



LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES

JUDAH, FROM ISAIAH TO EXILE

LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**Vol. 62
Fall Quarter 2025**

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

**No. 4
Price \$5.50**

Ages 18-Up

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LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY – USPS 006 – 820

Volume 62, No. 4, September, October, November 2025. An official quarterly of the African Methodist Episcopal Church prepared by the AMEC Sunday School Union. Published quarterly by the AMEC Sunday School Union, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Copyright © 2025 by AMEC Sunday School Union.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Liberating Faith Studies Sunday School Quarterly, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212.

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Entered as Periodicals Postage Paid Matter, March 20, 1942, at the Post Office at Nashville, Tennessee, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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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Editor • Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce

— Lessons —

Rev. Dr. Linda E. Mouzon

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 A.M.E. 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.

A.M.E. Discipline

Hello, AME Church School Member!

Don't Forget to join us on Zoom and Facebook to facilitate our weekly Connectional Church School with teachers (lay and clergy) from around the AME Connection. They generously share their knowledge, talents, and expertise with a weekly average of 500 participants viewing via Zoom and 1500 on Facebook.

The blessings from the teachings of the virtual AME Connectional Church School have been immeasurable. We convene the Connectional Church School on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. EST. Join us! Zoom Meeting ID: 829 9325 1894. Visit our website- www.iamame.org- to find worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

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Thank you for purchasing *Liberating Faith Studies*. We are working every day to fulfill our mission to provide high quality resources to empower us to spread Jesus Christ's liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 1-7

Monday	Mark 1:1-8 (God Sends a Messenger)
Tuesday	Isaiah 7:1-7 (God Defends the Chosen People)
Wednesday	Isaiah 20:1-6 (God Warns of Coming Disaster)
Thursday	Matthew 11:1-6 (God Fulfills God's Promises)
Friday	Matthew 11:7-15 (God Works Through Unexpected Vessels)
Saturday	Psalms 145:1-12 (God Is Gracious and Merciful)
Sunday	Isaiah 6:1-8; 38:1-5 (God Strengthens Those God Calls)

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

ISAIAH 6:1-8; 38:1-5 (NRSV UE)

Isaiah 6:1-8

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!"

38:1-5

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

ISAIAH 6:1-8; 38:1-5 (KJV)

Isaiah 6:1-8

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

38:1-5

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

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.”

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord,

3 And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

KEY TERMS

- **Isaiah** – Salvation of the Lord.
- **Uzziah** – The Lord is my strength or tower.
- **Train** – The tail or end of a robe or garment; the longer the train the more important the person who wore it.
- **Seraphim** – Six winged, celestial beings who continually worship God.
- **Hezekiah** – God strengthens (derived from the verb (*hazaq*), to be strong, and (*yah*), the shortened name of the Lord).
- **Sennacherib** – Sin has replaced the brothers.

- **The Assyrian Empire** – A collection of united city-states in power from 900 B.C.E. to 600 B.C.E.; the empire stretched from Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) through Asia Minor.

“
Every *Liberating Faith*
adult lesson includes a
Sankofa section.”

INTRODUCTION

Every *Liberating Faith* adult lesson includes a **Sankofa** section. But have you ever thought about sankofa’s meaning and significance? A Twi word, *sankofa*, “Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyiri,” originates in Ghana’s Akan tribe. When put into action, sankofa encourages us to know our history (look back). And from what the past taught us, we will be enlightened about our future. Symbolizing sankofa, a bird with its head turned backwards, represents a quest for past knowledge leading to wisdom, a

desire to understand how our roots equip us for the future. This notion of going back, reflecting on the past, to build a better future underlies this fall's quarter. Prophets admonished Israel to remember God and their history with God. Hopefully, looking back will remind Israel of God's promises and the consequences of their fidelity and/or infidelity. Let us join Israel and Judah on their reflective journey. Let us go back – let us remember what God has done so we can better understand what God is doing and will do.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah believes this part of his prophecy happened during the time of King Uzziah's death. Some scholars think the events in Isaiah 6 happened before events in the first five chapters because it talks about Isaiah's call. The same year Uzziah, Judah's king, died, Isaiah says he saw the Lord. Uzziah was a good king, but his successes made him want to do things his own way instead of following God's rules. Uzziah burned incense in the temple – that was the priest's job. For this act, Uzziah was struck with leprosy, which he had until he died. Ironically, it was in the same temple

