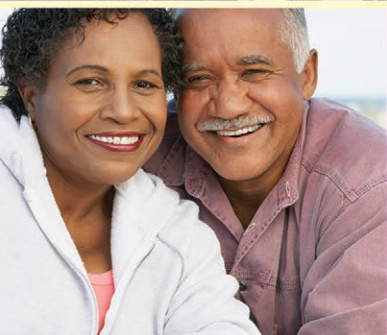




# ECHOES

Adult Student Book  
Comprehensive Bible Study  
March–May 2025



## Costly Sacrifices

Studies in Exodus, Leviticus,  
1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah,  
Matthew, Hebrews, 1 John, Revelation

---

# ECHOES

## Adult Student Book Comprehensive Bible Study A Bible Study Quarterly for Adults

**Editors:** Jason Hitchcock, Trinity Van Gaasbeek

**Contributing Editors:** Victoria McAfee, Yazmin Spearman

**Designer:** Dale Johnson

**Production:** Sean McCoy

*Adult Student Book: Comprehensive Bible Study* is published quarterly by David C Cook, DavidCCook.org. © 2025 by David C Cook, 4050 Lee Vance Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80918, U.S.A. Echoes® and David C Cook and its related logo are registered trademarks of David C Cook. All rights reserved. ISBN 978-1-589-19426-7 Printed in South Korea. All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version™, NIV™ Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.biblica.com](http://www.biblica.com). Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the *King James Version*. LEGO® is a trademark of the LEGO Group of companies which does not sponsor, authorize or endorse this resource. *Lessons and/or Readings are based on the Uniform Series International Sunday School Lessons International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching* copyright © 2021 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Digital products are subject to the End User License Agreement (EULA) found at [DavidCCook.org/EULA/](http://DavidCCook.org/EULA/) and any additional terms or restrictions that may accompany the product. Digital products cannot be returned, sold, or relicensed. This product license is good for 6 months. After 6 months, you must purchase another license.

Cover Photos: © valio84sl/Jacob Wackerhousen/Rolf Bruderer/Getty Images

# T A B L E O F

# Contents

## Costly Sacrifices

March, April, May 2025

(Studies in Exodus, Leviticus, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra,  
Nehemiah, Matthew, Hebrews, 1 John, Revelation)

### Unit 1: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, and Atonement

<b>March 2</b>	Lesson 1	A Kingdom of Priests, A Holy Nation	p. 5
<b>March 9</b>	Lesson 2	A Space for God	p. 12
<b>March 16</b>	Lesson 3	The Ordination of Priests	p. 19
<b>March 23</b>	Lesson 4	Offering a Sweet Aroma to God	p. 26
<b>March 30</b>	Lesson 5	The Day of Atonement	p. 33

### Unit 2: Christ's All-Sufficient Sacrifice

<b>April 6</b>	Lesson 6	Christ's Once-for-All Sacrifice	p. 40
<b>April 13</b>	Lesson 7	Christ the Atoning Sacrifice	p. 47
<b>April 20</b>	Lesson 8	Christ Dies and Rises to New Life	p. 54
<b>April 27</b>	Lesson 9	The Lamb Is Worthy	p. 61

### Unit 3: Special Offerings and the Sanctuary

<b>May 4</b>	Lesson 10	David's Sacrifice	p. 68
<b>May 11</b>	Lesson 11	Solomon Dedicates the Temple	p. 75
<b>May 18</b>	Lesson 12	Worship Is Restored	p. 82
<b>May 25</b>	Lesson 13	A Covenant Renewal	p. 89

### Special Features

What's Ahead	p. 4
Personal Pages	p. 96
Lesson Cycle	p. 97
Coming Up Next Quarter	p. 98

---

#### David C Cook would like to thank the following lesson contributors:

Thomas Anderson, Madison Cannon, Crystal Green, Tracie Heskett, Doug Hoffer, Josiah Krogman, Dan Lioy, Patricia Meritt, Rebecca Moss, Abby Parks, Michael Rade, Angela Reed, Chad Ryan, Carl Simmons, Denise Snyder, Jeff Stone, Ed Stucky, Justine Tegen, Jeff Wallace, Roslyn Yilpet

# What's Ahead

## Quarterly Preview

The spring quarter is devoted to the theme of worship, sacrifices, and offerings which are found in Scripture. Understanding the old covenant sacrifices and offerings is essential to understanding the New Testament's view of Christ's sacrifice.

**Unit 1** explores texts from Exodus and Leviticus to describe the covenant and sacrificial system. Each lesson is bound together by the theme of God's presence, which is graciously given to God's people.

**Unit 2** turns to New Testament texts to explore the significance of Jesus's perfect sacrifice. Jesus' death and resurrection are able to take away sin, and He alone is worthy of all praise and honor.

**Unit 3** concludes the quarter by exploring other stories that teach something about sacrifice, offerings, and temple. These stories come from the lives of David, Solomon, and those who returned from exile.

In this quarter, here are some biblical principles you will study and apply to the situations in your own life:

- A holy God requires a holy and obedient people.
- The holy God dwells with His people.
- Be holy as God is holy.
- Offer to God the sacrifices He requires.
- Sin is only cleansed by sacrifice.
- Draw near to God in confidence because of Jesus' sacrifice.
- Love one another because God loved us.
- Death is no match for the Son of God.
- Worship the worthy one, the slain and risen Jesus.
- Give God the sacrifice He deserves.
- Wholeheartedly worship God like He dwells among you; He does!
- Worship in the midst of fear and disappointment.
- Restoration requires following God's commands.

## A Kingdom of Priests, A Holy Nation

**M**an, you missed it!" Keshawn said, smiling at his coworker. "We had a great time last night. Bruce paid for everything."

Last night, Ervan did not accompany his supervisor and coworkers to the popular sports bar.

"We really had a great time," Keshawn continued. "And I think I'm in love with one of the waitresses. She gave me her cell phone number."

"And the new guy, Harold, was really talking Bruce up," Keshawn said, leaning against Ervan's file cabinet. "Bruce may consider him for the new men's basketball coach. Didn't you have your eye on that position?"

"Yes," said Ervan. "I've expressed my interest and talked to Bruce about being the men's basketball coach."

"Man, you should have come out last night," said Keshawn. "Why didn't you? I would think a single man like yourself would also like looking at good looking women."

The drinking environment and what he suspected would be the mood of the gathering were exactly why Ervan did not go. He knew himself and didn't want to put himself in that predicament. Ervan also loved God and didn't want to displease Him or reflect poorly on His name.

"Oh wait," Keshawn added. "Are you a holy roller?"

"I serve a holy God, and I love Him" said Ervan. "I try to live a holy life, because it pleases Him."

- 1. What does a holy life look like?**
- 2. Why does God want us to obey Him?**
- 3. What part do God's people play in His plan for creation?**

## Invitation to a New Identity

*Exodus 19:1–8 KJV*

1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. 8 And all the

*Exodus 19:1–8 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. <sup>2</sup> After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

<sup>3</sup> Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

<sup>7</sup> So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak.

people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

<sup>8</sup> The people all responded together, “We will do everything the LORD has said.” So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

After centuries of bondage in Egypt, where Pharaoh treated the Hebrews with contempt, God delivered them from slavery, using miracles beyond human comprehension. The people travel through the wilderness, and God leads them to the foot of a mountain, a place connecting heaven and earth. The mountain would smoke and thunder in a fearful display. At Sinai, they meet with Yahweh—God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and creator of the universe.

God first asks Moses to remind the people of all that they had witnessed (vv. 4–5). They were rescued and protected, “carried on eagles’ wings.” The people were brought out of Egypt for God’s sovereign purpose (v. 4). God invites the people to embrace a new identity. Instead of Pharaoh’s slaves, they have become the creator’s chosen ones.

Since God is giving them a holy status, they are to be a “treasured possession . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (vv. 5–6). God is doing something new. Although He created the whole earth, God is using the children of Abraham to bless the world (Gen. 12:3). Their holiness is not from what they have done. In fact, they were passive characters in their own redemption story. But God is loyal. He rescued them, and now He calls them His people. God shall be devoted and faithful to them. At the same time, He requires their obedience and faithfulness to His covenant. The people respond, “We will do everything the Lord has said” (v. 8)

The rescue plan is bigger than the redemption of one nation; God intends to bless the whole world. Through the descendants of Abraham, God plans to lead all nations into His presence, to fill the world with order and justice. The rescue, redemption, and covenant of Israel become a model of salvation for God to unveil to all people through

Jesus Christ (compare 1 Peter 2:9).

**4.** *What is the first thing that God asks Moses to say to the Israelites?*

**5.** *How might this reminder prepare the people for the invitation that follows?*

**6.** *God invites Israel to embrace a new identity. What are the conditions of this invitation?*

## Preparing to Encounter God

*Exodus 19:9–14 KJV*

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, 11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. 12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: 13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall

*Exodus 19:9–14 NIV*

<sup>9</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes <sup>11</sup> and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. <sup>12</sup> Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. <sup>13</sup> They are to be stoned or shot with arrows;



surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain."

<sup>14</sup> After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes.

Moses continues his conversation with God on Mount Sinai, and all the while God appears in a "dense cloud" so that everyone might see and recognize Moses' authority (v. 9). God endorses Moses' leadership and wants the people to know that Moses is speaking on God's behalf.

God tells Moses to consecrate the people, for Yahweh plans to come down on Mount Sinai right in front of their eyes—an encounter not to be taken lightly (vv. 10–11). Moses must prepare for this meeting by instructing the people about treating the mountain as sacred. God tells Moses that no one, not even an animal, is to touch the holy mountain and desecrate the space where God reveals His presence (v. 12). Before the signal, anyone who deliberately ignores this command and approaches the mountain shall be stoned or shot with arrows (v. 13).

Moses goes back to the people to deliver these instructions. He consecrates them, and they wash their clothes as God commands (v. 14). They are making themselves ritually clean and keeping themselves from anything disordered and unclean. The stage is set for God to appear on the mountain, where He will give Israel the covenant that they shall follow to remain His holy people.

**7.** *How does God appear to Moses, and why?*

**8.** *What instructions does God give to Moses?*

**9.** *What can we learn about God from His instructions?*

## What Is Holiness For?

As both the Exodus story and the apostle Peter make clear, salvation comes before the call to holiness. God does not save Israel because they are holy—Israel is declared holy after they are saved and rescued (Ex. 19:4–6). Peter reminds the church that holiness is a proper response to their salvation (1 Peter 1:9, 16). But what is holiness for?

Some people may think the purpose of holiness is to earn salvation. Others could say achieving holiness is its own reward. Both ideas, however, miss the point: Israel's holiness is intended for worship and mission.

In Exodus 19, God explains two purposes for making them a holy nation: to “bring you to myself” as “my treasured possession” (vv. 4–5), and to be “a kingdom of priests” among the nations (v. 6). Holiness makes Israel fit for a relationship with God—to worship Him—and with the nations—in mission for them. To see holiness only in relationship to salvation or purity misses that they are expected to do something with the holy status they have been given.

In 1 Peter 2:9, this same holy calling is extended to the church: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” God declares and calls the church to be holy so that they will proclaim His glory. This proclamation is an act of worship and mission. We can feel empowered by God's call: be holy! It is what He created us to do, to love our creator through acts of worship and to love our neighbors by serving them.

**10.** *Is holiness a moral calling for us to reach, or a spiritual status given by God. Or could it be both? Why?*

**11.** *How can we understand God's purpose for making us holy, in light of His purpose for making Israel holy?*

**12.** *Does the invitation to “be holy” feel like a burden or a relief? Why?*

## Holiness on Mission

God saves His people—Israel then, the church today—to make them holy, setting them apart to make them fit to worship Him and for mission to the world.

► *Think about the spiritual disciplines that draw you nearer to God (Bible reading, prayer, worship, fasting, etc.). Reflect upon which one of your spiritual disciplines could be purposed for mission. Create a goal for your practice of this discipline in the week ahead, so that you can orient it toward mission.*

God might invite me to use \_\_\_\_\_ for this purpose:

### KEY VERSES

All the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. —Ex. 19:5b–6a KJV

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. —Ex. 19:5b–6a NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of March 3 through March 9

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Ezekiel 14:1–11 — They Will Be My People.
- Tues.** Psalm 26 — Desire for God's Presence.
- Wed.** Ezekiel 43:1–12 — God's Glory Fills the Temple.
- Thurs.** Ezekiel 44:15–27 — Who May Draw Near?
- Fri.** John 2:12–22 — The Temple of Christ's Body.
- Sat.** John 4:13–26 — Worship God in Spirit and Truth.
- Sun.** Exodus 25:1–9; 26:1, 31–37 — Prepare a Sacred Space.

## A Space for God

Sandra rubbed the back of her neck as she surveyed the sanctuary. Her decorating team had done a wonderful job. Flower arrangements, sheer curtains, two handmade wall-sized quilts, and an assortment of other spring décor were expertly and lovingly placed throughout the church.

The women on the team were dedicated. Two were professional event planners, two were local artists, one was a decorating consultant, and one was a student studying art and design. Sandra was a self-taught and ascribed decorator with years of work under her belt.

Sandra was happy with the expertise and passion each woman brought to the group. However, today, she noticed what seemed to be bad feelings between Dominique, the college art and design student, and long-time committee and church member Edna.

“Ladies, let’s go into the fellowship hall and close out in prayer,” said Sandra as she entered the vestibule.

Sandra told the women how pleased she was with the morning’s work. She thanked them and added what most pleases God is how the women adorn their hearts with the love of Christ.

