

A scenic landscape photograph. In the foreground, there are tall green reeds and yellow wildflowers. A body of water reflects the warm, golden light of the setting or rising sun. In the background, there are green hills and a small white building with a red roof. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue.

THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

INTERMEDIATE SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

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----- **Ages 12-14 (Middle School)** -----

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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 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.

YOUR GOD REIGNS

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 52:1-12

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 52:1-12

Key Verse: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Isaiah 52:7

Isaiah 52:7-12 (NRSV)

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion.

9 Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

11 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.

12 For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Peace** – A state of security and tranquility.
- **Salvation** – Deliverance from foes, safety, rescued.
- **Reign** – To act as king.
- **Sentinels** – Soldiers or guards whose job is to stand and keep watch.
- **Redeemed** – To be freed.
- **Purify** – Cleanse, make pure.

INTRODUCTION

For the summer quarter, we are going to focus on the theme, *The Righteous Reign of God*. The summer quarter explores the biblical teachings about God's reign. Unit one, "The Prophets Proclaim God's Power," is a five-week study of the reign of God as depicted in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and Zechariah.

The prophet Isaiah was reared in an upper-class family and married to a prophetess. Isaiah called the people to turn from their sins and warned them of God's judgment and punishment. Today's lesson is focusing on God's powerful and peaceful reign.

Do you recall a time when you felt afraid? What helped you?

BIBLE STORY

Isaiah is considered by some to be the greatest prophet, and his writings are first in the Latter prophets of the Bible. The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah carry the message of judgment for sin. He warns Judah, Israel, and the surrounding heathen nations

about God's judgment for sin. Isaiah desired for the people to live godly lives in obedience to God's commands. The nations refused to listen to Isaiah's warnings. To this end, there are consequences for our actions.

The second half of Isaiah, comprised of twenty-seven chapters, is a message of forgiveness, comfort, and hope. Isaiah's message of hope is rooted in the expectation of the coming Messiah. Based on what Jesus Christ has done, God freely offers forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith. If we follow and obey God, we can have eternal peace and fellowship with him.

The events in the second half of Isaiah occur after the seventy-year captivity of God's people. Their disobedience led to punishment from God. Nevertheless, God always offers hope for those who repent and change their ways. In chapter fifty-two, Isaiah declares the Lord will rescue his people. We all have struggles in our lives that seem overwhelming. However, when we remember Jesus is our redeemer, we can be at peace knowing God is in control.

The enemies of God paid nothing for acquiring Jerusalem, nor acknowledged God's power; therefore, they have no claim on God's people. Nor would they be paid any amount of money for their return. God would be glorified for rescuing them from Babylon. Whatever situation you are facing, it is nothing in comparison to God's power! "Your God reigns!" (vs. 7-10; Zech. 6:8-14). God has sovereign rule over the world. Those who hear the message from God are commanded to rejoice. Even amid the ruins of Jerusalem, there was reason to sing and rejoice. As a result, God had comforted and redeemed Jerusalem.

In verse 10, there is mention of the "Lord has bared his holy arm." God's arm is often associated with redemption and salvation. God would redeem Israel from Babylon and all the world would see the deliverance. Ultimately, the glory of the redeeming God would be seen in Jesus Christ, especially at his return.

God redeemed us from sin through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ.

Cyrus, God's anointed, decreed that the Jewish exiles could return safely to Jerusalem (45:1; Ezra 1:1-4). God desired for the people to leave and were told not to touch any of the pagan religious objects (v. 11). The priests and Levites, who were responsible for taking back the articles of the temple seized by Nebuchadnezzar, had to purify themselves first. The people did not rush out of Babylon. God would protect the Jewish people just as he had when the Israelites were freed from Egypt (v. 12; Exo. 13:21, 14:19-20). They also had the king's approval and protection.

How would the Jewish people experience peace? How do you create and experience peace in your life?

LIFE APPLICATION

How do you typically respond to stressful situations? What are some of the ways we can deal with stress?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

God desires for us to be peacemakers. List actions you can take to become a messenger of peace. *I will be a messenger of peace by:*



Peace can come as we praise and worship God. If we take the time to think on God's goodness, it should naturally cause us to flow into praise and worship. This is also a means to put our focus on God, and not our problems. In life, we are going to have stress, trials, and problems. However, we know that God has given us the victory, just as he did for the nation of Israel. We can praise him in advance because God is sovereign. What songs do you like that enhance your praise and worship of God? Use your cell phones, tablets, or AMEC hymnals to find one of the songs on a music streaming site or in the book. Share the first verses of the song with the class.

SUMMARY

Our actions can lead to consequences that are unexpected. The Israelites were punished for their disobedience and taken into captivity. After 70 years, God rescued them. The same consequences can happen to us if we are not cautious. To this end, obedience to God's word is vital.

