

11A

RELIGION

God's family plan

Obedience to the heavenly Father

Sunday School Lesson

Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 5:20-31.
Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah 5.
Printed Text: Jeremiah 5:1-6

We are not told in the Scriptures about everything God had in mind when He created man, but it is clear that He wanted a family - children He could love and who could love Him in return. If they had no mind and will of their own, if they could not choose their way, or if they were programmed to do always what God wanted them to do, they would be nothing more than puppets, robots, dolls and toys. God wanted real live children.

So God made people with minds, wills and hearts who were capable of thinking and choosing. They could obey Him or disobey Him, please Him or grieve Him, love Him or hate Him.

Very soon God's children chose to disobey. It brought loss to them and grief to God, but still they chose to disobey. Continued disobedience only worsened man's condition: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). So God destroyed most of humanity and started over with Noah and his family.

Soon disobedience began again, and once more it grew and multiplied. This time God did not destroy all the sinners. He chose one man of faith and obedience to be the father of a nation that would show the rest of the world how good it is to obey God. To Abraham's children, God gave the special guidance of His law, the special protection of His power, and the special encouragement of His love. Still they became disobedient children, bringing disaster upon themselves and grieving their Father in Heaven.

Clearly mankind was not going to make itself obedient, even with the help of God's guidance and protection. Then God revealed the plan that would not fail. He sent the Savior, who was both God and man. Jesus gave His spotless life to redeem the disobedient. By His grace the sinners of earth can be forgiven, cleansed and made ready to live in God's presence as the obedient children He always wanted.

For this lesson, however, we are still looking at the time before the Savior came - a dark and evil time in Judah.

Jeremiah was God's spokesman for more than forty years. The book called by his name is a collection of prophecies he gave to Judah at different times during those years, along with some historical material. The prophecies are not all arranged in the order in which they were given. Some of them are dated; thus we know when Jeremiah delivered them (for example, see Jeremiah 25:1; 26:1; 32:1; 36:1, 9). The one assigned for this lesson is not dated; it may have come about the same time as Habakkuk's prophecy that we considered last week. From the text itself, we see that it came at a time when Judah was deep in sin.

Washington church drowning ruled a homicide

By James Wright and Frances Murphy
WASHINGTON AFRO-AMERICAN

WASHINGTON, D.C. - "Cause of death: drowning. Manner of death: homicide." These are the findings of the D.C. Medical Examiner according to Dr. Linda Boyd, spokesperson for the Commissioner of Health in D.C. Boyd was talking about the death of four-month old Sade Victoria Omotalo who died Sept. 19 at Children's Hospital. Sade was baptized by immersion at Imani

Temple on Capitol Hill, an African American Catholic Congregation on Sept. 8. Boyd said: "Homicide is a medical definition. Homicide is not murder nor does it imply intent. Only the court can determine intent." She said that the medical examiner's findings were based on "police reports, photographs of the ritual, medical records and terminal events."

Archbishop George Stallings said, "The Faith community of Imani Temple on Capitol Hill, is deeply shocked and taken aback by the D.C. Medical Examiner's report on the

cause of death of little Sade. We maintain that Baptismal by immersion is safe and sound and that the answer to infant Sade's dilemma was not in the method but in her pre-existing medical condition. It is important that we remember that the medical examiner's office uses the word 'homicide' as a medical term which does not imply intent. Again, it is solely a medical term. We profoundly regret this tragic and unfortunate situation. This matter now becomes a legal issue."

Little Sade was baptized by Father August C. Griffin.

After the baptism, her mother rushed out of the church and took the child to the hospital.

Burial of the baby's body, in a local cemetery, took place last week.

Shadera Cherice Woodland, in the presence of her parents, Shannon and Demetria Woodland, and hundreds of members of the Imani Temple on Capitol Hill was baptized into the Catholic faith by Archbishop Stallings on Sept. 22.

Stallings said the church still stands by baptism of immersion, which is done three times by placing the

baby's head and bottom in the water quickly in a seesaw-motion. The three times symbolizes the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. However, because of the controversy, the church has initiated new requirements for baptism:

- A parental approval form provided by the church must be signed and into the Liturgical Coordinator's office 30 days before the scheduled ceremony.
- Liturgical Coordinator schedules the baptism.
- The family is scheduled for

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Abs - and faith - of steel

Rev. Robert Leak balances spiritual and physical fitness

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

If you don't believe the Rev. Robert Leak of New Saint John Baptist Church is in excellent shape, just ask.

"Every day," he says, dropping to the floor in suit and tie to do several push-ups, "I do something. My body is a temple - I've got to keep it clean."

For more than 60 years, the athletic Leak has served Charlotte's African American religious community as pastor of several local congregations and moderator of the Mount Peace Sunday School Convention.