where Uzziah sinned, that Isaiah saw God's glory. What Uzziah could not see with his natural eyes, Isaiah's spiritual eyes described in detail. Isaiah saw the Lord wearing a royal robe (about 180 feet long) so big that it filled Solomon's Temple. And seraphim, six-winged creatures with four faces, kept worshipping God. They repeatedly said, "Holy, holy, holy." This three-word phrase, called the *trihagion* in Judaism, means that God

is completely holy. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The seraphim's declaration of God's holiness was so powerful that the temple doors shook, and smoke filled the temple because of the Lord's glory. After seeing God's incredible power, Isaiah realized how small and sinful he was. Isaiah admitted that his words were dirty. An angel with a

burning coal from God's altar had the cure Isaiah needed. The burning coal purified Isaiah's speech. Now free from sin, Isaiah answered God's question, "Who will go for me?" with a "Yes! I will." So, God sent Isaiah to tell Israel to turn away from their sins. This dangerous mission, according to Jewish tradition, eventually led to Isaiah's death.

This notion of going back, reflecting on the past, to build a better future underlies this fall's quarter.

Isaiah 38:1-5

Hezekiah was a good king who did what was right in God's sight (2 Chronicles 29:2). Under his leadership, the priest and Levites cleansed and repaired the temple. Aware that Judah's ancestors failed to follow the covenant and that these treacherous actions led to God's anger, Hezekiah renewed ritual worship. Priests offered purification and burnt offerings, and the Levites played cymbals, harps, and lyres based on directions given by Gad, the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet (2 Chronicles 29:25). And Hezekiah directed the Levites to sing praises. Going a step further, Hezekiah decided to reinstitute the Passover celebration for all of Israel. The celebration was so large there were not enough sanctified priests to present the burnt offerings. After the Passover, Judah continued to destroy idols. Priests and Levites were restored to their sacred duties, and offerings were made to the Lord. Despite all of Hezekiah's devotion and religious reforms, God allowed Sennacherib, king of Assyria, to invade Judah. Hezekiah listened to wise counsel. He stopped the waters from flowing outside of Judah, rebuilt defense walls and towers, and appointed military



Hezekiah and Isaiah led the nation in prayer and desperate pleas to God.

officials. Convinced of God's protection, Hezekiah told the people to be strong, steadfast, and fearless. Sennacherib sent messengers to taunt Judah and instill fear; they spoke against God. Hezekiah and Isaiah led the nation in prayer and desperate pleas to God. God responded by sending an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army that was poised to attack Judah. Given Hezekiah's devotion to God and fidelity to the covenant, it

seems surprising that Hezekiah became fatally ill. God told Hezekiah through Isaiah, "Set your house in order, for you are going to die and not live" (2 Kings 20:1b NASB). But true to previous interactions with God, Hezekiah cried out in prayer, "Please, Lord, just remember how I have walked before You wholeheartedly and in truth, and have done what is good

in Your sight!" (2 Kings 20:3 NASB). Hearing Hezekiah's prayer, God directed Isaiah to return to the king's chamber and tell him, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I am going to heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add fifteen years to your life" (2 Kings 20:5b-6a NASB). During this 15-year extended life period, Hezekiah became the father

of his successor – a son – Manasseh, an evil king who undid his father’s reforms and restored idol worship.

1. What would you do if you knew exactly how much longer you would live?
2. Why do you think children develop different religious beliefs than their parents?

SANKOFA


Maria W. Stewart, born a free person in 1803 in Hartford, Connecticut, became an outspoken abolitionist and women’s rights advocate. During the 19th century, women in the United States rarely had a voice; however, this did not deter Stewart. She became one of the first American women public speakers. A gifted writer, Stewart wrote and published a political manifesto, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build*, an article she wrote which was published by William Lloyd Garrison, a white abolitionist. She was an ardent believer that black people should challenge the corrupt oppressive system that included slavery. Her calls for black people to resist slavery, oppression, and exploitation were radical. God

orchestrated her steps so she would be prepared to speak for justice. Her faith was formulated and deepened at Boston’s African Baptist Church. Against the backdrop of Boston’s racist ideology, Stewart, like Isaiah, spoke out against injustice. Four of her public lectures were recorded. In 1879, Stewart died.

