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THE ORDER OF SERVICE

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

THE LESSON

- I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell — silence

THE CLOSING

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

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THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my AME Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

AME Discipline

SAMPLE

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A Kingdom of Priests, A Holy Nation

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 19

Focus Scripture: Exodus 19:1-14

KEY VERSES: “Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.” Exodus 19:5b-6a

WORDS TO KNOW

WILDERNESS: a dry, desolate, unfertile land

JOURNEYED: to have traveled

COVENANT: an agreement between God and a person or group

CONSECRATE: to set apart for a special purpose

SINAI: pronounced: SAI - Nai

REPHIDIM: pronounced: REHF - ih - dihm

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 19:1-14

- 1 On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.
- 2 They journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.
- 3 Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the Israelites:
- 4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.
- 5 Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine,
- 6 but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."
- 7 So Moses went, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him.
- 8 The people all answered as one, "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.
- 9 Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after." When Moses had told the words of the people to the Lord,
- 10 the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes
- 11 and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.
- 12 You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death.
- 13 No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows; whether animal or human being, they shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain."
- 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes.

INTRODUCTION

The Spring quarter lessons are entitled “Costly Sacrifice.” They study the personal and mutual elements that characterize faithful worship. We shall consider biblical practices of giving ourselves to God as the character of true worship and sacrifice for all. The first unit of lessons is entitled, “Tabernacles, Sacrifices, and Atonement” and comes from the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

It is important to be in committed relationships. When we value what others have to offer in a relationship, it inspires us to be committed too. It takes a lot of give and take on both sides. In today’s lesson, we learn Yahweh calls God’s people a “treasured possession,” a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

Relationships come with responsibilities. *Do you recall having to sacrifice yourself in a relationship? How did it impact the relationship? Can self-sacrifice in a relationship become one-sided? How do we avoid lessening who we are to maintain the relationship?*

BIBLE STORY

God had just delivered the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. They are wandering in the wilderness not knowing their future. In the third month, the people stopped and camped by the front of Mount Sinai for a year. Moses, who God had chosen as their leader, went up the mountain to seek God. God shared with Moses what he needed to tell the people. It is always good to listen to and obey God.

God’s message was to reveal to the Israelites the divine reason they were rescued from slavery. Even when we feel lost in life’s wilderness experiences, we can be confident that we are an essential part of God’s divine plan, just like the Israelites. All God requires is that we obey God’s voice and keep God’s covenant. It is important to obey God to maintain our relationship. We can always count on God keeping God’s part of the covenant.

Israel was chosen as God’s holy nation with a priestly kingdom. A holy nation is one separated from other nations and devoted to God, a kingdom whose citizens are all priests, each having the right of access, worship, and devotion to God. God chose Israel, not because of anything

they had done, but to display God's love and mercy. God knew about the nation's past and future wrongdoing, just like God knows about ours. God's love and mercy towards us is never-ending.

The people pledged their allegiance and submission to the Lord's purpose who was their creator and ruler. Once they accepted, the covenant was legally binding. The people were able to see the manifestation of the Lord's presence and to hear God's voice. In preparation to hear God's voice, the Israelites had to consecrate themselves by symbolically cleansing their garments and abstaining from sex. No one could touch the mountain. If touched, they were put to death by stones or arrows.

Why is our relationship with God important? What does God require from us to sustain our relationship? What are you prepared to do in order to be in covenant with God? What do you think God will do as part of God's covenant with us?

LIFE APPLICATION

God calls God's chosen people a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation." We are all priests to and for each other. The priest's duty was to represent the people (the world) before God through prayer, supplication, and sacrifice. Being a part of a "holy nation" can mean we are God's body (God's hands, feet, etc.) set apart from the world to fulfill God's plans.

How can others identify you as a priest and part of a holy nation? What distinguishes you from others? What actions and deeds will you do in order that you can better live out your role as God's priest and a part of God's holy nation?