After the prayer, Sandra observed Edna speaking to Dominique. The two women ended their conversation with smiles and a hug. “Thank you, Lord,” Sandra prayed as she locked the doors of the church. “I pray that you are pleased with us and our work today.”

**1.** *What do you think would make God feel comfortable or at home in your heart and life? Why or why not?*

**2.** *What kinds of things crowd God out of your heart and life?*

**3.** *What does it look like for you to represent God’s character in your world?*

## Offerings for the Tabernacle

*Exodus 25:1–9 KJV*

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. 3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, 4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, 5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, 6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, 7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

*Exodus 25:1–9 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. <sup>3</sup>These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; <sup>4</sup> blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; <sup>5</sup> ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; <sup>6</sup> olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; <sup>7</sup> and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

<sup>8</sup> "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. <sup>9</sup> Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

The tabernacle was a sacred space, one that the people would be able to bring along for their wilderness journey. God tells Moses to gather the people and to ask them to give items "willingly" for this purpose (v. 2 KJV). Among other things, God requests gold, silver, and precious fabrics such as colored yarn. Many items came out of Egypt, since God had caused the Egyptians to give the Hebrews gold and silver (Ex. 12:35–36).

The valuable items would make a dwelling fit for God's presence, while at the same time creating separation from the sin and disorder of the people. This would create a place where Israel could seek God's will and favor.

Offerings of metals, wood, and fabrics would construct the physical space. Most items in the tabernacle would be overlaid with gold—not just beautiful in appearance but immune to corrosion. The wood mentioned in verse 5, "acacia," is long-lasting, and it would create a durable tent structure.

The tabernacle would become central to Israel's religious life. The "ephod and breastpiece" are garments for Aaron, the high priest (v. 7). The names of all twelve tribes would be engraved on precious stones set on the priest's clothing, and Aaron would represent them when he came before God (see Ex. 28:12, 29–30). He would anoint objects with oil and burn incense.

The instructions are practical, down to the very materials. The holy God of Israel was planning to dwell with His people, and a sacred space needed to reflect the fact that the creator of the cosmos had come to dwell with a specific group of people.

**4.** *What motivated the Israelites to contribute materials for the construction of the tabernacle?*

**5.** *What was God's reason for directing the Israelites to build a tabernacle for Him?*

**6.** *What was the theological significance of the tabernacle for the Israelites?*

## The Tabernacle and Its Curtains

*Exodus 26:1, 31–37 KJV*

1 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet:

*Exodus 26:1, 31–37 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> "Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim

with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.

31 And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:

32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. 33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. 34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. 35 And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.

36 And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. 37 And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

woven into them by a skilled worker.

<sup>31</sup> "Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker. <sup>32</sup> Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. <sup>33</sup> Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

<sup>34</sup> Put the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law in the Most Holy Place. <sup>35</sup> Place the table outside the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle and put the lampstand opposite it on the south side.

<sup>36</sup> "For the entrance to the tent make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen—the work of an embroiderer.

<sup>37</sup> Make gold hooks for this curtain and five posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold. And cast five bronze bases for them.

Exodus 26 describes how the Hebrew artisans were to make the curtains and coverings for the tabernacle. The

portable sanctuary was designed with curtains of special materials, like finely-woven linen. They were decorated with rare colors, including “blue, purple and scarlet” (v. 31). They were patterned with cherubim, winged angelic figures, woven in intricate designs.

The tabernacle had a central curtain, called the veil, which separated the inside of the tabernacle into two sections. The veil which divided the tabernacle was held up by four special posts covered in gold, with golden “hooks” and “silver bases” (v. 32). The veil separated the Holy Place from the most Holy Place. The most Holy Place was where the ark of the covenant would be kept, over which God would appear in a cloud (see Lev. 16:2). The veil shielded the ark of the covenant from the sin and disorder of the people. Yearly, the high priest would be allowed to go behind the veil to sprinkle blood upon the “atonement cover” for atonement for all of Israel (Ex. 16:17).

Inside the tabernacle would be a “table” to hold bread that was regularly offered to God and a “lampstand,” for a tent with no windows (Ex. 26:35). The table would hold twelve loaves of bread to represent the twelve tribes, and the lampstand would be placed where it could help the priests move about while performing their duties.

An outer entry curtain would create another degree of separation from the disordered lives of those who had not prepared themselves to come before God. At the same time, the tabernacle would occupy a central place in the camp of the Israelites. The grandeur of the sanctuary would represent the sacredness and splendor of God’s holy presence, dwelling among His people.

**7.** *What is the significance of the cherubim on the curtain of the tabernacle?*

**8.** *What would the central veil of the tabernacle separate?*

**9.** *Why would God call for using the finest materials to construct a tabernacle?*



## Handling God's Presence with Care

"This room would be perfect for a home office!" With those words, I knew that my family's house hunt was over. After years of placing a desk in the living room—where a young child could wander past at any moment to wave a LEGO creation during Zoom meetings—we would finally have a space perfectly sized for a desk, office supplies, and bookshelves. But most important of all, the office would have a functioning *door*, one which could shut out the noise and commotion of home life.

I'm reminded of this need when I read God's instructions for a tabernacle. Without a question, God wanted to be with His people. God would accompany and protect them as they traveled through the wilderness; and day after day through worship and sacrifice, God would remember Israel and receive their offerings. With the right materials—those which would not corrode or fail—God's presence would not leave them.

But at the same time, many of the instructions for a tabernacle create layers of separation. Like my home office with a secure door, God's presence would be carefully shielded. The tabernacle of Israel was a constant reminder that something was imperfect, that the sin and chaos of human lives gets in the way of being with God. Thus, the instructions for the tabernacle show the graciousness of God. Though an elaborate system of access would be necessary, God didn't stop *wanting* to be with His people. All along, He was preparing to end the separation, to atone for sin, and to fill the earth with His presence.

**10.** *What makes the tabernacle a symbol of both God's presence and separation?*

**11.** *How would the tabernacle prevent sin and disorder from entering?*

**12.** *What times are you more conscious of God's presence? What times do you feel like God is distant?*

## Reflecting God's Presence

The Lord, the holy God, chooses to dwell with His people. He gave Moses detailed plans to build a tabernacle as His dwelling place. Under the new covenant, God has poured out His presence in the hearts and lives of believers. Our challenge is to make His indwelling presence and Spirit known to others.

► *Either through truth-telling, mercy, or acts of service, what is one way that you might reflect God's Spirit to others in the week ahead?*

### KEY VERSE

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

—Exodus 25:8 KJV

Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.

—Exodus 25:8 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of March 10 through March 16

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Hebrews 5—A Compassionate High Priest.
- Tues.** Leviticus 8:1–13—A Chosen High Priest.
- Wed.** Leviticus 8:14–23—A Cleansed High Priest.
- Thurs.** Psalm 133—A Chaste Priest.
- Fri.** Hebrews 7:1–14—A Commendable High Priest.
- Sat.** Hebrews 7:15–28—A Continuous High Priest.
- Sun.** Exodus 29:1–9, 35–37—A Consecrated High Priest.

## The Ordination of Priests

Erica shifted in her chair again. She was uncomfortable. She was sitting in the hospital cafeteria with two other coworkers from the radiology department.

Erica didn't mind when Sarah sat down, but when Rebecca spotted them, Erica had become a little deflated. Rebecca loved to gossip.

Erica never participated in these conversations, but she came to realize that it wasn't enough. She had politely tried to steer the conversations elsewhere to no avail. Besides, Erica had been talking to Sarah about the Lord.

"I'm sorry, ladies," Erica said, as she gathered up her tray, "I'm going to head out."

"Where are you going?" inquired Rebecca. "We have a whole 20 minutes left for lunch."

"Yes, I know," Erica said. "I'm going to find a quiet place and read." She pulled her book out of her bag and showed it to the two women.

"What's that?" Rebecca asked.

"It's a Christian devotional," replied Erica. "I can bring you one if you like."

"Oh no, that's okay," said Rebecca.

"Erica?" Sarah said, as she also moved to get up. "Mind if I go with you?"

As the two women were walking out, Erica turned to Sarah, "I'm sorry, but I just had to leave. God is not pleased with me listening to and contributing to gossip."

**1. Why is it important that God makes us holy and set apart?**

**2. In what ways have you seen God's holiness in your life?**

**3. How have you seen God work through you to bring change to the world around you?**

## Consecration of the Priests

*Exodus 29:1–9 KJV*

1 And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish, 2 And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of wheaten flour shalt thou make them. 3 And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams. 4 And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water. 5 And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod: 6 And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. 7 Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him. 8 And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. 9 And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them:

*Exodus 29:1–9 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> "This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect. <sup>2</sup> And from the finest wheat flour make round loaves without yeast, thick loaves without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves without yeast and brushed with olive oil. <sup>3</sup> Put them in a basket and present them along with the bull and the two rams. <sup>4</sup> Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. <sup>5</sup> Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skillfully woven waistband. <sup>6</sup> Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred emblem to the turban. <sup>7</sup> Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. <sup>8</sup> Bring his sons and dress them in tunics <sup>9</sup> and fasten caps on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a

and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

lasting ordinance.  
"Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

Exodus 28–29 says to clothe and consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests for the people. In the ancient world, priests had the job of mediating between humans and the world of heaven. For Israel—a whole nation of priests (Ex. 19:6, see Lesson 1)—special clothing would give Israel's own priests dignity and honor in the eyes of others, and—more importantly—it would prepare them for the weighty task of approaching God's holiness. The priests would be ritually set apart for divine service, down to their clothes and appearance. God is expressing a desire to dwell among His people because of His faithful love, and to meet with them.

Moses would instruct the Israelites to bring a young bull and two rams without any defects, along with unleavened bread mixed with oil (Ex. 29:1–2). These offerings, which remind us of the bread of Passover, were to be prepared and placed inside a "basket" (v. 3), almost like how we might wrap a gift. Aaron and the priests would then approach the tent of meeting, for they alone among the people shall enter. The priests are washed and clothed for their work, with a tunic, robe, ephod, and breastpiece (v. 5). The ephod was an ornate vest with shoulder pieces, precious stones, and fine gold chains (Ex. 28:6–14). Both the ephod and breastpiece contained engraved stones naming all the tribes of Israel, a "continuing memorial before the Lord" (Ex. 28:29). Each time that God would look upon the high priest, God would be reminded of His covenant and His promises.

Finally, a turban would be placed on Aaron's head, and a sacred crest or medallion tied on the turban (v. 6). Moses would pour anointing oil on Aaron, setting him apart for his sacred duties. Then Moses would bring Aaron's sons to the entrance of the tent, ready for their work.

**4.** *What is the job of Aaron and the other priests?*

**5.** *What offerings did the Israelites need to bring to the tabernacle entrance before readying the priests?*

**6.** *What do the priests' garments represent about their role among the Israelites?*

## Consecration of the Altar

*Exodus 29:35–37 KJV*

35 And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all things which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them. 36 And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. 37 Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

*Exodus 29:35–37 NIV*

<sup>35</sup> “Do for Aaron and his sons everything I have commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them. <sup>36</sup> Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement. Purify the altar by making atonement for it, and anoint it to consecrate it. <sup>37</sup> For seven days make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy.

At the entrance of the tent of God’s sacred presence, Aaron and his sons would offer a bull as a “sin offering” (v. 36). Leviticus 4:1–35 gives more details about this sacrifice, which seeks purification from sin. Leviticus 4:3 says that this is required when “the anointed priest sins.” Even the priests—those who had been selected by God, ritually washed and anointed, and clothed in the finest garments—would offer sacrifices for their own guilt, as well as the ignorant sins of the community (see Lev. 4:13, 22).

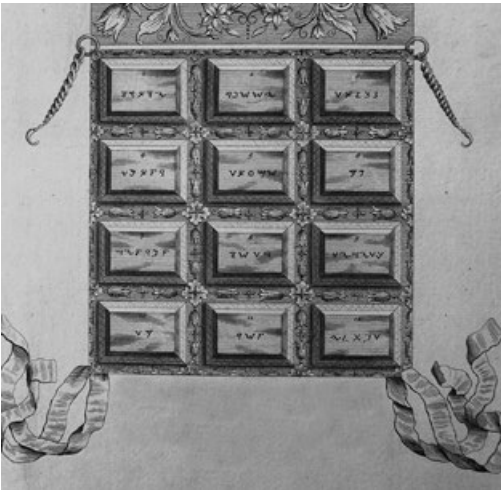
Then God directs Moses and the Israelites to “consecrate” (KJV) or “ordain” (NIV) these priests, which are translations for the Hebrew that means “fill their hands”

(v. 35). Part of the ceremony includes placing a portion of the sacrifice into the hands of the priests as a symbol of their role and responsibility to serve in the tabernacle.

In this text, God requests a sacrifice for atonement for seven consecutive days (v. 37). The number seven signifies completeness and wholeness. Just as God created a good world and rested on the seventh day, God is creating a nation of chosen people and giving them a way to seek forgiveness for sin. The priests would be cleansed, and the altar would also be ceremonially set apart from any corruption. Objects which were created for service to God, like an altar, could be polluted by sin and improper use. To be an effective tool for seeking forgiveness, the altar would need to remain holy, and a weeklong ritual of sacrifice ensured that the priestly representatives would find favor with God, who would welcome their worship. In a surprising turn, anyone or anything that came in contact with the altar would be considered “holy” (v. 37).