CASE STUDY

Michelle Alexander, a black writer and civil rights advocate, was born in 1967.

A graduate of Vanderbilt University, she later earned her Juris Doctorate from Stanford Law School. She has dedicated her career to advancing justice. As part of her commitment to racial justice, Alexander has brought national attention to racial profiling by law enforcement. Alexander has highlighted the negative effects of mass incarceration on black communities.



Against the backdrop of Boston’s racist ideology, Stewart, like Isaiah, spoke out against injustice.

One of her controversial positions was presented in an essay entitled *Why Hillary Clinton Doesn’t Deserve the Black Vote*. In that writing, she provided a list of policies Clinton endorsed that adversely impacted the black community. Alexander serves as a lightning rod where her words, like those of Isaiah, call for God’s justice.

LIFE APPLICATION

An idiom often heard, “Speak truth to power,” does not specify whose truth. People that God chooses to carry his messages must hear from God and say exactly and accurately what God says. God’s messengers may have inexplainable visions and glimpses of the Lord. While these visualizations magnify God’s awesomeness, they are not given for one’s own enjoyment or enlightenment. Instead, what matters most is that whatever message God gives you to say, you deliver it. Isaiah did this – he gave warnings, good news, and judgments because God’s spirit was on him. God’s spirit lives in you, so what is it God is directing you to say?

Questions

1. What prophetic voices exist today? (This is not future telling. Israel’s prophets speak to the people about God and to God about the people.)
2. How do you envision God?
3. Where did you see Jesus in this lesson?
4. How will you apply what you learned to your life?

“People that God chooses to carry his messages must hear from God and say exactly and accurately what God says.”

SUMMARY

Prophetic voices still speak long past the life of the person who uttered the words. Isaiah dates the time of his prophecy to the sixth century BC. His words are still read, memorized, and shared to this day. Looking back on Isaiah’s words reminds us of God’s power over life and death.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Meditate on this song: “If You Can Use Anything, Lord, You Can Use Me”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_4noaeDBfs

Lyrics for meditation:

If you can use anything, Lord, you can use me. If you can use anything, Lord, you can use me. Take my hands, Lord, and my feet; touch my

heart, Lord, and speak through me; if you can use anything, Lord, you can use me.

Silent Moments: What has the Holy Spirit told you – about fear, death, illness, enemies, or worship? Write your thoughts down; then share them with others.

Prayer: Lord, we are so grateful for leaders who will follow you wholeheartedly.

May we be your instruments, your messengers, whenever we hear your voice telling us to speak. Help us to show appreciation for all that you do. During times of stress, please hear our voices as we cry out to you. When you answer

our prayers, please remind us that you are our life-giving source. May we be ever humble and remember that every success comes from your hand. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**September 8-14**

Monday	Psalm 145:13-21 (An Everlasting Kingdom)
Tuesday	Matthew 3:4-12 (A Call to Bear Good Fruit)
Wednesday	Acts 3:12-20 (A Summons to Repent)
Thursday	James 5:12-18 (A Ministry of Care and Comfort)
Friday	Exodus 12:3-14 (A Feast of Remembrance)
Saturday	Deuteronomy 12:5-12 (A Dwelling for God's Name)
Sunday	2 Chronicles 30:1-9, 26-27 (An Act of Repentance and Renewal)

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

2 CHRONICLES 30:1-9, 26-27 (NRSV UE)

2 Chronicles 30:1-9

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.

2 CHRONICLES 30:1-9, 26-27 (KJV)

2 Chronicles 30:1-9

1 And Hezekiah sent 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 unto the Lord God of Israel.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.

6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers

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.”

26-27

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.

were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

9 For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

26-27

26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.

KEY TERMS

- **Chronicles** – In the Jewish Bible (the Tankah), Chronicles is the last and concluding book – it gives a summary of Israel’s history and provides hope for a better future.
- **Hezekiah** – Derived from the Hebrew root “chazak” (be strong) which means “YHWH strengthens.”
- **Idol** – Hebrew “elohim acheirim,” literally “other gods.”
- **Passover** – Hebrew “Pesach” which means “skipping”; the celebration is an eight-day festival beginning on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan.
- **From Dan to Beersheba** – Dan was the northernmost area where Israel settled, and Beersheba was the

southernmost area of settlement; the expression “from Dan to Beersheba” is equivalent to our phrases “from east to west,” or “from north to south.”