SUMMARY

God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. As they journeyed toward Canaan, they stopped at Mount Sinai. God spoke to them through Moses about the new covenant. Since covenants were legally binding agreements, the Israelites had to agree to abide by God's terms. In preparation, they had to consecrate themselves. God will do as God promised, but we must live by God's holy standards. We cannot be like those in the world. We are a "royal priesthood" and "holy nation." How can we best honor our relationship with God? God's people must be

fully committed to God and live accordingly.

- ❖ What covenant are you prepared to make with others? What steps need to be taken?
- ❖ What covenant are you prepared to make with God? What steps need to be taken?
- ❖ Write out your preparation plan for encountering and covenanting with God.



CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: We worship you, our promise-keeping God. Help us to live so that our lives reflect holiness and commitment to you alone. Amen.

Hymn: "A Charge to Keep I Have"
(AMEC Hymnal #242)

A Space for God

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 25–27

Focus Scripture: Exodus 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37

KEY VERSE: They shall make me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them. Exodus 25:8

WORDS TO KNOW

ACACIA: *the locust tree and its wood, from which the ark and other objects in the tabernacle were made; the wood is hard and resistant to insects*

EPHOD: *the official garment of the high priest, which was later worn by the ordinary priests*

SANCTUARY: *the holy of holies in the Tabernacle and in the temple*

CRIMSON: *deep red color*

CHERUBIM: *flying creatures which seem to have been used as guards in the Old Testament*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 25:1-9; 26:1, 31-37

- 1 The Lord said to Moses,
- 2 “Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me.
- 3 This is the offering that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze,
- 4 blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen, goats’ hair,
- 5 tanned rams’ skins, fine leather, acacia wood,
- 6 oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,
- 7 onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and for the breastpiece.
- 8 And they shall make me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them.
- 9 In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.”

.....

1 “The tabernacle itself you shall make with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them.”

.....

- 31 “You shall make a curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns and of fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it.
- 32 You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, which have hooks of gold and rest on four bases of silver.
- 33 You shall hang the curtain under the clasps and bring the ark of the covenant in there, within the curtain, and the curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy place.
- 34 You shall put the cover on the ark of the covenant in the most holy place.
- 35 You shall set the table outside the curtain and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table, and you shall put the table on the north side.
- 36 You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns and of fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework.
- 37 You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.”

INTRODUCTION

On Sundays, it is the sacred time set aside for believers to come together to worship God. But after we have praised God and heard the preached Word, when we leave the church, is that it? Some may feel that God's presence is only in the church but not in the people. Why? Some people talk and act just like those in the world when they are outside of the church building.

In today's lesson, we explore God's desire to dwell with God's people wherever they go so a tabernacle was built.

How do you view the sincerity of church people? Do you feel it is important to have God's presence wherever you go? Why? Why not?

BIBLE STORY

Exodus, chapters 25 through 27, gives us details of the free-will offerings for the ark, bread of presence, the golden lampstand, and the tabernacle, with instructions for their construction. God's presence is made known to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. But they had to travel to Canaan, and God would go with them. God dwelt amongst the people. God's love and desire to be in relationship with the people was so great until God desired to be in the midst of the people.

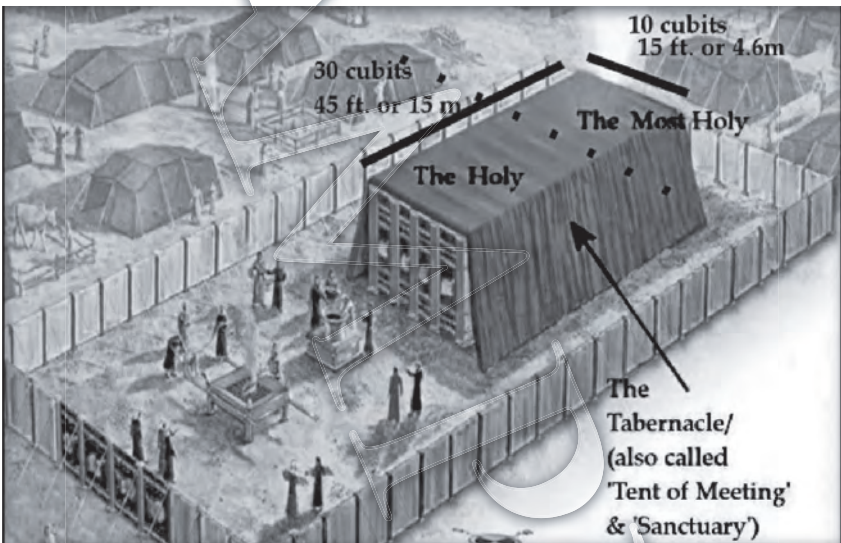
The Israelites had escaped Egypt but took their captors' valuables before they left. The people freely offered the items and furnishings for the sanctuary. God gave Moses the blueprint for the construction (25:8 – 9). The sanctuary was a holy place, but the tabernacle in verse 9 was a dwelling-place. The tabernacle stood as a 'dwelling' to represent God's co-dwelling with God's people. God does meet God's people and reveal Godself to them. The ark contained the law to regulate God's people's lives.