**7.** *What is the purpose of the “sin offering” mentioned in verse 36?*

**8.** *For what purpose does God request seven days of sacrifices?*



*A modern artist has imagined what the twelve precious stones on Aaron’s ephod might have looked like, each inscribed with a name of a tribe of Israel (as the language might have been written in the days of Moses). Most people could not enter the tabernacle, but the priest would enter on their behalf, wearing their names on his chest.*

*Artwork: Philip De Vere*

## Reflection of the Great High Priest

When I was a teenager, people often described being set apart as a specific set of “don’t” rules: don’t dress a certain way, don’t listen to certain music, and don’t watch certain movies. Being set apart and holy was something I could only define by what I wasn’t: I wasn’t like the rest of the world. Or so I thought.

But that only sets us apart from the culture where we find ourselves. I was a homeschooled girl living in California, and I didn’t know the latest pop culture references. But I don’t think that made me holy.

I’m still learning what it means to live as one made holy by Christ’s sacrifice. I’ve learned that being “set apart” isn’t just a list of cultural prohibitions. I want the holiness of God to mark out what I do, not just what I avoid. Jesus’ death was the one sacrifice I needed: I don’t need to be consecrated in the same way as Aaron and his sons. Jesus has saved me, and He is making me holy.

So I want to live like Jesus is most important in my life. And I want to have unfathomable joy, even in a world filled with darkness. I want to be kind to my neighbor, even though a person might be uncharitable to me. I want to praise Jesus, even when I feel embarrassed at the thought of sharing my voice.

Sure, there are plenty of things that I avoid. But I want holiness to be visible by what I say and do. So that is my prayer: to live according to what Jesus has done for me, and what He is continuing to do.

**9.** *How has Jesus’ sacrifice altered the ways that we think about sin and holiness?*

**10.** *How should believers, followers of Christ, look different from the world?*

**11.** *How might holiness include the things that we actively do, not just what we avoid?*



## Surrender to God's Holiness

While their garments and rituals set the priests apart, what sets today's believer apart is not any outward attire but a heart clothed in Christ's righteousness.

► *Identify behaviors or attitudes that you have not surrendered to God. Have you been seeking only the good of others and placing their needs above your own? Take some time this week to write a prayer of confession for any ways that you have fallen short of God's holiness. You might find it helpful to contact a friend, mentor, or your group leader to ask for support as you seek God's holiness in these areas.*

### KEY VERSE

And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

—Exodus 29:9 KJV

Fasten caps on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. "Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons."

—Exodus 29:9 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of March 17 through March 23

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** 1 Peter 2:1–5—Building a Spiritual House.

**Tues.** Psalm 141—Prayer like Incense.

**Wed.** 2 Corinthians 2:12–17—The Fragrance of Knowing Christ.

**Thurs.** Zephaniah 3:14–20—God's Delight.

**Fri.** Romans 12:1–8—A Holy and Acceptable Sacrifice.

**Sat.** Romans 12:9–21—Worship through Loving Genuinely.

**Sun.** Leviticus 1:3–17—An Acceptable Offering.

## Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Malachi jumped when his cell phone alarm clock went off. Then, for several seconds, he forgot where he was—the parking lot of his church. It was 9:30 a.m. and soon the parking lot of Mount Zion would be filling up.

At 7 this morning, Malachi had taken a shower, washed his face, brushed his teeth, and dressed at a 24-hour gas stop for truckers. It was quicker for Malachi to park his truck at the church when he got off the road.

Malachi's schedule as a truck driver was a rough one. Still, he was grateful to God, his company, and Pastor Jones.

"Why don't you park your rig behind the church, Brother Malachi," Pastor Jones had said. "Then you can be here in time for church."

During the worship service, Malachi lifted his voice and his hands. He didn't care how tired he was, God had been more than good. He had saved him, gave him a good job to take care of his family, and so much more.

At offering time, Malachi got out his prepared tithe envelope, because he was "old school." He gave in cash, not online. His wife, however, was concerned about whether they "had enough money to be tithing and giving to God."

"I don't care how little or how much money I make," Malachi said, "There is no way I'm going to not tithe and give offerings to the Lord."

**1.** *What are some things that you are currently sacrificing to God?*

**2.** *Are these sacrifices the best you have to give?*

**3.** *What is your heart's attitude about your sacrifices to God?*

## Offerings That Please the Lord

*Leviticus 1:3–9 KJV*

3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. 4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 5 And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces. 7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire: 8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: 9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

*Leviticus 1:3–9 NIV*

<sup>3</sup> "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. <sup>5</sup> You are to slaughter the young bull before the Lord, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>6</sup> You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. <sup>7</sup> The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. <sup>8</sup> Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. <sup>9</sup> You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD."

When we read Leviticus 1, we might picture an Israelite drawing near to the tabernacle to offer worship to God. Our passage details God's expectations for *burnt offerings*. What makes this particular sacrifice unique is that the whole of the animal is burned and consumed. It represents devoting one's entire worship to God through a sacrifice, giving everything to God and holding nothing back.

God details three kinds of burnt offerings, all "from either the herd or the flock" (Lev. 1:2). God requires domestic animals (not wild animals), "males without defect" to ensure that offerings are of value (v. 3). The Hebrew behind "without defect" is the same word as "blameless" when used to describe people (Gen. 6:9; 17:1; Deut. 18:13). The unblemished animal functions as a substitute for the sinful worshiper, as well as an illustration of God's unmatched character: just, pure, life-giving.

God describes the ways these offerings are to be given. First, the worshiper is to present the animal (v. 3). Second, the worshiper is to lay hands on the animal's head (v. 4)—probably to signify the substitution for the worshiper's sin. The animal can then be "accepted" on behalf of the worshiper in order "to make atonement for [him or her]" (v. 4). Atonement means that God is accepting the sacrifice. Third, the worshiper is to slaughter the animal to complete the act of substitution (v. 5). The unblemished animal receives the death, instead of the "blemished" worshiper. The person can walk away with a renewed relationship with God, because of the sacrifice of a "blameless" life.

Finally, the priest splashes the blood on the altar to cleanse it (v. 5). Blood is associated with life, and Leviticus 17:14 says "the life of every creature is its blood." The priest continues to prepare the sacrifice for burning (vv. 6–9), which transforms the animal into smoke that then ascends to God as "an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (v. 9). God says plainly the effect of this offering in a spirit of obedience: God is pleased!

**4. What is the significance of the burnt offering, which**

*is completely consumed on the altar?*

**5.** *Why would it be important for the animal to be “without blemish” (v. 3 KJV)?*

**6.** *What does the burning of the offering accomplish?*

## **Offerings That the Lord Accepts**

*Leviticus 1:10–17 KJV*

10 And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish. 11 And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar.

12 And he shall cut it into his pieces, with his head and his fat: and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: 13 But he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water: and the priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

14 And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. 15 And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head,

*Leviticus 1:10–17 NIV*

<sup>10</sup> “If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male without defect. <sup>11</sup> You are to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar. <sup>12</sup> You are to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. <sup>13</sup> You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of them and burn them on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> “If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you are to offer a dove or a young pigeon. <sup>15</sup> The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its

and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar: 16 And he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes: 17 And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. <sup>16</sup> He is to remove the crop and the feathers and throw them down east of the altar where the ashes are. <sup>17</sup> He shall tear it open by the wings, not dividing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is burning on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

This section details two other kinds of burnt offerings—sheep and goats (vv. 10–13) and birds (vv. 14–17)—following the same basic pattern in verses 1–9. Each is framed the same way: “It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (vv. 13, 17).

The main difference between the kinds of offerings is the value of each type. Instructions for less expensive offerings (birds) may have been a provision for the poor, who might not even own a more expensive animal like a bull. So long as the worshiper’s sacrifice represented a reasonable sacrifice offered with a sincere heart, God would be pleased with the sacrifice, no matter its financial value. Readers of Luke’s Gospel will notice that pigeons are used for an offering of purification, for Jesus’ own earthly family (Luke 2:24).

**7.** *What is one possible reason God provided instructions for less expensive offerings?*

**8.** *Why can God be equally pleased with “food offerings” that vary in size and value?*

## A Sacrifice that Counts

Lately, in my weekly church group, we've been talking a lot about sacrifice. Usually when it comes up, someone will connect it to the woman who gave only a penny, even though that was all she had. My group's leader has said a few times that if we're truly being sacrificial in our giving, it's going to hurt. Maybe you've been saving up for a nice new kitchen appliance, or a new computer, or to have the repair shop change your car's oil for you; but then you give, and it comes right out of that "for me" fund.

But I keep feeling like there must be more to sacrifice. After all, doesn't Jesus urge us to carry our crosses—our very instruments of death—and follow Him? To someone with a stable job and a stable paycheck, financial giving doesn't always feel like that much of a sacrifice. Is there something more that I am missing, a costly sacrifice that I've been avoiding?

Ever since I was a child, I've valued my time. If I don't have a specific, uninterrupted routine, I get upset, or at least demotivated. I like to wake up at 6:30 a.m., read my Bible, work out, and eat breakfast by 8:50 a.m.—just in time to log into my work computer by 9:00. Then, when I log off in the evening, I have a routine that takes me until I get into bed at 9:30 p.m. And if my habits get interrupted, it can feel as though my entire day is ruined.

Maybe, for me, a sacrifice would be to give up some of my precious "routine time." I could offer my time to God. I could lose some of my rigidity and be ready for a call to serve, even when it feels inconvenient.

**9.** *Does proper sacrifice in today's church context have to be financial?*

**10.** *What's something you've sacrificed that wasn't directly financial?*

**11.** *What's something that would be a sacrifice for you, but might be easy for someone else to give up?*

## What We Sacrifice

For every sacrifice, God demands that His people give their best. God doesn't want His people to give something that they wouldn't miss. After all, that wouldn't be a sacrifice. His people needed to follow God's instructions and enter His presence with clean hearts.

► *Reflect on your own sacrifices. Are you giving your best? Is there something that you're holding back, something that God might ask you to give up? In the space below or on paper, write out a prayer. You might ask God to give you discernment to better know what and how to sacrifice to Him.*

### KEY VERSE

But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. —Leviticus 1:9 KJV

You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. —Leviticus 1:9 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 24 through March 30

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 40:1–8—Delighting to Do God's Will.
- Tues.** Psalm 40:9–17—Safe in God's Love and Faithfulness.
- Wed.** Hebrews 9:1–14—A Preferred Sanctuary.
- Thurs.** Hebrews 9:15–22—Christ's Perfect Sacrifice.
- Fri.** 2 Corinthians 5:11–21—Vertical and Horizontal Reconciliation.
- Sat.** Leviticus 16:1–10—Approach God in Awe.
- Sun.** Leviticus 16:11–19—Cleanse the Sanctuary.



## The Day of Atonement

Are you getting enough rest?" Sister Ethel asked Gelisa. The 24-year-old and young believer bobbed her head up and looked across the metal table at Sister Ethel. The two were part of the sandwich assembly line.

Every Saturday, Grace Fellowship's Benevolence Committee organized "Food Drops" for the unhoused. A sandwich, bag of chips, piece of fruit, sweet snack, a Christian tract and list of area resources for low-income and the unhoused were put in a paper bag. Then, church volunteers went to some of the areas in Chicago where the unhoused typically frequented.

"You seem to be here an awful lot," Sister Ethel said.

Gelisa didn't know exactly what to say. She didn't want to tell anyone about her guilt, let alone share it with 75-year-old Sister Ethel.

Gelisa had stuffed her shame and tried to cover it with a lot of good deeds.

Later, Gelisa found herself in the kitchen alone with Sister Ethel. She told the older woman that she was feeling miserable and was trying to make things right with God.

"Sweetheart," Sister Ethel said. "I'm so glad you are here, but the Lord has already paid for every sin you have committed and ever will commit. His sacrifice paid for the sins of the entire world. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us. Can I help you confess it to Christ and accept His amazing love and grace?"

**1.** *What is your reaction to your sin?*

**2.** *What do you do when you sin?*

**3.** *How would you talk with another believer who was wrestling with sin?*

## The Bull Offering

*Leviticus 16:11–14 KJV*

11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: 12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: 13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: 14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

*Leviticus 16:11–14 NIV*

<sup>11</sup> “Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. <sup>12</sup> He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. <sup>13</sup> He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die. <sup>14</sup> He is to take some of the bull’s blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.”

God gives Moses specific instructions to ensure that Aaron and other priests would not die as they entered the most Holy Place—the innermost part of the tabernacle (Lev. 16:2–3)—and sacrificed before “the atonement cover on the ark . . . [where God] will appear in the cloud” (v. 2). Those sacrifices were “to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites” (v. 34). Interestingly, the title, “Day of Atonement,” doesn’t appear until Leviticus 23:27.

In order for Aaron to atone for the people’s sins, he first

has to make atonement for his and his family's sins, since priests were not immune from sin and corruption. The first sacrifice was a bull, which was killed in the courtyard outside the tabernacle, for Aaron "to make atonement for himself and his household" (v. 11). Aaron would then collect some of the bull's blood, a firepot "full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord," and two handfuls of incense. He would "take them behind the curtain" (v. 12). The curtain separated the courtyard from the tabernacle. Once inside the most Holy Place, he would put the incense on the fire; and "smoke of the incense [would] conceal the atonement cover" of the ark of the covenant, "so that [the priest would] not die" (v. 13). Aaron would thereby be cleansed so that he could make the sacrifice for the people.

The priest was to take blood from the sacrifice and sprinkle it over the atonement cover. "Mercy seat" (KJV) and "atonement cover" (NIV) are different names for the golden cover of the ark of the covenant, which held the stone tablets and other symbols of God's miraculous provision and deliverance. Through a sevenfold sprinkling of blood, Aaron would present the lifeblood of the animal sacrifice as a contrast to his own sin, which leads to death.

