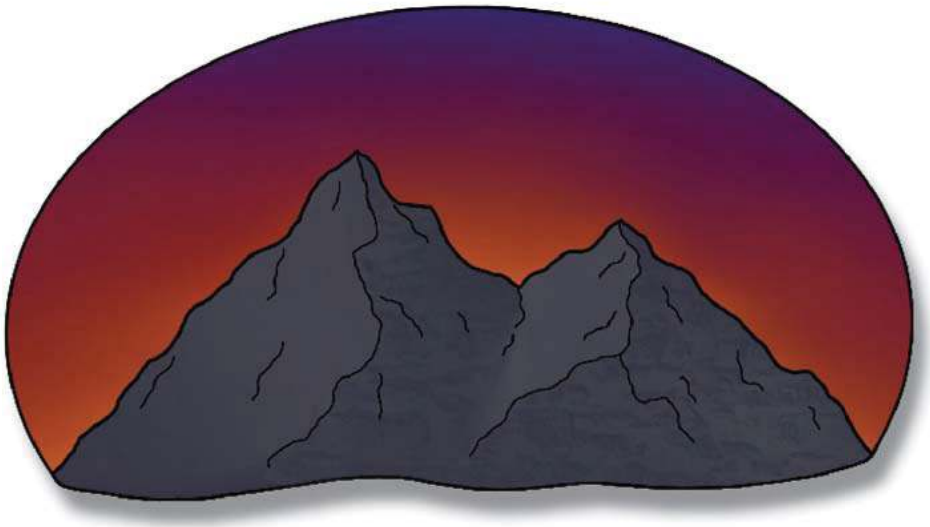
THE MISSIONARY BAPTIST VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
LITERATURE COMMITTEE PRESENTS

TELL IT FROM THE MOUNTAINS



HIGH SCHOOL

THE MISSIONARY BAPTIST VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
LITERATURE COMMITTEE PRESENTS

TELL IT FROM THE MOUNTAINS

For High School Grades or Ages 14-18

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Written by: Brother David Carter

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Lesson One: MOUNT ARARAT

Written By: Brother David Carter
BACKGROUND: Genesis 7:11-8:14
LESSON TEXT: Genesis 8:15 - 9:1

The Original Beginning

The flood had ended and the Ark now rested on Mt. Ararat, located in what is known as modern day Turkey. Ararat was a twin peaked mountain range, rising to a height of 17,000 ft. above sea level. It was almost an equal distance from the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black sea, and the Caspian Sea. According to *Harpers Bible Dictionary,* This is the place where Noah, his family, and all the living creatures, in whom was the breath of life, disembarked from the ark, and began to replenish the world with life.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," (Genesis 1:1). Over the next six days, God spoke, and everything we see around us had its foundation. He created all the stars and planets; the land and seas; the plant life and animal life. He just spoke, and it happened. He created all these things from nothing. Then he took one of those creations – the dust of the ground – and *formed* the first human being – Adam. He even breathed Adam's first breath, then took one of his ribs to make Eve, his wife. *"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good,"* (Genesis 1:31).

God gave Adam and Eve everything they would ever need. He gave them fruits, vegetables, and herbs for food. They had each other and all the animals for companionship. God even gave them work to do to occupy their time. He told them to multiply and fill the earth and to have control over all the animals. But He also gave them one law – *"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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,"* (Genesis 2:16-17).

Then it happened. The day God knew would come, even though He never wanted it to – the day He had already made preparations for (more about that in Lesson 5). The serpent deceived Eve – *"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked,"* (Genesis 3:6-7). This one act of disobedience brought sin into the world, *"and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,"* (Romans 5:12). The whole of God's creation began suffering the consequences of that sin. We see the first murder in the next generation – Adam and Eve's own son killed his brother. *"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,"* (Genesis 6:5).

A Worldwide Flood

This increasing sinfulness and wickedness of man grieved God greatly. So much so that He said *"I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them,"* (Genesis 6:7). *"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die,"* (Genesis 6:17). Notice God said He would destroy *all* flesh. That is everything. It was a worldwide flood with worldwide devastation. There is no way anything on the earth could escape from God's wrath.