Overall, it does not matter what your circumstances are when it comes to being obedient. When we violate God's commands, we are going to suffer the consequences of our actions. This can make us feel stressed and depressed. Nevertheless, God wants us to remember he is our redeemer. He sent Jesus to redeem us from sin and because of this, Jesus would be highly exalted for

his sacrifice. Moreover, Jesus also suffered to cleanse the world from sin. In any event, praise and worship enable us to rejoice and exalt him, for he is our peace. By all means, let us seek and accept the peace God has given us!

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: God, I praise you for salvation, peace, and protection. Amen.

Hymn: "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart" (*AMEC Hymnal* #8)

GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 65:17-25

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 65:17-25

Key Verse: The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent – its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. Isaiah 65:25

Isaiah 65:17-25 (NRSV)

17 For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.

20 No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant

vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well.

24 Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Distress** – To feel harassed or troubled.
- **Accursed** – To be victim of or to suffer under a supernatural event that can cause severe injury or harm.
- **Vain** – Ineffectual, idle.
- **Calamity** – Doomed for misfortune.

INTRODUCTION

For many people, starting over sometimes can be exceedingly difficult. Military families move frequently, and they must adjust to living in new states or countries. Furthermore, when you graduate from school to attend college or a trade school, you must adapt to living with a roommate who may be a stranger. Similarly, your parents may not be able to afford to live in your house anymore, so the entire family must move in with a family friend. Sharing a space with another family takes adjusting. Although starting over requires some adjusting, there are lessons to be learned that can prove to be beneficial.

To be sure, all believers in Christ are guaranteed to dwell in a new home with God. Our new home will not be like our earthly home. In today's lesson, Isaiah 65 describes God's new creation in which God will establish perfect peace.

What feelings do you have when you find yourself in a new, unfamiliar place? What adjustments are needed to feel comfortable in a new location?

BIBLE STORY

Isaiah gives us a glimpse of God's "new heavens and a new earth" (65:17). He had previously promised God would do "new things" for his people (42:9; 48:6). It will be a place where no sin dwells. All of the pain, crying, suffering, sickness, sorrow, and evilness of this world ends and will never be remembered again. God's people are encouraged to "be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating" (65:18). The new Jerusalem God creates is worth rejoicing about.

After the Israelite's seventy years of captivity and exile, God would create the new Jerusalem and restore the people. They would enjoy abundance, peace, and security. God also rejoices in the new city and will be greatly pleased with the Israelites who are new people. And God takes joy also in the people's joy and peace with him (65:18-19).

Isaiah's prophecy is directly connected with the Messiah's kingdom and the cross. The Messiah's (Jesus) coming would undo all the effects of the fall (Gen. 3) by providing a way for reconciliation with God. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross gives us the path to peace (Eph. 2:13-17). Ultimately, there will be a final judgment on God's enemies and the eradication of violence (Rev. 20:7-15).

In the new creation, God's people will have complete satisfaction. We will not experience the sufferings and frustrations that result from sin but will enjoy life as God intended for us to enjoy it (65:21-23). The absence of sin will mean that we will live in perfect fellowship with God. The world of nature also will benefit in this new era of genuine peace and harmony (65:24-25).

What is unique about "the new heaven and new earth" that God will create? How does the promise of a new world make you feel? How can we experience the peace of God in the midst of the turbulent times we currently live in?

LIFE APPLICATION

Answer *True* (T) or *False* (F) to the statements about our scripture lesson.

1. The former earth will be a part of the new earth.
☐ T ☐ F
2. Everybody can be a part of the new heaven and new earth.
☐ T ☐ F
3. The new heavens and new earth will be a place of joy and peace. ☐ T ☐ F
4. In the new heavens and new earth, animals can live together in peace. ☐ T ☐ F
5. The inhabitants of the new earth are assured to have a long life.
☐ T ☐ F



Ponder what the new heaven and earth will be like versus the present world. Under “OLD WORLD” write situations with which we currently must deal. Under “NEW WORLD” write what we expect to experience in the new earth. When finished, create a poster on construction paper to demonstrate new earth.

OLD WORLD:	NEW WORLD:

SUMMARY

God's promises of a new heaven and new earth offer us hope and peace. The world will become like the Garden of Eden, but much better. For these reasons, we can rejoice no matter our current circumstances. We must be intentional in our pursuit of peace. What special places, songs, or circumstances give you peace? Everyone needs to reconnect with God to receive the hope and peace that he gives us.

This week, take the time to brainstorm ideas about being peacemakers for God at home, in the community, at school, and in the world. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, be the person who seeks peace.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: God, we are grateful we have your Word to give us hope. We are going to seek to be peacemakers wherever we go. Amen.