There is a tendency for the descriptions of the tabernacle and its furniture to be repeated (26:1). This supports its importance. The inner sanctuary was to be marked off by a single veil (curtain) embroidered with cherubim, the symbol of the divine presence, and in this, only the ark of the covenant and mercy seat were housed (26:31). The altar for the burnt offering was to be made in accordance with 20:21 – 26 and a hollow box filled with earth (dirt).

The horns were regarded as the most sacred part, and it was to those that the

sacrificial blood applied, and for those criminals who held out hope of refuge if they took hold of them. In chapter 27, verses 9 through 21, the details of the court of the tabernacle and the burning light are given. The burning light, supplied by the people and tended to by the priests, symbolized God's presence, and the people's resulting understanding of this. God's presence is with us today through Jesus Christ. Jesus became flesh and "lived" among us (John 1:14). Jesus continues to "live" on the earth through us.

What symbols in the tabernacle represent God's presence? What symbols in your church represent God's presence? What impact does God's presence make in the lives of God's people?



Watch the video "Heaven and Earth" at bibleproject.com for a visual summary of the role of the tabernacle.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/heaven-and-earth/>

LIFE APPLICATION

The Israelites had the tabernacle, where the presence of God dwelt. Today, we have churches with symbols representing God's presence with us. We, the body of Christ, are the church, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

If we were to ask your friends or family, "How do you know God's presence dwells within _____ (your name)?", what would be their response?

Each of us needs to strive to live a holy, consecrated life. It is a spiritual process but with consistent worship, studying the Word, prayer, fasting, and discipline we can do it. What is hindering you? What can you do to overcome it?

This past Wednesday marked the beginning of Lent. Lent is a time to reflect on the life, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus. Lent is a 40-day season (not counting Sundays) marked by repentance, fasting, reflection, and ultimately celebration. The 40-day period represents Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness, where he fasted and overcame temptation. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Lent is a time to ask for forgiveness and repent. It is a time to practice self-control through fasting. Lent is a time to serve by giving alms (offerings). It is a season of mourning for the sufferings of Christ on Good Friday, and anticipation for his victory over sin and death on Easter Sunday. Lent is a time to seek the Lord in prayer by reading sacred scripture.

How will you observe the season of Lent this year? It is not too late to start your Lenten journey!

SUMMARY

The Israelites had been delivered from slavery in Egypt and now were on the way to the Promised Land. Their stop at Mount Sinai was necessary. God gave instructions for building a holy tent, a transportable Mount Sinai, which communicates God's intention to dwell with the covenant people. We cannot travel in life without God's presence to guide and protect us. The more we lean on God, the more likely God will lead us in the right direction. God is the perfect travel companion.

- ❖ How can we stay connected to God?
- ❖ What steps can we take to ensure we are on the right path with God?
- ❖ The Israelites followed God's instructions for building the tabernacle; why is it important to follow God's instructions?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: God, you are always present with us! Help us follow your plan and instructions. May we feel your presence with us even more during this Lenten journey. Amen.