**4.** *What did Aaron need to do before making sacrifices for the people's sins?*

**5.** *What was the first sacrifice, where was it made, and what was its purpose?*

**6.** *What was Aaron to do with this sacrifice, and why?*

## The Goat Offering

*Leviticus 16:15–19 KJV*

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the

*Leviticus 16:15–19 NIV*

<sup>15</sup> "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with

blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: 16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. 17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. 19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.

<sup>16</sup> In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

<sup>17</sup> No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel.

18 "Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. 19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites."

Now Aaron would be ready to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. There were two goats used for the offering, each with a different purpose. The first would be the sacrifice; and once the goat was selected, verses 15–19 give

instructions for handling the sacrifice. The priest would slaughter the goat, presumably in the courtyard; then Aaron would reenter the sacred space of the tabernacle. As with the first sacrifice, he would “take its blood behind the curtain . . . [and he] shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it” (v. 15). While the fire and incense are not mentioned, verses 13–14 suggest they might continue to be used to conceal the appearance of God’s holiness.

The bull had been sacrificed for the sins of the priests, but the goat would be sacrificed “because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been” (v. 16). Some wrongdoings might be clear, but others might be hidden. In this ceremony, any sins would be covered, whether the community had discovered them or not.

Even the tabernacle was to be purified from sin, since it was in the midst of the people (v. 16). No one else was allowed to enter until Aaron had fully “made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel” (v. 17). Afterward, the priest would exit the tabernacle and make atonement for the bronze altar where the sacrifices were burned. Aaron would use blood of both sacrifices to cleanse the altar, sprinkling seven times with his finger “to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites” (v. 19). This sacrifice was thorough, even cleansing the holy instruments used for sacrifices.

Once the first goat was killed, the other goat would be brought to Aaron. With hands on the goat, Aaron would confess the sins of the community. This would symbolically transfer the things that separate humans from God onto the goat. The goat would carry the sins out to the wilderness, from where they would never return.

**7.** *What was the purpose of the goat offering?*

**8.** *What was done with the blood, both inside and outside the tabernacle, and why?*

**9.** *What’s your reaction to today’s passage? Was this kind of sacrifice really necessary?*

## Cleansing through Atonement

God's detailed instructions to Aaron for cleansing from sin sound completely foreign today. The word *atonement* is not part of our vocabulary and everyday speech. What does it mean to "make atonement for sin"? God wanted Aaron—and His later worshipers, like us—to repent and take account of wrongdoing. God created people with free choice, which Adam and Eve exercised when they made a choice to disobey God. All people are born with this tendency to do what is wrong, to want their own way. And they fall short of following God's perfect plan for how they should live. Therefore, they cannot make right the wrongs committed against God. God's ultimate plan to deal with sin requires a righteous sacrifice to make amends and to reconcile His people to Himself.

Today's text doesn't list all the specific wrongs people might do. In fact, it implies that our listing would be inadequate. It's easy to allow unholy things of the world—thoughts, words, and actions—to creep into my life. I oppose God whenever I turn away from Him in rebellion, intent on doing things my way instead of God's way.

The difference between the sacrificial system in the Old Testament and the new covenant is that Jesus offered a sacrifice for sins, once and for all. As one who did not sin, He was able to completely take humanity's sins upon Himself and fully become the perfect sacrifice. When Jesus, God's righteous Son, died on the cross, the curtain concealing the most Holy Place ripped in two. When I accept and trust in Jesus' sacrificial death to cover my sins, God sees me as righteous; and I have access to the presence of the Holy God.

**10.** *What does it mean to make atonement?*

**11.** *How has God made a way to deal with sin today?*

**12.** *When have you experienced reconciliation, and how did it impact your life?*

## Into God's Presence

God has a plan to deal with sin so we might be reconciled to Him. The sacrificial system illustrates that blood from an unblemished life can cover over sin. Jesus, the righteous Son of God, offered a perfect sacrifice that fully satisfies the requirements.

► *God offers forgiveness and reconciliation to those who acknowledge and deal with their sin. Commit to spending time with God this week to discuss this important topic.*

*I will meet with God on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*(day of week) (time)*

### KEY VERSE

And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. —Leviticus 16:16 KJV

In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

—Leviticus 16:16 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of March 30 through April 6

**(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)**

- Mon.** Psalm 96—Enter God's Courts with an Offering.
- Tues.** 1 Peter 3:18–22—Christ's Suffering and Exaltation.
- Wed.** Isaiah 52:13–53:3—The Suffering Servant.
- Thurs.** Isaiah 53:4–12—Light out of Anguish.
- Fri.** Mark 10:35–45—A Ransom for Many.
- Sat.** Hebrews 9:23–10:4—Christ in Heaven on Our Behalf.
- Sun.** Hebrews 10:11–14, 19–25—Confidence in God's Presence.

## Christ's Once-for-All Sacrifice

Cameron was driving the speed limit on the way to church, but his mind was in overdrive.

First, there was the recent fight he had with his girlfriend, Dedra. After more than a year, he wanted something permanent. But when he brought up the idea of marriage, Dedra said she didn't think she wanted to get married.

Then there was the issue of expanding his construction company. He didn't know if he could do the licensing, find good employees, and keep up with his current workload.

There was also his bottled up anger. He reflected on the last session with his therapist, which he didn't publicize about going to because of the historically negative cultural leaning about Black people—let alone Black men—in counseling.

Cameron didn't like it when he felt indecisive. Lately, it had led to him putting up walls with people. He needed to do better.

Arriving at church, Cameron gratefully reached for the Communion elements before entering the sanctuary. When it was time for Communion, Cameron exhaled. One thing he was certain of, and that was the love of Christ and the blood of Jesus that cleansed him from all his sins.

What did he have to worry about? Didn't Christ always meet his needs? As Cameron took Communion, he basked in the presence of God—being renewed with confidence—all because of Christ.

- 1.** *How confident are you in drawing near to God?*
- 2.** *What can you do to remind yourself of the approachability of God?*
- 3.** *How can Christ's sacrifice make you more confident in your faith?*



## A Better Sacrifice

*Hebrews 9:23–10:4 KJV*

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the

*Hebrews 9:23–10:4 NIV*

<sup>23</sup> It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. <sup>25</sup> Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. <sup>26</sup> Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

<sup>27</sup> Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

<sup>1</sup> The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities

things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. <sup>2</sup> For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. <sup>3</sup> But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. <sup>4</sup> For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. <sup>3</sup> But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. <sup>4</sup> It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Christ's priestly work fulfilled and transcended the old covenant patterns of worship. Since the earthly tabernacle was purified with animal sacrifices, the cleansing of its heavenly counterpart required a more precious sacrifice. Christ entered that heavenly tabernacle to offer Himself on our behalf. Unlike earthly high priests, who must offer the same sacrifices year after year, Christ sacrificed Himself only once.

In Hebrews 10:1–4, the author explains why Christ's sacrifice and priestly service were necessary: the Law was intended to foreshadow the true purification that Christ would bring. Animal sacrifices of the old covenant were never sufficient on their own. To defend this claim, the writer points to the repetitive nature of past sacrifices. If they were truly effective at cleansing God's people, they would not need repeating again and again. Rather than purifying God's people, animal sacrifices served to remind them of their need for more purification. In truth, the sacrifice of animals could never deal with human sinfulness.

**4.** *How does Christ's sacrifice differ from those performed under the old covenant?*

**5.** *How do we know that the law was not intended to take away sins?*

## **A New and Living Way**

*Hebrews 10:11–14, 19–25 KJV*

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 And

*Hebrews 10:11–14, 19–25 NIV*

<sup>11</sup> Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. <sup>14</sup> For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

<sup>23</sup> Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let

let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,<sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The author draws more contrast between Christ and the priests of the old covenant. In the past, priests never saw an end to their duties; they performed the same ineffectual sacrifices every day. Christ, on the other hand, offered Himself as a sacrifice once for all and took His rightful seat as king at the right hand of God the Father. Unlike offerings of animals, Christ's self-sacrifice was effective in making God's holy people "perfect," free from the guilt of their sins. Verse 20 makes a metaphorical comparison between the temple's curtain—which separated sinful humans from God's holy presence—and "body" or "flesh" of Jesus. At the same time that Jesus was killed, the separation between God and humanity could end (compare Matt. 27:51).

Christ's blood opened a new way for us to enter God's presence, with confidence instead of fear. As the high priest of God's heavenly temple, Christ enables us to "draw near to God" with security in our salvation, purified of sin and guilt in our innermost beings. As our faithful high priest sustains our hope, we encourage one another "toward love and good deeds" (v. 24). We must remain engaged in the community of God's people, encouraging each other as the day of Christ's return draws near.

**6.** *How do the duties of priests under the old covenant differ from Christ's?*

**7.** *What does Christ's sacrifice enable us to do?*

## A Job Done Well Doesn't Need Repeating

“If you want something done well, do it right the first time.” That’s what my father used to say. As a landscaper who specialized in building retaining walls, a big part of his job was fixing the faulty work of others. Weather has a way of testing what we build; unless someone takes the time to dig deeply into the soil to prepare a firm foundation, nothing can keep a wall from falling—even a wall built of heavy stones.

We often forget that it was God who created the old system of sacrifice. The ancient priests weren’t doing the wrong things, but it was a system of endless repetition. Priests of Israel were always flawed and sinful, so how could their work be effective? Jesus wasn’t like them at all. He wasn’t even a priest who worked in the physical temple of Jerusalem, but His work went to the foundation of the problem. He entered the heavenly sanctuary, where He offered a perfect sacrifice—the firmest foundation of all. And He sat down because the job was done.

There is nothing that we need to add, no work that we could offer in return. But it is our responsibility to proclaim Christ to the world. While we wait for the day that Jesus puts an end to evil, we continue in the “love and good deeds” that encourage one another (Heb. 10:24). Our confidence isn’t based in what we do; it is based in what has already been done. We can be confident that Jesus does things right the first time.

**8.** *What is the difference between things that are done repeatedly and things that are done only once?*

**9.** *Do you find it easy or difficult to be confident in the completed work of Jesus?*

**10.** *What are examples of acts of “love and good deeds” that proclaim the work of Christ? How do these actions encourage one another?*

## Proclaiming the Work of Christ

Nothing we do can add to the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice. But if we are confident to come before God, that should also make us confident to share with our friends and neighbors who might not know Jesus. Easter Sunday is one time each year when many people are receptive to an invitation, either to share a meal or even to come to church for the first time.

► *Ask God to show you one or two names of people you could invite to your church to hear the message of Christ's sacrifice. Write a prayer that God will give you confidence to invite these people to consider Christ.*

### KEY VERSE

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. —Hebrews 9:24 KJV

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. —Hebrews 9:24 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of April 7 through April 13

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 59:1–8—Our Sins Separate Us from God.
- Tues.** 1 Peter 2:19–25—Healed by Christ's Wounds.
- Wed.** John 3:1–15—The Promise of Eternal Life.
- Thurs.** John 3:16–21—God So Loved the World.
- Fri.** Romans 3:19–31—Atonement through His Blood.
- Sat.** Romans 5:1–15—Reconciled to God by Christ.
- Sun.** 1 John 2:1–6; 4:9–17—Atonement through God's Son.

## Christ the Atoning Sacrifice

You seem to have a lot of white friends,” Alyssa said to Mia.

“Emma?” responded Mia. “Yes, she is a sister in Christ and a good friend.”

Alyssa and Mia were two of the “mature” women in their master’s-level course and had been studying together for a few weeks. Tonight, they were studying at Mia’s house, and Emma had arranged to stop by with some treats.

Mia and Emma met at a women’s luncheon that had brought together four churches in the area. Alyssa’s response was funny and sad at the same time, since Mia’s family said the same thing. But Mia knew the family of God was bound by love for Christ, and race isn’t a barrier between family.

Mia had prayed about sharing God’s love with her study partner, and now seemed an opportune time.

“I am able to love and befriend others regardless of who they are, because I have the Spirit of God on the inside,” Mia said. “More importantly, I am able to love because God loved me first in sending His Son to die, for not only me, but the sins of the entire world.”

“Do you have a personal relationship with Christ, Alyssa?”

“Well, I try to be good,” said Alyssa.

“Being good will never pay for your sins or transform you. Through believing and following Christ, God has made a way for all of us to be changed. God loves you, and He’s already prepared a way!”

**1.** *Is there anyone you are holding a grudge against or someone you are finding hard to love?*

**2.** *What are ways you can begin to love them with the love of God?*

**3.** *How do you define genuine love? How does the world?*

## Our Advocate

*1 John 2:1–6 KJV*

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

*1 John 2:1–6 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

<sup>3</sup> We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. <sup>4</sup> Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. <sup>5</sup> But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

John addresses “dear children” (v. 1). This has nothing to do with their relative age, since the audience includes “fathers” and “young people” (2:13). John writes “so that [they] will not sin” (1 John 2:1). Yet, if they did sin, they would “have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1). Sometimes the letter of 1 John appears to say that believers do not sin at all (see 1 John 3:7–10). But verses like this one show that forgiveness of sins isn’t something that we receive once and will never need again. Jesus will continue to advocate for His people, precisely because “He is the atoning sacrifice” (v. 2). Only



Jesus can appear before God to continually advocate on our behalf, as the “Righteous One” with no sin. The former priests represented Israel (Lesson 3); Jesus shall represent His followers and be a superior priest in heaven (Lesson 6).