Hymn: "Peace, Be Still" (*AMEC Hymnal* #462)

GOD'S SERVANT-KING

LESSON SCRIPTURE: EZEKIEL 37:15-28

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EZEKIEL 37:21-28

Key Verse: *My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Ezekiel 37:27*

Ezekiel 37:21-28 (NRSV)

21 ...then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land.

22 I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms.

23 They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

24 My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all

have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes.

25 They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children's children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever.

26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore.

27 My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

28 Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Defile** – To make polluted, render unclean.
- **Detestable** – Shocking, disgusting, obscene.
- **Transgressions** – Any actions that violate the Word of God.
- **Apostasies** – The abandonment of one's faith and belief in God.
- **Ordinances** – Authoritative orders from God.
- **Everlasting** – To be eternal.

INTRODUCTION

Leaders are put in a position to help those under their authority. However, this does not mean they treat all people the same. Some leaders have specific people and groups that are shown favoritism. This benefits the leaders because they can get certain favors and monetary kickbacks in return. In many instances, this same scenario is played out repeatedly.

Moreover, we sometimes exhibit the same behavior. We have specific friends from the same race and social status. Choosing this behavior allows us to maintain certain standards and not bother with others who do not fit our elitist standards. This means we have exclusive people who we feel are beneath us and must be always avoided.

In today's lesson, we are going to explore Ezekiel's prophecy of God's servant reigning eternally over a united kingdom.

What happens when we separate ourselves from others? How does God treat each of us as individuals?

BIBLE STORY

God's people had committed idolatry, human sacrifices, and many other sins. God was not pleased with his chosen people, Israel, because they refused to obey God. God punished the nation of Israel by letting the Babylonians and Assyrians capture and take the people into exile. God's holy city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and the temple was ransacked. Some of the items from the temple were taken as well.

The vision of the dry bones, in Ezekiel 37:1-14, reveals how God's chosen people are restored by God through the divine power, the divine Word, and divine life. The purpose of the vision is to fulfill God's Word; to revive Israel's lost hope; to settle Israel in her own land in Jerusalem; and to demonstrate to the world that Israel was an elect nation. The bones represented the exiles; the valley, their dispersion; and the graves, the death of their national life.

The nation of Israel had a divided kingdom. Judah was the leading tribe in the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom was led by Joseph, the father of Ephraim. The kingdoms had been divided since Solomon's death (1 Kgs. 12). The putting together of the two sticks symbolized how God would unify both Judah and Israel into one nation (37:15-21). God saves and cleanses the people from their sins. Their hearts will be open to receive God's forgiveness and restoration (37:23). The results of the restoration will be land forever; a king forever; a covenant of peace forever; and a sanctuary forever.

Verse 24 mentions, "My servant David..." The Messiah is often called *David* because he is David's descendant. David would be a good king, but the Messiah will be the perfect king (Rev. 17:14; 19:16; 21:1f). When the Messiah comes, he is likened to a shepherd who tends to his flock (37:24; Jn. 10). We, the believers, are the sheep. Just as the Lord told the Israelites, we too, must obey all his commands and ordinances. The "covenant of peace" looks to the final peace, initiated by Christ, and still not fulfilled (37:26; Phil. 4:7). Peace translates to "shalom" in Hebrew.

The “sanctuary” and “dwelling place” demonstrates God’s presence on earth and his rule in the heart of every believer who obeys him. People recognize those who are believers based on how they act and treat others. We draw others to Jesus Christ by demonstrating his love towards all people. God desires for his kingdom to be as diverse as the world he created. God loves each of us just as we are.

How do conflicts in the church cause disunity? Is there peace and harmony in your church? Why is it important to forgive others and seek reconciliation?

LIFE APPLICATION

In the acrostic, use the letters from the word “UNITY” to describe how God desires for us to treat each other.

U _____
 N _____
 I _____
 T _____
 Y _____



Racism can cause conflicts. Have you experienced racism? How did it make you feel? Why do you think people are racist? What can be done to promote understanding and unity among diverse groups? Who in your church, school, and community promotes peace and unity?

SUMMARY

To sum up, unity is especially important in the body of Christ and the world. Unity is not always easy to accomplish, but we must make every effort to achieve it. This means letting go of personal desires and seeking what is best for the whole. God dwells with us through the Holy Spirit's presence. As the Spirit guides us, we can create opportunities to share and learn about others. Our differences make each of us unique, but our commonalities are what unify us as God's people.

Discuss with the pastor ideas that promote unity in the church and within your community. One possibility is to conduct an inter-faith worship service or fellowship. A second idea is to conduct a community festival where you invite various ethnic groups to present information about their cultures.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: God, help us to unify to accomplish your divine plans. Amen.

Song: "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds" (*AMEC Hymnal* #522) or "I Need You to Survive" by Hezekiah Walker and The Love Fellowship Choir - <https://youtu.be/JBwUkCYW2n0>