

JUDAH, FROM ISAIAH TO EXILE

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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



The Ministry of Isaiah

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-13; 7:1-7; 20:1-6; 38:1-22

Focus Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8; 38:1-5

KEY VERSE: I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”
Isaiah 6:8

VOCABULARY

SERAPHS: *angelic beings considered to belong to the highest order in Christian angelology. Seraphs are often associated with light, ardor, and purity.*

PIVOTS: *the central point, pins, or shaft on which a mechanism turns or oscillates.*

WOE: *refers to great sorrow, distress, or misery. It can also describe things that cause such feelings, like troubles or hardships.*

IMPLORE: *to beg someone earnestly or desperately to do something. It is often used to convey a sense of urgency or deep emotion.*

AMTZ: *Pronounced: AY-moz*

HEZEKIAH: *Pronounced: hez-uh-KAI-uh*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 6:1-8; 38:1-5

- 1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty, and the hem of his robe filled the temple.
- 2 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.
- 3 And one called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."
- 4 The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.
- 5 And I said, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"
- 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.
- 7 The seraph touched my mouth with it and said, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."
- 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

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- 1 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover."
 - 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord:
 - 3 "Remember now, O Lord, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.
 - 4 Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah:
 - 5 "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life."

INTRODUCTION

The fall quarter invites us to discover and appreciate how God, through prophets and other leaders, helped and guided the people of Judah so that we may see God's hand in our lives and all human affairs. Unit one offers four lessons that give some spiritual reasons for the nation Israel's decline, seen mainly through the prophetic ministry of Isaiah and two faithful kings, Hezekiah and Josiah.

All of us have experienced anxiety and stress. It is how we handle them that matters. What causes you to feel anxiety and stress? Who do you turn to in a time of crisis? How do you handle the impact of the unjust laws enacted by people in power?

In today's lesson, we explore the role of a prophet in the Old Testament. Isaiah, son of Amoz, whose name means "The Lord saves," was a prophet of God. His ministry began in 740 B.C., when King Uzziah died (6:1). Isaiah was married and had two sons (7:3; 8:3). He spent most of his life in Jerusalem. Isaiah enjoyed his most significant influence under King Hezekiah. Isaiah warned the people of Judah that their sins would bring punishment from God. But God afterward would redeem them.

BIBLE STORY

In chapter six, we see that Isaiah received a unique commission from God. The people had mocked the "Holy One of Israel" (5:19), so God commissioned Isaiah to call them to account. King Uzziah reigned from 792 to 740 B.C. and was a godly and powerful king, but he did have flaws. He burned incense in the temple, so God struck King Uzziah with leprosy until his death.

Isaiah had a vision in the temple. He perceived the Lord seated on the throne (6:1). The seraphs were angelic beings with six wings who could not gaze directly at God. They worshiped God because of God's holiness. The temple shook and became smoke-filled (6:4). Isaiah panicked because anyone who saw God expected to die immediately. He acknowledged his sinfulness and that of all the people.

The act of the seraph touching Isaiah's lips with a live coal from the altar was to cleanse and atone for his sins. Isaiah was now prepared to be God's prophet. He heard the voice of God asking for those who would represent

the triune God. Isaiah's response, "Here am I; send me!"

As God's spokesperson, Isaiah was given messages from God to share. In the case of King Hezekiah's grave illness, God told Isaiah to inform him to prepare to die (38:1). But Hezekiah humbly approached God in prayer to spare his life. He had been a faithful, devoted servant of God. Hezekiah wept as he waited on God (38:2-3). Isaiah received a message from God for Hezekiah. God heard Hezekiah's prayer and tears. God promised him fifteen more years of life.

How is Isaiah's call and commissioning connected to Hezekiah's answered prayer? Why is it important to listen to and obey God?