But there was good news, even in the midst of all the bad – *"Noah walked with God,"* and *"found grace in the eyes of the LORD,"* (Genesis 6:9 and 6:8). God instructed Noah to build an ark to save himself and his family. So, Noah set out to work on this ark and gather food. A week before the flood came, God brought animals to the ark and they began loading it. When the ark was completely loaded with all the food, animals, and Noah's family, God shut the door. There was no way for anyone or anything to get in or out after that happened. Then the rain came. And came. And came. For forty days, it rained. Not only was water coming down from the heavens, the fountains of the great deep were opened too. There was water coming up and water coming down. There was nowhere to escape the flood that came. *"And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth:*

and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark," (Genesis 7:23).

A New Beginning

Noah and his family rode out the flood in the ark until it came to rest on Mt. Ararat. This mountain range is in what we know as Turkey and is 17,000 feet tall. Noah's family still had to wait 220 days before the waters receded and the earth was dry enough for them to exit the ark. Think about this for a minute – what must that have been like? They knew all the old world – everyone and everything they were familiar with – was gone. They were completely separated from their old life. They didn't know what to expect when they came out of the ark, but they knew it was surely different than when they went in. The ark saved them from the flood, but the flood saved them from that old world.

After Noah departed the ark, he built an altar to the Lord and made offerings to Him. God then told Noah and his sons to multiply and replenish the earth, just as He had told Adam and Eve. He again gave them dominion over the animals and permission to eat them along with the fruits and vegetables; He even gave them a law of capital punishment for murderers. He established a covenant with Noah, his heirs, and all the creatures He brought off the ark. *"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth,"* (Genesis 9:14-16). What a promise from a loving God – He will remember His covenant every time He sees the rainbow. He will never again destroy the earth with waters.

The Like Figure

This is a wonderful account of God's character and His provision for those He loves. Not only that, it is a wonderful lesson for us today. Like those people of old, *"the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,"* (Genesis 8:21). God has prepared another worldwide destruction – this time by fire. And there is no way any person can escape this death sentence. We are sinful

people and have no way to fix this within ourselves. Oh, but thank God that He has prepared another ark of safety! We, like Noah, can find grace from the Lord. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast,"* (Ephesians 2:8-9). We can't create this faith, God has to grant it to us. We can only go to him in absolute surrender to His will for us. Just like Noah's family, when we enter this ark, God will shut the door and keep us there safely. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one,"* (John 10:27-29).

God also commands those He has saved to be separated from the old world of sin. *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,"* (Romans 6:4). This baptism, like the great flood of old, separates us from the old world of sin and death. God commands us to multiply and replenish the earth, just like He told Noah and his family. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"* (Matthew 28:19).

Just like He did with Noah, God makes a promise to all those that enter into this new ark. *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,"* (Hebrews 8:10-12). Again, what a promise from a loving God. Everyone God shuts in this new ark will know Him personally. He will forget our sinfulness and our selfishness and show us *"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,"* (Ephesians 2:7). There can be no better promise for us than this.

Lesson Two: MOUNT MORIAH

Written By: Sister Megan Carter

BACKGROUND: 2 Chr. 3:1; Gen. 21:1-5; Heb. 11:17-19; 1 Peter 5:6-9 **LESSON TEXT: Gen. 22:1-9**

Abraham and Isaac

There are four notable events that took place in the Land of Moriah. They are: The test of Abraham's Faith; The purchase of Oman's Thrashing floor by David; The building of the Temple by Solomon; and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In the "Land of Moriah" there is a Mountain with several peaks, called by different names; for example; Mount Zion, Mount of Olives, Mount Calvary, and Mount Moriah.

Although Abraham was born nearly 2,000 years after creation, it is appropriate to consider the events of his life as another kind of new beginning. Many times, he is referred to as "Father Abraham," and for good reason, since he is the father of God's chosen people during Old Testament times. This group of people goes by several names – Jews, Hebrews, Israelites – and are spoken of throughout the Bible, but it's important to remember that they began with Abraham. When Abraham was a relatively old man, God spoke to him and made him a promise: *"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country… I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great… and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,"* (Genesis 12:1-3). The very next verse begins with these words: *"So Abram departed…"* Without question, at 75 years old, Abraham picked up his whole life and followed God's leadership. Already, we're beginning to see evidence of Abraham's great faith.

