced His creation "good" and "very good." The meaning may at times be extended to mean beautiful, joyful, bountiful, or pleasurable. Again, there is nothing to indicate we should look for an unusual meaning of good. The Hebrew word for evil that is used in the tree's description has the sense of misery, woe, grief, or harm. The word means evil, and perhaps more. It points to something extremely sorrowful so we can rightly understand that eating the fruit of this tree would reveal knowledge of good and misery.

Not to be disagreeable with the learning of bible scholars, but it has been my impression for many years that Adam and Eve became aware of the difference between right and wrong. Between that which is pleasing to God and that which is pleasing to Satan. Before they ate of the fruit, the man and the woman were innocent, having no shame because they had not yet sinned against the commandment of God. Genesis 2:25 reads, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." After the fruit was eaten by both the woman and the man they both knew they were naked. The scripture says that their eyes were opened, made aware of their sinful condition, and they knew they were naked.

When God gave the command to the man, He said that if he ate the fruit of this tree he would "surely die," But they didn't die straight away. We know from the events that transpired later, that the phrase "thou shalt surely die" means they would start to die physically from the moment they ate of the fruit, which is what happened. From that moment, the perfect bodies that God gave to man began to deteriorate. The events of his life leading up to that physical death would be filled with terrible happenings. He would have to forego his Master's favor and be subject to the ravages of pain, illness, disease and finally death. No matter how man tries he cannot escape the aging of his body, which is the result of the sin of Adam. The end result of this physical deterioration is physical death.

But spiritually they died immediately, because their sin separated them from God. This would be worse than any of the afflictions that would affect his physical being. Man would suffer

the terrible feelings of separation from his maker. There would be no more walks in the garden in the cool of the day. There would be no long talks with God. That sweet communion was broken. Man and God were separated and would be until reconciliation was made by the Messiah, the Son of God.

THE GREATEST LIE

Can anyone count the number of lies Satan has told since the lie in the garden? I don't think anyone can. It would be just as easy to enumerate all the blessings God has extended to us. An easier question to answer would be, "Has Satan ever told the truth"? It is correct that in Genesis 3:5 he told the truth when he said that God knew that if they ate the fruit they would have the ability to distinguish between good and evil. But he told this truth in connection or in the same sentence with the lie that they would not die. That made the statement a half truth and in a speech that is a mixture of lie and truth, the lie negates the truth and the whole thing becomes a lie. Satan's motive for mixing the truth with the lie was to entice them to disobey God's instruction and eat of this forbidden tree. Since that day everything Satan has said has been a lie.

THE APPEARANCE OF SATAN

Even Satan's appearance is a lie and his appearance makes him difficult to recognize. No doubt, all of us have been with him many times. When we were children we saw drawings of the devil and through these pictures we were conditioned to think of him as having a red body, with horns, a pointed tail and carrying a pitchfork. We were told that if we weren't good the boogey man would get us. But he doesn't look like that. Rather than wondering what he looks like, it would be better to ask, "How does he appear"? If he always looked like a monster that terrified little kids, it would be easier for us grownups to stay away from him.

But his appearance varies. And his appearance varies with those to whom he comes in contact. And the lies he tells varies depending on circumstances. He knows our weaknesses. Therefore, he may appear as one set of temptations to one person and an altogether different set to another. It would depend if we are vulnerable in a certain area. The great desire for young people is that they might "fit in". Be one of the group. Imagine a young person who is saved and trying to live according to the will of God and having someone tell him that he is different. To someone in our age group, hearing that would be gratifying. But to a teenager wanting to be accepted by their peers, this news could cause him to think, "Do I really want to be different?" That was Satan whispering in his ear. To someone who has not been saved, Satan may appear as a smooth, slick tongued preacher who espouses an easy believism form of salvation. We must get beyond the idea that Satan is a repulsive monster if we

can ever hope to recognize his more subtle appearances. Genesis 3:1 describes him as, "more subtil than any beast of the field." The other end of his spectrum of disguises is told by Peter in I Peter 5:8, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". But sometimes he isn't scary or repulsive or roaring. In fact, at any moment, what he has to offer might seem more attractive than anything else in the world. And it is exactly at those times—when Satan in some guise makes an attractive, enticing offer to sin, or bad advice from a "trusted" friend—that he is the most dangerous.

ORIGINAL SIN

Had it not been that the serpent tempted Eve and she ate and then gave the fruit to Adam , all we have talked about would be a point of no effect. All the warnings about the appearance of Satan could be disregarded. Man would still be in his perfect relationship with God. Without sin. But Eve was deceived and Adam willingly ate and a new relationship was introduced between God and man. Man became sinful and separated from his Creator.

The remainder of our comments will be relative to the third chapter of Genesis. This is where we see the lie of lies. As mentioned before, this lie seems more heinous because it had truth mixed with it. That's the way Satan operates. Brother Paul Bryson said that modern evangelistic practices are like rat poison. Ninety-five percent of rat poison is composed of those ingredients that contribute to the health of the rat, but the other five percent will kill him. In this lie the ratio isn't that great. There are thirty-two words and five of them are lies. "Ye shall not surely die." 15.6 percent. But killing nevertheless.

In the sixth verse we see that the woman succumbed. She believed the lie part of the serpents words and rejected the absolute truth of God., and she ate. She gave the fruit to Adam and he also ate of it. Those who have sinned will often try to draw others into it. Somehow, to them it makes their sin seen less. When Adam ate, he showed his utter disregard for the command God gave him. Then they immediately knew right from wrong. Verse seven says that their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. In one instant, after eating of the damnable fruit and violating God's authority, they were altered from the state of not being ashamed of their naked bodies to that of feeling ashamed that they were uncovered. Not only were they physically naked, they were also morally naked, their deeds exposed as well as their bodies.

Then they did what man has tried to do since that day. They attempted to cover their sinful state. Using fig leaves for this, they tried to save themselves. Today, as in times past man has worn different "fig leaves" in order to attempt to hide his sins from God. and has never been

able to make a “fig leaf” that will cover his sin. He tries “fig leaves” of easy believism, good religious works, church membership, baptism, confirmation, tithing, the sacraments, new age movements and on and on, but he still cannot escape his guilt. The “fig leaves” wither and are of no effect. Only the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ will suffice. . This sacrifice was foretold in Genesis 3:21, “The LORD God made coats of skins, and clothed them” There is only one remedy for sin.