LIFE APPLICATION

Isaiah's call was big and dramatic! God calls all of us; but, our call may not be as dramatic as Isaiah's. It may come to us over time, maybe as we learn more about ourselves and even as people see things in us that we do not see in ourselves. Rev. Dr. Katie G. Cannon was a famous African American woman preacher and theologian who was the first African American woman to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA. (She also was the famous actor Nick Cannon's aunt.) She once said, "Do the work that your soul must have." Dr. Cannon was talking about calling. We must discern our calling. To discern means to figure out. We all must figure out what God is calling us to do. God clearly saw that Isaiah could be a good prophet even if Isaiah did not think much of himself in the presence and glory of God in the temple. **Use the space below to think about what you see in yourself and what others might positively see in you.**

What I see in myself

Physical _____

Intellectual _____

Emotional _____

Spiritual _____

What others see in me

Physical _____

Intellectual _____

Emotional _____

Spiritual _____

SUMMARY

God's call to Isaiah involved a vision of the Lord, seraphs, smoke, an earthquake, and a hot coal. It was enough to make Isaiah think he was doomed. However, God had a plan to use Isaiah as a prophet. God asked who would go for them, and Isaiah responded that he would go. God used Isaiah in various ways, but always to get his message heard. For instance, Hezekiah had become ill and received a message from God through Isaiah that he needed to prepare to die. Hezekiah's response was to pray, cry out to God, and weep bitterly. God was merciful toward Hezekiah and told Isaiah to inform Hezekiah that his life would be extended by fifteen years.

How has God revealed Godself to you recently? If you were to share your story about what God has done for you with others, how could it influence them?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: God, we honor and worship you. I am available to be used. When you call my name, I will listen and obey. Amen.

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

Hezekiah Leads the People Back to God

Lesson Scripture: 2 Chronicles 30:1-27

Focus Scripture: 2 Chronicles 30:1-9, 26-27

KEY VERSE: There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon son of King David of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 30:26

VOCABULARY

SANCTIFIED: *to dedicate; make holy.*

REMNANT: *remaining portion.*

DESOLATION: *a waste.*

EPHRAIM: *Pronounced: EF-rim*

MANASSEH: *Pronounced: Muh-NASS-uh*

HEZEKIAH: *Pronounced: hez-uh-KAI-uh*

ASSYRIA: *Pronounced: Uh-SEER-ee-uh*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 2 CHRONICLES 30:1-9, 26-27

SAMPLE

- 1 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord the God of Israel.
- 2 For the king and his officials and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the Passover in the second month
- 3 (for they could not keep it at its proper time because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem).
- 4 The plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly.
- 5 So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the Lord the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it in great numbers as prescribed.
- 6 So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his officials, as the king had commanded, saying, "O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.
- 7 Do not be like your ancestors and your kindred, who were faithless to the Lord God of their ancestors, so that he made them a desolation, as you see.
- 8 Do not now be stiff-necked as your ancestors were, but yield yourselves to the Lord and come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever, and serve the Lord your God, so that his fierce anger may turn away from you.
- 9 For as you return to the Lord, your kindred and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him."

.....

- 26 There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon son of King David of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.
- 27 Then the priests and the Levites stood up and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; their prayer came to his holy dwelling in heaven.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 Pandemic was probably the greatest crisis many of us have ever experienced. COVID-19 started in one part of the world and spread quickly throughout every continent. No one was prepared for what was to come. From the youngest to the oldest, people began to get sick and go to hospitals. There was no cure, so millions of people died. The nations' leaders had to constantly give updates to keep the people as calm as possible. The cure rested in the hands of scientists who worked tirelessly to find out how to stop COVID-19 from spreading. After a lengthy period, a vaccination was created. While many still contract the disease, the deaths have been reduced greatly.

During crises, people want strong national leadership to help restore society. What types of leadership promote stability? In today's lesson, Hezekiah brought stability by guiding the nation back to the Lord through worship and by reinstating the Passover.

BIBLE STORY

Second Chronicles continues the history of First Chronicles. It tells the stories of the various kings—what they did right and mistakes that they made as well.

David's son, Solomon, was made king. Solomon built the magnificent temple in Jerusalem. He enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous reign of 40 years that made him world famous. After he died, his son Rehoboam became king but was very immature. His immaturity caused the kingdom to be divided.

In Judah, there are a few good kings and many evil ones. Eventually, their idolatry led to God's punishment. The nation was conquered, and the people taken captive by the Babylonians. The temple was destroyed. When Hezekiah ascended to the throne, he immediately took action to restore the temple, eliminate all idolatry, and reinstitute worship of God.

Hezekiah desired to make a covenant with the Lord (29:10). First, the temple had to be cleansed of idols and sanctified. Then, Hezekiah approached God and offered sacrifices. Sacrifices were God's appointed way of approaching God and restoring a right relationship with him. Hezekiah's sin offering was given to ask for God's forgiveness for

unintentional sins (29:21). Afterwards, Hezekiah and everyone sang praises and worshiped God.