At 76, he is still active. Leak is in the midst of building a new million-dollar sanctuary for New Saint John. He hosts a local radio show and continues to work the community.

Born on a farm in Lancaster County, S.C. Leak says his life "seemed hard to other folks."

His father died, leaving three sons and daughters still at home.

"There are 11 of us," he said. "I am the parents of six sisters and four brothers."

Leak said he and his siblings farmed and like most black southerners, leased farms and "worked for white folks." They grew everything, Leak said. Corn, cotton, potatoes, and the children worked outside to gain extra money.

"I did things for everyone," he says. "I've been working since I was 7 or 8."

Leak came to Charlotte in 1935. Segregated Charlotte provided few economic outlets, but he managed.

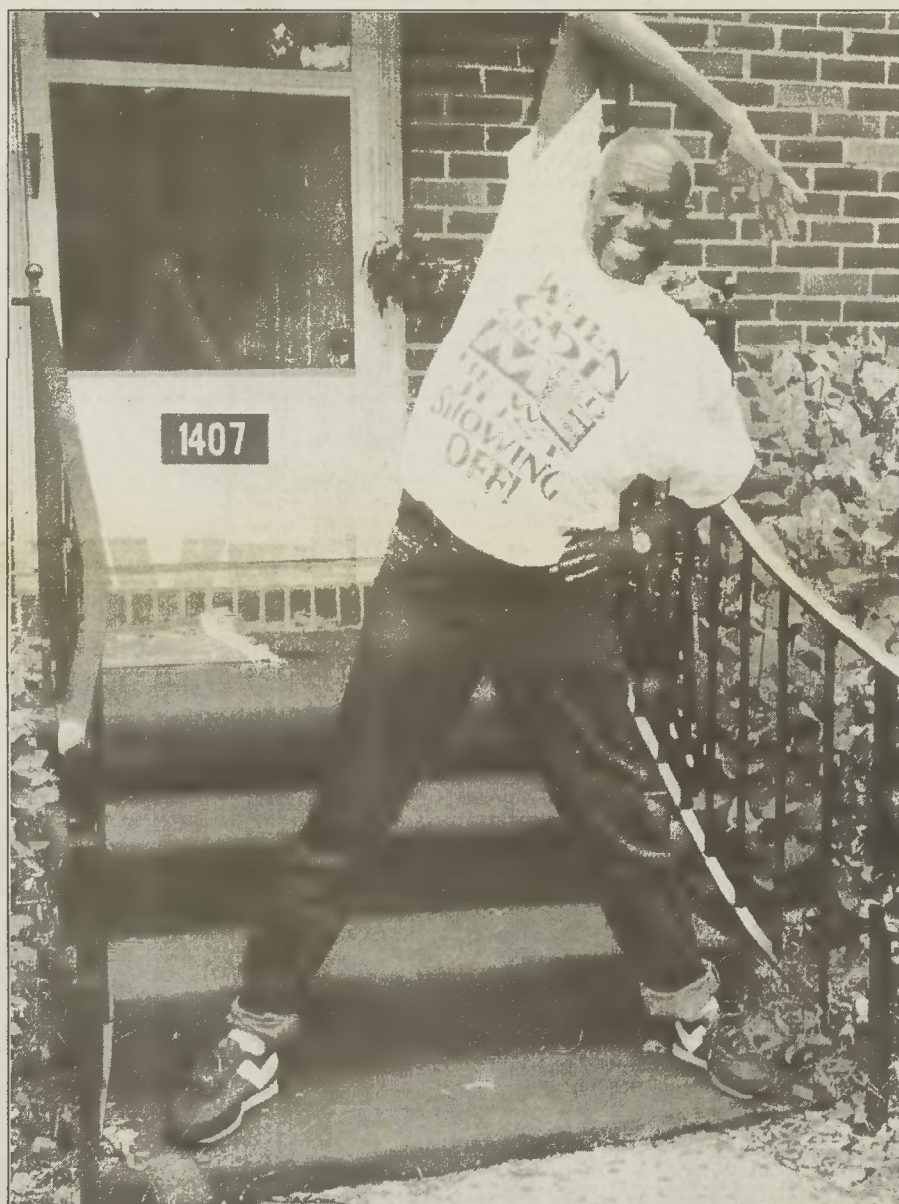
"I worked in a coal yard, in a drugstore as a soda jack," he says. "I was always resourceful. I was the family resource."

Leak also honed his skills as a boxer in his spare time.

"I boxed in the Golden Gloves," he says. "I held three titles up to 1942."

Leak spent almost 30 years at Gethsemane, where he worked in every aspect of the church.