John’s readers can be certain that they know Jesus “if [they] keep his commands” (v. 3). The opposite must also be true: “Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person” (v. 3). Those words of warning may sound harsh, but how can anyone know and love Jesus, but reject what He says? How would that person be His follower? But for those who obey, “love for God is truly made complete in them” (v. 5). Words alone mean nothing (“[claiming] to live in him”) unless matched with actions (“[living] as Jesus did,” v. 6). Thus, listening to and obeying God’s Son is what makes us God’s children.

**4.** *What can John’s “dear children” do if they sin?*

**5.** *How can we be sure that we truly know God?*

## Our Sacrifice

*1 John 4:9–12 KJV*

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

*1 John 4:9–12 NIV*

<sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

In 1 John 4, John describes the central message of the Christian faith: God shows His love to the world by sending “his one and only Son . . . that we might live through him” (v. 9). Love does not—cannot—originate in God’s people, apart from God. Love comes “not [because] we loved God, but [because] he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (v. 10). God took the initiative, sending Jesus to die while people remained hopelessly lost to sin. Those who trust in Him have the opportunity to experience God’s love and share it with others.

John encourages readers to love one another with the selfless and sacrificial love that only God can model: “since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (v. 11). We have never seen God’s throne, but our love for one another becomes all the evidence we need: “God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (v. 12).

**6.** *What kind of love has God shown by sending Jesus?*

**7.** *How are John’s readers to respond? What evidence can display God’s love?*

## Our Response

*1 John 4:13–17 KJV*

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth

*1 John 4:13–17 NIV*

<sup>13</sup> This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. <sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God

in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

in them.<sup>17</sup> This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

John declares that believers can “know that we live in him and he in us” (v. 13). They have an experiential knowledge because “He has given us of his Spirit” (v. 13). Through the atoning work of Jesus and gift of His Spirit (see John 20:22), believers experience communion and relationship with God. They can be “in God” (1 John 4:15).

Followers of Jesus have an inner and outer testimony (v. 14). The original apostles could say, after years of being with Jesus, “We have seen.” People today have not been with Jesus in the flesh, haven’t *seen* in the physical sense meant here. But followers of Christ also testify through their changed lives. All believers can be certain of their inclusion: “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God” (v. 15). None of Jesus’ followers have missed inclusion in God’s kingdom and God’s redemptive purposes, for “God is love” (v. 16).

God’s love is not some abstract ideal of positivity. John tells readers to stand in “confidence on the day of judgment” (v. 17). In other words, divine love isn’t perpetual relativism; God’s justice is still coming! One response would be to quake with fear, to hide from the light of God’s presence. But believers can live like Jesus, empowered by His Spirit. They can stand before God on the day of judgment, with confidence.

**8.** *How can believers be certain they know God (using the words of verses 13–15)?*

**9.** *What confidence can believers have, according to verses 16–17?*

**10.** *What does the short statement “God is love” really mean?*

## Love Manifested

It was the first Christmas without our elderly mother, who had passed away in July. As a family, we wanted to do something in her honor. We thought about various gifts we could give, perhaps trips we could take together. But in the end, we decided to spend our Christmas assembling care packages for the homeless people in our city. After all, we thought, Mom was such a giver herself.

Our city and state continue to have thousands of people without a place to go. On Christmas night, we arrived to an endless city of tents, and the need felt overwhelming. What we didn't know was that most of the tents had been recently donated; for every tent there was another person with a shelter constructed of tarps, blankets, plastic, and sticks. There was more need than we even realized.

As we were handing out clothes and food and supplies, I was struck to notice the humble decorations—even a few Christmas trees—around us. As we greeted people and spent a few moments getting to know them, I kept wanting to bring up my mom. It was because of her that we had come, but none of the people we met would know that. A few times I caught a flash of a smile and thought, “Mom would be pleased.”

My experience of reflecting my mother's kindness is a reminder of what God asks us to do, in all circumstances. God didn't wait until we were accomplished or worthy. Neither does God make us wait, if we want to feel confident before God. If we want confidence before our day of judgment, we can have it. We find communion and relationship with God by following the way of Jesus.

**11.** *What concrete demonstrations of love does God expect us to show?*

**12.** *What is the difference between love that “waits” and love that initiates?*

**13.** *How can we feel confident before final judgment?*

## God Loves Me

When you think about God being the creator of heaven and earth, it can be overwhelming to realize that He loves you. How do we respond to that fact? We pass along His love to others. We love others as He first loved us.

► *Take a moment to process that God loves you. Does that feel easy or difficult to believe? I sense that God is saying this:*

► *God's love makes me want to surrender to Him in these ways:*

### KEY VERSE

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

—1 John 4:10 KJV

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

—1 John 4:10 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of April 14 through April 20

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 71:12–24—I Will Rise Again.

**Tues.** Hebrews 2:1–13—Made Perfect through Suffering.

**Wed.** Genesis 22:1–14—The Lord Will Provide.

**Thurs.** Matthew 26:17–30—Servanthood, Suspicion, and a Sign.

**Fri.** Matthew 27:38–44, 45–54—Darkness, Despair, and Death.

**Sat.** Psalm 49:1–15—Ransomed!

**Sun.** Matthew 28:1–10—He Has Risen!

## Christ Dies and Rises to New Life

DeAndre watched his grandfather, Cedric, as he slept. The 87-year-old had sung a worship song, quoted some Scripture, and kept sharing about the love and faithfulness of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

DeAndre always had respect for his grandfather. Cedric was the cause of his giving his life to Christ, many years ago. Now, with his grandfather in hospice care, DeAndre was even more in awe of him. It was his grandfather's rock-solid faith—his love of Christ and the miracle of grace—that DeAndre admired most in these circumstances.

"We're all going to die, grandson," Cedric had said. "For the Christian, death has no sting. It has no power left. You just be certain that your calling is sure, because mine is. The grave won't hold me."

DeAndre believed it to be true. He just didn't want to lose this godly man who had been so influential in his life. After learning his grandfather was in hospice, DeAndre had been near to his bedside.

"I'm not afraid to die," he repeated. "What can separate me from the love of Christ? Nothing! Not even death!"

Then, a few weeks later came the words, "Now we will hear remarks from Cedric Johnson's grandson, DeAndre Johnson." The minister invited him to the front.

And DeAndre took in a slow breath. As he moved to the microphone, he had a flurry of emotions, but more than anything, he knew his grandfather was with the Lord.

- 1.** *Why doesn't the Christian need to fear death?*
- 2.** *How can the gospel be shared when people are on their deathbed?*
- 3.** *What are some encouraging Scriptures about life after death?*

## The Son of God Dies

*Matthew 27:39–40, 45–54 KJV*

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46 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?

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks

*Matthew 27:39–40, 45–54 NIV*

<sup>39</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

<sup>45</sup> From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About

three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

<sup>47</sup> When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

<sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. <sup>49</sup> The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

<sup>50</sup> And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

<sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split <sup>52</sup> and

rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.<sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

<sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Matthew emphasizes the cruelty of Jesus' execution, especially the verbal abuse He endured. Contrary to the onlookers' demand that He prove His identity by coming down from the cross to save Himself, Jesus instead would prove it by staying put until He died.

And the cosmic events surrounding Jesus' death present an immediate challenge to the crowd's negative assessment of Him. An ominous darkness comes over the scene until Jesus' final moments (v. 45). He cries out that God has forsaken Him and gives up His life to God. Jesus' death sets into motion a second set of supernatural events: the tearing of the temple curtain; a tomb-breaking earthquake; and the raising to life of "many holy people" who had been dead (vv. 51–52). The division of the curtain might have a twofold significance. First, it signifies God's coming judgment on the temple and the priestly leaders who rejected Jesus. Second, it shows that Jesus' death was an atoning sacrifice which fulfills the temple sacrificial system. The way to relationship with God is now open.

After these signs, one Roman commander comments on the execution. There are at least two ways of reading the words, "Surely he was the Son of God." By one reading, the centurion recognizes the signs of Jesus' identity.



Alternatively, some understand the centurion's words as insincere, as mocking Jesus.

**4.** *Why didn't Jesus prove that He is the Son of God by coming down from the cross?*

**5.** *What is the meaning of the torn temple curtain?*

## The Son of God Is Risen

*Matthew 28:1–10 KJV*

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there

*Matthew 28:1–10 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

<sup>8</sup> So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

In the first-century world, women were not considered reliable witnesses. Despite that, Matthew records that the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection were women. Two disciples—both named Mary—went to see Jesus' body (vv. 1, 5). A supernatural earthquake interrupted them, an earthquake caused by the angel who was rolling back the stone which blocked access to Jesus' tomb (v. 3).

The Roman guards stationed at the tomb and the women were fearful in the angel's presence (vv. 4–5). The angel reassured the women that they did not need to fear because he knew their honorable motives in "looking for Jesus" (v. 5). Then the angel gave them joyful news: "He is not here; he has risen" (v. 6).

The angel commissioned the women to tell the other disciples this good news, but Jesus also met the two women on their way (vv. 8–9). By clasping the feet of His resurrected body in worship, the women affirmed with their actions what the centurion affirmed at the cross: "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54)

**6.** *Why might it be surprising that the first witnesses of the resurrection were women?*

**7.** *Why were the Roman guards not reassured by the angel that they need not be afraid?*

## **A Crucifix or a Cross? What Is the Difference?**

In the Alpine areas of Austria, Germany, and Italy, it's not uncommon to pass little structures along highways; these are called wayside shrines. Whether elaborate or simple, they each house a crucifix—a wooden cross with a carved image of Christ attached. While this type of relic often appears in Catholic or Orthodox churches and shrines, Protestants favor an empty cross without Jesus' body. However, neither symbol was embraced by first-century Christians. In those days, the cross inspired dread. It was a device of torture and terror. Many early Christians were sent to crosses alongside common criminals.

Crosses and crucifixes coexisted until the Reformation. Many Protestants saw the crucifix as a type of graven image and embraced, instead, the unadorned cross. But to some, the crucifix still serves as a reminder of Christ's death and the suffering that He faced as a sacrifice for humanity. Likewise, an empty cross can represent Christ's resurrection, the Easter miracle which secured new life for those who call upon His name.

The messages of crucifix and cross are each part of the whole. As the crucifix shows, Jesus suffered terrible pain and agony; thus Jesus can be present with us when we suffer. As the empty cross shows, the story didn't end with His death; Jesus triumphed over sin and stunned the powers of darkness. Because of both the death and the resurrection of Christ, we can stand before God, washed in the "blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11).

**8.** *Do you approve of the crucifix and the cross as symbols of Christianity? Why or why not?*

**9.** *What are other cultural symbols of Christian faith, and what might they communicate?*

**10.** *What is the most important message to be heard on Easter?*

## Sharing His Victory

Reflect on what Jesus achieved as a result of defeating death. First, He showed Himself the true Son of God through His miraculous resurrection. Second, He took the weight of humanity's sin upon Himself. Jesus clears a pathway for us to be reconciled to God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul says, "The new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" Christ's victory provides the believer with the gift of new life. If you have experienced this new life for yourself, how has it inspired you to share the victory with others?

► *This week, take time to reflect on what your life was like before you came to know Christ, and what it has been like since. For your non-Christian friends, is there anything you could share to spark their interest? How could Christ's victory transform their lives? On a sheet of paper, list areas where Christ has transformed your life. Also list what makes you grateful today.*

### KEY VERSE

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. —Matthew 28:9 KJV

Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. —Matthew 28:9 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of April 21 through April 27

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** John 1:29–36—Here Is the Lamb of God!

**Tues.** Psalm 118:1–14—The Lord Has Become My Salvation.

**Wed.** Psalm 118:15–29—Live and Not Die.

**Thurs.** 1 Peter 1:13–25—Worthy Ransom.

**Fri.** Psalm 99—Celebrate God.

**Sat.** Revelation 21:9–27—Live in the Light.

**Sun.** Revelation 5:1–10—The Slaughtered, Conquering Lamb.

## The Lamb Is Worthy

“She sounds wonderful!” LaRonda said to her sister, Renatta. “She has really been practicing her violin.”

The two were talking about Renatta’s 15-year-old daughter, Jazmin, who was practicing upstairs.

“A Worship Extravaganza? Is that what it’s called?” LaRonda asked. “How long will it last?”

“It should be about an hour,” Renatta said. “I’m excited to be going to a service of music and worship. It’s refreshing and rejuvenating.”

“Well, you do have a good choir. And I always love to hear my niece,” LaRonda said.

“I’m glad for you to come,” said Renatta. “This is not about entertainment. They may have rehearsed, but this is about leading the people of God into worship. There is so much to thank Him for! Jesus is worthy of our praise.”

When LaRonda drove to the church, she passed a billboard along the way that said “In God We Trust.” Only, it didn’t say “God.” It substituted the name of a politician who was campaigning for office. Something about the Worship Extravaganza made her uneasy about that. As LaRonda joined her sister in the pew, she thought to herself, “Is anyone but Christ worthy of my trust?”

“You sounded good up there,” she later told to her niece as she closed the car door.

“Thanks, auntie,” said Jazmin.

“What was the song you were playing?” asked LaRonda.

“Great is Thy Faithfulness,” answered Jazmin.