Hezekiah took the initiative to reinstate the Passover celebration (30:1). Although it was usually held the previous month, circumstances allowed it to be celebrated a month later (Num. 9:10-11; 30:2-3). Passover commemorates God sparing Israel's firstborn sons in Egypt, marked by the blood of a lamb over their doors (Exo. 12:23). All other firstborns were killed during this plague, after which Pharaoh freed the Israelites. This yearly celebration served as a reminder of God's redemption, and Hezekiah's efforts indicated a significant change of heart, as it had been over 200 years since such a celebration occurred in Jerusalem.

Hezekiah was a king who dedicated himself to God and wanted to help his nation grow spiritually (30:6-9). He sent letters throughout Judah and Israel, asking everyone to turn back to God. He urged them not to be stubborn, but to surrender themselves to the Lord. We show our submission to God by obeying God and giving our bodies, minds, wills, and emotions to God. We need to be guided and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Only then can we deny our selfish desires.

Who did God choose to rebuild God's relationship with the people? How did King Hezekiah improve their relationship with God? How can we restore our relationship with God after we have disobeyed? What spiritual practices can help show that we are genuinely trying to change?

LIFE APPLICATION

Being a leader is a privilege. As a leader, you get to make a difference. Being a leader also is an important burden, carrying much responsibility. As we see in our lesson today, good leadership that honors and follows the will of God can be the difference between success and failure.

Name some good leaders (They can be in the church, community, or government). What do you think makes them good leaders? What qualities do they possess? What qualities are godly?

IF I WERE IN CHARGE...

Name the first 10 things you would do if you were in charge. First you must determine what you would be in charge of (the congregation,

school, your community club, scout troop, the city, state, country, etc.). Then, share what you would do and why. Be prepared to defend your list and answer the questions of others.

1. _____ 6. _____
2. _____ 7. _____
3. _____ 8. _____
4. _____ 9. _____
5. _____ 10. _____

SUMMARY

Some crises occur outside our control. When we face troubling times, our trust in God can sustain us. We can pray that those in authority do what is best for all. But no matter what they do, our God will sustain us and provide guidance. Our faith will increase because we know who is in control. These facts should propel us to worship God. There are many ways to worship God, so worship as God leads you.

What does “worship” mean to you? How can you demonstrate your feelings about God?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Think about and name some of things that we worship as idols. (An idol can be anything that we give more attention and love to than God.)

Prayer: God, forgive us for worshiping idols. We are committed to obeying and worshiping you alone, Amen.

*Hymn: “What a Wonderful Change in My Life”
(AMEC Hymnal #403)*

What Hilkiah Found in the Temple

Lesson Scripture: 2 Chronicles 34:1-33

Focus Scripture: 2 Chronicles 34:15-22, 26-27

SAMPLE

KEY VERSE: Hilkiah said to the secretary Shaphan, “I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord,” and Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. 2 Chronicles 34:15

VOCABULARY

PENITENT: *feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong; repentant.*

HUMBLED: *to be meek, not proud.*

AHIKAM: *Pronounced: uh-HAI-kam*

HILKIAH: *Pronounced: hihl-KAI-uh*

SHAPHAN: *Pronounced: SHAY-fuhn*

HULDAH: *Pronounced: HUL-duh*

TOKHATH: *Pronounced: To-kah'-ath*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 2 CHRONICLES 34:15-22, 26-27

SAMPLE

- 15** Hilkiah said to the secretary Shaphan, “I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord,” and Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan.
- 16** Shaphan brought the book to the king and further reported to the king, “All that was committed to your servants they are doing.
- 17** They have emptied out the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workers.”
- 18** The secretary Shaphan informed the king, “The priest Hilkiah has given me a book.” Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.
- 19** When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.
- 20** Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, the secretary Shaphan, and the king’s servant Asaiah,
- 21** “Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found, for the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us is great, because our ancestors did not keep the word of the Lord, to act in accordance with all that is written in this book.”
- 22** So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to the prophet Huldah, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (who lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect.
-
- 26** “But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Regarding the words that you have heard,
- 27** because your heart was penitent and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord.’”

