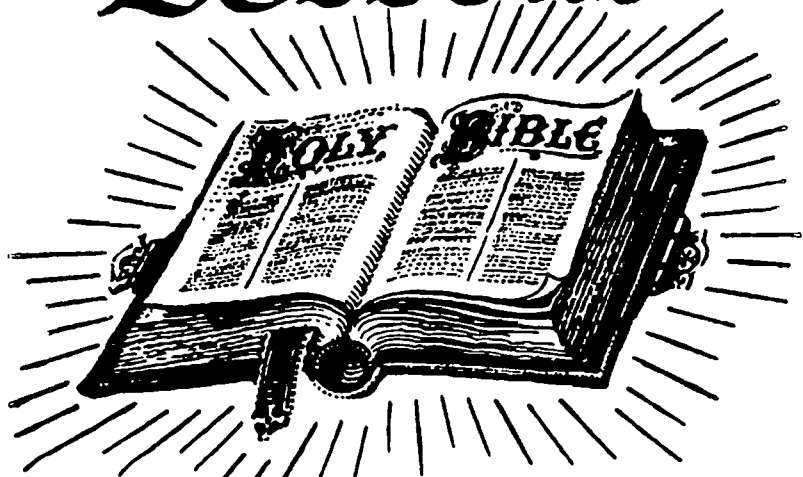


Bible Lessons



**Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED” II Cor. 3:18**

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 6, No. 3
July, Aug., Sept.
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Vol. 6

July, August, Sept., 1974

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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 1974



For this quarter, we will study the books of Daniel and Hosea. Daniel is partly historical, but is mainly prophetic. The first six chapters are mainly historical. The prophetic occupies some of the second chapter and the rest of the book. It contains predictions of events from Daniel's own time to the end of the world. We note that much is given in regard to the advent, work, and the death of the Messiah which was to come to pass. The fulfillment of these prophecies gives a most convincing proof of Jesus Christ's true Messiahship.

The divine authority of the book of Daniel is given by Jesus Christ quoting words from Daniel ("spoken of by Daniel the prophet" Matt. 24:15). Similar testimony is borne by the Apostles, as well as by the whole Jewish Synagogue and the early Christian Church. The book of Daniel formed a part of the canonical Scripture in the time of Christ, and from the time of the completion of the Old Testament canon.

In the book of Daniel, we see the power of God on exhibition in answer to the prayers of those who were steadfast in their allegiance to God. We note the folly and effects of pride on those who were given to vanity. It is proved that the oppressors and persecutors of God's people will not go unpunished. We see that God's grace is sufficient for all who will love and serve Him.

Hosea, the son of Beeri, is the first of the minor prophets. He lived in the kingdom of Samaria. He prophesied under the kings of Judah and under Jeroboam, second king of Israel. Some historians believe that his writings are some of the oldest in our possession. He speaks of the Israelites as a people who are entirely corrupted, and are ripe for punishment. They have disobeyed God by worshipping idols and will be punished.

—Sister Marie Miles

Correction: On page 39 of the last Bible Lesson book the sentence should have read: "This [day of Pentecost] was ten days after Jesus had ascended to heaven."

July 7, 1974

DANIEL'S RESOLUTION

Daniel 1:3-5, 7, 8, 12-15, 17, 20; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 1 Cor. 6:19

Daniel 1:3 And the king [Nebuchadnezzar] spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he should not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times

better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Cor. 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Memory Verse: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 1:12.

Central Thought: Rash resolutions are often foolish and dangerous. Thoughtful resolutions made and kept cause one to become strong. Be a Daniel, a man of prayer as well as purpose.