**1. What kinds of people ask for our trust?**

**2. How is worshipping Jesus different than placing hope in someone else? How can Jesus prove faithful when others do not?**

**3. What is God’s answer to a world in need of hope?**

## Who Is Worthy?

*Revelation 5:1–5 KJV*

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

*Revelation 5:1–5 NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup>And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” <sup>3</sup>But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. <sup>4</sup>I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. <sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

John’s attention is drawn to the scroll in the right hand of God, who sits on heaven’s throne. In the story of the exodus, when God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, God’s right hand is associated with His power to deliver and defeat His enemies (Ex. 15:6). The contents of the scroll are mysterious, but it has to do with God’s plan to deliver creation from the powers of darkness. But it is sealed shut with seven seals.

“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” asks a powerful angel (v. 2). In the previous chapter, God is declared worthy “to receive glory and honor and power” because He created all things (Rev. 4:11). Who

then is worthy to take the scroll from the hand of the creator, God, and to open it? Who could possibly be qualified for such a task? The question is proclaimed so loudly that it rings throughout heaven, earth, and under the earth—all of creation. The renewal of all things hangs in the balance, and God’s plan requires a chosen agent. But tragically, no one is worthy for this job (v. 3). No one can open the scroll.

At this point, John weeps and makes a display of great mourning, because he grasps the gravity of the situation (v. 4). God’s plan for creation depends on someone worthy to open the scroll and look inside. If there is no one, what does that mean for humanity? God’s plan requires a servant who is worthy to rule and judge with complete impartiality. God’s plan requires someone to perfectly reflect God’s will.

One of the elders surrounding the throne breaks the tension. He tells John to stop weeping because “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed” (v. 5). These titles belong to the Messiah and remind us of Israel’s hope for a deliverer who would sit on the throne of David and usher in God’s eternal kingdom (see Gen 49:9–10; Isa. 11:1; 2 Sam. 7:12–16). The lion has triumphed, and the victory has already been assured. Jesus, God’s Messiah, is able to break the seven seals and reveal God’s plan.

**4.** *The contents of the scroll remain a mystery, but what do we know about it?*

**5.** *Why does John weep in verse 4?*

**6.** *What does verse 5 tell us about the one who is worthy?*

## The Slain Lamb

*Revelation 5:6–10 KJV*

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a

*Revelation 5:6–10 NIV*

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four

Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying,

Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. <sup>8</sup> And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

<sup>10</sup> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

John might have expected to see a lion arrive on the scene. But instead, he sees "a lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne" (v. 6). The "Lion" is also the "Lamb," one who has been killed. Yet the elder has just told John that the Messiah has triumphed. God's conquering power has come, not by force, but through sacrifice. Jesus defeated death by dying and rising again. He has given of Himself in love, for the good of others.



The lamb stands at the center of the throne. This suggests something important about the identity of the lamb, for who besides God can share God's throne? The lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. A horn is an image of power in the Old Testament (Deut. 33:17; Ps. 132:17). And John comes right out and tells us that the eyes are the "seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (v. 6). Therefore, the eyes may represent God's all-seeing, all-knowing, and ever-present nature. In Zechariah 4:10, the seven eyes belong to Yahweh, and here they are attributed to the lamb. This again suggests something important about the identity of this person: He possesses the complete power and knowledge of Yahweh, and He rules as king from the throne of heaven.

In verse 7, the lamb takes the scroll from the right hand of God. In verses 8–9, those surrounding the throne respond by falling down to worship the lamb, offering prayers of God's people and singing a "new song."

The worshipers sing of Jesus' worthiness to take the scroll, for He was slain. He triumphed through self-giving love, bringing salvation and victory for all God's people. With His own blood, Jesus purchased people from "every tribe and language and people and nation" (v. 9). As in the exodus event, when God set people free from bondage in Egypt, Jesus now brings an even greater deliverance: He extends salvation to the ends of the earth and for all people (Isa. 49:6). In doing so, He has inaugurated a new kingdom, established free people as "a kingdom and priests" to serve God and reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). This reenacts and extends the calling that God gave Israel, after delivering His people from Egypt (Ex. 19:6). Life in God's kingdom is now marked by praise, prayer, and Christlike love.

**7.** *What do these verses tell us about the lamb's identity?*

**8.** *The lamb appears to have been killed (v. 6). How then did He triumph?*

**9.** *What is the result of Jesus' triumph (vv. 9–10)?*

## If Jesus is King

*I wonder if she knows I'm a fraud.* I remember thinking those words during a summer internship at my family church. I had been assigned to help a woman run a children's outreach at a low-income housing development. This woman had a reputation. She seemed strange to people—strange to me—and her strangeness had to do with her willingness to run headlong into risky places.

I didn't know her well. I knew she was sometimes gone for months or years at a time, following Jesus to some corner of a city or to a town damaged by a big storm. She would come back with stories that challenged the complacency of our church, and it made me uncomfortable.

By this time, I had been a Christian for many years. I knew the story. I confessed Jesus as Lord and believed He rose from the dead. But when I was around her, I couldn't shake the feeling she understood something, and I didn't. She was gripped by the truth. Jesus was her king and she was willing to follow Him wherever He went. I paid lip service to that idea, but I'm not sure I was willing to let the rubber meet the road.

As I watched her jump into action, it finally dawned on me: If Jesus is who Scripture says He is, that changes everything. If He is the rightful king over all creation and has made a way for all people to be part of His kingdom, then I owe Him my unchecked allegiance. Certainly I can endure a little awkwardness for my Savior. It's time for the rubber to meet the road.

**10.** *Can you think of someone else who has modeled sacrificial love for the good of others? Who?*

**11.** *If Jesus is king, and His kingdom has begun, what are the implications for us?*

**12.** *What obstacles keep people from giving full allegiance to Jesus?*

## Living for the Kingdom

Jesus, the lamb who was slain and has risen, is worthy of worship. Through His sacrificial death, He defeated the powers of darkness and made a way for all people to be a part of His kingdom to follow Him as king.

► *Set aside time this week to pray that you might acknowledge Jesus as king and live for His kingdom. Ask God to show you what a life of worship will mean for you.*

### KEY VERSE

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. —Revelation 5:9 KJV

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. —Revelation 5:9 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of April 28 through May 4

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 86:1–17—Answer Me, O Lord.

**Tues.** 1 Peter 5:1–11—Be Alert.

**Wed.** Lamentations 3:19–36—The Lord Will Not Reject Forever.

**Thurs.** 2 Peter 3:1–10—God Patiently Waits for Repentance.

**Fri.** 2 Peter 3:11–18—Live the Godly Life.

**Sat.** 1 Chronicles 21:1–13—A Presumptive King.

**Sun.** 1 Chronicles 21:14–30—A Costly Sacrifice.

## David's Sacrifice

It's beautiful," said Aaron. "I really like how you inlaid the cross."

"Thanks," said Earl. "Do you think your pastor will like it?"

"He'll love it," said Aaron while examining the mahogany wood pulpit. Aaron was a member of Abundant Word and Life Church, a small congregation of about 50 people. The church had been renting space in a strip mall for months. Aaron told his pastor that he would donate a new pulpit, which the church sorely needed.

The pastor said he didn't want anything fancy. He wanted something sturdy and that bore the emblem of the cross.

Aaron contacted Earl, an expert woodworker with a lucrative business that Aaron had once done marketing and design work for.

As Aaron ran his hand across the top of the pulpit, Earl said, "I'm in the mind to just give you the lectern for all the great marketing you've done for my business."

Aaron looked up at him. "What?"

"You don't owe me anything, Aaron," Earl clarified. "Consider it a gift."

"You know, that is very generous of you," Aaron said. "I do appreciate your gesture, but I will pay the full price for the pulpit. I set out to make it a gift for the church."

"Besides," Aaron smiled. "I don't want to give something that didn't cost me anything."

**1.** *Are there times in which it could be hard to sacrifice to God?*

**2.** *Does God understand when we hold back on giving our best?*

**3.** *How can we plan and prepare to give God our best?*

## God Sends a Plague

*1 Chronicles 21:14–19 KJV*

14 So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.

15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

16 And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

17 And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go

*1 Chronicles 21:14–19 NIV*

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead.

<sup>15</sup> And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

<sup>16</sup> David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown.

<sup>17</sup> David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? LORD my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

<sup>18</sup> Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar

up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.

to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19 So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.

The angel of God brings a plague on Israel after David ordered a census for prideful reasons (1 Chron. 21:1–13). Seventy thousand men die as a result (v. 14). But before the angel destroys Jerusalem, God relents (v. 13).

While David and his elders were on their way to Gideon to offer sacrifices for forgiveness, David sees the angel who was bringing disaster (v. 17). The angel instructs David to build an altar to Yahweh at the threshing floor of Araunah (“Ornan” in the KJV), where the angel was waiting (v. 15).

4. *Why does God relent after sending a plague on Israel?*
5. *What does this action show about God’s mercy?*
6. *Why would God ask David to build an altar to Him?*

## David’s Offering

*1 Chronicles 21:20–26 KJV*

20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the

*1 Chronicles 21:20–26 NIV*

20 While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. 21 Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

22 David said to him, “Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped.

LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.

24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.

Sell it to me at the full price.”

<sup>23</sup> Araunah said to David, “Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this.”

<sup>24</sup> But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”

<sup>25</sup> So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. <sup>26</sup> David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

David approaches Araunah to buy his threshing floor in order to build an altar to God. He won't allow Araunah to give away valuable land for free (v. 24). David requests to pay the full price for the land to house an altar to God, which shows the sincerity of his motives. David builds the altar and brings “burnt offerings and fellowship offerings” (v. 25). In response, God sends fire, a sign that God is pleased and accepts these sacrifices from David. David—“a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14)—turns back to God, who was ready to restore him.

7. *Why does David pay for the threshing floor?*

8. *Why does God send fire from heaven?*

## God Forgives

*1 Chronicles 21:27–30 KJV*

27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

28 At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. 29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. 30 But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

*1 Chronicles 21:27–30 NIV*

<sup>27</sup> Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. <sup>28</sup> At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. <sup>29</sup> The tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon. <sup>30</sup> But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

The threshing floor was on Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered his son (Gen. 22). Now it would be where the tabernacle would be kept, until a permanent temple could be built by Solomon—again, on this piece of land. This space would be a memorial of God’s grace and a sign of His willingness to forgive and heal His people.

God tells His angel to sheath the sword. A sheathed sword indicates an end of judgment: the plague is over. The tabernacle of the Lord is moved to the “high place at Gibeon” (v. 29). But the text gives a note that David would not come to this place again: “he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the Lord” (1 Chron. 21:30).

9. *What does sheathed sword communicate (v. 27)?*

10. *Why might David continue to be afraid (v. 29)?*



## A Living Sacrifice

We are commanded in Romans 12:1 to “offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.” I remember that, at fifteen years old, I was clueless what those words might mean. Still, somehow I knew then that I wanted to please God and give Him my whole life.

My first challenge was choosing a university. There was a good school in the back of my mind, a place that I had always wanted to be. But when it came down to making that choice, God led me in a different direction. God knew that I needed to be somewhere that would give me the friendships and spiritual foundation that I would need to serve in full-time ministry. I could have chosen to ignore the Spirit’s prompting, but I am so glad that God had something different in mind.

After university, my plans and God’s plans were still miles apart. All I wanted was to marry my high school sweetheart and live a comfortable life in my hometown. I had a good job lined up and a comfortable career in mind. But God called me to leave everything familiar behind and to train overseas as a missionary. I wasn’t prepared for a radical change. But through a lot of prayer and spiritual counsel, I came to understand that God was asking me to do this.

It felt like a momentous sacrifice. But in a strange reversal, the “costly sacrifice” that felt so hard rewarded me—not with comfort of financial security, but with a community and a story that I would trade for nothing.

**11.** *How has God’s direction to you changed over time?*

**12.** *Do we ever get rewarded for offering “costly sacrifices?” When?*

**13.** *Is it easy or difficult to trust God with our plans?*

## Take My Life, and Let It Be.

Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee,  
Take my moments and my days;

let them flow in ceaseless praise,

Lord, I give my life to Thee, Thine forever to be"

—Frances Ridley Havergal, 1874

► *Reflect on what it means to give your life to God, as a consecration and a ceaseless praise. Begin each day this next week reading the words above and asking God to help your actions, words, and thoughts to be a pleasing sacrifice of ceaseless praise to Him.*

### KEY VERSE

And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. —1 Chronicles 21:24 KJV

But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." —1 Chronicles 21:24 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of May 5 through May 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Ezra 6:13–22—A Joyful Celebration.

**Tues.** Psalm 18:1–15—God Heard Me in My Distress.

**Wed.** Acts 7:2–16—God in Mesopotamia.

**Thurs.** Acts 7:30–41—God in the Wilderness.

**Fri.** Acts 7:42–50—God Needs No Temple.

**Sat.** 2 Chronicles 6:12, 14–27—Hear Our Prayers, O God.

**Sun.** 2 Chronicles 7:1–7, 11—God's Glory Fills the Temple.

## Solomon Dedicates the Temple

Henrietta took the balled-up tissue in her hand, and dabbed her eyes as she opened them. Then she pushed herself up from the carpeted floor and took her seat, next to her book bag.

There was still a heavy aura of praise in the sanctuary. The musicians were playing an ongoing, melodic worshipful refrain. Many worshipers were singing along, while others were shouting phrases of adoration, some could be heard weeping, while others stood, knelt, rocked, or sat in silent meditation.

About 30 minutes earlier, Pastor Wright had stood behind the podium as if to preach. However, he had continued leading worship songs and encouraged the congregation to continue to praise God. And they had.

The only thing in the back of Henrietta's mind was her Aunt Mildred. Her appearances at church were few, because she always wanted to be "in and out."