Perhaps Abraham wondered exactly how God planned to make a great nation of him, but it wasn't until he made a big part of his journey and saw the land God spoke of in His promise that the Lord revealed to him that it was through "thy seed" – through the offspring of Abraham – that these promises would be fulfilled. Surely Abraham was curious since, at an advanced age, he had no children, but it isn't until a couple chapters later in Genesis that he questioned it, expressing concern that he had no heir except a servant in his household. God again assured Abraham that his heir would be his very own child, reaffirming that assurance by instructing Abraham to *"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be,"* (Genesis 15:5).

Abraham's faith was not perfect. When a child did not appear in a reasonable amount of time (from their flawed point of view), Abraham and his wife Sarah attempted to take matters into their own hands. This resulted in the birth of a son through Sarah's servant, Hagar. His name was Ishmael and, although God is gracious and promised to bless Ishmael, he was not the son God had promised.

Even though Abraham's faith wavered, God is eternally faithful and gave Abraham the promised offspring who was such an important part of God's plan – Isaac. At the time of Isaac's birth, Abraham was 100 years old. He had waited 25 years for the fulfilment of God's promise.

Some time later, Abraham again received shocking instructions from God: "…*God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering…"* (Genesis 22:1-2). It's hard to imagine how this must have made Abraham feel, but once again, he got up the next morning and, without question, began to follow God's instruction. It's significant to know that this was not an easy task to carry out, even from a practical standpoint. The following verses tell us that they travelled for three days and only then could Abraham see their destination in the distance. At that point, Abraham and Isaac separated from the others they travelled with and began the climb up Mt. Moriah. Abraham carried the knife to kill the offering God demanded, his own precious son, as well as the fire to burn him. Isaac himself, unknowing, carried the wood which would burn beneath him. Isaac even questioned as they walked why they had brought everything to make an offering except the offering itself. Abraham replied, "*My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering…"* (Genesis 22:8).

Abraham built an altar, stacked the wood to be burned, and bound his son on top of the altar. He took the knife in his hand, fully prepared to take Isaac's life when the voice of the angel of the Lord cried out to Abraham, *"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me,"* (Genesis 22:12). It was then that Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a nearby thicket. The ram was offered on the altar instead of Isaac and Abraham called

the place *Jehovahjireh*, which means "the LORD will provide."

Spiritual Application

Remember that when God first told Abraham that he must sacrifice his son, He intended to *test* Abraham, specifically his faith. When God saw that Abraham feared Him and was willing to surrender everything to Him, even the son God had promised, it was enough to satisfy God's requirement. Hebrews 11:17-19 says, *"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead…"* Imagine the agony that Abraham would have endured walking up that mountain, knowing the task that lay ahead of him, if he didn't have faith that God would make it right one way or the other. Imagine the fear and sorrow that would have gripped his heart if he didn't believe that God was able to redeem it all and make it good. How was he able to have that kind of faith? Was Abraham some kind of spiritual superhero? Certainly not! He was a human, made out of the same stuff we are. He was weak and made many mistakes along the way as we all do. If you read through the whole account of Abraham's life with God, though, the example that shines through it all is that Abraham *stayed with God*. Although falteringly at times and with mistakes, Abraham followed God's leadership and because of that saw God's promises reaffirmed again and again. Abraham experienced that God was able to and would keep his promises, which at the time of his greatest test, strengthened his ability to obey.

This is the mark of a faithful servant of God: not that they never make a mistake, not that they never doubt or are never fearful, but that they *stay with God*. Even if all a person has is the weakest attempt, God is there with all of His tender mercy and adds His strength to our weakness. This advice given by Samuel rings true in Abraham's situation as well as in our own lives: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to [listen] than the fat of rams"* (1 Samuel 15:22). Sometimes God does require action, but it is the obedience brought about by love and fear of God that is truly satisfying to Him.