*Hymn: "Yes, God is Real"
(AMEC Hymnal #361)*

The Ordination of Priests

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 29:1-37; Leviticus 8:1-36

Focus Scripture: Exodus 29:1-9, 35-37

KEY VERSE: The priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons. Exodus 29:9b

WORDS TO KNOW

CONSECRATE: to set apart for a special purpose

EPHOD: the official garment of the high priest, which was later worn by the ordinary priests

BLEMISH: a defect whether physical, spiritual, or mental

UNLEAVENED: without leaven or yeast

VESTMENTS: robes worn by clergy or choirs during worship services

DIADEM: the crown of a high priest

ATONEMENT: to offer a sacrifice to amend for a wrong or injury

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 29:1-9, 35-37

- 1 “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to serve me as priests. Take one young bull and two rams without blemish,
 - 2 and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour.
 - 3 You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket and bring the bull and the two rams.
 - 4 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.
 - 5 Then you shall take the vestments and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece and gird him with the decorated band of the ephod,
 - 6 and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy diadem on the turban.
 - 7 You shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.
 - 8 Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them,
 - 9 and you shall gird them, Aaron and his sons, with sashes and tie headdresses on them, and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons.”
-
- 35 “Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, just as I have commanded you; through seven days you shall ordain them.
 - 36 Also every day you shall offer a bull as a purification offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it, to consecrate it.
 - 37 Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.”

INTRODUCTION

Everyone wants to feel connected to others, particularly when the group has a common purpose. We all have gifts. It is particularly meaningful when we can use our gifts with others for special purposes and for purposes bigger than our own personal needs or desires. Every person needs to feel like they are accepted to give them a sense of connection. When we are connected, it gives us a sense of purpose.

In today's lesson, we explore the role of priests as the ones chosen as the connection between the people and God.

What emotions do you experience when you are around people with whom you have a connection? How do connections strengthen bonds?

BIBLE STORY

Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8 give parallel accounts of the consecration of the priests. Consecration is the setting aside of persons or things for special use and purpose. God had originally intended that God's chosen people be a nation of priests with both the nation as a whole and each individual dealing directly with God. This did not happen because of the sin of the people. Their sins separated them from God. They could not approach a holy God. God appointed priests from the tribe of Levi and set up a system of sacrifices to help the people approach God.

God forgave their sins if specific sacrificial offerings were given by the priests on their behalf. These sacrifices were God's way of maintaining close connection between God and God's people. God would once again offer a direct relationship with God for anyone who would come to God. In the meantime, the priests were the people's representatives before God.

Moses had to consecrate the priests. Although all the men from the tribe of Levi were dedicated to service to God, only Aaron's descendants could be priests. These priests had to be cleansed and dedicated before they could help the people do the same. The priests were: 1) washed to symbolize purification (Ex. 29:1 – 4); 2) they were clothed with special garments (Ex. 28:1 – 43; 29:5 – 9); 3) they were anointed (Ex. 29:5 – 25); and 4) there were sacrifices for the atonement and consecration.

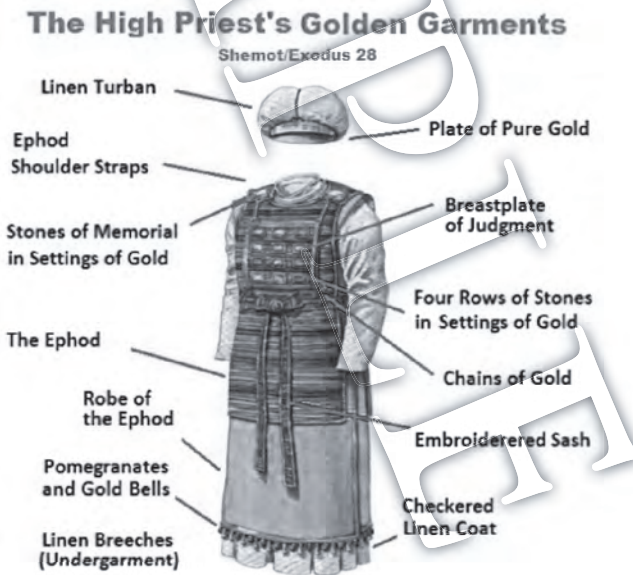
The high priest, Aaron, was distinctly different from ordinary priests.