Word Definitions: Purpose means: "to aim, intend, plan." Resolution means: "determination." Pulse is seeds that grow in pods such as beans or peas. —Smith's Bible Dictionary

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first verses in Daniel give us the background of the four men who were chosen from among the children of Israel taken captive from Judah. The kingdom of Judah, like that of Israel, had forsaken God; therefore, God forsook them. God had forgiven Manasseh's sin in filling Jerusalem with innocent blood, but his children and subjects continued impenitent. The blow fell on Jehoiakim and the people during his reign. 2 Kings 24:1-4. Jerusalem was taken, and Jehoiakim was "bound in fetters" to be carried away to Babylon. He was released later and allowed to reign as a tributary prince. Many captives, some of noble and royal birth, were taken to Babylon. A portion of the sacred vessels of the Temple were taken, and Nebuchadnezzar placed them "in the house of his god" as the trophies of his conquests and an expression of his gratitude to his god, Bel.

The fate of the children of God's chosen people and God's warning to them concerning idol worship, make us to know that God's word, whether of mercy or judgment, shall not return to him void. Though promising pleasure or profit, the path of disobedience is found to be planted with thorns. Remember that it's "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Daniel 1:2 says, "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah,

into his [Nebuchadnezzar's] hands." Remember that God is ruling. Nations and kings are raised up or overthrown at His will. It's His to plant and to pluck up, to build and to throw down. We need to flee to Christ. As we studied in the past, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Psalm 2:12.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were four of those who were brought as captives from Judah to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after the siege at Jerusalem in Judah. —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Tell why the four men from Judah were in Babylon.
2. Does it make any difference to God what we eat or what we drink or how we take care of our bodies?
3. What resolution (purpose) did Daniel make?
4. Where should we base the reason for our resolutions?
5. What were the results of the decision that Daniel and his three companions made?
6. Mention others who made right decisions and tell of their outcome.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God has given us a wonderful body. The Psalmist David has said, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." Psa. 139:14. God has also given us the complete care of our bodies. We can abuse it, or we can take care of it. But regardless of what we do, we must give an account to Him for how we take care of it. He commands us not to defile our bodies. He makes us know that our bodies were "bought with a price." We are to glorify God in our bodies.

Daniel was given a choice. He could stuff himself with the king's dainties, wines, etc., or refuse them. What did he do about it? Yield to the "lust of the flesh"? Oh, that there would be more Daniels! I think of the little saying that I learned when a child. It said, "Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose true. Dare to make it known." It takes a thoughtful, prayerful waiting upon God to make resolutions that will affect one this deeply. Our lives are different; and our resolutions might be different; but if we love God we must determine to let Him be our Guide, and purpose to live according to God's Word.

Make a habit of making right resolutions or purposes. Standing by them gives a person moral strength and force of character. Each resolution carried out in the face of difficulty or natural reluctance makes one stronger. Daniel's resolution

and the fulfillment of it prepared him for greatness in later times. One must not feel that he can carry out his purpose without prayer. Prayer is important. Daniel was a man of prayer as well as of purpose.

In the Bible we read of the prodigal son who said, "I will arise and go to my Father." He put his purpose in action. We read of the woman with an issue of blood who made a resolution to press through the crowd. She knew if she touched the hem of Jesus' garment she would be healed. Esther resolved, at the risk of her life, to plead with the king for the lives of her countrymen. She said, "If I perish, I perish." But David's prayer was, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." Jesus faced the devil in His trial and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is better to obey God steadfastly, and it is more profitable in every way. The king's meat was doubtless of the unclean class which was forbidden for the children of Israel to eat. Only the animals that had cloven hoofs and that chewed the cud were counted as clean and were allowed to be used for meat to be eaten. This was a very serious commandment to Israelites and very strictly followed by those who strove to please God. There is on record an account of a mother with five sons who were faced with the heathen concerning the eating of swine meat. That mother witnessed the torturing and death of each of her five sons, while encouraging each one of them to bravely refuse to eat of the forbidden meat.