Then here comes God. I believe it was a usual thing for God to visit with Adam and his wife. When they heard His voice they hid. God knew where they were and what they had done, but He wanted them to confess their sin. Before their transgression they would have welcomed His visit, but now His voice brings terror. Notice that God addresses Adam, plainly showing that He looked to the man for the keeping of His commands. When God questioned the man concerning the nature of his sin, Adam replied, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Adam tried to absolve himself of any guilt by blaming both the woman and God. To Eve’s credit, she didn’t try to shift her guilt to another. “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” After guilt for all parties involved was established by God, He pronounced curses on all of them. Adam and Eve were banished from the garden and would not be a stranger to the hardships and disappointments of life. The serpent was already cursed and had been since he was cast out of heaven. However, further condemnation was placed on him in the “enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel.” Here, very early in the scriptures, we find the first reference to the coming Messiah, the savior of mankind, who was selected before the creation of the world in the great council in heaven. In Genesis 3:21 we find that God made coats of the skin of animals and clothed the nakedness of the man and his wife. The self made cover of fig leaves were not sufficient to hide their nakedness. Here, God was painting a beautiful picture of what His plan of salvation would be: to redeem man of his now inherited sin state. It is my belief that those animal skins were from lambs, and in order for those skins to be made into coverings for Adam and Eve, those animals had to die. In Hebrews 9:22, the writer states ”without shedding of blood is no remission” You could say the animals had their “blood shed” so that they might “cover” Adam and Eve’s “nakedness”. Notice also that God clothed them with the skins, he put them on Adam and Eve Himself. Does this answer the question, “was Adam and Eve saved”? I think it does.

CONCLUSION

Adam and Eve, having sinned had broken intimate fellowship with God. The effects of sin is always separation from God. This does not mean that God does not love us, but it means God by His nature must be separated from sin.

The sin that plunged mankind into sin was not murder or some other gross and heinous sin, but a simple act of eating the fruit of a prohibited tree. The sin was disobedience. The tree was placed there to define good and evil. On all the earth there was only one source of temptation, that one tree. It was wrong to eat the fruit of that one tree. God said it was forbidden and thus they had to accept that it was.

God is our creator and thus has the right to establish laws that His creation live in an orderly manner. God’s laws are both spiritual and physical. For instance, the physical law of gravity is absolute. If you disobey the law of gravity by jumping off a high cliff or building you will be injured or killed. The law of gravity is vital for order on the physical earth. The law of gravity is not evil but is good. The responsibility rests with the individual to obey and observe the law of gravity thus benefiting from it.

God’s spiritual laws are also absolute. There can be no deviation. God wanted the very best for man, thus he had the right to prohibit man from doing that which was destructive to him. Thus he instructed man to always obey God. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil established the relationship of man’s responsibility. Of all the trees in the garden man could freely eat, however this one tree was harmful and God told man not to eat of it.

Note that God gave man a will. There was a need that boundaries be put on man’s will. In spite of what the serpent said, man was not as a god and did not have the knowledge of God, thus he was and is a creature needing guidance and help. Man was not a robot programmed to be a performer. Man was made a free being able and expected to use his God given ability to choose to correctly obey God.

LESSON TWO

The Cross

LESSON TEXT
1 Peter 2:24

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER CLIFFORD HAYES

1 Peter 2:24
Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture is silent as to the type of wood used to make the cross upon which our Lord was crucified. The world is filled with widespread theories as if the type of wood is important. There is the "Legend of the Dogwood Tree". Then there is a farfetched story concerning Constantine's mother and her recovery of remnants of the cross and the crucifixion nails.. The Cedars of Lebanon have been proposed, along with pine, fir, olive and many other trees mentioned in the bible. There have been slivers of wood sold claiming to be wood from the actual cross of Jesus. One skeptic said that if all these slivers were in one pile, there would be enough wood to build a huge house. When we consider the silence of the word of God as to the type of tree used for the cross, we might be led to conclude that the cross isn't really that important. But it is.

The cross and the sacrifice made on it stands as a monument to God's relationship to man. Those who lived before the New Covenant looked forward, in faith, to the sacrifice of the prophesied Messiah. When the teachings of Jesus became difficult for many of His followers to live by, they left Him and went away. Jesus asked the twelve if they would also leave. Peter answered Him in this manner in John 6: 68-69, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art THAT Christ, the Son of the living God." Notice my emphasis on the word "THAT". This word is different from that used in Matthew 16:16 and Mark 8:29 when Peter said, "Thou art THE Christ" Emphasis also mine. "The" is a definite article, denoting the one, the only Messiah. In the previous scripture "that" is a demonstrative pronoun, referring to Jesus as the one who was foretold by the prophets. Those prophets, especially Isaiah, told of His trial and death. After the New Covenant was established, we who have been recipients of God's saving grace, look back to the cross and the prophesied sacrificial Lamb that died in our place. But as important as the cross is to all of us, its importance is secondary to the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus that has made the difference for all of us. Without the cross, and the blood that Jesus shed, we would have no hope of ever seeing heaven. No redemption, no eternity with Jesus and the Father. Without the blood of Jesus being applied to our sinful souls there would be no hope for anything eternal. We would be forever dead in our sins. It was on the cross that God's plan of salvation was consummated.

FIG LEAVES

We have studied how, in His infinite wisdom, God gave Adam and Eve a grand opportunity to have dominion over all His creation. We are all too familiar with the tragic events that followed their disobedience. Before God came into the garden to visit the man and his wife, the newly made couple realized they were naked and made aprons of fig leaves to try to cover the sign of their sin. God was not fooled. Adam and Eve hid themselves thinking they could hide themselves from God. The effect of sin made them aware that they had disobeyed God and they were ashamed. Before they sinned they were delighted to see God, but after they sinned they did not want anything to do with Him. Sin causes us to want to hide from God physically, emotionally and spiritually because we know we are guilty. In the last days those without God will beg , without relief, for the rocks and mountains to fall on them that they might be hid from the one who sits on the throne. (Rev. 6: 15-16) Fig leaves did not stand a chance.

