

## Sunday School



Devotional reading: Hebrews 1:6-14.

Lesson scripture: Hebrews 1:1-3:6.

The first five lessons of this quarter, drawn from 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, dealt with the topic "Guidance for Ministry." Today's lesson begins a new unit titled "The Greatness of Christ." The four lessons in this unit are based upon the book of Hebrews.

While most of the epistles of the New Testament begin by identifying the writer, Hebrews is quite different. In fact, it begins more like a tract than a letter. The writer is not identified. This has led to abundant speculation as to the author's identity; among the most frequent suggestions are Paul, Apollos, and Barnabas. On the other hand, the destination of the book seems certain; it was directed to Jewish, or Hebrew, Christians. Exactly where these believers lived is yet another mystery. Some schools suggest Palestine, while others believe the book was destined for Alexandria (in Egypt) or Rome.

These questions concerning the book's authorship and destination should not be allowed to detract from its great value to us. Hebrews is both a theological treatise and a guidebook for practical Christian living. Christians today can find valuable instructions and encouragement from both of these emphases.

A fundamental proposition of Christianity is that God has spoken to man. That revelation has come at sundry, or various, times. Since the writer was addressing Hebrew Christians who were familiar with the Old Testament, they would immediately call to mind how God spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden, how He called Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, and how He thundered forth His commandments on Mount Sinai. They would also remember how He spoke to kings, and to prophets. The writer focuses particularly on the prophets, perhaps because of their role in preparing for the coming of God's Son into the world.

The phrase in diverse manners highlights the many different ways in which God spoke to man. Sometimes He spoke through dreams, visions, signs, or miracles. Expressions found in the prophets, such as "Thus saith the Lord," "The word of the Lord came unto me," and "Hear the word of the Lord," indicate that God communicated more directly to these specially chosen spokesmen.

Frequently the Bible divides the history of time. The Old Testament era is considered the "former days," or, as in Hebrews 1:1, "time past." The New Testament era, beginning with Christ's first coming and ending with His return, is viewed as the last days. For other uses of this phrase and similar terminology in the New Testament, see Acts 2:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20; and 1 John 2:18. While we do not know when Jesus will return, we know that He will return and we know that when He does come back, He will judge the nations (Matthew 25:31-33). We need to pay special attention to God's message for the last days, just as the Hebrew Christians did. This message is found only in His Son.

Jesus has been appointed heir of all things. We are not to think of this inheritance as one in which the father must die before the son can receive it. This expression indicates the close relationship of the divine Son to the heavenly Father. One aspect of this kinship is the Son's participation in the creation of all things.

This doctrine is stated, not only in this verse, but in other New Testament passages as well. All things will one day come under the dominion of Jesus, and then of the Father, when Jesus returns (1 Corinthians 15 (25-28)).



PHOTOS/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Above, Arsherres Jenkins, 6, holds her little sister, Taryn, 4, during a break between songs.



Choir director Tishia Corley works with a group of choir members after rehearsal. From left, bottom row: Arsherres Jenkins and Taryn Jenkins. Middle row: Meredith Spears, Avodon McCaskill, Willie Ervin, Tywon Crockett. Top row: Crystal Garvin, Sheba Jennings and Randall Ervin. The choir rehearses 6 p.m. Mondays at Garr Memorial Church. The group is open to children of all ages.

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Tywon Crockett loves to sing. He also loves the music of Charlotte gospel artist the Rev. John P. Kee. So when Tywon, 8, found out that Kee was creating a children's choir, he had to join.

"I have a lot of tapes of him," Tywon says. "I really like to listen to him."

Tywon and his cousins Randall and Willie Ervin are among the 50 children age 5-15 who make up the Youth for Christ Mass Choir, sponsored

by Kee and New Life Productions Inc. Each Monday night, children gather at Garr Memorial Church off Independence Boulevard for rehearsals.

There's no fidgeting or talking during the hour-long rehearsals. The work is hard, the children say. But it's worth it.