- **Assyria** – Known for its powerful military, arts, culture, medicine, and education.
- **Nisan (or Nissan)** – The first month on Jewish calendar.

INTRODUCTION

God established Passover, a festival celebrating deliverance and liberation. After over 400 years in Egypt, Israel became an independent nation. Initially, Pharoah welcomed Israel to Egypt. But after Joseph’s death and a new Pharoah began to rule, Israel was forced into servitude. Forced labor and harsh treatment caused Israel to cry out to God

for relief. In response, God sent Moses to demand the people be set free. This freedom was not for Israel's prosperity, but it was so that they could worship God. *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may serve me'" (Exodus 9:1 NRSV UE).* Once God freed the Israelites, the Lord commanded they celebrate the Passover annually. *This day shall be a day of remembrance for you.*

You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance (Exodus 12:14 NRSV UE). The Passover represents the first recorded command to celebrate freedom.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

2 Chronicles 30:1-9

When Hezekiah was twenty-five, he became Judah's, the southern kingdom's, king. Unlike Ahaz, his father, Hezekiah was not a wicked king. Maybe Hezekiah's remembrance of his father's deeds, and the consequences (continued Assyrian attacks against Judah) that followed, led him to act differently. In the letter he wrote inviting all Israel to the Passover

he says, "Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were unfaithful to the Lord God of their fathers, so that he made them a horror, as you see. Now, do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the Lord and enter his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his burning anger may turn away from you" (2 Chronicle 30:7-8). Under Ahaz's rule, the Jerusalem temple was remodeled to resemble the Damascus temple in Assyria

(2 Kings 16:10-20). Once the remodeled temple was complete, Ahaz had offered, grain, drink, and fellowship offerings. He had ordered Uriah, the priest, to offer everyone's offering on that newly created pagan altar; and Ahaz relegated the Lord's altar to a lesser place. Not only did Hezekiah have his father's example, but he also saw what



The Passover represents the first recorded command to celebrate freedom.

had happened to the northern kingdom. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom, demolishing their cities and deporting the people (2 Kings 17). These examples from Ahaz's reign greatly influenced Hezekiah, resulting in his religious reforms. Hezekiah knew disobedience's cost, so Hezekiah's reforms began upon his ascendancy to

the throne.

Extensive changes were required. After cleansing the temple, Hezekiah wanted all the Israelites, including those left in the northern kingdom following its captivity, to rededicate themselves to Yahweh (2 Chronicles 30:1-9). Hezekiah issued a decree proclaiming that Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan (i.e., all of Israel, 1 Samuel 3:20) should come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover. Not only did people living in Judah come, but many came from Israel, the northern kingdom that had been destroyed by Assyria. Many in Israel had no interest in doing this (2 Chronicles 30:10), but some responded positively, as did many of the people in Judah. It was impossible to complete the cleansing of the temple until the fourteenth day of the first month (2 Chronicles 29:17). It was, therefore, decided to defer the Passover celebration to the 14th day of the second month. This postponement allowed time for the priests to purify themselves, and for the Passover festival's proclamation to be made throughout all Israel.

This wonderful invitation from

Hezekiah is a remarkable testimony. It came following the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria in 722 B.C., a disaster that Hezekiah attributed to their forsaking the true worship of God in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 30:26-27

Solomon's Passover celebration had set a high standard. Hezekiah's decreed

Hezekiah left a legacy. After the Passover, Judah continued reform efforts that involved destroying idols – restoring priests and Levites to their sacred duties – making offerings and giving sacrifices to the Lord.

Passover reminded the people that joy results from remembering the Exodus – remembering how God set them free from bondage. Hezekiah left a legacy. After the Passover, Judah continued reform efforts that involved destroying idols – restoring priests and Levites to their sacred duties – making offerings and giving sacrifices to the Lord. Priests prayed God's special favor over Israel. And their prayers reached heaven, God's dwelling place. Cleansing the temple, annihilating idols,

decreeing a Passover celebration proved much easier than changing people's hearts and minds. Sadly, Hezekiah despite all of his reforms could not save Israel from destruction (Jeremiah 26:18-19). According to the biblical record, God, who knew Hezekiah best, says, "He

(Hezekiah) trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; and after him there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who came before him” (2 Kings 18:5).