Like Adam and Eve we try a lot of "fig leaves" to cover up our shame and guilty conscience. I read somewhere that the oldest profession is not what people think; it is the clothing industry. We are constantly trying to cover up. The weight of our sins upon our minds is intolerable, and we try countless ways to cover them up. The end result of these modern "fig leaves" in our pagan world culture is even greater exposure and guilt. Drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, lust of the eyes, the world, the flesh, etc. do not relieve the stress of guilt; they only increase it. Evasion and excuses increase our guilt before God.

Man has never been able to make a "fig leaf" that will cover his sin. Unregenerated man tries "fig leaves" of good religious works, church membership, baptism, tithing, the sacraments, religious philosophy, new age movements, philanthropy, etc. But he still cannot escape his guilt.

All outward acts of religion without the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins are withered "fig leaves." Man need not try coming to God with his "fig leaves." They may be in fashion, but they are inadequate for God's purposes. Fig leaves have no part in the plan of salvation. God will not accept them; they can never please God because no death has taken place. As stated in lesson one, "Without blood there is no remission."

THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD

God's plan of salvation was initiated in the garden. The first death in God's creation took place when

God made coats of skins to clothe Adam and Eve. God killed animals to provide clothing to cover Adam and Eve's exposed nakedness. Our perfect God willingly shed the very first drop of blood ever shed for the sake of mankind. The shedding of blood, this first death, came as a result of man using his free will to choose to sin, to not trust God's goodness, to rebel against Him. Our loving God responded to Adam and Eve's act of distrust and disobedience by making the very first blood sacrifice on behalf of mankind.

As stated previously in lesson one, He was painting a picture of what he was going to do one day, redeeming man from his sinful state.: Those animal skins were lambs skin, and in order for those skins to make it from the animal to clothing for Adam and Eve, those sheep had to die. You could say they had their "blood shed" so that they might "cover" Adam and Eve's "sinful nakedness". It is important to notice that just as God closed the door of the ark after Noah and his family entered, God Himself clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of these lambs. He put them on Adam and Eve Himself.

Isaiah 64:6 reads, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags." We have no righteousness of ourselves, only that of Jesus which is reflected off our lives. Our sin makes us naked before God, before his holiness. Our lamb, Jesus Christ, died on the cross, shed his blood for us, that we might be clothed with His righteousness, so when God looks at us, we are no longer naked and therefore cast out from God's presence. God sees us now as clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which we receive as a free gift from God once we trust Christ as our Savior. He then covers us with the clothing. Also, when God looks at us at the judgement, He will not look and see our righteousness. He will look at us and see Christ and His righteousness.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Putting God's name in the title of this section was not an afterthought. It was a conscious effort to distinguish between His plan and the many "fig leaves" that Satan has devised in an effort to steal the souls of the crowning achievement of God's creation. He knows God's plan of salvation more thoroughly than anyone other than God Himself. He has therefore, through the instrumentality of man, devised many varied false religions and plans to mislead man in his effort to have a relationship with God. From the time that Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaves man has been trying many different avenues to cover themselves in such a way that he could somehow earn his way into Heaven. All down through the ages right to the present, man has tried to earn a way into Heaven through doing good things and practicing false religions.

The reportedly fastest growing religion in the world is Islam. For them their god is called Allah and their prophet is Muhammad. Many people in the bible are considered to be their "prophets". Even Jesus is reduced to that status instead of being the Son of God and the savior of the world. Then comes the "isms", Buddhism, Hinduism, Mormonism and Catholicism. There may be more of them, but these are the ones that come readily to mind. They are all blasphemous as they are religion of works. Add to these all the denominations that came into being following the so called reformulation of the Catholic Church. They brought many of the heresies of Catholicism with them, including salvation by works. There are other irregularities in the teachings of denominations within the Christian community. The most damnable is easy believism as is taught by the modernist under the name of "The Roman Road." Make no mistake, we believe all the words penned by Paul in the book of Romans to be true. But not in the perverted sense as the modernist interprets them, In their salvation plan "believe and confess" is merely a case of the "do betters". Gone is conviction. Gone is godly sorrow which leads to repentance, Gone is grace which leads to salvation brought about by faith in the sacrifice of the risen Savior.

God had a complete plan for all time before He spoke His first words of creation. The plan that He put into effect is the single most effective plan that could have ever been because of who He is. At certain times and to certain people of His choosing, God has revealed a portion of that plan. In very special instances, God has revealed His plan by way of a promise, and God has chosen to be bound by every promise He has made. Some of these promises have been in the form of an agreement whereby some conditions must be met in order for the promises to be kept. Most have been without condition, promises given completely by His grace, dependant on nothing else. Such is God's plan of salvation.

THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

This eternal plan was formulated by the Godhead in eternity past. When Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost he told the listeners. "Him, being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:" (Acts 2:23) There are key words in this passage that needs to be enlarge upon. The first is determinate counsel. Webster defines counsel as an interchange of opinions. With such an exchange of opinions there are bound to be disputes. It must be clearly understood when the bible speaks about determinate counsel as in this verse there was never any disagreement between the members of the Godhead. The crucifixion of Jesus was divinely determined beforehand – nothing in the word of God is clearer than this truth. God decreed in His own mind that His only begotten Son

should come into this world, born of a virgin, that He would occupy a body of humiliation, and in that body He would die at the appointed time, at the appointed place and in the appointed manner. The crucifixion of Christ was the most horrible crime ever committed, and yet it brought the greatest blessing to the greatest number of people of anything that has ever happened, or ever will happen.

Foreknowledge - This word denotes "the seeing beforehand of an event yet to take place. It implies that the event is fixed and certain, that for some reason the event will most certainly take place. In this instance, God is represented in the Scriptures as purposing or determining future events. Indeed, Isaiah 14:24 tells us, " The Lord of hosts hath sworn saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; as I have purposed, so shall it stand:", also Isaiah 46:11, "yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." To say that an event will take place when it is uncertain that it may or may not occur, is an absurdity. Foreknowledge, therefore, implies that the future events could not be foreseen by him unless he had so determined or foreordained, so the word sometimes is used in the sense of determining beforehand, or as synonymous with decreeing, (Romans 8:29 and 11:2). In this place the word is used to denote that the delivering up of Jesus was something more than a bare or naked decree. It implies that God did it according to his foresight of what would be the best time, place, and manner of its being done. It was not the result merely of God's will; it was His will, directed by a wise foreknowledge of what would be best for His creation. And this is the case with all the decrees of God. It follows from this, that the conduct of those who participated in the crucifixion that day was also foreknown. In spite of the wickedness of the world, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah 46:10)