In these latter days, we have more serious issues to confront. It is no longer a question of meat, for the kingdom of God does not consist of such. We are faced with a higher standard to live by, namely, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Satan seeks to undermine our purpose of heart concerning these things. John Bunyan, in his book "The Pilgrim's Progress," gives us a spiritual application to the clean and unclean meat thought. He brought out how many people "chewed the cud," that is, they read, studied, preached, taught, and listened to the Word of God. But at the same time they did not "part the hoof," that is, they did not (as he put it) part the way of sinners. They made no distinction in right and wrong, good and evil. This made them unclean. And in like manner there are those who are so strict on parting from wrong and evil, who do not seek to feed on the spiritual things of God from the Word. Both of these spirits are unclean. We must feed on the Word of Life and at the same time depart

from iniquity. As we view the world today, we see these two foreign, unclean elements at work. There is the fanatical spirit, and the compromising spirit. They are both wrong and are to be refused. But let us be as Daniel who refused the unclean and clung to that which was ordained and accepted of God.

—Leslie Busbee

DARE TO BE A DANIEL

Doubtless, Daniel and his companions had been reared in loving homes. They had been carefully taught in the Law from their earliest childhood. They were the very finest of the young men of Jerusalem, "young men in whom was no blemish, and beautiful in appearance, and skilled in all wisdom." They had been carefully sheltered from the temptations of the world by godly parents. They were some of the rare products of many years of earnest, loving care, and discipline. Much had gone into the rearing of these young men, and the hopes of the Jewish nation were directly concerned with them.

Suddenly, the shelter and restraint were gone. They were torn from parents and friends and thrust into the wickedness and worldliness of an alien court. They were now pressured to do wrong. Furthermore, they were under the special favor of the king of Babylon; therefore, almost anything was theirs, simply by request. Even their identities had been covered by the changing of their names. This was a rare opportunity to "give way," to "have some fun."

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." This was the secret of his steadfastness. Daniel purposed in his heart to stand true to the truth that he had been taught. Here is character! The temptation was not only presented, but "appointed" by the king. "But he [Daniel] purposed in his heart."

This singleness of heart brought great danger to his life. For the king of Babylon, the absolute monarch of the known world, had spoken; and his word was law. To disobey was death, but Daniel was prepared. He had been living for God—day after day. And his Ruler had been preparing, for "God had brought Daniel into favour and compassion with chief of the eunuchs." Surely, this would be the last person to show favor and compassion upon a poor Hebrew slave! But God knoweth the hearts of all men, and "He knoweth the way that I take."

But the chief of the eunuchs was afraid. He knew well the terrible consequences of the king's wrath, and feared greatly the results of deviating from the king's commandment. Surely the tempter whispered to Daniel's heart: "Will you endanger

the life of your friend merely for the sake of holding to these old-fashioned, prudish scruples?" But no, the steadfast conviction of that noble heart recoiled from the tempter's suggestion and proposed a fair test before his friend. Praise God! True holiness need but to be tested to be proved!

"Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants." Let godliness be compared with the instruments of Satan! Which is greater, God or Baal?

Now, where do you suppose that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah spent the next ten days? Someone says: "Well, I guess they spent it all on their knees." They could not. They had their studies and classes, meals, etc. Spiritual conflicts seldom occur at a time when everything is convenient for victory. Surely, however, every available moment was spent Godward until they knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that victory was at hand.

"And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." And God was glorified in His servants.

What was the secret of his success? First, he "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." Secondly, he entrusted the resolution of his heart into the hand of God. Thirdly, he prayed over and around all obstacles until faith believed and claimed victory. Fourthly, he saw "the salvation of God."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

—Mark Spinks



July 14, 1974

IN THE DAYS OF THESE KINGS

Daniel 2:31-34, 35b, 36, 39, 40a, 44, 45; Luke 2:1, 4, 5, 7;

Mark 1:14, 15

Daniel 2:31 [Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar] Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

35b And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40a And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron:

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus (Roman Empire), that all the world should be taxed.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Memory Verse: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 14:17.