"It's exciting," says April Howie, 13. "And it will help me build up my singing voice. And maybe we'll get to travel."

Howie, an eighth grader at Northwest School of the Arts, has already won several vocal competitions, but thinks working with

Kee and the choir will start her in the right direction.

"I heard about it on the radio," says April's mom, Lula Howie. "It was a good opportunity to get her on a good choir. It's also a motivator to get her to sing better. She really likes John P. Kee. It seems like it's going to be a challenge."

Challenging it is. Members receive copies of songs and are taught harmonies, soprano, alto and tenor by choir director Tishia Corley. The music is up tempo, which Corley and the Rev. Ivan Powell, who heads the choir, say

keeps the kids focused.

"Keeping their attention is the hardest part," Corley says. "Once they get it, they don't forget."

Powell, who's from Connecticut, has worked with children's choirs before, but this is extra special, he says. His own children are also members of the group.

"We didn't have harmony like this back in Connecticut," Powell says with a laugh. "These kids are really good. It's special. I love it. When my daughter is at home, I hear her singing all the

time."

So does Tywon's mom, Jo-Anne Crockett. She heard about the choir from a friend and knew the choir would be perfect for Tywon.

"My son just had to join," Crockett says. "He's been coming for about three months. He never gets bored and he loves the music."

Tywon, who hopes to sing lead vocals soon, agrees.

"It's a nice thing to come out every Monday night," Tywon says. "You don't have to be in the house all the time. And you get to sing."

## Torched Mississippi churches rebuild

By Ray Harrist  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KOSSUTH, Miss. — Billy Dillworth leaned his large frame forward onto a metal folding chair and took a reassuring glimpse of the new structure that houses Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church.

"You can burn our building but you can't kill our church," said the 61-year-old Dillworth.

A year ago, he stood with other members of the tiny congregation, fighting back tears as thick, choking smoke curled heavenward from the gutted remains of what had been their ancestral place of worship.

"The church is a baptized group of believers, that's what the church is," he said.

The night of June 17, 1996, fire spread rapidly through Central Grove Missionary Baptist Church near Kossuth. A few county roads away and 17 minutes later, flames engulfed the Mount Pleasant Church. Both were destroyed.

Within days, federal and state investigators had determined the obvious — that the churches had been torched.

The fires came during a period when churches around the country, particularly black congregations in the South — like Mount Pleasant and Central Grove — were being targeted by arsonists.

Since Jan. 1, 1995, there have been more than 400 arson fires nationwide involving churches,

*"You can burn our building but you can't kill our church"*

— Billy Dillworth

including more than a dozen in Mississippi.

No arrests have been made in the Kossuth fires, but Craig Valentik, assistant special agent in charge of the federal Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms office in Birmingham, Ala., said a "very, very active investigation continues."

The rumors of an arrest has fueled the rumors among Kossuth's 225 residents. Some see a national conspiracy by white separatists. Others believe the churches were torched by local youths anxious to get in on the publicity that followed church fires in other

areas of the country.

On this humid day, Dillworth, an Alcorn County deputy sheriff for the past six years, and his 77-year-old uncle, Eli Dillworth, were taking advantage of the air conditioning inside the igloo-styled portable building that has served as the church's temporary home. About 50 yards away, precisely where the old church stood, a new, larger building is nearing completion.

Both men have been almost daily visitors to the site, anxious to take guests on a tour of the new building, with its high-ceil-

ing sanctuary that can hold double the current 130-person membership.

Four miles away at Central Grove, a large red-brick building with stained glass windows and wine-colored carpet is nearly finished, a source of pride for lifetime church member Robert Garrett.

"I think this whole thing has been a test that has brought us together," said Garrett as he manipulated a remote control to adjust the lighting and ceiling fans in the auditorium capable of seating some 300 people.

"They (the arsonist) thought this would start some racist stuff in this community," said Garrett, 47. "It didn't. We prayed to God and kept going."