Lesson Three: MOUNT SINAI

Written By: Elder Bradley Hicks

BACKGROUND: Exodus 19

LESSON TEXT: Exodus 19:1-9

Introduction

The Sinai Peninsula was a 260 mile long triangle. It is characterized by a mountain range of granite peaks rising up to 8,000 feet above sea level. The two most notable peaks are Sinai and Horeb, sometimes identified as the same place. Sinai also had a 15-mile wide band of sandy dunes reaching south from the Mediterranean Sea; it also had a high plateau of limestone and gravel, and dry steam beds, running 150 miles south of the sand belt.

Guilt. Shame. Regret. Inferiority. Embarrassment. Fear. If any of these personal, and at times crushing feelings sound familiar, you are not alone. For many these can weigh so heavily upon the mind that they paralyze almost every aspect of one's life. The reality that there is a standard we are called and feel compelled to reach, but are wholly unable to. The response of the American culture has been a rush, by often well-intentioned people, to reassure the one who is suffering from these feelings that they *are* in fact good enough, and that the standard being advocated is unjust, bias, or in some way faulty itself. The problem with that assurance is that it very often rings hollow in moments of clarity. That no matter how loud the voices of reassurance clamor, the voice within convinces us that, "You are simply not good enough."

Admittedly not all of these feelings have a divine origin, however our lesson is going to consider the possibility that often they do; and that the best thing we can do is look past the symptoms (the emotions), to the cause (the law), and urgently seek the remedy (Christ).

God's First Law

It is often said of Mt. Sinai that it is the first place God gave the law. Although in one sense this is accurate because God physically gave Moses a stone with rules carved on them, in another sense it is misleading. Long before Moses descended

from Mt. Sinai, God had given laws to mankind.

The first law was given to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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."*

God's first law was spoken solely to Adam and was simply not to eat of a specific tree in the Garden of Eden. Sadly, in the following chapter we learn that Adam disobeyed God and suffered the consequences of such brazen disobedience (spiritual death). Immediately after Adam eats from the tree we learn that almost instinctively, he sews fig leaves together and hides from the presence of God. A clear indication that these powerful emotions can (and often do) emanate from breaking God's law.

God's Moral Law

"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come" (Romans 5:13-14).

Immediately following God's first law, we find another one appears on the scene. We must look closely to find it, but the scripture above discreetly references it. Let's consider what this scripture is teaching.

1. Sin cannot be present where there isn't a law.
2. Sin was present after Adam's decision in the garden but before Moses brought the Ten Commandments.
3. People sinned during that time even though they didn't break the same law God gave to Adam.

This leaves us with a sincere question? What law was present between Adam and Moses? In the Bible we find the presence of three different laws: the Moral law, the Civil law (of Israel), and the Ceremonial law. Each of these served different purposes and groups of people, but all of them set a standard which God

expected to be kept.

The word "sin" literally means to "miss the mark." So imagine a dart board where the goal of the game is to hit the center circle every time. A bullseye! If a person fails to hit the circle then it is easy to say that they "missed the mark." But, if the dart board doesn't exist, then it is impossible to be accused of missing the mark because there was no mark (standard) to hit or miss.

In the same way, God's law is the bullseye which he expects our thoughts, attitudes, and actions to hit. Failing to do so equates to sin. In our scripture it notes that sin existed in the world even though there was no *discernible* law given to mankind between Adam and Moses (approximately 2500 years). How was this possible?

Because, following Adam's sin in the garden, God has written on the heart of every individual since the sin of Adam a moral law. A law which our conscience declares is right, and which condemns us if we fail to uphold it and commends us if we keep it.

"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15).

One evidence of this law's existence is when this verse says, "...*their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."* The thoughts being described are those of guilt, shame, and the others we spoke about at the beginning of this lesson. They clearly are meant to be messengers conveying the news that we have failed to keep the standards (law) of God and are guilty of sin. The only per se "problem" with the moral law is that it can be easy to ignore or deny. That even though we may feel a sense of guilt or shame for our actions, we may be able to convince ourselves that these feelings are not of divine origin, and thus nullify in our own minds the existence of this internal law. God, knowing man's tendency to run from sin or avoid the law, made provisions at the top of Mt. Sinai to take away this very excuse.