Central Thought: The Kingdom of God was set up "in the days of these kings" when the Roman Empire had reached the height of its glory. God's kingdom is an exclusive kingdom, the stone that breaks all other power in pieces and fills the whole earth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream. He called in his wise men and said, "Make known to me the dream and the interpretation thereof." When none other could make it known, Daniel responded. In our lesson, God revealed to Daniel the dream and its interpretation. Daniel told the king that God, who "revealeth secrets, maketh known to thee what shall come to pass." After Daniel had told the king his dream and its meaning, the king declared, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." Daniel 2:47.

In the book of Daniel, we note that the kingdom ruled by Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian kingdom. This was the "head of fine gold." In Daniel 5:31 we read about the Medo-Persians taking the kingdom of Babylon from Belshazzar in 538 B. C. This was the "breast and his arms of silver," which were parts of the great image. This was the second kingdom to rule the then known world, which is also according to the history that you studied in school. You also studied about the Greeks ruling the world after conquering the Medo-Persians in 331 B. C. The third kingdom is the belly and thighs of brass of the great image. Then the Romans conquered the Greco-Macedonian Empire in 146 B. C. The Roman Empire was the fourth kingdom to rule—"the legs of iron" on the great image. Now you might think this is not important, but we must know these facts to establish the truth that "in the days of these kings" the kingdom of God was established. We note in our lesson, which is important, that Jesus was born during the rule of the Roman Empire under Caesar Augustus. —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Describe the great image and tell who saw it. 2. What does each part of the image represent? 3. What hit the image and destroyed it? 4. Why is it important to remember the words, "in the days of these kings"? 5. Tell exactly when the Kingdom of God was set in motion. 6. Will these truths can-

cel false claims that the kingdom of God will be set up at some future date?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It makes the soul of one rejoice as the Bible's deep truths are pursued. Just to think that God used Daniel to bring us the important truth of the time and extensiveness of the great kingdom of God! How glorious are God's ways and truths!

We read in the New Testament that Jesus is the "chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20), who was rejected by the Jews. Isaiah 28:16 makes us know that Christ is called a tried stone, a sure foundation; and God's approval is upon Him. Because this stone was not set up by man, but by God; He is said to be "cut out of the mountain without hands." Jesus is also called a "stone of stumbling, a rock of offense" because many will not accept Him; therefore, He will be their ruin. He shall fall upon them and break them to pieces. The Jews rejected Him to their own destruction. Jesus told them, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Luke 13:35). They lost their eternal salvation as a whole. But thank God for all who will accept this Stone. Unto them Jesus has become "a precious stone" because of His redemptive plan, His glory and power being manifested to those who believe on Him.

In olden days they used a device in warfare which would eject a great stone into the ranks of the enemy. In our lesson, a stone was projected and hit the great image. The image was broken into pieces and became like chaff, and the wind carried it away. That Roman kingdom was not important anymore. But there was a kingdom which became great. It could be called the fifth kingdom. It was the Kingdom of God. This kingdom became as a "great mountain and filled the whole earth." Christ is the stone, the government, which arose during the Roman Empire. Jesus was born in Judea, a Roman province. His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom; and the government, rule, and power of this kingdom is "righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost." We note that the apostles went out pulling down idolatry and establishing the Christian church. More people were "added to the church daily such as should be saved," and thousands rejected idolatry and worshiped Christ. Thus on the day of Pentecost, the kingdom of God was set in motion. Praise God, the Kingdom of God is still ruling today. When we are "born again," we are in the kingdom, and the kingdom is "within" us. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In speaking of the image seen by the king of Babylon, a widespread false teaching says that the feet and toes of miry