Aaron was anointed before the consecration sacrifices were slain in contrast to the priests, in whose case the application of the blood preceded the anointing. Jesus Christ, the sinless one, required no preparation for the anointing oil (representing the Holy Spirit). Aaron, the high priest, had the anointing oil poured upon his head, representing Christ's immeasurable fullness of the Spirit (Heb. 1:9).

Why did God appoint Aaron as the high priest? Do you think the other priests' roles were less significant than Aaron's? Why? Why not?

LIFE APPLICATION

Aaron and his sons were consecrated to serve God as priests. They wore distinctive clothing that identified them as leaders. The ephod was a short linen garment of the same material as the veil of the tabernacle and joined at the shoulder, with two open sides bound together by an embroidered girdle. The robe was the garment beneath the ephod. There were bells attached so the sound of them was an announcement of the continuation of the ministry of intercession to make sure the priest did not die while ministering in the tabernacle. The turban was itself crowned by the plate of gold which proclaimed *Holy to the Lord*.



In the AME Church, during worship services and special programs, the leaders wear specific types of clothing to identify the specific role God has appointed them to do. Try to name as many as you can.

AME CHURCH LEADERSHIP

LEADER'S POSITION:	GARMENTS:

Aaron and his sons had to be consecrated before serving as priests. What does it mean for someone to be consecrated and expected to exemplify holiness? What leadership skills should we expect from leaders? Do you feel the AME Church leaders model godly behavior? Why? Why not?

SUMMARY

God chose Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. They were consecrated and anointed to represent the Israelites before God. Within the body of Christ, there are diverse roles. But each role is vital to the building up of God's kingdom. God values each person. We cannot reject someone who belongs in God's family. By demonstrating love and respect, we say by our actions, "All are welcome and belong in God's family."

Do you recall a time when you did not feel like you belonged in the church? What gifts do you possess that can be used in serving others? (spiritual assessment test: <https://s7d9.scene7.com/is/content/LifeWayChristianResources/Spiritual%5FGifts%5FAssessmentpdf.pdf>)

- ❖ Have you ever worn a uniform in church or for other reasons? What is the purpose of the uniform? Did you feel any different when you wore it?
- ❖ Has anyone prayed a special prayer for you before you began a task or project? What difference did the prayer make in you and/or the special project?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for calling us and giving us special gifts. We are prepared to use our gifts in service to others. Anoint us to do the work. Amen.

*Hymn: "I Am Thine, O Lord"
(AMEC Hymnal #283)*

Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Lesson Scripture: Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13

Focus Scripture: Leviticus 1:3-17

KEY VERSE: The priest shall turn the rest into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord. Leviticus 1:9

WORDS TO KNOW

BLEMISH: a defect whether physical, spiritual, or mental

ATONEMENT: to offer a sacrifice to amend for a wrong or injury

FLAYED: to peel the skin off a corpse or carcass

SUET: the hard white fat on the kidneys and loins of animals

ENTRAILS: the animal's intestines or internal organs, especially when removed or exposed

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LEVITICUS 1:3-17

- 3** “If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you shall offer a male without blemish; you shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, for acceptance on your behalf before the Lord.
- 4** You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable on your behalf as atonement for you.
- 5** The bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall offer the blood, dashing the blood against all sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.
- 6** The burnt offering shall be flayed and cut up into its parts.
- 7** The sons of the priest Aaron shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire.
- 8** Aaron’s sons the priests shall arrange the parts, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar,
- 9** but its entrails and its legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall turn the rest into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.
- 10** If your gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, your offering shall be a male without blemish.
- 11** It shall be slaughtered on the north side of the altar before the Lord, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar.
- 12** It shall be cut up into its parts, with its head and its suet, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar,
- 13** but the entrails and the legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall offer the rest and turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.
- 14** If your offering to the Lord is a burnt offering of birds, you shall choose your offering from turtledoves or pigeons.
- 15** The priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and turn it into smoke on the altar, and its blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar.
- 16** He shall remove its entrails close to its tail feathers and throw it at the east side of the altar, in the place for ashes.
- 17** He shall tear it open by its wings without severing it. Then the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.”