Well, the church had certainly done some "carrying on" this morning! And Henrietta was neither ashamed nor apologetic about it. He was Immanuel! How she loved to walk in God's presence. Her recognition that God is always with her made Henrietta want to spend time with Him and more time at church, not just around Christmas and Easter.

On the ride home, Aunt Mildred was uncharacteristically quiet. "How did you enjoy service?"

"I don't think I've seen anything quite like it," Aunt Mildred said. "I found myself saying a little prayer."

- 1.** *When was a time you felt God's presence with you?*
- 2.** *Have you ever struggled to feel God's presence?*
- 3.** *How can you remember each day that God is near to you?*

## Remember and Celebrate

*2 Chronicles 7:1–3 KJV*

1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. 3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

*2 Chronicles 7:1–3 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. <sup>3</sup> When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

The covenant helps the Israelites to remember and to celebrate God's merciful presence. Through laws and covenant obligations, God often reminds them of the Exodus event. As they celebrate their festivals, as they honor Sabbath rest, and as they interact with the foreigner, they are constantly reminding themselves that they are God's holy people, and the creator has called them His "treasured possession" (Ex. 19:5). His presence has protected them, guided them, and provided for them. Their worship is a response.

It is no accident that this passage, where the temple of the Lord is dedicated, reviews many of Israel's interactions with God. The events described here call for Israel to remember their life with the Lord—to be faithful to Him

in the present and into the future.

What happens next points back to several events of Israel's past. Fire from heaven comes down and consumes the burnt offerings (v. 2), which recalls God's similar acceptance of David's previous offering in this very spot (see last week's lesson on 1 Chron. 21:26). Next, God's glory fills the temple, so much that the priests were unable to enter the temple building (v. 2). This is very much like what happened on the journey through the wilderness, when God appeared in a cloud (Ex. 13:21-22).

These events are like what God showed on Mount Sinai by coming down in a visible display of fire and smoke (Ex. 19:18). Like then, the Israelites fall down in worship, reciting the truth that "He is good" and "his love endures forever" (1 Chron. 21:3). Some of the same words are used in Exodus 34:6, when God first revealed His character as "compassionate and gracious . . . slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Like then, this moment will be etched into Israel's memory. It is a confirmation of the covenant at Sinai and a reminder of God's protection into the future. Just like God was with Israel in a tabernacle, now Yahweh will be with His people in the temple. No wonder everyone bows in worship; all around they see evidence of God's presence.

**4.** *What "flashbacks" in this text point back to Israel's previous experiences with God?*

**5.** *What does this teach us about God's faithfulness?*

**6.** *Why is it so important that Israel remember what God has done in the past?*

## **An Extravagant Celebration**

2 Chronicles 7:4-7, 11 KJV

4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. 5 And king Solomon

2 Chronicles 7:-7, 11 NIV

<sup>4</sup> Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. <sup>5</sup> And King

offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. <sup>6</sup> And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

<sup>7</sup> Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

<sup>11</sup> Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God. <sup>6</sup> The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, "His love endures forever." Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing.

<sup>7</sup> Solomon consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar he had made could not hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat portions.

<sup>11</sup> When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace,

Solomon sacrifices hundreds of thousands of animals. Picture the bleating, the smells, and the gory scenes in the brand-new temple. The Levites give a concert, making

music to the Lord in praise of His steadfast love. Animal and grain offerings overflow as the people fellowship with one another and the Lord. It is an ancient celebration, filled with meaning, joy, and praise for the people of God.

The temple is dedicated through sacrifices to God. Tens of thousands of cattle, sheep, and goats are offered to the Lord (vv. 4–5). In an agrarian society with no supermarkets or fast food, meat is precious and often rare. This extravagant offering shows the importance of this celebration and the great honor due to the Lord God of Israel.

The tribe of Levi is responsible for the temple, serving as priests, caretakers, and musicians. The refrain of praise and thanks for God’s merciful love, which endures forever, is used throughout Israel’s history—at the temple and even in battle (2 Chron. 20).

In verse 7, a different part of the courtyard has to be consecrated as well because the number of sacrifices cannot be contained. The fellowship offerings invite the Israelites to eat their fill in the presence of their God who dwells among them.

Verse 11 summarizes the events of the previous few chapters; Solomon has been successful in his task of building the temple of the Lord and his own royal palace. The instructions he had received from his father, David, were completed in full. Solomon’s temple would be remembered throughout Israel’s history as his greatest accomplishment.

The completed temple is a place for God’s people to come worship and spend time with Him. God’s goal has always been to provide a way for people to be in His presence. Solomon’s temple was a symbol of this truth.

**7.** *What do you think it would have felt like to be at the dedication of the temple?*

**8.** *Why were so many animals offered in sacrifice to God?*

**9.** *Why did the rest of the courtyard need to be consecrated?*

## Without a Doubt

I recently had a conversation with someone who struggles with doubting God. She has been a Christian for many years, but there are times when she wonders if God exists and questions if He does exist, whether He loves her. These doubts are in spite of the memories she has of God's very real presence in her life.

The day Solomon dedicated the temple would have left no room for doubt. Anyone who was there not only felt but even saw the glory of God descending. Everyone there couldn't help but worship because God was present.

After that, the Israelites would have gone home to their daily lives. God's glory at the temple would have faded into a memory. Doubt could have crept in. As a believer in Jesus, I know I have the very presence of God dwelling in me (1 Cor. 6:19). But I do not always feel this truth.

In my conversation with the woman who struggles with doubt, I reminded her that God is always asking His people to remember Him and the things He has done. I told her that when I struggle in my faith or when I'm in a dry season, I take time to think about how God has been near to me in the past. Stopping to recall my experiences with God sparks truth in my life and leads me to worship because I know that God dwells in me, even when I don't feel Him.

God has always provided a way for His people to be near to Him. He was in Eden, at the tabernacle, in the temple, and now in us! Even, in my moments of doubt or seasons of apathy I can take comfort in the knowledge that God is always with me.

**10.** *What are some of the faith-defining moments you have had with God?*

**11.** *When have you experienced doubt in your faith?*

**12.** *Why does it help our faith to remember the moments we've experienced God?*



## Week of Worship

God's very presence descended upon the temple, accepting the sacrifices offered to Him and causing everyone to worship and praise. That same God dwells in believers today. His presence is with us, and we can and should worship Him for it.

► *Spend some intentional time this coming week in God's presence. Consider taking an hour, or half a day, or even a full day to spend time talking to God, worshiping Him, and inviting Him to show up in your life in new ways.*

### KEY VERSE

And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. —2 Chronicles 7:3 KJV

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

—2 Chronicles 7:3 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of May 12 through May 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 30—Joy Comes with the Morning.

**Tues.** Colossians 3:12–17—Songs of Gratitude.

**Wed.** 2 Corinthians 1:2–14—Blessed Be the Merciful, Consoling God.

**Thurs.** Psalm 95—Enter God's Presence with Thanksgiving.

**Fri.** Philippians 3:1–14—Serve in the Spirit of God.

**Sat.** Ezra 1—The Exiles Return.

**Sun.** Ezra 3:1–6, 10–13—Building a New Foundation.

## Worship Is Restored

Kelvin heard the music as soon as he opened the door leading from the garage. He moved further into the kitchen with a mixture of feelings—sadness, caution, hopefulness.

The sounds were coming from their bedroom. He didn't know if Tamar was upstairs by herself or with one of her sisters. His wife's sisters had been keeping a vigil-like watch over Tamar since their latest unsuccessful in vitro attempt.

Kelvin and Tamar had been well into their 40s when they married, and now three years later the couple had been trying for more than two years to get pregnant. It had been crushing—the disappointment, hurt, and anger. Yes, they could adopt. But Tamar always wanted to have children of her own.

As Kelvin climbed the staircase, his caution melted as he got closer to the worshipful sounds. What he loved most about Tamar was her fierce love for Christ. It is what first struck him and drew him to her. She was devoted. She was single-minded. She was a warrior. Yes, she was hurting. They both were. But praise is part of who they were. It is what they did. They wouldn't let anything keep them from praising Yahweh, their God.

Kelvin opened the bedroom door and saw Tamar standing there, signing. And he joined in with her, adding his voice to the chorus coming from the radio.

**1.** *Do you find it harder to worship during certain periods of life?*

**2.** *How can community lessen a hurting person's burdens?*

**3.** *What helps you to persevere in the midst of fear or disappointment?*

## Rebuilding the Altar

*Ezra 3:1–6 KJV*

1 And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

2 Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.

3 And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening. 4 They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; 5 And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD. 6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the

*Ezra 3:1–6 NIV*

<sup>1</sup> When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled together as one in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

<sup>3</sup> Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices. <sup>4</sup> Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day. <sup>5</sup> After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred festivals of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the

foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

foundation of the LORD temple had not yet been laid.

After the Jews returned to the promised land, their first task was to reinstitute their worship and sacrificial system. The people prioritized the rebuilding of the altar before anything else, even before they gathered the money and materials to rebuild the temple (v. 7). Without an altar, they were unable to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Ezra says the people “assembled together as one in Jerusalem” (v. 1). This communal atmosphere was crucial for their rebuilding efforts, which soon would face opposition.

Sacrifices were supposed to begin on the first day of the seventh month, so the rebuilding had to be completed in time. Joshua and Zerubbabel led God’s people and organized the construction. Joshua’s name appears before Zerubbabel, who was the Jewish governor and heir to the Davidic throne. Joshua was a priest, so it was appropriate for him to initiate the reinstitution of Jewish worship.

The Jews carefully built the altar according to the Law of Moses. The altar needed to be made with uncut fieldstones, and upon the foundation of the original altar (Ex. 20:25; Deut. 27:6). It was important to maintain the traditional place of sacrifices to the Lord; this showed continuity with the former temple and its system of worship—a true restoration and return to proper worship.

By rebuilding the altar, the Jews expressed trust in God. The Jews were afraid of the neighboring people groups living within Judah who were not supportive of Jewish worship. When the Jews returned from exile, they met animosity and hostility from these people.

The people restarted the daily offerings exactly as Moses had instructed (Num. 28:1–8) by sacrificing burnt offerings each day (v. 3). The people also celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles, a religious festival that recalled Israel’s wandering in the wilderness under God’s protection.

Finally, the returned Jews offered proper sacrifices to commemorate the festivals, following Moses’ instructions

in Leviticus 23:1–44. They brought freewill offerings to God, which meant they were worshiping Yahweh out of their own volition. Although the Jews had rebuilt the altar and established regular sacrifices, the temple was nonexistent, lacking even a foundation.

**4.** *What did Joshua and Zerubbabel lead the people to do?*

**5.** *Why did the Jews rebuild the altar first?*

**6.** *How did the returning Jews view the people around them?*

## The Temple Construction Begins

*Ezra 3:10–13 KJV*

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD;

because he is good,  
for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel.

And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of

*Ezra 3:10–13 NIV*

<sup>10</sup> When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD:

“He is good;  
his love toward Israel  
endures forever.”

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. <sup>12</sup> But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the

this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. <sup>13</sup> No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

As the builders constructed the temple's foundation, the people responded in celebration. Ezra emphasizes the communal worship that took place, rather than dwelling on the details of the construction. The temple celebration in verses 10–13 is reminiscent of the celebration at the completion of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 5:1–14). In both celebrations, the priests sound trumpets and cymbals and lead a song of praise with the words of Psalm 100:5.

However, this celebration after the exile was different. There was no ark of the covenant, no visible glory of the Lord, and no great temple. As a people, the Jews had endured a great deal of suffering and humiliation, and the rebuilding of the altar was the first step in restoring God's former dwelling place among them.

In verse 11, Ezra describes the people's "great shout of praise." Their joy and thankfulness overflowed into enthusiastic exclamations. Still, their celebration was joined by weeping and sadness. The elders in the community remembered the grandeur of Solomon's temple and recognized how inadequate the new altar appeared. The older generation might be disappointed with the new altar's diminutive size, but the materials and craftsmanship were also inferior. The crowd's mixed response of celebration and sadness was heard by neighboring peoples (v. 13).

**7.** *How did the Levites celebrate the rebuilding of the temple foundation?*

**8.** *Why did some people weep?*

## **Worship God to Battle Fear**

What if I am mocked for expressing my faith in Christ Jesus? What if people don't like me? What if something bad happens? What if I die? These questions can tempt believers to fear. Fear has a way of grabbing our hearts and immobilizing us. In moments of fear or distress, it sometimes doesn't make a lot of sense to worship God. Instead, we strain with our whole beings to fix the issue, to bring resolution to the situation, to do something! Or, we simply try not to think about the issue at all.

To pause and worship can feel nonsensical in the midst of trials. At least, it feels that way until we realize that we can't fix our problems ourselves. As we come to realize that so many circumstances are out of our control, the idea of worship starts to make more sense. We must lay our quaking hearts at the feet of Jesus.

When we worship God, we are often reminded of the bigger context of our lives and gain the courage to face our fears. We remember who God is and who we are in Him. God is good (Ps. 100:5). He is in control. God is for us and not against us (Rom. 8:31–32). Our lives are secure in Him (Phil. 1:3–6). Death no longer has the last word upon our lives (1 Cor. 15:54–55). Through worship, we are bolstered with courage to face all kinds of fear. It is not that the feelings of fear necessarily go away, but that worship equips us with the courage we need to endure the fearful contexts that surround us.