"I joined Gethsemane Baptist back in 1935," he says. "That was right after I came to Charlotte. I have done everything there. I was superinten-



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Rev. Robert Leak, 76, stretches before one of his daily workouts, which includes running, walking and shadow boxing.

dent of Sunday School, director of music. I sing. I have the ability to develop choirs and musicians."

Leak put that talent to good use during a stint in the Army during World War II. The Army was not integrated but he

adapted, he says.

"I was in Special Services," he says. "I went around and helped set up stages and lights. Sometimes I would sing with the band."

Leak was in London during the Nazi bombings. He and other members of his regiment

spent nights in foxholes and tents listening to sounds of the bombs destroying parts of the city. He was also on the beach at Normandy, France, during the D-Day invasion.

"After D-Day, I fought all the

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AME church splits

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENVILLE, S.C. - For most of her 72 years, Minnie Harris has worshipped at what is now the Bakers Chapel Baptist Church, and she isn't about to let the building stand unused.

The granddaughter of one of the church's founders, who was a runaway slave, is among a handful of parishioners who broke away from the African Methodist Episcopal Church and now are in a legal battle about using the sanctuary.

Harris has vowed to continue worshipping there to keep a promise she made to her uncle on his deathbed.

"He said don't sell the land. Don't get rid of the church. Stay on here. Don't let nobody take it away from you," she said.

"We don't want to get off the property," Harris said. "We really don't know what's wrong. We have got the church fixed up and everything."

But the AME Church has sued the members of Bakers Chapel, claiming they are trespassing by holding services in the 98-year-old Greenville County sanctuary. Church officials want a restraining order to keep them out.

Since 1898, the church had been known as Bakers Chapel AME Church. The tiny building was rundown and had only three members when the Piedmont Conference voted last year to abandon it and study how to use the property.

But two of the church's members kept meeting there anyway. They declared themselves independent Baptists, recruited about a dozen new members and renovated the building.

They argue the property belongs to the congregation, not the denomination. They point to a handwritten 98-year-old deed that says the property, on what has become a commercial strip, was sold to the congregation "forever for the sole use and benefit of church and burying purposes."

Hattie Cureton, also named in the lawsuit, said the group plans to "fight like blue blazes."

"There are people buried in the churchyard and we don't want to give them up," she said.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages. It says "the value of the real estate... will be greatly affected if the defendants are permitted to continue cutting down trees, removing fixtures and other property from the church and altering the sanctuary itself."

James A. Duckett, a lawyer for the AME Church, said he does not know whether the church plans to sell the property for commercial use.

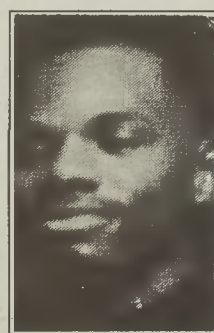
"They may not have any plans at all. But that doesn't mean they want anyone to just come in and take it from them," he said.

EYE ON GOSPEL

Reaching out: In a campaign to raise money for Burned Churches Building Fund, Warner Alliance Records has released a commercial five-song cassette entitled "No Weapon," featuring Beverly Crawford, Carlton Pearson, Andrae Crouch, the Winans, and the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. The company is also gearing up for the release of Donnie McClurkin's much anticipated and long-awaited self-titled solo debut. A retail campaign will key in on three major markets: New York, Los Angeles and Detroit. High profile appearances on the 700 Club, at Promise Keepers and T.D. Jake's Manpower summit will support in the massive rollout campaign.

And the first release from the House of Blues Gospel Music Company is "Houses of God," a gospel CD featuring Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross & the Supremes, the Winans, Clarence Fountain & The Blind Boys of Alabama, Andrae Crouch and Cissy Houston. A portion of the proceeds from the album, which was inspired to raise social consciousness, will assist in the rebuilding effort of those churches destroyed by arson in the South. Contributions will also benefit the International House of Blues Foundation program, a non-profit organization, established to bring music and art back into the public school system and to increase racial harmony through educational outreach programs.

Tidbits: With the rousing success of the stage play "He Say, She Say," which featured gospel singing sensation Kirk Franklin in his first acting role, Franklin is now fielding numerous offers for film and TV roles. However, gospel music remains the first love for Franklin - who is winding down work in the play and eventually hopes to preach...



Franklin

Word out of New York is that Rev. Al Sharpton will run for mayor of New York City next year. The controversial 41-year-old preacher, who has made two failed bids for the U.S. Senate announced his intentions from the pulpit of the Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem.

Briefly: The annually televised Stellar Awards, which honor and recognize excellence in the field of gospel music, are set to be taped on Dec. 12...The New Jersey Mass Choir recently completed a "Live In Concert" recording concert for the BBC radio broadcast in the United Kingdom.