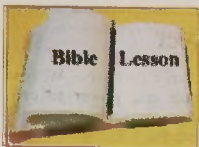


5B

RELIGION

Life 1B



A day to always remember

Some older Americans will remember where they were and what they were doing on December 7, 1941—the day Pearl Harbor was attacked. The memory of the events of such a tragic day is impossible to erase. A more current example of an unforgettable day would certainly be September 11, 2001. Who can forget what he or she was doing or the emptiness that was felt upon hearing and seeing the Twin Towers in New York City being attacked?

Whatever you feel inside when such events occur, it may be quite similar to how the people of Jerusalem felt as they witnessed the Babylonians ravaging their holy city and setting Solomon's magnificent temple on fire. We should not miss what the religious implications of this action were at the time it took place. The Babylonians' destruction of the temple of the God of Judah implied that their pagan gods were mightier than Judah's God. After all, so the thinking went, if the Lord were stronger, wouldn't He have intervened to protect His sacred dwelling place? If He failed to do so, then it must be because the Babylonian gods were superior.

Of course, that was not at all the case. Prophets such as Jeremiah repeatedly emphasized that the Babylonians were not conquering Jerusalem through their own might; the Lord was giving Jerusalem into their hands as punishment for the sins of His people (Jeremiah 27:5-7; 34:2). Even some Babylonians (Chaldeans) recognized this truth (see Jeremiah 40:2, 3).

The destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of God's people did not signal the absence of the Lord; on the contrary, these events provided evidence of His control. The events validated His prophets as authoritative messengers who conveyed His truth.

Lesson Background
Conditions in Judah deteriorated rapidly following the death of Josiah in about 609 b.c., the last godly king in that country. Here is a summary of the reigns of Judah's last four kings:
Jehoaahaz, also called Shalhum, was a son of Josiah. He reigned over Judah only three months. He was taken captive to Egypt, where he died (2 Kings 23:31-34; Jeremiah 22:11, 12).

Jehoiakim was put on the throne by the Egyptians after they had removed Jehoahaz from power. This was another son of Josiah. He ruled for 11 years (609-598 B.C.).

Please see A DAY/8B

Fire destroys one of most historic black churches

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON—A lightning strike ignited an overnight fire that destroyed one of Houston's oldest black churches.

Pastor Floyd N. Williams II was one of five people in the Friendship Baptist

Church Monday night when they said lightning struck the rear of the church about 7 p.m. Monday.

"I heard thunder, and then I heard a pop sounding like lightning had struck the transformer. We lost all power," Williams said.

By the time firefighters

arrived, "it was engulfed in flames," said Assistant Fire Chief Jack Williams.

The church's walls and roof collapsed as about 150 firefighters battled the towering flames, which destroyed the 60-year-old church sanctuary in Houston's predominantly black

Fourth Ward.

A neighboring duplex owned by the church also was damaged.

The church was founded in 1903 as one of the original nine churches in what was then Houston's Freedmen's Town.

Sing, earn \$10,000



By Cheris F. Hodges
cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

Want a chance to win \$10,000 for your gospel choir and a chance to sing in New York?

Then the Pathmark Gospel Competition is for you.

In celebration of Black History Month, the contest draws singers from all over the country to compete with Metro New York choirs. This year's

competition takes place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in The World Financial Center Winter Garden, West Street between Vesey and Liberty Streets in Lower Manhattan.

For more information about either of Pathmark's Black History Month events or to enter, call (866) 893-1812 or log on to Gospel5000.com.

Competition Youth Division Choirs, for members age 18 and under, sing first, beginning at 10 a.m. From 1:30

p.m. to 5 p.m., the Open Division competition takes place. Last year's Open Division top choir, the Mount Vernon Gospel Knights, will perform a medley, including "Lift up Your Voice," during intermission.

The entire day's event is being taped to air on XM Satellite Radio's Spirit Channel. Inspirational bands, fine soloists and sweet harmonies add to a tremendous day and an opportunity for choirs, famous in their own communities, to be heard Coast to Coast.

Praising Jesus on line

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

YORK, Pa.—It may be hard to imagine the disciples of Jesus Christ at a keyboard trying to download an encore presentation of the sermon on the mountain, but if the way churches do their jobs today is any indication, it might have happened if they were around today.

At the Zion Lutheran Church in Manchester Township, Patrick Dye, the parish administrator, said it only takes minutes to download the church's digitally recorded service to the World Wide Web.

"We make it available for users of both broadband and dial-up Internet service," Dye said.