CONCLUSION

God's great plan of salvation was conceived, foreordained and initiated in eternity past. As stated previously, it had its culmination on Calvary's tree. This plan was initiated upon the foreknowledge that Adam would disobey and bring sin to the entire human race. Do not be mislead, it was not foreordained by God that man would fall, He could foresee this happening, but Adam was a free moral agent and could have resisted the temptation. But God did foreordain the plan whereby man would regain the close relationship with God that Adam once enjoyed. What's more, God never foreordained that any one particular person would be saved. That would take "whosoever" out of the plan. (John 3: 15,16 ; 4:13 ; 5:4 and Romans 10:13) There are other references, but these

should suffice. He did, however, foreknow if that particular person would be saved. Foreknowledge is foreseeing as God told Jeremiah in Jer. 1:5, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

As stated in the lesson text, Jesus was nailed to a tree and died for all mankind. Because of His life sacrifice, we can have salvation in His name. God's promise of salvation can be trusted.. It is clear—"Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24

What a great Savior! What a great God! What an all sufficient God!

Matthew Henry wrote, "He is a God that is enough."

LESSON THREE

The Ark of the Covenant

LESSON TEXT
Exodus 25:22

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER CLIFFORD HAYES

Exodus 25:22
And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

INTRODUCTION

"*Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan*. Thus is the ark of the covenant spoken of in scripture. (Joshua 3:11). It was a commandment of God that the Ark, accompanied by the cloud, precede the congregation of Israel in their wanderings. This most holy object was made of acacia (shittim) wood, completely covered with fine gold, and decorated with a border of golden molding about the top. Within the Ark was placed the tablets of the law, a pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. The lid of the Ark had a cherubim at each end with their wings extended toward each other. Between the wings was the mercy seat where God dwelt.

Before proceeding, read the description of the ark in Exodus 25: 10-22. Another account is given in Exodus 37:1-9 where the actual builders of the tabernacle and all its furnishings are identified. There were several of those furnishings and each had a special significance to the Israelites and their relationship with God. Those pieces also have a place in the Christian's life because each one is a symbol or shadow of the coming Messiah. The Ark of the Covenant was the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. Therefore, in writing about the ark, it is difficult to separate it from the building of the tabernacle.

THE PLANNING OF GOD

It is to be noted that each time God wanted something done that He considered to be of great importance, He gave specific, detailed instructions as to how it should be done. We see this when He commissioned Noah to build the ark and in Joshua's conquest of the city of Jericho. It was most obvious when the Triune Godhead planned the way that sinful man could be brought back into relationship with his maker. There are other instances, but these are sufficient to make the point. In short, God knew not to leave the important matters in the hands of mere mortals. He knew that if these things of significance were left in the hands of men, they would mess them up. It is also interesting to note that God gave Moses the description of how he wanted the

Ark of the Covenant built before He gave plans for the tabernacle. This shows the importance He placed on the place he would meet with those people whom He had chosen as stated in the scripture lesson, "*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, and from between the two cherubim's which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."(Exodus 25:22)*

The extent of God's planning for this undertaking of the erection of the tabernacle and the building of its furnishings is revealed in Exodus 25:9 when He says, "*According to all that I have shown thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it*." His instructions included not only how He wanted the tabernacle to be built (dimensions, materials, furnishings, etc), but also how those materials were to be gathered. (Exodus 25:1-8) He was no less specific as to who He wanted to lead the building and furnishing all of this sanctuary.

God told Moses that He had called Bezaleel to this task and had given him Aholiab as a helper, because ."… *I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship." (Exodus 31:1-6)* These two were to enlist the help of whomever they needed of those who were "wisehearted", in whom God had put wisdom. After the materials were gathered, each person who was enlisted, were to be used in their areas of expertise. "*Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withall. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; (Exodus 36:1-4)* It is to be noted that those who were not working were contributing materials to be used in the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings. In fact they were so devoted in their giving that they were asked to stop bringing the materials to the construction site.

How much would God's cause prosper today, if those Christians whom God has blessed with special gifts, who He has made "wisehearted", would exercise

these gifts as those Israelites did at that time. How much would God's cause prosper if all Christians would bring offerings into the storehouse as those Israelites did at that time.

THE TABERNACLE

Much of the following is taken from the lesson "The Tabernacle: it's Design and Services" by Elder Steven Skinner. This study was sub-titled "Toward Shekinah." The tabernacle is to be considered a portable structure that could be taken down and made ready for moving when God, represented by the two pillars of fire and cloud, decided to move the camp. There was an external courtyard measuring 150 feet by 75 feet. The whole compound was surrounded by a fence about 7 feet in height. This fence was made of linen hangings held by pillars. This courtyard was surrounded by a high fence with only one entrance. A person could not simply come from any direction into the courtyard as he pleased — he had to enter through the one gate. This setup informed the Israelites that they could only come to God in the way He prescribed. There was no other way. God is using the Old Testament tabernacle to tell us that we, too, must come to Him only through the way He has provided for us — Jesus Christ.

This gate was always located at the east end of the courtyard (so that people were facing west when they entered— a direct opposition to the pagan sun worshippers of the day who always faced east). Upon entering the gate, he encountered the brazen altar where he was to present his animal offering, and then hand the sacrificial animal over to the priests, who make atonement and intercession for him in the tent.

The tabernacle itself consisted of a tent-like structure covered by four layers of different materials, some for inside walls and some for a roof. The innermost covering was woven of fine linen and embroidered with figures of cherubim and was visible from the inside. The inside wall was constructed of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The second layer of coverings was made of goat's hair, which was white. The third layer was made of rams' skins dyed red, and the outermost layer was made of badger skins for protection against the elements. Each covering had it's own significance as it referred to the Christ. The curtains were pinned to the ground with loops and clasps. Any wood used in the tabernacle and in all it's furnishings was covered with gold, showing the humanity of Christ (wood) and His divinity (gold).