INTRODUCTION

Relationships can be complicated. Siblings may not speak to one another. Parents may divorce after many years of marriage. The police and community can have strained relationships. Pastors and lay members may disagree on church protocol. The choir may refuse to sing with the new pianist. Teachers can mistreat certain students.

There are many reasons why relationships in our society are fractured. People do not love one another enough to make sacrifices to maintain core relationships. Relationships require the sacrifice of self.

In today's lesson, God's people are instructed to offer burnt sacrifices to maintain and restore their relationship with the Lord.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being extremely difficult), how difficult is it to sacrifice on behalf of others who we care about? Why are sacrifices necessary?

BIBLE STORY

Leviticus is a book to guide the priests and Levites, detailing their duties in worship, and a guidebook of holy living for the Israelites. The Israelites had escaped slavery in Egypt and now they were at the foot of Mount Sinai. God used the opportunity to teach the people how to live as holy people. The book of Leviticus has two sections: 1) Worshipping a Holy God (1:1 – 17:16) and 2) Living a Holy Life (18:1 – 27:34).

In today's lesson, God gave Moses instructions to share with the people regarding offerings. There are five offerings the Israelites made to God: 1) Burnt Offering (Lev. 1 – voluntary); 2) Grain Offering (Lev. 2 – voluntary); 3) Offering of Well-Being (Lev. 3 – voluntary); 4) Sin Offering (Lev. 4 – required); and 5) Guilt Offering (Lev. 5 – required). Our focus will be on burnt offerings from chapter one.

Each person offered a gift to God by sacrificing it on the altar. In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was the only way to approach God and restore the relationship with God. Sacrifices were given in praise, worship, and thanksgiving, as well as for forgiveness and fellowship. The animal sacrifice symbolically took the sinner's place and paid the penalty for sin. Its death represented one life given so that another life could be saved. Ultimately, Jesus sacrificed his life for our sins so we could be saved.

It was called a burnt offering because all the flesh was consumed on the altar. The burnt offering was the most important sacrifice, but it was voluntary. The animal had to be a male without blemish. The person offering the animal takes it to the door of the tent of the meeting, places or presses his hand on its head, makes a confession, and slays it. The animal is flayed and divided into pieces according to its joints. The inwards and legs were washed. The priest collected the blood, sprinkled it on the altar, and burned all the flesh. This is a priestly function but no one eats any part of the sacrifice. But the hide of the animal goes to the officiating priest.

The person who offered the sacrifice was consecrated and completely dedicated to God through the ritual. The burnt offering did make atonement, which means “to cover over.” Sin must be covered with atoning blood. God is satisfied in the offerings of God’s people, and it is a “pleasing odor to the Lord.” The sacrifice of a sheep or a goat is the same as that of the bull. When those who were poor offered a bird sacrifice, the ritual was much simpler but similar.

How does a person connect with a holy God? What can you voluntarily offer as a sacrifice to God? Why do you think the sacrifice had to be unblemished? What does it mean to sacrifice your best for God?

LIFE APPLICATION

Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ required a sacrifice for reconciliation. The sacrifice came through Jesus offering his life for the forgiveness of our sins. What are people willing to sacrifice for Christ? Did you give up anything during this Lenten season? How has the experience of making this sacrifice during the Lenten fast been for you?

What else might God be calling you to give up to serve God wholeheartedly.

Daily, how can you devote yourself wholeheartedly to serving God?

SUMMARY

The sacrificial system that God created reflected the future sacrifice of Christ for our sins. The offerings given were only a temporary covering of sins. Jesus' shed blood washed away our sins forever. God had a plan for the reconciliation of all humanity into a right relationship with him. Therefore, we can devote ourselves wholeheartedly to serving God in every way possible.

This week pray and seek God's guidance in serving others for him. This lesson emphasizes holiness. God is holy compared to God's people. God's people are to be holy compared to others. The sacrifice restores right relationship.

- ❖ What might it have felt like to lay your hands on an animal that would die for your sins? How does this relate to Jesus' sacrifice for us?