INTRODUCTION

Ezra wrote Second Chronicles to bring the nation back to God by reminding them of their past. Only by following God will they prosper. Judah had suffered because of its idolatry. There had been a history of corrupt and idolatrous kings. But there were a few good kings, and for a time, there was revival. It did not last because the people returned to their idolatry, which led to chaos, destruction, and captivity.

Ezra wrote this book in 430 B.C., recording events from Solomon's reign (970 B.C.) to the beginning of the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.). The most quoted verse from this book is 2 Chronicles 7:14. In today's lesson, we will explore the impact of Hilkiah's discovery of the Book of the Law.

Remembering practices and traditions that help establish our identity as a person, family, race, or culture is vital. What practices and traditions do you and your family celebrate? Based on our practices and traditions, how can others know we are Christians and belong to the AME Church?

BIBLE STORY

When he became king, Josiah was eight years old. He reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. as one of Judah's best kings. Josiah sought the Lord. He obeyed God and purged Judah and Jerusalem of idols. Josiah ordered Shaphan and Joah to repair the temple. While removing money to restore the temple, the priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law. The Mosaic law was lost during Manasseh's reign of terror (2 Kgs. 22:1—23:30). Hilkiah gave the Book of the Law to Shaphan, the king's secretary. Shaphan immediately reported the discovery to Josiah and read it aloud.

The laws of God that Hilkiah found were probably in the book of Deuteronomy, which most likely had been lost during the reign of the evil kings. Josiah tearing his clothes represented his grief over the people's neglect of God's laws. Now that it had been found, Josiah realized that drastic changes had to be made to bring the nation back in line with God's commands. He desired to be obedient to God, so he asked the priest to seek what God desired for him to do (34:19-20). They went to the prophetess Huldah (34:22).

God declared that a disaster would come because the people had forsaken him and offered to other gods (34:25). Once he heard the Word of God, Josiah responded with repentance and humility, promising to follow God's commands so his life would be spared (34:27-28). God is merciful and kind. Josiah proclaimed a celebration of the Passover as a reminder of God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt.

How did Josiah prove his love and obedience to God? What significant celebration did Josiah reinstitute? Why? How can our connection to past events bring unity?

LIFE APPLICATION

A lot of times, we are fascinated by the new and latest things. They get us excited. They become the talk and are the things that are trending on social media. Some of this is true even in the church and with the ways we worship. New is great; but, we should also pay attention to the things that have been handed down to us as tradition. *Do you ever wonder why we do what we do as a congregation? What do we do differently from other congregations? How do the things that we do shape who we are? What is a love feast? Is it something that you practice in your church? What other things do we do in church that make you curious and want to know why or where that practice comes from? Why do these things even matter? Who can you ask to get answers to these questions? Make yourself a plan to investigate these practices.*

SUMMARY

When we continually disobey God, we can expect punishment. The prior kings, Manasseh and his son Amon, did what was evil in God's sight. If people neglect practices or traditions that have helped establish their identity, they lose a sense of meaning and purpose. When Hilkiah found the Book of the Law, it opened the path to restoring Israel's worshipful practices. The celebration of the Passover was a new beginning for all.