The Importance of Mt. Sinai

For 2500 years people were accountable to God because of the moral law He wrote upon their heart. Though this mode of accountability was fair, it presented a sincere challenge to mankind. How do we determine if these powerful feelings are from God or ourselves?

Initially, God spoke these laws to the children of Israel in Exodus 20 with a loud voice from heaven that was accompanied by thundering and lightening. But later God wrote these Ten Commandments on tablets of stone to show they were eternal, immutable, and most of all, clear. Now, nobody could claim that they didn't know it was wrong to do something or to fail to do something. God's law given to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai was an attempt by God to clearly identify man's weakness. Or in other words, if the feelings of guilt and shame derive from the moral law of the heart wasn't enough, now God was doubling his effort to reveal your weakness by clearly showing them through this written law.

Spiritual Conclusion

Many today deny the existence of a moral law, despite believing that all people ought to hold to a certain standard of conduct and thought. Others strive to keep the law of Moses, thinking that if they live good enough (according to their standard) that they will be deserving of salvation. Whether it was the law God gave to Adam, the moral law of the heart, or the law delivered at Mt. Sinai, God's laws are meant to show us our weakness. That no matter how hard we strive to meet His standards, we won't. They are meant to stop us in our tracks and cause us to confess that we are not good enough and in need of somebody to save us. And that Somebody will be found at the top of our final mountain this week, Mt. Calvary.

Lesson Four: MOUNT CARMEL

Written By: Sister Cathleen Hicks

BACKGROUND: I Kings Chapters 17 & 18

LESSON TEXT: James 5:17-18

Forgoing Man to Follow God

The setting for this lesson is Mount Carmel. Although, called Mount Carmel, it is more like a hilly range that stretches for about 25 miles along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, between and behind, the modern-day cities of Haifa and Hadera. The highest point of Mt. Carmel is 1791 feet above sea level and is about twenty miles long and eight miles wide. The Valley of Jezreel lies to the immediate Northeast of the mountain range. The brook Kishon is also nearby.

Ascending steeply out of the Mediterranean Sea, and stretches from the modern city of Haifa, Israel, southeast to the Plain of Dothan. It is best known as the site of the conflict between the prophet Elijah and Queen Jezebel's pagan prophets. By examining this account further and considering the full details of what transpired, we receive valuable insight into the spiritual conflict that led to the error of King Ahab's ways, and how, by God's grace, we might be able to avoid his mistakes.

A Tale of Mountainous Proportions

Elijah was a prophet sent by God to the nation of Israel during the reigns of King Ahab and his son, King Ahaziah during the 9th Century B.C. He was a rugged man, adept at living in the wilderness, with a strong constitution. His greatest strength, however, did not lie in his stature or physical characteristics, but in the character of his inner-man.

Elijah had a great love for God. That great love compelled his strong opposition to the standards of his day; Israel had become a people of God who had given their hearts away to another.

God lead Elijah to confront King Ahab of his sinful idolatry, prophesy of a coming drought as a result, lead him to flee and fed him (by ravens, none the less) during his time of refuge. God then sent Elijah back to King Ahab to challenge King Ahab

in a show of strength, pinning himself and his God against the gods Baal and Asherah… and 850 of Queen Jezebel's choice prophets. Despite their best efforts, their vain, empty gods proved powerless. God showed up and showed out, displaying Himself and His strength in a mighty and unforgettable way.
Perhaps one of the most perplexing factors surrounding this scenario lies in this question: How did Israel get to such a forlorn state? Were they not God's chosen people; the ones who held His heart and the key to the great strength of His hand? How, and why, had they suddenly forsaken God? And, what had King Ahab done to be described saying he, *"did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him"* (1 Kings 16:30).

Consider the Source

In 1 Kings 16:31, we find the answer to one of King Ahab's mistakes: *"And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the song of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel…"*

From the perspective of cultural customs, the motivation behind King Ahab's decision to marry was reasonable, and not uncommon. As the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Zidonians, Jezebel was a Phoenician princess, and a marriage to her was considered a wise political maneuver in order to gain a powerful ally. In doing what was acceptable in the eyes of man, King Ahab willfully disregarded the word and the will of the Lord.