The broadband service is almost as crisp and clear as being there. The dial-up is a little grainy and choppy but does not require the more expensive broadband connection.

In this day and age, churches have to be technically savvy, Dye said. That's why his church has a technology committee. In addition to ensuring services are made available online, they also make certain that the service itself is glitch-free before the first word is spoken.

Zion Lutheran relies heavily on its technology committee to prepare its services' slide show presentations, graphic displays, sound for the music performers and lighting effects, if needed.

And the techies are still thinking of what to do next. One

idea that could be unveiled early next year is to make services available for downloading to iPods or other portable digital players.

The church is also going to add a link to a service called Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. This service will help parishioners set up their tithing electronically.

Rather than deal with checks, envelopes and collection plates, a preset amount of money will be withdrawn from a parishioner's designated bank account and deposited into the church's account.

At the New Life Assembly of God church in East Berlin, Pastor Joel Everhart said his services are broadcast in real-time, meaning as they happen. His son, Josh Everhart, set up the feature two years ago.

The service is ideal for people who work late and have trouble getting up. Some church members have said they have used their laptops to go to church while on vacation.

"One man in Washington, D.C., invites friends over to his apartment to watch our service there," Everhart said.

For those wanting to find New Life from D.C. or anywhere else, the Web site can provide directions door to door from anywhere via a link to Mapquest. The site even has a digital prayer chain.

Like the service offered by Zion Lutheran, New Life church

Please see PRAISING/6B



Hammond at best on 'Worship'

Fred Hammond
Free To Worship
Fred Hammond and
Bobby Sparks,
producers
Verity/Zomba Records



I didn't think Fred Hammond could top "Something Bout Love," but he's done it easily with "Free To Worship."

Hammond doesn't have the best voice. It can get a bit whiny but he's always known how to sing. Sometimes he doesn't seem to want to sing, but his last two CDs have brought his vocals back up to the level of his suburb song writing abilities.

It's Hammond's writing ability that make this CD stellar. He's dipped into every subcategory of gospel - contemporary, praise & worship, r&b and traditional - all of which he does with ease. No matter the style, his lyrics seem to hit home. He's a great storyteller, writing for the everyday worshiper. That's not to say his songs are simple. Hardly. But Hammond's songs do flow easily and linger in the memory. "My Heart Is For You" starts the CD with nearly a swing beat, weaving choruses, vamps and verses through the bouncing beat. "This Is The Day" is a contemporary take on a classic hymn with a touch of hip-hop.

Hammond shows his versatility on "More Of You" and "Every Time I Think," which could fit easily on R&B radio, despite the overtly religious lyrics. But Hammond's best work is on the slower songs and mid tempo songs that build. Hammond is refreshingly simple on "There Is No Place" a haunting exhortation of God's grace. "Thank You (I Won't Complain)" is a testimony on which Hammond pours his soul into his words. You get the feeling this is something he lives, not just sings about.

The CD also comes with a bonus DVD with live versions of a few songs. That's gravy. The real meat is the great songs and stylish production job that brings them out. Hammond has got himself a winner.

+

Ratings

Classic: ★★★★★

Excellent: ★★★★★

Good: ★★★★

Fair: ★★★

Why? ★★

No stars = A mess

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for announcements is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail your announcement to cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com. Please put "church news" in the subject line.

Ongoing
We Empower Women For Life At Women of The Harvest Bible Study Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at 6636 Suite L Hickory Grove Business Park.

• Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500

Shopton Road, will have noon day Bible study from 12 to 1 p.m.

• Join Scouting at Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500 Shopton Road, Charlotte, NC 28217. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop meetings are held each Wednesday night at 6:30 p.m. Call (704) 523-6552 to register or to obtain additional information.

• Hearts and Hammers, a construction ministry of Independence Hill Baptist Church is currently collecting application for its 2007

project. Hearts and Hammers assists non-profit organizations by providing expertise and labor. The deadline to submit an application is Dec. 31. For information or to obtain an application, call (704) 596-2124.

November 17
Pastor Valari Logan and Women of the Harvest present a Women's Fall Retreat, "Listening to God with our Total Mind, Body, and Soul." The event runs through Saturday and registration is \$85. To register, send cash or

money order to Kingdom Fellowship-Women of The Harvest, PO Box 444334, Charlotte, NC 28215.

The retreat will be held at The White Oak Conference Center in Winnsboro, S.C. For more information, call (704) 531-2246.

November 18
First Presbyterian Church, 302 E. Windsor St., Monroe, will host its third annual Community Jubilee from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more

Please see FIRST/6B