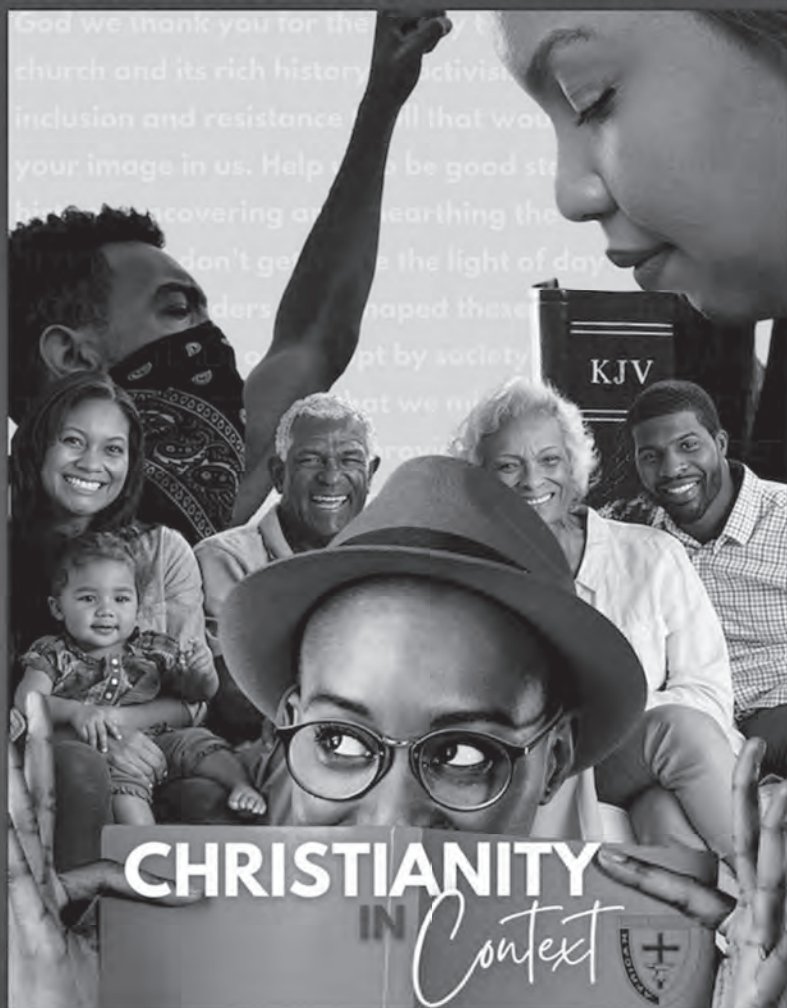
How can we incorporate diverse spiritual practices in our daily lives in worship of God? What spiritual practices do you already use? How open are you to trying other spiritual practices?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: God, forgive us for turning away from your Word. We are fully committed to obeying your commands and worshiping with our whole hearts. Amen.

Hymn: "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"
(AMEC Hymnal #75)

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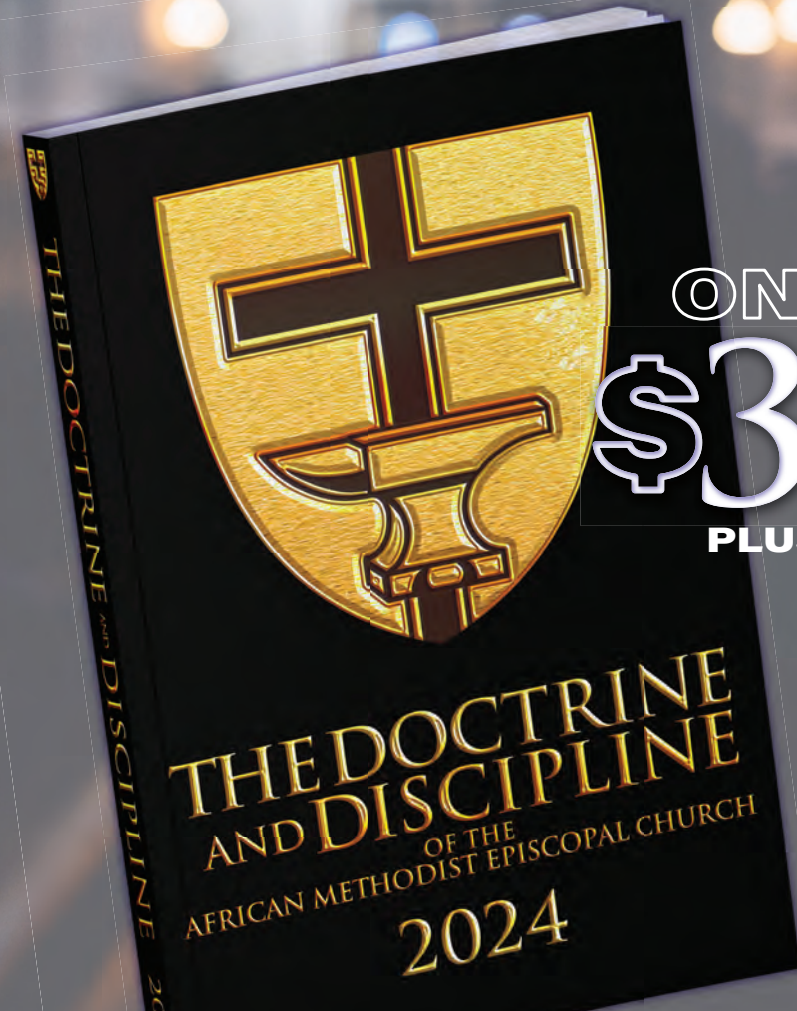
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