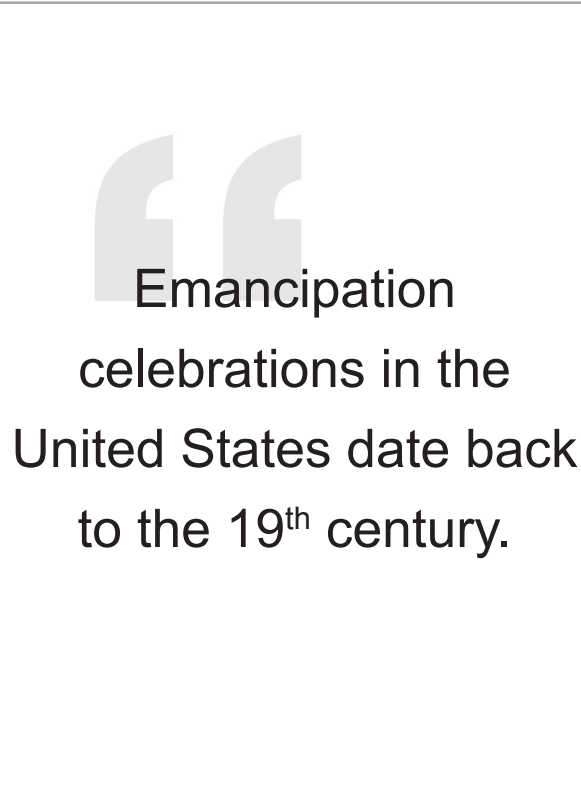
SANKOFA

Emancipation celebrations in the United States date back to the 19th century. Juneteenth, now a national holiday, commemorates enslaved Texans' freedom. However, there were other communities and cities where black residents celebrated emancipation. In 1865, black farmers in Tampa, Florida borrowed American flags to celebrate their freedom. The prior year (1864) federal forces that included a colored regiment (black soldiers) recaptured Fort Brooke (Tampa, Florida) from the Confederacy. Tampa residents continue a May celebration of their Emancipation Day. In St. Petersburg, Florida, newspapers record emancipation celebrations primarily sponsored by black churches and civic organizations. These celebrations commemorate passage of the 13th Amendment (13th Amendment language – Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as

a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction). Emancipation celebrations demonstrate God's intervention in world history.

CASE STUDY

April 27 is Freedom Day which is the South African celebration of the country's first democratic election. This day reminds the country of its announced official end of apartheid. The day – filled with parades, visits to monuments, and street parties – symbolizes what should have been a complete end to unjust policies. Unfortunately, this day that honors freedom for so many is held in a country that still struggles with racialized injustices.



Emancipation
celebrations in the
United States date back
to the 19th century.

Too many black South Africans remain in severe poverty. Rampant unemployment still exists, and many young people depend on welfare grants. Wealth distribution is unequal, and a person's color can severely impact one's living conditions. While many stood in line to vote (about 19.7 million), their resolve to make democracy a reality has not eliminated violence, unemployment, or

infrastructure failures. As seen in Israel, freedom celebrations do not change the hearts of people who refuse to follow God's command to take care of the poor, widows, and children.

LIFE APPLICATION

Celebrations have significance. The church calendar has seasons, i.e., Advent, Lent, and Pentecost. Each year, Christians have the opportunity to remember what God has done, is doing, and will do in building the Lord's kingdom. Too often, like Israel, God's holidays have lost their significance. Christmas trees, wreaths, and gifts, Easter eggs and baskets, and for some turkey, gravy, and cranberry sauce have shifted the focus from God to things. Hezekiah reminds us of the need for reform. Our Christian festivals should serve as reminders that we should praise and thank God.

As seen in Israel, freedom celebrations do not change the hearts of people who refuse to follow God's command to take care of the poor, widows, and children.

the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed, John 8:36)

3. Why do you think after praise and worship celebrations people turn from God?
4. Where do you see Jesus in today's lesson?
5. How will you apply what you learned to your life?

SUMMARY

God instituted annual religious festivals for Israel. During these celebrations Israel would remember the Exodus or thank God for provision (deliverance) and guidance (journey to the Promised Land). Although the Passover had not been celebrated in many years, after Hezekiah's religious reforms, the southern and northern kingdoms joined in the Passover festival.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Meditate on the words from this hymn, "Sing the Wondrous Love of Jesus" (AMECH #511)

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus,
Sing his mercy and his grace;

Questions

1. What special days does the church celebrate? How important is it to participate in these celebrations?
2. What celebrations remind Christians of the freedom Jesus offers? (so, if

In the mansions bright and blessed
He'll prepare for us a place.