The tabernacle was divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Entrance into the Holy Place was through a curtain and from there the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies, also through a curtain called the vail. There before him was the most revered, the most worshipped piece of furniture of the tabernacle. It was the dwelling place of God. It was the Ark of the Covenant.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

As stated before, the Ark of the Covenant was an ark or chest of shittim (acacia) wood two and one-half cubits long, one and one-half cubits high and one and one- half cubits wide, overlaid with gold, and embellished with a molding of gold extending around the chest upon the top edge. Four rings of pure gold were set in the four corners, two on one side and two on the other, through which were passed wooden staves, also made of shittim wood, overlaid with gold. These staves were used in carrying the sacred chest. (Exodus 25: 10-21; 30: 5; 37: 1-10).

The Ark of the Covenant, thus decorated as God instructed, was the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place. It was visited but once each year by the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, to make "atonement for the sins of the people." The Jews had many days that were religious and devoted to the worship of God and this Day of Atonement was the holiest and the most solemn ceremony of the Hebrew worship. God gave instructions as to when the nation was to observe this Day of Atonement, how it was to be observed and why. This was to be a law for them to observe forever. (Lev. 16: 29-34). One of the duties of the High Priest (originally Aaron) was to enter the Holy of Holies only once a year and make an offering for the sins of the people of Israel. God had pronounced the penalty of death if he entered at any time other than He had prescribed.

There was one part of the Ark of the Covenant not yet described--- the lid that covered the contents of the Ark. Within the Ark was a pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the two tablets of the law that Moses brought down off the mountain the second time. The lid was called the mercy seat. This mercy seat and it's cherubim consisted of one integral unit made from solid beaten gold. The skill and artistry necessary to fashion such a work attests to the wisdom of God in choosing a man such as Bezaleel for this important work. This mercy seat had cherubim on each end facing each other with their wings stretched over the space between their bodies. The cherubim, symbols of God's divine presence and power, were facing downward toward the ark with outstretched wings that covered the atonement cover. The atonement cover was God's dwelling place in the tabernacle. It was His throne, flanked by angels. God said to Moses: "*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:22)*

Above the ark and mercy seat, God appeared in His glory in some manner which the high priest was not able to view. This glory is sometimes referred to as the Shekinah glory. The word Shekinah, although it does not appear in our English bibles, has the same roots as the word for tabernacle in Hebrew and refers to the presence of the Lord.

Because the ark was God's throne among His people, it was a symbol of His presence and power with them

wherever it went. There are quite a number of miracles recorded in the Old Testament surrounding the ark: With the presence of the ark, the waters of the River Jordan divided so the Israelites could cross on dry land, and the walls of Jericho fell so that the Israelites could capture it (Joshua 3:14-17, 6:6-21)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The importance placed by Israel upon the Ark of the Covenant is astounding. The importance given in this Ark by Jehovah was awesome.. In respect to a study of its typical significance, these facts must be realized.

There are three Arks in the Bible: Noah's Ark, the Ark of Moses, and the Ark of the Covenant. Without exception each one speaks to us of preservation, and each in its own particular way portrays the Lord Jesus - our Ark of refuge. One of the articles within the Ark of the Covenant was God's law. Just as the Ark of the Covenant preserved God's precepts to Israel, so the Lord Jesus, as our everlasting covenant, has reserved for us the earnest of our salvation in heaven. (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 13-20; 1

Every year, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Bringing burning incense to shield his eyes from a direct view of God's glory, he sprinkled blood from a bull onto the mercy seat for his and his household's sins, Then he sprinkled blood from a goat for all the sins of Israel. God promised that when He saw the blood, it would cover over man's sin. God did not see the sin anymore, but as stated in His law, He saw the provision instead, and it appeased His wrath. Paul wrote in Hebrews 10:4, "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*" This is the final law of God. When Christ died, He carried His blood and placed it on the altar in God's presence. This was the last blood God would need. The Israelites found acceptance with God by believing His word to be true — that when their sins were covered by blood, God temporarily overlooked their sins as if they had been obliterated. But Jesus Christ has become our permanent atonement cover. Through Jesus' blood, our sins have been covered over. When God looks at us, He doesn't see our sin, but the provision: His own Son. Jesus lay down His life for us as an innocent sacrifice so that God would look on us and see His perfection.

The mercy seat was God's throne in the midst of the Israelites. God is on His throne today in heaven and Jesus, our high priest, is at His right side. When we come to God now, we approach a throne of grace.

LESSON FOUR

The Cedars of Lebanon

LESSON TEXT
1 Kings 6:7-10

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER CLIFFORD HAYES

I Kings 6:7-10
7. And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.
8. The door for the middle chamber was in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third.
9. So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar.
10. And then he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar.

INTRODUCTION

For many years God had dwelt in a tent. After the construction of the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant went before the congregation of Israel, led by God's spirit, represented by the pillar of fire or the pillar of cloud. It led God's children in the conquest of Canaan, during the period of the judges and Saul's and David's reign as kings of Israel. During all this time, this Ark, God's dwelling place was housed in the tent called the tabernacle.

The purpose of the building of the temple was threefold: To provide a fixed habitation for Jehovah, to provide a central place of worship where Israel might meet together for worship and thus preserve the unity of the nation God had forged at Sinai and to prefigure the more glorious building, the church of our Lord

DAVID'S DESIRE FOR A FIXED HABITATION

The account telling of David's desire to build a house for God to dwell in is found in 2 Samuel; 7. The king was troubled that he had a house to live in, but "the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." After David's wishes were made known to God, He gave the prophet Nathan a message for David in which he was told that he would not build Him a permanent dwelling place, but his seed would be allowed to do this. Also, we notice that this house was not God's idea. Verse 7 reads, *"In all the places wherein I have walked with the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me a house of cedar?*" However, it obviously pleased the Lord that this was David's desire. But the task was not given to David, but to his son At this time this son is not named, nor is the reason given why David was not allowed to build the temple.

We find both of these questions answered in 1 Chronicles 22. The son is identified as Solomon and the reason for God not allowing David to build the temple is given in verses 7 and 8, "*And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.*" In this passage God goes on to tell David He would give to his son Solomon, who would be a man of peace, the commission of building His house. Not only was David a warrior, but he also had the blood of Uriah the Hittite on his hands.

Instead of actually building the house of God, David was allowed to gather the materials to be used in the actual building. Also, David made alliances with the countries from which some of the materials would be gathered. For instance, cedar trees from Lebanon were major in the construction process. These trees, noted for their strength, straightness and wonderful scent, were prized as building materials in that part of the world.