clay and iron represent these latter days of time and that in this time Jesus is supposed to set up His kingdom. But let us consider some important things concerning this. The fourth kingdom was to be as strong as iron. Very few people can deny the fact that this fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire. If it was the Roman Empire, let us notice that the condition described as iron being mixed with miry clay is yet speaking of this same kingdom. "The kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken." And doubtless he speaks of the same kingdom when he said they would mingle themselves with the seed of men, and not cleave one to another. A look at the history of the Roman Empire and the course it took reveals that this is exactly what happened. With the Germans invading from the north and vice and immorality corrupting from within, the Roman Empire went to pieces. But while this was going on, another kingdom was taking shape in the hearts and lives of men and women. Christ, our Saviour and King of glory, made His short visit to this earth, wielding the sceptre of righteousness and truth. Through the virtue of His life and death upon the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, He arose from the dead and established the kingdom of love and peace to reign in the very heart of man. Oh, it is the blinded soul who denies that God set up a kingdom in Christ. It is folly and error to say that the kingdom of God has not been brought down and set up. It is no wonder that so many cannot discern this because this divine and eternal kingdom is of a spiritual nature that rules the affections and devotions of men with undying and true love. Such is the only manner in which man can be ruled. Man cannot be ruled with force, threats, and oppression. He may be crushed to servitude and bondage, but the spirit and affections are not bowed. With the first opportunity the captive escapes. But the person who is ruled by love and devotion is truly a faithful subject indeed. Such is the kingdom that God set up in the days of these kings, one that would stand forever.

—L. Busbee

SATAN LOOSED

Rev. 20:7, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Satan here mentioned has reference to the old dragon spirit, which is called the Devil and Satan (Rev. 12:9). And again he is mentioned in Rev. 20:2, and it says he, this dragon power and spirit which is anti-Christ and anti-God, was bound for a thousand years. But since that thousand years has now expired, we see the same old anti-Christ and anti-God spirit coming on the scene under a cloak of Communism, for Satan, this dragon power, is loosed out of his prison. The eighth verse tells us what he will do when he is loose,

for it reads thus, "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." This dragon power and spirit under the cloak of Communism is doing this very thing now.

We see that it has deceived and captured Russia, and thousands in that country who have resisted its power have been slain or held in misery in prison camps, and this anti-Christ and anti-God octopus dragon spirit is reaching out practically to all the known world and instilling its anti-Christ doctrines into the hearts of the people. It is spreading and becoming stronger all the time. It is so slimy and deceitful that nearly all the people in our country are under its influence, and in different ways are aiding its prestige and spread, while at the same time claiming to be against it. Our law makers are formulating rules and passing laws in its favor and the people in general love to have it so.

To prove our assertion, we insert here an editorial taken from the "Oklahoma City Times," which makes the claim of having the greatest paid circulation of any paper in the State of Oklahoma:

"Historians of a century hence will review with amazed incredulity the attitude of the present administration. This administration demands that American taxpayers spend billions upon billions in the effort to 'check Communism abroad,' but views the spread of Communism within our own nation with smug and uncomprehending complacency, and even brands the efforts made to check this spread as 'witch hunts' or 'dragging red herrings across the trail.'

"Some of the highest-place officials in this administration, strange and incomprehensible as this seems, have admitted that official Washington is honey-combed with Communists and fellow-travelers. Proof is now a matter of government record. For the most part, these Reds and "pinks" are products of American universities where 'academic freedom' has been so prostituted that treasonable doctrines have gone unchallenged, and have finally penetrated government itself."

You notice that this eighth verse says he went out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. Four quarters include it all. Adam Clarke, commenting on the terms "Gog and Magog," writes, "Under these names the enemies of God's truth are generally intended." There is no body of people greater enemies to God's truth than those who make a profession of being the Lord's children (or followers of Christ) and at the same time hold up for sin and self-righteousness, and while professing to be the Lord's cater to the world in spi-

rit, in fashions and fads, and worldly conformity in different ways and manners. James makes the statement: "Whosoever therefore will be a friend to the world is the enemy of God."