Refrain: When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,

We'll sing and shout the victory!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the many ways you demonstrate your power on earth. Help us to see and hear with our spiritual senses. Please give us the courage to share the miraculous we experience every time a new life enters the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 15-21

Monday	Matthew 22:36-40 (The Command to Love)
Tuesday	Romans 2:9-16 (Keep God's Laws and Do Good)
Wednesday	Deuteronomy 30:1-10 (Promised Restoration)
Thursday	Deuteronomy 30:11-21 (Choose Life)
Friday	Hebrews 1:13-2:4 (A Greater Message)
Saturday	Matthew 13:44-52 (Hidden Treasure)
Sunday	2 Chronicles 34:15-22, 26-27 (Sorrow Leads to Joy)

What Hilkiah Found in the Temple

Lesson Scripture: 2 Chronicles 33:1-33

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

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

2 CHRONICLES 34:15-22, 26-27 (NRSV UE)

2 Chronicles 34:15-22

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

2 CHRONICLES 34:15-22, 26-27 (KJV)

2 Chronicles 34:15-22

15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

21 Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.

22 And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Has-

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.

26-27

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.’”

rah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect.

26-27

26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard;

27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.

KEY TERMS

- **Hilkiah** – The high priest has a popular priestly name; his name has two Hebrew origins from the verb (*halaq*) and an abridged form of YHWH, which means “the inheritance of Yahweh” (God’s formal name first mentioned in Exodus 6:2-3).
- **Huldah** – A female prophet; name means “weasel” (a burrowing animal); like her name, she had to unearth and reveal God’s meaning to the people.
- **Josiah** – Means “YHWH heals me.”
- **Shaphan** – Means “a coney”; a scribe or secretary of King Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-7).

Imagine the joy of finding a long-lost treasure. How would you feel?

- **Torah** – The first five books of the Bible or Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) which Moses gave to Israel as instruction from God. From a Hebrew root that probably meant to throw or shoot an arrow. From this definition comes the idea that sin means to miss the mark

- **Scroll** – Paper made of glued together parchment made from animal skin or papyrus sheets.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine the joy of finding a long-lost treasure. How would you feel? Depending upon what was found you may want everyone to know about your discovery. Now suppose that what you found could change history’s course, by

moving people closer to God-centered worship. Who would you tell first? What would you expect society to change? In today's lesson, a copy of the entire Torah (Pentateuch) or at least a portion of it was discovered in the temple.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

2 Chronicles 34:15-22, 26-27

Josiah, Amon's son and Manasseh's grandson, unlike his fathers, did what was right in God's eyes (2 Kings 22:1). He sought God. During the eighteenth year of his reign, he ordered restoration of the temple. Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant, often led by idolatrous kings, resulted in neglect of the temple. Funds were raised for materials placed in the temple such as timber and stone to repair roofs and wall openings. According to 2 Chronicles 34:11, the carpenters and the builders received these monies to purchase whatever was needed to repair the temple. Sometime during the repair work, Hilkiah found the Book of the Law. Whether Hilkiah found the Torah or just one book remains unclear. Also unclear is how Moses' Book of the Law was misplaced. Whatever scroll or scroll portions were discovered or when the loss occurred matters little compared to unearthing this incredible find.

Shaphan, the scribe, told King Josiah the Book of the Law was found. Before reading the book, Shaphan gave an account of the workers' progress: they were faithful completing all assigned tasks. After being given an account of the work, Josiah then listened as Shaphan read the scroll aloud. Convicted of God's anger due to Israel's sin, Josiah tore his clothes (a sign of grief and repentance). His grief may be related to the command in Deuteronomy 17:18-20, "When he (the king) sits on the throne as king, he must copy for himself this body of instruction on

Josiah, Amon's son and Manasseh's grandson, unlike his fathers, did what was right in God's eyes (2 Kings 22:1). He sought God.

a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees. This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away

from these commands in the smallest way. And it will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel." Directed by Josiah, Hilkiah led a five-person delegation to inquire of Huldah (female prophet). Huldah told of Judah's impending doom. Because of their idolatry, God's anger could not be extinguished. However, the good news for Josiah, his humility and repentance would spare him from God's

anger. Josiah would not see Judah's calamity; instead, he would go to his grave in peace.