- ❖ What does the role of the priest say to us about leadership in the church?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

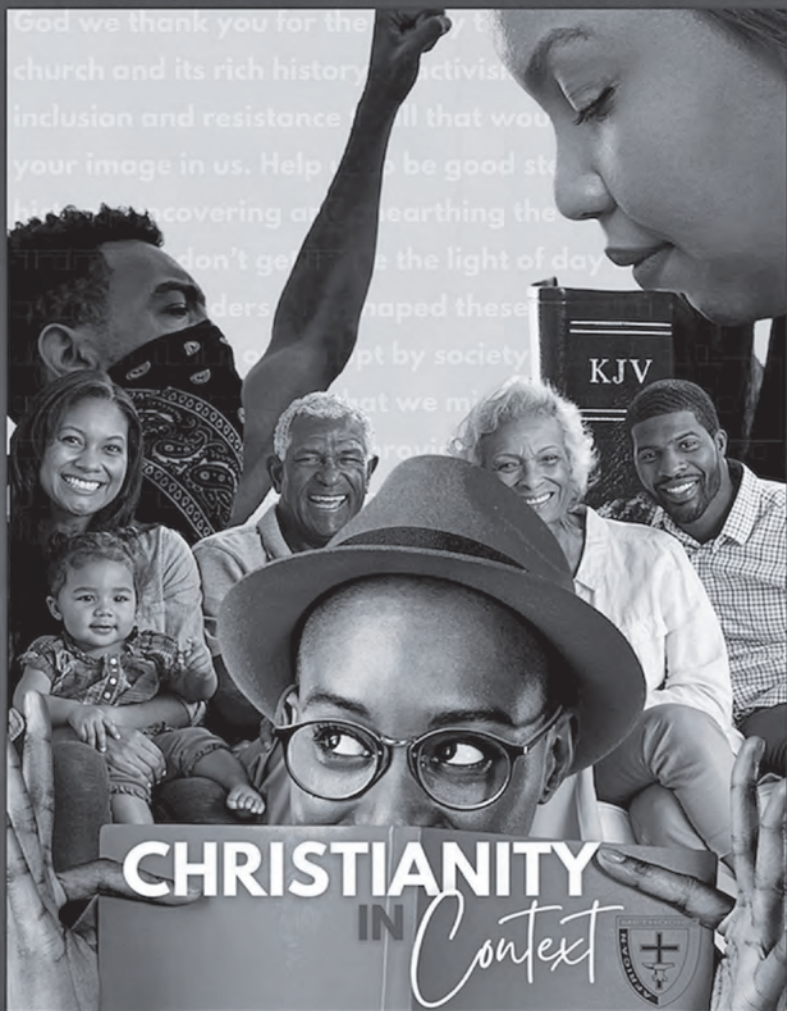
Prayer: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice for the world's sins. I am committed to serving you and others. Let my life be a sweet aroma to you. I pray for the leadership in the church (give their names and their leadership roles). God, give them everything they need to be the leaders you have called them to be in your church. In the name of your perfect gift, I pray. Amen.

Hymn: "Jesus Paid It All"
(AMEC Hymnal #271)

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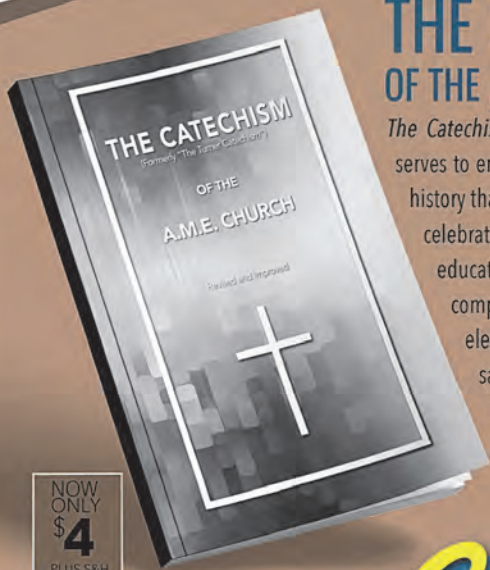
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