The Old Testament scriptures describe in detail the cooperation between Solomon and Hiram, the King of Tyre but it was David who made the treaty with that king that made this cooperation possible. Scripture tells us that Hiram "was ever a lover of David." When Solomon made his appeal to Hiram for the cedar trees and said he would send workers to assist in the hewing of the timber, Hiram responded," …I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir." In return Solomon gave to Hiram's household wheat and oil, "year by year."

Not only did Hiram King of Tyre furnish the trees to be used in the construction of the temple. He also sent another man of Tyre, also named Hiram to cast the vessels and the pillars of brass that were used in the temple. "And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work."

There is a fraternal order that teaches that this man Hiram was the architect of the temple. They have a ritual that teaches this legend. Scripture does not support this teaching. It is a myth. The architect of the temple gave his plans for the temple to King David and he in turn passed them to King Solomon for the actual building. I believe the architect to be God. To me, it would be unthinkable for God to leave the plans for this important work to a mortal.

The site for the temple was not chosen by happenstance. Genesis 22, we have the account of God commanding Abraham to take his son, his "only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering…" This was the

child of promise. This was the son through whom God had promised Abraham many descendants. Never questioning, Abraham went to Mount Moriah with Isaac. We all know how that turned out.

Earlier in the history of the ancestors of the Jewish nation, a man named Melchizedek, the King of Salem (later Jerusalem) met and blessed Abraham. This man, told of in Genesis 14: 17-20, "was a priest of the most high God." He served Abraham with bread and wine and Abraham in turn gave Melchiedek tithes. There has been much speculation as to the identity of Melchizedek, but he was obviously a man of great stature and renown, because Psalm 110:4 describes Jesus as "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

In Chronicles 22 there is a list of the materials David gathered for the building of the temple. In addition to the trees from Lebanon, he amassed stores of iron for nails and braces, brass for the vessels of the temple, one hundred thousand talents of gold, and one million talents of silver. Stones for the foundation and for the building itself were hewed in the quarries by stone masons. These building blocks were cut from the rock so precisely that they fit together perfectly. ! Kings 6:7 reads, "A*nd the house, when it was in building ,was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.*"

There was a tremendous work force available to work on the building. In addition to the thirty thousand men Solomon sent to Lebanon to assist King Hiram's workers in felling the trees, great numbers were employed in the other work on the house of God. There were seventy thousand bearers of burdens, eighty thousand workers in the quarries and three thousand six hundred overseers or foremen.

The house of God was seven years in building. Critics of this account of the building of the temple say that it is ridiculous to imagine that it took this long, at this expense and with this work force to build a structure hardly larger than a basketball court. If they were building something to house a basketball court, they would be correct. But Solomon was building the house of God. It's magnificence cannot be described. Words have been used in an effort to paint a picture, but I am convinced it is a case of "better seen than told."

The temple was finished. God had a permanent dwelling place and not a tent. Israel could come to this place and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But first the house of God had need to be dedicated or set aside as a house of worship. During this service, which lasted several days, there was a great feast and many animals were sacrificed. But the spiritual high point of this event was the dedicatory prayer offered by Solomon. During this prayer, God's spirit came in and completely filled the temple. It is noteworthy that when the King began his prayer, he was standing with his hands spread

toward heaven. At the conclusion of the prayer, being enveloped by God's spirit, he was on his knees, with his hands spread toward heaven.

This enormous undertaking and great work toward the worship of God was obviously pleasing to Him.

A FIXED PLACE OF WORSHIP

For about forty years the children of Israel had followed the Ark of the Covenant where ever God deemed it should go. When the pillar of cloud or the pillar of fire stopped, the priests set up the tabernacle, and the congregation of Israel stayed there until one of the two pillars moved again. While stopped, the people worshipped at the tabernacle. In short, the place of worship was always with them. After the conquest of the promised land, the people scattered into the various territories assigned to the different tribal families. Worship at the tabernacle was difficult, but it continued nevertheless. At this time the tabernacle and the Ark was at Shiloh. (Joshua 18:1)

Religious personnel were important to the manner of worship that God had instituted in Israel. One entire tribe was designated by God to provide the personnel for this service, the tribe of Levi. At the time of the conquest of Canaan, Levites numbered 23,000 males one month and older. Among them, descendants of Aaron were declared to be priests, and the eldest son of the continuing family was designated high priest. Priests and Levites administered the tabernacle ceremonies, with the Priests doing the sacrificing and the Levites assisting. In keeping with the idea of theocracy, with God as chief ruler, the main factor of unifying the tribes was the sanctuary that had been set up at Shiloh. As in the wilderness, the Ark of the Covenant, housed in the tabernacle represented God's presence among His people. This religious center was for all the people of every tribe, with no tribe favored over another. All could come to the tabernacle and on occasion were commanded to come for their religious expression. But as said before, it was difficult journey for some to come and worship.

Adding to this problem was the fact that Israel did not destroy all the Canaanites as God had instructed, Those of the Israelites who lived near the pagan worshipping inhabitants of Canaan began to think their gods were not so bad. How soon God's people forget. In Joshua 24, we have the account of his farewell speech to the people of Israel. He had gathered the elders of Israel along with their judges and their officers. The scripture says they presented themselves before God. Joshua rehearsed the history of God's chosen people from the time of Abraham to the present. Then in verse 15 we hear his words, "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" With these words, Joshua was challenging these people to remain faithful to Jehovah God.

"*And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods".* After further admonishing then as to what their punishment would be if they served strange gods, they said, "Nay but we will serve the Lord."

But they did serve strange gods. It seems that Joshua knew these people, knew they would fail. That was the reason of his continued warnings. He knew them with a special God given insight that pastors today know their congregation, their needs and their failures. At any rate, Israel went into a period of apostasy, influenced, no doubt by the pagan gods of their neighbors. After the death of Joshua, the bible records the period of the judges where it is recorded that at times "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6 and 21:25) This religious indifference and actual rejection of the God who had led and sustained them so long continued. But it seemed that through all those years, Israel was searching for that which was lost.