**9.** *How have you dealt with fearful situations in the past?*

**10.** *How might worship change your perspective on the current, fearful contexts that you are in?*

**11.** *How can you build a habit to worship God in the midst of fearful contexts?*

## Pray for Worship

Though life may shatter, God's love never does. The exile effectively shattered the lives of the Jews. Yet many years later, God brought them back to their homeland. God was faithful to love His people then, and He will be faithful to His people now. He shows us His love by making us whole through the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of such love, we can worship Him amid fearful situations!

► *Every day for the next week, make an effort to pray that God will help you trust and worship Him amid fearful contexts, remembering that His steadfast love endures forever. Ask Him to help you through the circumstances that surround you so that in your weeping, you weep with hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

### KEY VERSE

All the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

—Ezra 3:11b KJV

All the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. —Ezra 3:11b NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of May 19 through May 25

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Jeremiah 31:27–34—A New Covenant.

**Tues.** Ephesians 2:1–10—Saved by Grace.

**Wed.** Luke 22:7–20—A New Covenant.

**Thurs.** Nehemiah 8:1–12—Hear the Word of the Lord.

**Fri.** Nehemiah 9:2–18, 32—Remember God's Salvation.

**Sat.** Hebrews 8—A Better Covenant.

**Sun.** Nehemiah 10:28–39—Revitalized Worship.



## A Covenant Renewal

Rosetta flinched for the last time and then excused herself from the outdoor table. Her coworkers loved to call themselves “not very religious,” and they repeatedly used Christ’s name in place of curse words. However, Rosetta reminded herself that she had done the same, at one time.

But since Rosetta had recommitted herself to Christ, she had been following Him more closely, and that had included stripping away some things—like taking the Lord’s name in vain. She had also let the Spirit show her what was needed—which included a regular, committed time in church and a heart with more grace and love.

“So, did we offend you back there?” asked Iris.

“Well, I don’t like it when the Lord’s name is used in vain,” said Rosetta.

“Hmph,” replied Iris. “I don’t think we were, but okay. I guess you won’t be at the office bowling get-together on Sunday?”

“No, sorry,” said Rosetta. “The time conflicts with my church group.”

“So, are you becoming super religious now?” Iris said sarcastically.

“Oh my, no. I hope not,” smiled Rosetta. “I have renewed my relationship with Christ, and it is the most important thing in my life.”

**1.** *What does it mean to you to be in “covenant” relationship with Christ?*

**2.** *Have you ever been in the place when you needed to restore your relationship with Christ? How can you best go about restoring a relationship with God?*

**3.** *What are the benefits of a life restored back to God?*

## All The people Commit to Obey God's Commands

*Nehemiah 10:28–33 KJV*

28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; 29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes;

30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, not take their daughters for our sons:

31 And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves

*Nehemiah 10:28–33 NIV*

<sup>28</sup> "The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand—<sup>29</sup> all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our Lord.

<sup>30</sup> "We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.

<sup>31</sup> "When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.

<sup>32</sup> "We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the

yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; <sup>33</sup> For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

service of the house of our God: <sup>33</sup> for the bread set out on the table; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, at the New Moon feasts and at the appointed festivals; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God.

After gathering to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles and hear Ezra read the Law, the people fasted, confessed their sins, and met to make a “binding agreement” (9:38) to obey the Lord. The “rest of the people” refers to the residents of Judah who were not numbered among the leaders in 10:1–27. The people gathered to separate from all foreigners who would tempt them to disobey the law. The Jews promised to keep their sons and daughters from marriage with foreigners who do not worship God (v. 30).

The people also promised that they would not purchase food on the Sabbath (v. 31). They would return to the strict observance of Sabbath as God required. The Sabbath day reminded God’s people that God was their creator and that they were once slaves in Egypt, without any allowance for rest (Deut. 5:12–15).

God’s people also agreed to offer “a third of a shekel” for the house of God every year. Priests, who had no inheritance of land, relied on the contributions of others in order to serve God in the temple. Only through regular offerings could the temple continue to operate and give the proper sacrifices for sin.

**4.** *What promises do the Jews make in verses 28–33?*

**5.** *Why was it important for Jews to contribute to the temple?*

## All the People Commit to Care for the House of God

*Nehemiah 10:34–39 KJV*

34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law:

35 And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord:

36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:

37 And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with

*Nehemiah 10:34–39 NIV*

<sup>34</sup> “We—the priests, the Levites and the people—have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law.

<sup>35</sup> “We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the Lord each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.

<sup>36</sup> “As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there.

<sup>37</sup> “Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and olive oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. <sup>38</sup> A priest descended from Aaron is to

the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. <sup>39</sup> For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. <sup>39</sup> The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and olive oil to the storerooms, where the articles for the sanctuary and for the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the musicians are also kept.  
 “We will not neglect the house of our God.”

The Jewish people made four promises. First, they would supply the altar with wood for sacrifices (v. 34; see Lev. 6:12–13). Second, they promised to give the “firstfruits” of the harvest of crops and fruits (v. 35; see Lev. 23:9–14). The firstfruits supported the temple with food and were a reminder that God owned everything. Third, they promised to consecrate any firstborn livestock and firstborn male children to God’s service (v. 36). This reflected the time of the exodus, when God designated that every firstborn belonged to Him (see Ex. 13:2). Finally, the people promised to offer a tithe, meaning a tenth of their earnings, to stock the rest of the temple’s needs (v. 38). The temple’s operation depended on this financial support from all people. The section ends with an affirmative declaration from the residents of Judah: “We will not neglect the house of our God” (v. 39).

- 6.** *What were the promises expressed in verses 34–39?*
- 7.** *How did each promise care for the house of God?*
- 8.** *Why was it important to care for the house of God?*

## Restorative Obedience

As the sermon began, I settled into my seat to listen. As the pastor spoke, the message hit me: Obeying God is hard. I don't like to think about my sin, but obedience requires a level of internal recognition, requires me to recognize that I have selfish desires I need to overcome. It is easy to say that I love my spouse, but it's a lot harder to do the unselfish things, like be the one to stay up with our child, when all I want is sleep. It is easy to say that I love my neighbor, but it's hard to spend my day off helping him to move. "It's easy to go about life as if you are the center of the universe," said my pastor. As I processed those words, I found myself offering excuses. But as John says, "Let us not love with words . . . but with actions" (1 John 3:18). I don't think obedience has ever been easy.

Today's lesson displays God's restoration, the offer to return to God in specific ways. The people of Judah commit to enter marriages only within their community. They provide the priests with all the items essential for the reinstitution of sacrifices. And they seek their God through heartfelt offerings. Obedience is not a cage that confines their lives. Through obedience, the people of God find abundant life and a future hope, one that will only be fulfilled by a new covenant and the freedom it offers.

Obeying God can be hard! That's something I'm not proud to admit. When I am tired, all I can think about is how difficult it would be to serve my spouse. But obedience produces the fruit of life, and I can obey God because Jesus has set me free from the enslaving powers of sin. There is life and something good on the other side of restoration.

**9.** *What times do you find it hardest to obey God?*

**10.** *What kinds of freedoms can obedience and restoration bring?*

**11.** *What good things might God be able to do through our obedience?*

## Intentional Actions

We listen to God because He knows what is best for us. God knows what we need in order to be sustained in every season, whether in need or plenty.

► *Take a moment to consider whether you have been tempted to think that God is busy, disconnected, or unaware of your struggles. What untruth about God has threatened to keep you from faithful obedience to His ways?*

### KEY VERSE

We will not forsake the house of our God. —Nehemiah 10:39b KJV

“We will not neglect the house of our God.”

—Nehemiah 10:39b NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

#### Week of May 26 through June 1

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Proverbs 3:1–10—Honor God with Your First Fruits.

**Tues.** Hebrews 10:26–35—Struggles of Faith.

**Wed.** Hebrews 10:36–11:4—The Righteous Will Live by Faith.

**Thurs.** Acts 5:1–11—Half-hearted Giving.

**Fri.** Luke 20:45–21:4—Give Your All.

**Sat.** Revelation 6:9–17—The Martyrs’ Cry for Justice.

**Sun.** Genesis 4:1–15—Acceptable and Unacceptable Worship.





COMPREHENSIVE BIBLE STUDY

# Lesson Cycle

FOR 2022-2025

	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	MARCH	JUNE
2022/23	<p><b>God's Exceptional Choice</b> (Studies in Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, 1 Samuel, Ephesians)</p>	<p><b>From Darkness to Light</b> (Studies in 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Joel, Luke, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, James, 1 Peter)</p>	<p><b>Jesus Calls Us</b> (Studies in the Gospels, Acts)</p>	<p><b>The Righteous Reign of God</b> (Studies in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Matthew, Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians)</p>
2023/24	<p><b>God's Law Is Love</b> (Studies in Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians)</p>	<p><b>Faith That Pleases God</b> (Studies in Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Chronicles, Proverbs, Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, Matthew, Luke, Romans, Hebrews)</p>	<p><b>Examining Our Faith</b> (Studies in the Gospels, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, 1 Peter, Jude)</p>	<p><b>Hope in the Lord</b> (Studies in Psalms, Lamentations, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Hebrews, 1 Thessalonians, Titus, 1 John)</p>
2024/25	<p><b>Worship in the Covenant Community</b> (Studies in Genesis, Exodus, 1-2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Psalms)</p>	<p><b>A King Forever and Ever</b> (Studies in Ruth, 2 Samuel, Psalms, Matthew, Luke)</p>	<p><b>Costly Sacrifice</b> (Studies in Exodus, Leviticus, Hebrews, 1 John, Matthew, Revelation, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah)</p>	<p><b>*Sacred Altars and Holy Offerings</b> (Studies in Genesis, the Gospels, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Hebrews, 1 Peter)</p>



# Coming Up Next Quarter

**June, July, August 2025**

## **Sacred Altars and Holy Gifts**

The summer quarter continues to explore scriptural themes around worship, sacrifice, and offerings.

Unit 1, "The Genesis of Altars and Sacrifices," has lessons all from Genesis. This unit examines the building of altars and offering of sacrifices before the Sinai Covenant.

Unit 2, "Jesus and the Temple," explores several sections of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to examine the ways that Jesus fulfills the meaning of temple. Through Jesus, God's people continue to have access to God, even once the physical temple is gone.

Unit 3, "Christians and Sacrifice," brings the study to a conclusion by exploring what it means to offer sacrifices in the new covenant.

*Comprehensive Bible Study* lessons are organized according to a thematic study of the Bible following the International Sunday School Lessons series. In six years, this cycle will touch on the Bible's key themes through studies of books in both the Old and New Testaments.

# JESUS FULFILLS THE MEANING OF Sacrifice

**T**he resurrection of Jesus changes everything. On Easter, Christians celebrate the first day of a new creation, the Sunday morning when a mournful group of followers met a resurrected Savior walking about alive, risen in the flesh. Jesus comes with a simple word of greeting, leaving people to fall at his feet in speechless worship of a risen Lord (Matt. 28:9).

A risen and ascended Jesus is enthroned in heaven. He alone, the lamb who was slain, is undisputedly the chosen one, “worthy” to purchase a kingdom by the sacrifice of His own blood (Rev. 5:9–10). Those in heaven sing of Christ’s redemption “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:10). Jesus’ first disciples rethought everything which they thought they knew, and Christians soon find that all Scripture points forward to Jesus (see Luke 24:27).



This thirteenth-century fresco is found in the monastery in Serbia. It depicts the apprehension and joy of the women who found Jesus’ empty tomb. On their way, they were met by the risen Savior Himself (Matt. 28:5–10).

Orjen



Like the threshing floor where David constructed an altar, this modern threshing floor has a large open space. David’s purchased the land for a fair price, making this a genuine sacrifice (1 Chron. 21:24).

Stan Zurek



Albrecht Dürer, a sixteenth-century master artist of the German renaissance, created this woodcut depicting the heavenly worship of Jesus, represented as a lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:6).

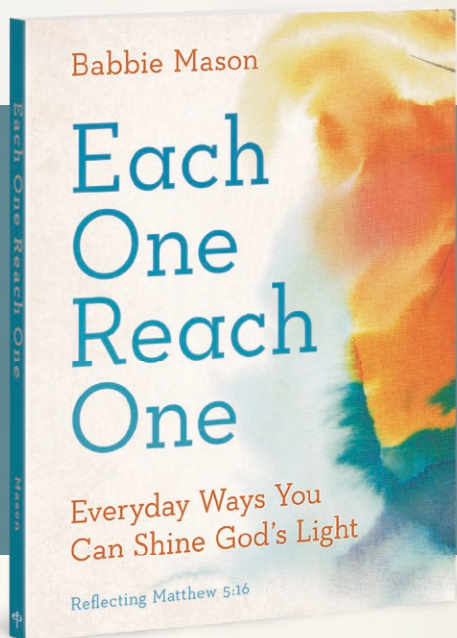
Houghton Library/Public Domain



The Arch of Titus depicts the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70. The glory of God which filled the temple in the days of Solomon (2 Chron. 7:1) came to dwell in the person of Jesus.

Paolo Villa

# Tell Your God Story with Joy and Confidence



Written for Christians who want to live with more boldness and purpose, *Each One Reach One* equips us to find our own unique style of talking about Jesus, see evangelism as a delight rather than an obligation, and anticipate opportunities for telling others about Christianity.



Two-time Dove Award-winner **Babbie Mason** is a Grammy-nominated recording artist and songwriter and the television host of *Babbie's House*. Babbie is also the author of numerous books and Bible studies. She and her husband, Charles, live in Georgia and are the parents of two adult

Available from David C Cook and everywhere books are sold

**DAVID C COOK™**

*transforming lives together*

**A** Adult  
Comprehensive  
Bible Study  
No. 5082