1. How does your church maintain its building?
2. Where are Bibles kept in your church?
3. What does Josiah's kingship teach us about young people's role as leaders?

SANKOFA

Julia A. J. Foote, a former enslaved person whose father bought her freedom, was born in Schenectady, New York.

Her belief in God and worship began early in life. She wanted to read the Bible; however, because of his limited education, her father could not teach her to read. Julia's great desire to read the Bible resulted in her, at the age of ten, moving in with the Prime family as an indentured servant. While living with the Prime family, Julia's was able to attend school. An unfortunate incident occurred. Mrs. Prime

accused Julia of stealing food. Despite Julia's denial, Mrs. Prime whipped her. Sometime later, after Julia left the Prime's residence, she began to engage in what she labelled, "The poms and vanities of this world." She attributed Mrs. Prime's unjust treatment as part of the reason she turned away from God. However, one day when she was out dancing, the Holy Spirit so convicted her that she believed that God would strike her dead if she did

not change. At age fifteen, a sermon she heard about the new song (Rev. 14:3) so convicted her, she asked God for mercy. In 1841, she married George Tilman, a sailor. On his many voyages away from home, Julia spent time examining the scripture and growing spiritually, which led to her desire to preach. Although Tilman did not support Julia's desire to preach, she pursued her call to ministry. Tilman died and later Julia married Beverly Foote. Her ministry expanded. Though she encountered race and gender-based bigotry, segregation, and

discrimination, in 1894 Foote became the first ordained woman deacon in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. She preached, encouraging holiness, throughout the United States to crowds as large as 5,000. Like Josiah, Foote discovered God's will by reading scripture. Foote died in November 1901.

CASE STUDY

James Rucker, a native of Monterey County, California, co-founded two activist groups: Color of Change **and** Citizen Engagement Lab. He attended Stanford University for two years. Rucker served as a grassroots director for Move On. In that position he strongly dissuaded President George W. Bush from using racist means to win the 2004 election. He worked tirelessly to persuade young adults to register to vote. He was instrumental in having Glenn

“
Josiah would not see
Judah's calamity;
instead, he would go to
his grave in peace.”

Beck's show cancelled by Fox News, due to its continual focus on race baiting. Currently, Color of Change has over 1.7 members. Rucker, like Josiah, spoke up for what is just and right.

LIFE APPLICATION

Age does not determine a person's commitment to following God. And age does not decide if a person can lead others in worship and spiritual revival. To quote the Lord in Jeremiah's call, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak" (Jeremiah 1:7). Josiah gives an example that God calls whoever is needed whenever that person is needed – and that is not age dependent.

Questions

1. In this age of electronics, what is the role of hard-copy Bibles?
2. How long are you willing to listen to Bible readings?
3. What value is there in reading the Bible aloud?

SUMMARY

Josiah, the descendant of evil kings, became Judah's king when he was eight years old. Ten years later after the discovery of the law of Moses, at the age of eighteen, Josiah led the nation in religious reform. Because of his devotion to the Torah and fidelity to God, Josiah did not see Judah's demise and the temple's

destruction.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Read Psalm 51:1-12. Think about how these words apply to the church, community, and you.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me
from my sin.

³ For I know my
transgressions,
and my sin is
always before me.

⁴ Against you, you
only, have I sinned
and done what is
evil in your sight;
so you are right in
your verdict
and justified when
you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at
birth,
sinful from the time
my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the
womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret
place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be
clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than
snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;

Age does not determine
a person's commitment
to following God. And
age does not decide if a
person can lead others
in worship and spiritual
revival.

let the bones you have crushed
rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within
me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to
sustain me.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to keep our hearts and minds fixed on you. May we take care of your temple, our bodies, and your physical buildings, our churches, as part of our worship. May our desire to read and hear your Word lead an us to do those things you command. And may we repent and grieve whenever we miss the mark, so we receive your mercy, and not your anger. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 22-28