Finally, they decided that they needed to be like other nations about them and they wanted a king. This was the final rejection of God. The people of Israel had been living under a theocracy since God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. This Jehovah had loved, led, guided and sustained them was being told they no longer needed Him. But even though they had discarded God, He in His mercy never gave up on them. In His foreknowledge (where have we heard word that before?) He knew that Israel's greatest glory was ahead of them. When their first king, Saul, didn't work out, He chose David, the shepherd boy, as their second. David was devout and even though he sinned greatly he was a "man after his own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14)

King David unified the nation politically but the nation needed more. He brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and placed it in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. From the time of it's construction in the wilderness, the tabernacle had served Israel well. There God dwelt on the mercy seat of the Ark. But it was a tent. And it was ugly, being covered with badger skins. It had no appeal to the eyes. The beauty was on the inside and the common man of Israel never saw the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. This tent was much like our Jesus. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." (Isaiah 53:2) Those who do not know God and His saving grace cannot possibly see the inner beauty of our savior.

When the temple was completed it was externally in direct contrast to the tabernacle. It was a magnificent structure, a thing of beauty. Examples of it's splendor are it's walls, hewn and fitted together without mortar and the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, standing on either side of the porch. This was a structure that was appealing to the eye of the beholder, something that would appeal to the common man of Israel.

And when Solomon prayed the dedicatory prayer and the Spirit of God filled the house, Israel was united, both politically and spiritually.

A PREFIGURE OF THE CHURCH

There are many shadows or symbols in the old scriptures that relate to the church. With the temple we come to a different type of shadow of the church. Clearly, the thought here is that God dwells among His people: 'And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them' (Ex. 25:8) We know that in this instance, God was speaking of the tabernacle. But the thought carries into the temple of Solomon.

If the shadow of the bride of Christ is connected with the thoughts of pure and undivided love, the thought of the house or dwelling place of God is connected with attributes which are different but just as important. One of these attributes is the order to be observed in the house of God.

Everything had to be made according to the pattern God had showed Moses on the mountain. 'According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it' (Exodus 25:9) Here again, this is in reference to the tabernacle, but also again, these words spoken by God also applies to the temple and to the church. In the last two chapters of Exodus which report how the tabernacle was set up we read the phrase 'as the Lord commanded Moses'. This phrase occurs numerous times in these two chapters alone.

Today, we can make two types of mistakes in respect to church order. The first one is to ignore God-given instructions and the second is to add human 'order' by determining things the word of God leaves unsaid. Paul, when writing to the Corinthian church said, Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40)
Another attribute is in the displaying of the glory of God. All the materials of the tabernacle and temple speak of the glories of Christ. But the one material that dominated God's dwelling place at the time was gold – which speaks of divine glory. First of all, gold was used for the ark: its lid, its rings, its staves and the cherubim. The other pieces of furniture was fashioned of gold: the table of showbread, the candlestick and the altar of incense was overlaid with gold. The use of gold in the temple was even more lavish than in the tabernacle.

If one is impressed with the extent to which this precious metal was used, it only brings home to us how important it is in God's eyes that glory is brought to Him in the church. The glory of Christ and His work is such that we should not glory at all except in Him and His work (Gal. 6:14). We are for the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:12.14), and it says explicitly of the church: 'Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21).

The last attribute that we will mention is the display of holiness that is due the presence of God. The temple consisted of two parts, both characterized by holiness. There was

the holy place and the holies of holies. The high priests and the priests had to wear holy garments, consecrated for His service, in order to enter either of these chambers.

The church of the living God is a holy place. The holy garment we wear is our regenerated soul. We can clean up our lives to the point that those about us think we are spotless, but our exteriors can never match what God has placed inside us. God chose us because he foreknew us. It is our duty and responsibility to display the holiness of God wherever we go, whether in the Lord's house or out of it. Romans 12:1 states, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

If further proof is need read 1 Peter 2:9. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

LESSON FIVE

Palm Trees

LESSON TEXT
Revelation 7:9-10

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER CLIFFORD HAYES

Revelation 7:9-10
9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the theme of these lessons, this final lesson is titled "The Palm Tree." The branches from the Palm tree has long been a symbol of victory. They were a symbol of triumph and victory in pre-Christian times. The Romans rewarded champions of the games and celebrated military successes with palm branches. The Jews follow a similar tradition of carrying palm branches during festive times. Early Christians used the palm branch to symbolize the victory of the faithful over enemies of the movement, as in the occasion of this lesson. In Christian art, martyrs were usually shown holding a palm frond, representing the victory of spirit over flesh, and it was widely believed that a picture of a palm on a tomb meant that a martyr was buried there.

But this lesson could have easily been titled, " Jesus Triumphant". We know that Jesus triumphed over death and the grave when He rose and came forth from His burial place. He entered heaven as our triumphant Lord and Savior. This lesson will deal briefly with that event. But our remarks will be primarily about the life of Jesus, His ministry, His teachings and the only time He was triumphant while on earth,

JESUS AROSE

Our faith is based on many things, but perhaps most basic is the fact that Jesus arose from the dead. On this rests our hope that we too, one day, will arise to live forever in eternity. I know the following is lengthily, but it is the passage that comes to mind when we think of our bodily resurrection Paul, writing of the resurrection had this to say, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

The amazing thing about Jesus' rising from the dead is that His enemies gave attention to what Jesus said and His followers did not. How many times did He say that He would rise again? The first warning takes place somewhere near Caesarea Philippi immediately after Peter proclaims Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus teaches his Apostles that "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again". (Mark 8:31-33) This account is also found in Matthew's and John's gospel. At this time Peter objects and is rebuked sharply by Jesus.

Again in Mark 9: 30-32 Jesus taught His disciples, "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day." Here His followers didn't understand and they were afraid to ask Him about what He had said.

The third time was when He and his disciples were on the way to Jerusalem for the last time. He said, " Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him and the third day he shall rise again." (Matthew 20:17-19)

Several times it was attributed to Jesus that He said "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" The witnesses at His mock trial testified that He said these words. Then when He was being reviled while He was on the cross, His detractors said, "Thou that destroys the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." (Matthew 26:40)

As far as I have found, the only time He actually said these words was when He had cleansed the temple of the moneychangers. His authority to do such was challenged and He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19) The chief priests and the Pharisees remembered this and asked permission to have a stone placed over the tomb and a guard placed beside it. However it was not until after His resurrection that the disciples remembered that He had said this. Then they believed the word He had said. (John 2:22)

It is strange that they did not believe this would be Jesus' fate. Perhaps they loved Him so and believed in Him and did not think this would happen to God's Son.

JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

It has been said that if one wants to know about God, he should read the life of Jesus.