The dragon, which is called the Devil or Satan, is now loose, gathering his forces together from Gog and Magog to battle against the remnant of God's people who are not of the world, and will not bow to his cunning and deceitful ways. They are closing in on the beloved City all the time, and the number of them is as the sand of the sea. Verse nine is speaking of the winding-up days, "They went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about [God's true family, who are not of this world], and the beloved City [the New Jerusalem which has come down from above, Rev. 21:2, 9]." When they do this and it looks as if all of God's true witnesses are going to be taken and slain, then God intervenes and fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them (2 Peter 3: 7, 10). The last day has come and the Judgment is set. The wicked, religious enemies of God's truth are burned up with the world and their souls will meet the true God in judgment. The tenth verse reads, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast [Catholicism] and the false prophet [protestantism] are [they are already there; this Pagan power under Communism will be last to go down.], and shall be tormented day and night forever and forever. And I saw a great white throne [white denotes purity and righteousness, and the throne represents the Judgment] and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them." This is the last day spoken of by Jesus in the sixth chapter of John; and there will be no more day after this; for the righteous and the wicked will be judged, as it states below, out of the records in the books. This is when the end comes, and according to Paul in 1 Cor. 15:24, the Lord will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. The kingdom of God is none else but the bloodwashed, redeemed children of God which constitute the true vine, the church, in the world today. This kingdom will be delivered up to God the Father, and He will be all and in all. Read 1 Cor. 15:28. In the 26th verse it is written, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." In the 14th verse of the 20th chapter of Revelation, we read, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Dear reader, there will be no literal thousand-year reign of Christ upon this earth; neither will there be any chance for you to get right with God after you pass from this life. Now is the day of salvation. If you neglect the cleansing stream in this life, sad will be your doom. We beg you in Jesus' name,

make your peace, calling, and election sure with God now, and enjoy the comfort of His Spirit in this life and the assurance of bliss in the world to come. —Fred Pruitt

July 21, 1974

A FIERY FURNACE OR A FIERY HELL

Daniel 3:1, 6, 14-19a, 20, 24-28

Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

6 And [he said] whoso falleth not down and worshipeth the image [when the music plays] shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltry, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19a Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury,

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors,

Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth; and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their heads singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire passed on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Memory Verse: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matt. 10:28.

Central Thought: The fiery furnace, with the favor of God, is rather to be chosen here than the soul's fiery hell in eternity.

Word Definitions: "A burning fiery furnace" This was a Babylonian practice of punishment and death. The Medes and Persians had a lions' den as a death punishment for the offenders of their laws. —Hom. Com.

LESSON BACKGROUND

I trust that you read the whole chapter at home since you knew we were studying the book of Daniel. We chose only parts of the chapter for our lesson today.

The king commanded the so-called important people of his province to come together before his huge image. This image was about 100 ft. high. It was probably overlaid with gold.

The children of Israel were commanded by the law of Moses not to bow down before any kind of an image, or to worship

any other god but the true God of heaven. Since the three Hebrew children were in the court of the king, they were standing before the image. No doubt, they had prayed much about their coming trial. Of course there were those who were filled with envy against them in the crowd that immediately told the king about their disobedience in not falling down and worshipping the image. This caused the king to become angry. After they refused a second time to bow down or obey him, he had the furnace heated seven times hotter than before. The men who bound the three Hebrew children and threw them in died from the intense heat. Probably God took vengeance right there upon those who threw them in. (Romans 12:19). How quickly the king changed! He had been filled with pride and passion, which had shut his eyes to reason. The three Hebrews' past faithfulness was forgotten. Now he was amazed and astonished. He called them out of the furnace and declared that all were to worship the true God. —M. Miles

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Are you standing up or are you bowing down? There are many images set up today. The Apostle Paul reminds us that Satan is the "god of this world." 2 Cor. 4:4. The devil has built many big images. His power is causing most of the people in the world to bow down to these huge images. And if we would only stop and think, he is using music to cause them to be drawn to these images. That worldly and filthy music works on the emotions, and the people are swayed and do yield to the power that is working to cause them to bow. Think of the power of the god of fashion. "Why are you so out of step with the times? Why be so old fashioned? Why not improve your looks and beautify yourself? You're being left out by your 'silly' ideas. The Bible was written for people of those times, not for these times." Many are drawn down upon their knees before the "god of this world," and they obey its call. But there are a few who are standing up. Are you among that group?