Monday	Philippians 2:5-10 (The Humble Servant Exalted by God)
Tuesday	Isaiah 42:1-7 (The Faithful Servant)
Wednesday	Acts 2:25-31 (The Resurrected and Glorified Servant)
Thursday	Acts 13:44-49 (A Light for the World)
Friday	Psalms 84 (A Doorkeeper in God's House)
Saturday	Isaiah 50:4-9 (God's Servant Obeys)
Sunday	Isaiah 53:1-7 (The Suffering Servant)

DECALOGUE

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise:
And hosts of sins are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

Superintendent—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not kill.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not steal.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

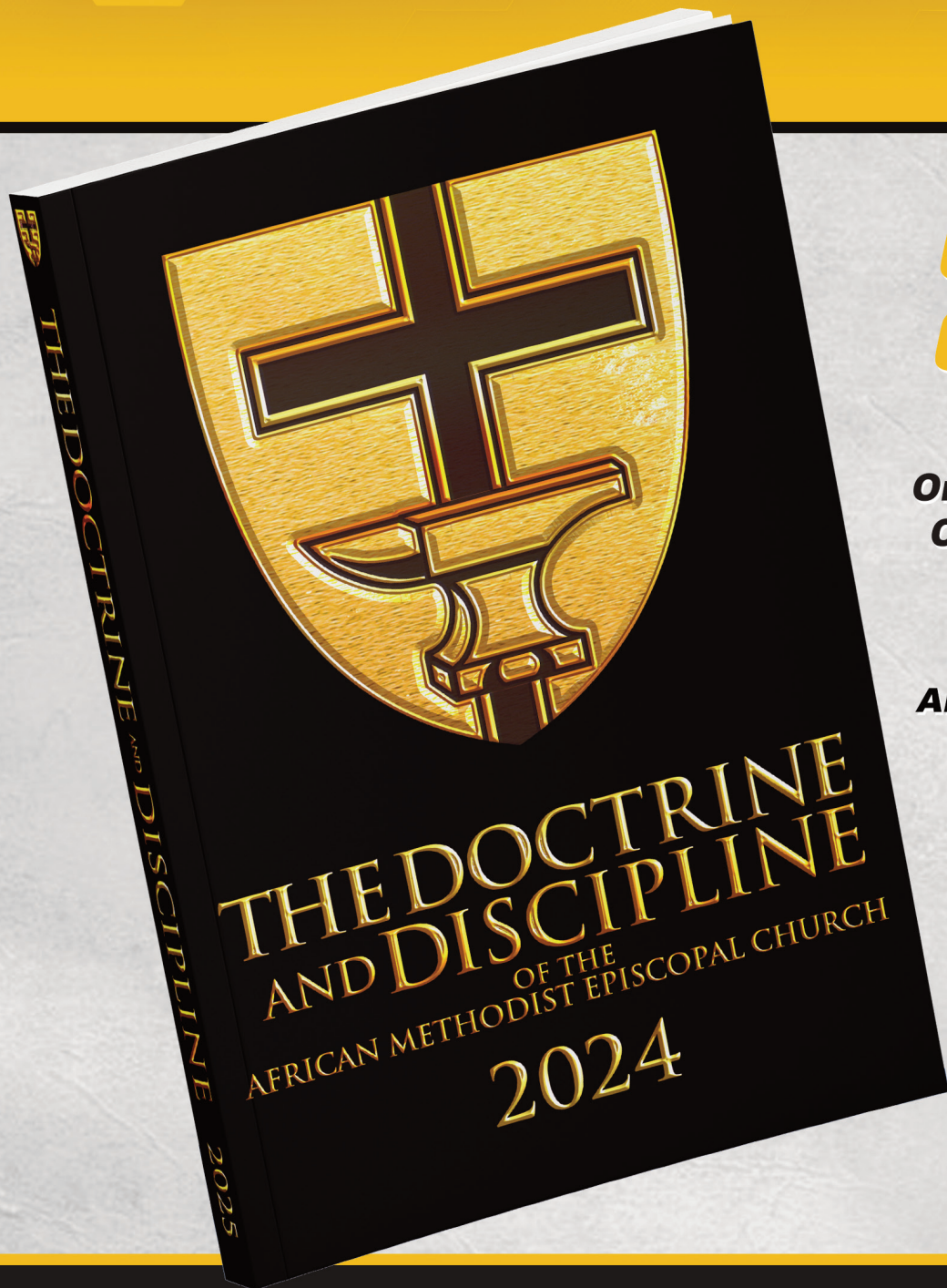
School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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