As we begin to establish ourselves as individuals, leaving the rules and guidance of our parents and begin "adulting" on our own, we are faced with a myriad of choices. We find ourselves surrounded by a chorus of opinions, the pressure to please and succeed, and in a race against our most precious resource: time. When you seek out advice from those around you, you may hear the words and wisdom of man; perhaps seasoned by education and experience, or qualified by financial gain or worldly success. Although seeking out counsel may seem a prudent way to go, beware. Following the logic of man, unrooted in God's word and without the leadership of His Spirit, means compromising God's perfect truth, His complete knowledge and infinite power, the security of his love and faithfulness, and His beautiful plan for our lives in order to heed incomplete or ill-motivated plans

men from who are fallible and limited. God knows every need and circumstance, every strength and weakness, and the events that have shaped us and those that have yet to come to pass. This choice to walk after our own plans is not God's best for us, and will only lead us on an impossible uphill climb, overgrown with roots and snares, and ending in failure, disappointment and emptiness.

Counting the Cost of Compromise

Love. Happiness. Completion. Attraction. Friendship. Commitment. Partnership. Goals…

While all these reasons to marry might sound good, and even necessary, in today's world of "prenups" these attributes alone are not strong enough to offer security and permanence. A relationship firmly built upon a mutual understanding and respect for God is one that will not only withstand the ebb and flow of life's seasons, but through unconditional, self-sacrificing love, will blossom in the face of hardship. Many Christians have found themselves in precarious situations, married to unbelievers and without mutual love for God or spiritual understanding. When conflict with their spouse arrives, they find themselves resorting to an undesirable and dangerous solution in order to maintain peace: compromise.

Marriage is not the only avenue in which Christians find themselves facing compromise; family, relationships with friends (both "Christian" and otherwise), work demands, financial woes and church disagreements - in fact nearly every situation in life - require too often choice between taking the "high road" doing what is Biblical and best (albeit often most difficult), or fall to temptation in choosing the easy road or to satisfying our fleshly desires. In both King Ahab's situation, and in the lives a child of God, the selection of a spouse is paramount and can lead to a life of forgoing God's plan - and the souls that perhaps you could reach - in order to maintain a life of relative, and unpromising "peace."

Compromise for King Ahab meant fully, consciously turning away from God to conforming to the religion of his wife. According to scripture, Ahab *"...went and served Baal, and worshipped him… And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he*

had built in Samaria" (1 Kings 16:32).

Satan has waged war against our hearts and our nation and disguises himself in the name of "tolerance", "acceptance", and "understanding". If we believe that God IS love, and God IS truth, however, allowing others to trespass His word in fulfillment of their own lust or desires is far from displaying genuine love and care for them. Instead, we must be as Elijah and unafraid to stand against those who defy God. We must trust His faithfulness, His love, His promises and His plan.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptabe, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

The View from the Top

In leaving behind the account of Elijah and Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel, God has laid before us the result of two very different paths. King Ahaz's deliberate disobedience and disregard for God provoked God's anger (1 Kings 16:33), led to his shame and destruction, the physical death and spiritual destruction of innumerable people. Elijah's story, however, leaves behind the testimony of the bounty of blessings we receive when we still our hearts and determine to follow God. Time after time God protects and provides for Elijah. Not only did Elijah's choices benefit him, but they glorified God and allowed Elijah to bear precious fruit of truth and love to nourish those around him.

The stories left behind are to be tools for us, to encourage us and guide us as we navigate the twists and turns of life, when compromise sometimes tempts us to take the easy road. Every situation you will encounter in your life, every impossible situation or decision, is already known unto God - as the book of Ecclesiastes teaches us, "*there is nothing new under the sun*." A life dedicated to the service of God promises heights of joy and great depths of peace, and triumph at its summit.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" Ephesians 3:20-21.

Lesson Five: MOUNT CALVARY

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BACKGROUND: Matthew 27:29-56; Mark 15:16-41; Luke 32-46; John 19:13-30 **- LESSON TEXT: Mark 15:16-28**

Introduction

The exact year is not known when Christ was crucified; most likely 30-33 A.D.

The exact location also is not known. It was called Golgotha, meaning the place of a skull (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, John 19:17). Also, it was called Calvary (Luke 23:33). Although the Scripture does not call the location a mountain or even a hill, It was evidently an elevated place where the Romans crucified convicted criminals. It was outside the walls of Jerusalem, yet it was near-by.