The bible's four gospels tell the story of the life of Jesus by four different authors. These four gospel authors present Jesus in four different ways. Matthew. Mark and Luke are known as synoptic gospels, meaning

"seeing together". They tell much of the same events, as seen through different eyes, therefore giving a more complete picture. Matthew writes for the Jews, and his is the gospel of the King of His kingdom, according to Old Testament prophecies. Marks gospel may be called the gospel of deeds. It is limited to the earthly life of Jesus and tells of the mighty things He did. Luke's gospel is called the gospel of the savior and shows His relationship to all mankind. John's gospel has been called the gospel of assurance, knowledge and comfort. It sets forth the divinity of Christ.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God, All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-3; 14)

When Jesus first announced His office of Messiah, He read the following in the synagogue in Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4: 18-19)

He fulfilled His mission statement. His ministry began at the Jordan River with His baptism by John. This beginning was endorsed by God when the heaven opened and the Holy Ghost settled on Him and the voice of God said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22). There is no need to go into the specifics of Jesus' ministry and work. This is written for the adult class and students of the bible are familiar with this area of His life. It will be sufficient to point to the words of the Apostle Peter in his sermon in Acts 10: 37-39, delivered in the house of Cornelius, Here Peter gives an overview of the ministry of Jesus, and to what "was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

There were no honors placed on Jesus by the general populace during His ministry. Only His closest followers loved Him, and that was with a friendly love as evidenced in John 21:15-17. It is true that great crowds followed Him wherever He went, Some were saved, but it is doubtful that the majority of them really wanted the milk of the word, much less the meat. What Jesus was teaching was new and they were curious, plus they had heard He had fed a multitude with little food. They were hungry and they wanted to see a miracle. When the doctrines became harder and harder the crowds became thinner and

thinner. Finally, in John 6: 66-69 we read this account, " From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

So during His ministry no honors were heaped upon the Son of God. The men of His hometown sought to kill Him. His message went unbelieved by the ruling hierarchy of that day. The scribes and the Pharisees were constantly trying to trick Him into saying something that would condemn Himself. He would not go into Judea because the Jews wanted to kill Him. He was rejected by the Jews as the Christ because they were expecting another type of Messiah, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11)

But there was an honor waiting Him. The final week of his life was crowded with many events. He observed the temple being used for things other than the worship of God, and He drove out those people who had desecrated God's house He taught many lessons during this last week, but the event that publicly proclaimed Him as the rightful holder of the office of Messiah-the Son of God and the savior of the world- was His triumphant entry into Jerusalem..

THE TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

During the last week of Christ's life leading to His death on the cross, many events occurred. Of those events, the first was His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Holy city. There were thousands of people gathered, Jews, Greeks and Romans. As the crowds filled the city there was a prophecy from the Old Testament ready to be fulfilled. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Zechariah 9:9)

This was no ordinary day despite the coming of the Passover week. Jesus was to announce the ultimate challenge to the ruling religious hierarchy. The Son of man was to proclaim that He is the true Messiah, the King coming to conquer the rituals of temple worship.

Just before entering Jerusalem, Jesus and the true disciples were on the outskirts at Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. Jesus had said to the disciples, "Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him." (Mark 11: 2) There are critics of God's holy word that say that Jesus planned the whole event, that it was staged. They say Jesus could not have known the location of the ass otherwise. According to them

even His reception into the city was a planned event, that He had planted people to incite the crowd in their actions. The answer to this charge is of course it was planned. Just as surely as Christ's virgin birth and His sacrifice on the cross for our sins were planned during the determinate council of God, every event in the life of Jesus was planned. Jesus displayed His omniscience knowing all things, Surely He was not just a man but He was God manifested in the flesh.

So the disciples went into the village and immediately they found a colt tied to the door way and brought it to Jesus. What's so important about using a colt, why not any other animal? In the Old Testament a colt was a noble animal, it was used for service and to carry the burdens of men; perhaps more importantly, it was used by Kings. When they entered a city in peace, they rode a colt to symbolize their peaceful intentions. When a King entered a city as a conqueror, he rode a stallion. The colt also represented sacredness, according to the laws of purification given by Moses the animal had to be perfect and unused, never having a yoke upon his neck.

Jesus was making sure everything He did was representing Him as a King. The Lord needed the colt to proclaim Himself to be the Messiah. Jesus was now strongly proclaiming to be a King, better yet the true Messiah. Before Christ would not except praise but now Christ said, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out". - Luke 19:40. The Pharisees were jealous, their reign or authority would come to an end if this was the Messiah. All around Jesus they heard proclamations, saying, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." They would be just like the common people with no special privileges.

So this great host of people paid homage and gave honor to Jesus as the Christ, the long awaited Messiah. They welcomed Him into the city by laying their garments and palm branches in the street for the ass to walk upon. Others waved palm branches in the air, the symbol of victory. The multitudes received Him as King, they paid homage and reverence to the coming King. In the eyes of the screaming worshipers they thought their King was coming to start to conquer the Roman Empire. But during the days between this event and the time that He was arrested and brought before Pilate and those of the hierarchy of the temple, Jesus taught many things. It became obvious to the people that He did not come on a white stallion but on an humble colt, coming with peace, not to destroy the governments but to save men.

Their actions soon changed and instead of praising Hosanna in the highest they later on proclaimed that He would be crucified. Today people want power and authority, seldom do you find people that are humble and full of peace. The triumphant entry of Jesus was just the very beginning of

His last ministry in Jerusalem during the Holy week. Let us learn from this day and remember that today, Jesus our true Messiah entered Jerusalem to save all men.

THE LESSON TEXTS

We have already touched on the scripture from John relative to this lesson. The passage from Revelation is unique in that we are able to see, through the eyes of the beloved Apostle John, some of the things that await us in heaven, One of the elders told John that, "These are they who came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation: 7:14) This word 'tribulation" is not "the great tribulation" as some today would have us believe, but is in reference to Psalm 116:3 when David said, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow."

This agony we suffer when we travel from nature to grace is like no other tribulation this world has to offer. Those who have experienced this knows of what we speak. Those we see in this verse from Revelation knows. And we notice that the palms they are waving are also palms of victory, symbols of their own victory over death and the grave.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins".

As an afterthought to this scripture, I believe that this great multitude John saw in Revelation 7:9 is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 22:17, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies."