



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Malachi 4:1-6

Matthew 17:1-13

Session Theme:

Reckoning

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: “Hear ye! Hear ye!”

Look at picture of a court gavel on your phone or computer, and then draw one on the board. (The less perfect it is, the better!) Without naming it, invite kids to guess what you’ve drawn and how it might be used. Then, explain that a gavel is a small wooden mallet that is used by a judge in court. The judge bangs the gavel on a desk to get people’s attention or announce a decision.

In today’s Bible story, the writer wants to tell us something important. Like someone with a gavel, he is trying to get our attention and tell us that day of reckoning is coming, where all people will be judged by God. As people of faith, we need not fear this. If we honor God and trust him, all will be well in the end.

c. Opening Prayer

God of all hope, our very lives rest in your hands. Help us to remember this, and to honor and trust you in all things. Turn our hearts to you today and always. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” (hymn)
- “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today’s Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Promise

The prophets spoke the promise of God to the people in times of struggle and exile. In visions, dreams, and prophecy, God foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah and the salvation that would come in Jesus Christ.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day’s lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss “Reflection for the Week Ahead”

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, Luther’s Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Malachi 4:1-6

- Chapter 4 of Malachi is the last chapter of the Old Testament. In what ways does it serve as a good lead-in to the story of the New Testament?

This chapter of Malachi raises expectations by focusing our mind on things that are about to happen. In particular, he points to the coming of the Lord (the advent of Christ himself). The last thing he mentions is the coming of Elijah, who will prepare the way by calling people to repentance. One of the first people we will meet in the New Testament is John the Baptist, who will do exactly that.

- "The Day of the Lord" is a phrase used many times in the Old Testament to refer to the great day when God would finally bring in his kingdom. What do you think Malachi's first readers were thinking of? What did they expect God to do?

Many Jews looked forward to "the Day of the Lord" as a time when all their hopes and dreams would be fulfilled, when the Messiah would come to give them victory over all their enemies. But Malachi warns them the Day of the Lord will not be a celebration, but a time of judgment. (Other prophets give the same warning — Amos 5:18, Ezekiel 30:3, Zephaniah 1:14, and more.) We should not be so quick to assume that the story will end well for us! We might just find ourselves among the arrogant and the evildoers.

- Who or what do you think is being referred to when Malachi says, "the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" (v.2)? Explain why you think this.

The rising of the sun refers to the coming of a new day, when after the darkness, things will be better again. The faithful will experience healing and renewal. For us as Christians, the image of "rising" in the morning may also call to mind the resurrection of Jesus, who is also called the Son of Righteousness (son/sun pun intended).

- From our perspective as Christians, the Day of the Lord brings to mind Jesus' coming to live among us. How do these words of Malachi apply both to Jesus' first coming and his second coming?

In Jesus' day, the Greek word *kyrios* could simply be a polite way to address a person as "sir." But to us as Christians, it is a reminder that Jesus is *The Lord* — God himself. Therefore,

the day of the Lord's coming is literally his incarnation, when he was born into this world as a human. But the day of the Lord also refers to his coming at the end of time, when the dead will be raised and appear before his throne for judgment, the final destruction of the wicked.

- What two great prophets does Malachi mention by name? Do you think it is a coincidence that these same two figures appear in the story of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8)? How does this support the fact that Jesus is "the Lord"?

Malachi mentions Moses and Elijah, two of the greatest Old Testament prophets. These same two prophets appear in the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus on the mountaintop, where the disciples witnessed them speaking with Jesus. Their appearance demonstrates their affirmation of Jesus' identity and mission and their subordination to him. This story ends with the Father proclaiming Jesus' Sonship, with the command, "Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5).

- Read Matthew 17:9-13. The disciples ask about Elijah coming to prepare the way for the Messiah. Did this happen? Who does Jesus say this was? What fate did he share with Jesus?

The disciples were familiar with Malachi's prophecy that Elijah would come/return before the day of the Lord, but they didn't know exactly what this meant. Would this be some kind of vision, or perhaps a reincarnation? Jesus cuts through the speculation with a more down-to-earth explanation. John the Baptist (who acted and dressed like Elijah — Matthew 3:4) actually served the function of preparing the way and calling people to repentance, like Malachi said.

- Do you think the prophets always knew the meaning of the message revealed to them?

We do not need to assume that the prophets always knew the full meaning of the message. God's Word has a way of surprising us in ways we don't expect. We only know and understand the wisdom God chooses to reveal to us (Daniel 2:30).

- Can the same passage in Scripture mean more than one thing, yet still not contradict itself? Explain. How might this shape our understanding of the Day of the Lord?

Like facets of a gem, God's Word can be seen from many angles. The prophecies often had a direct application to the days of the prophet, as well as foreshadowing events at the end of time. But God's Word always speaks to our present life of faith as well (past, present, future).

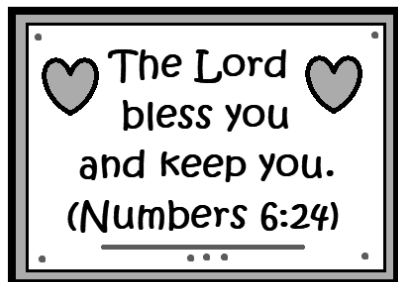
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Family Fridge Magnet Craft

Materials Needed:

- Colored 3 x 5 index cards (blank on one side)
- Pencils
- Markers
- Scissors
- Clear contact paper or packing tape
- Magnet backs



Instructions:

Today's Bible story tells about God leading children and parents to love each other more. Help your class make refrigerator magnets for their parents (or grandparents or guardians) as a gift of love!

Give everyone two index cards, a pencil, scissors, and markers. Invite them to follow these directions:

- Take a colored index card, and using pencil, write a short Bible verse on the blank side.
- Bible verse ideas may include: "The Lord bless you and keep you" (Numbers 6:24); "Let all you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14); "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15); "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" (Proverbs 3:5), etc.
- Trace over the letters in marker.
- Next, add graphic designs (dots, squiggly lines, shapes, flowers, etc.) to decorate the piece further.
- Place clear contact paper or packing tape over the front of the card. Do the same on the back. Press down to "lamine" the card. Cut off excess tape.
- Attach a magnet to the back and the refrigerator magnet is complete!
- If time allows, make a second magnet for another parent, grandparent, or guardian, following the same process.



Activity 2: Coupons from Kids Activity

Materials Needed:

- Plain copy paper
- Envelopes
- Markers
- Stickers (optional)
- Scissors



Instructions:

Kids can show love for their families in active ways, by giving of their time and talents!

Encourage the class to generate ideas of things they can do to help their families at home, and write these on the board. Ideas might include: Setting the table; washing the dishes; sweeping the floor; dusting; taking out the trash; vacuuming the rug; weeding the garden; feeding a pet; raking leaves; making a bed; etc.

Generate a second list of kind things kids can do for their families that don't involve chores, and write these on the board as well. Ideas might include: A hug from me; no complaining all day; reading a book to a younger sibling; drawing a picture of our family; making a card for a relative; etc.

Explain that kids are going to make coupon packets for their family members, using their favorites of the ideas listed above. To make the coupons, follow these directions:

- Give kids one sheet of paper. Have them fold the paper in half, and in half again
- When kids open the paper, they will have four boxes. Cut along the fold lines to make four pieces of paper.
- Cut each of these rectangles in half to make eight pieces of paper. These will be the individual "coupons."
- Using markers, kids can write one thing they can do on each coupon. Decorate each coupon with designs.
- Finally, give kids an envelope, and have them decorate it with markers. They can title the envelope, "Gifts of Love from (their Name)" or something similar. Decorate the envelope with stickers, if desired. Fill the envelope with "coupons" and have kids give it to a parent or other caregiver.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" is the first commandment with a promise: "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Words from this Passage:

- 1) Discipline is required if we are to act in a right and responsible way.
- 2) Anger is the emotion we feel when we are upset or annoyed.
- 3) Right is the opposite of wrong.
- 4) Obey means to listen to and follow the orders of someone.
- 5) Mother is the female parent in a family.
- 6) Lord is a title used in the Bible to refer to God as our ruler.
- 7) Promise means to let someone know what you will do for them.
- 8) Well is how things are going when all is good and the way it should be.
- 9) Commandment is a rule or law given by God.
- 10) Provoke means to push or pressure someone until they respond badly.
- 11) Father is the male parent in a family.
- 12) Long is the opposite of short, referring to an object or period of time.
- 13) Instruction is what we need to learn and understand a subject.

Map Answer Key

The major Iron Age empires that ruled the Middle East are shown on the map on the Youth Page:

- a) The Babylonians (modern-day Iraq)
- b) The Persians (modern-day Iran)
- c) The Greeks (modern-day Greece)
- d) The Romans (modern-day Italy)

Vocabulary Word for the Week:

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary:

Reckoning

a time of judgment when we face the consequences of our actions

Trust in Jesus and live each day by faith. This is the best way for us to to prepare for the day of reckoning.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

The topic of the "Day of the Lord" might be something new you're hearing about. In essence it is the day of judgment.

In the Apostles' Creed we confess each time we worship, "I believe... (Jesus) descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. **He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**"

Talk together about what you think this means. Does it scare you? If so, why?

We don't know a lot about the Day of the Lord, just what the Holy Scriptures tell us: it will come suddenly, we will all know immediately that it's happening, God will comfort his own people and punish the wicked, and those who love God will be saved. So we don't have to be afraid because we belong to Jesus! He has promised us eternal life with him.

Talk together about how Jesus' promises are comforting to us. What do you think the Kingdom of God (eternal life) will be like when we get there?



The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer thanking God for his promises to us through Jesus Christ. Ask him to fill us with all hope and faith, trusting in his love for us.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.