Each day we have ascended one of the important mountains of the Bible. Indirectly, the common theme has been to show a different aspect of the human experience. It is very appropriate that we finish our study by ascending the highest spiritual mountain of all. A mountain whose peak cannot be scaled, height cannot be known, and upon which the greatest display of love known to men and angels was shown to the world. We are of course talking about Mt. Calvary, the place where Jesus Christ was crucified.

Studying the events which occured on Mt. Calvary is a paradox in many ways. On one hand, it was the place where Jesus was taken and gruesomely murdered before a crowd of onlookers. It is a symbol of injustice, wickedness, and is the peak of man's depravity. On the other hand, can any event in human history better display the infinite love of God? This mountain is the hallowed place where God sent His only begotten Son to die at that hands of wicked sinners for the salvation of mankind. In this lesson, we will consider the events which took place on this mountain, and how it serves as a picture of man's sin and at the same time, God's infinite love.

The Events at Calvary

The events which took place at Mt. Calvary are really the climax of a story which begins long before the birth of Jesus, or even the creation of the world. In eternity past, God foresaw Adam's sin and devised a plan to bring forgiveness and salvation. For God to be just AND for all people to be presented with the opportunity to be saved, God had to provide one who could experience the penalty of sin for every person. Since the penalty of sin is death (separation from God), the punishment which our savior would have to experience would have to be a death on behalf of all mankind. This is exactly what God provided in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

Not only would Jesus be required to die, but it was God's will that His death would be one accompanied by rejection and ridicule. Rejection from His closest followers, His nation, and ultimately, God the Father.

Before Jesus ever reached the top of this mountain His death sentence was in the process of being carried out. The day of His death and prior to ascending Mt. Calvary, Jesus was betrayed and forsaken by His followers, falsely convicted by various Jewish and Roman "judges," beaten by men's hands, whipped, spit upon, and mocked. After these torturous acts, He was sentenced to death by crucifixion. Already weakened, He was unable to carry the cross and was helped by a man named Simon.

"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross" (Matthew 27:32).

Once He reached the pinnacle of Mt. Calvary, Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to a cross where he hung for hours suffering. At one point amidst His suffering, we read what I believe to be the

greatest depth of suffering He experienced:

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45-46)

It seems like it was at this point, when darkness covered the land and Jesus cried in agony, that the weight of the world's sin was placed upon Jesus and He experienced death for every man. Without the aid of God the Father, Jesus experienced death as a man, without any divine help or comfort. Bearing upon Himself the sins of the entire world, Jesus died as a lost man does without God. And in this dreadful moment, when He gives up the ghost and dies, He pays the penalty for man's sin! The Bible says,

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14).

This verse means that God took the long list of reasons why He could and should justly sentence us to eternal death, and nailed them to His cross. Or put them to death; nullified them. And now, God has put forward conditions whereby He will extend forgiveness to anyone who meets them. All who come to God in humility and broken hearted repentance for their sin and put faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ will receive forgiveness for their sin.

Man's Depravity and God's Love

The magnitude of the events which transpired on Mt. Calvary are impossible to fully grasp. The depth of man's depravity is on fully display. The betrayal of Judas, the selfish fear of the disciples, the struggle for power by the Sanhedrin, the false accusations of the witnesses, the bloodthirst of the crowd, the injustice of Pontius Pilate, the gruesome acts performed by the soldiers, the ridicule of passerbyers, and the overall disregard by all present that this man, God in the flesh, was certainly sent from above. And yet, it is when the blackness of the human heart is most fully

displayed that God is able to demonstrate His great love. The Bible says,

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Mt. Calvary is terribly wonderful, hideously beautiful, and unfortunately amazing. For it was here that God's greatest gift was murdered upon a cruel cross. It was here that God showed His unparalleled for us. And it was here, that the penalty for our sins were paid in full.

If we with ink the ocean filled and were the skies of parchment made,

Were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry,

Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky.

The Love of God how rich and pure, how measureless and strong,

It shall forevermore endure the saints and angels song.