What about the god of drugs, god of cigarettes, god of medicines, god of worldly entertainment, god of television, etc.? Are you bowing down to those images, or are you standing up? It might mean the fiery furnace for you, but are you willing to say with the three Hebrew children, "If God doesn't deliver us from suffering, we are willing to suffer"? Oh, praise God, He will deliver you even if it's through the fiery furnace. The "form of the fourth," who is the Son of God, will be right there with you in that fiery furnace. He will hold your hand in the suffering. What a comfort to have Him! What an inner peace

is in the soul when you know you are in His favor! It is worth more than the applause of mankind. Those who stand up for God stand tall. They are to be admired. They are the ones who have courage. It's easy to go with the crowd. It's easy for a canoe to float down stream, but it takes some effort to row upstream. Any old dead fish will float downstream, but it takes a live fish to go upstream.

It's better to suffer a thousand times over and die in God's favor, than to die with the favor of the world upon you and go to hell in eternity. Better a fiery furnace for the body than the fire of hell and a guilty conscience for the soul. Choose today. We need not fear him that can kill the body, but should fear God who can cast both soul and body into hell. It pays to serve God. God can deliver; but if not, we will die and go to be with the Lord. God did deliver the three Hebrew children and brought glory to His great name. A wicked nation and king recognized the God of heaven as being the true God.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The courage and decision of these three Hebrew children of Nebuchadnezzar's court is a splendid example that we as children of God should count worthy to imitate. God saw fit to deliver them that day from the violence of the fire. But they were so determined to be faithful to God that they were willing to die in those flames as well as to be delivered. Let us remember those who were faithful to God at the very cost of their lives. Think of John the Baptist who dared reprove Herod for taking his brother's wife. Herod was content to merely place him in prison, but the malice raged on in the heart of his wife. And at the opportune time she had this holy man's head severed from his shoulders. This is just one case of many that God allowed to be. Perhaps He saw that the proud and stubborn hearts of Herod and his wife would not be changed even if He spared John. Then think of the high priest Ahimelech in the days of David and King Saul. Here was an innocent man who helped David in an hour of need, but suffered vengeance at the hand of the enraged and jealous Saul. The Lord not only permitted him to die, but the entire city of the priests along with all the men, women, and children, and all the animals were smitten. Only one man, one of the high priest's sons, escaped. Jesus mentioned righteous Abel and another man who died at the hands of those who were void of the grace of God.

But let us remember the words of the writer in Hebrews 11:35. After noting how that many through faith stopped the mouths of lions and quenched the violence of fire and escaped

the edge of the sword, he said, "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." This is important to be remembered. For those who were not spared from death were sealed up in the hope of something better than being spared, and that was the hope of a better resurrection. So it is for us to settle it in our hearts and be established to be faithful to the good Lord and His blessed way, whether we live or die or whether we suffer or are delivered. We cannot lose if we will do this. —L. Busbee

WON WITHOUT A WORD

During some evangelistic meetings in Hunan, China, a country woman listened to the Gospel messages very attentively. Being much agitated because of her burden of sin, she prayed and accepted Christ as her personal Saviour.

She said, "Missionary, if I tell my husband that I believe in Jesus I will have to suffer the consequences, and you may be killed because he hates missionaries." I smiled and told her I did not like to believe it. But when she went on to tell me some of her husband's deeds, and also confessed that on one occasion he had planned to hold me up in order to rob and beat me, I felt too that the situation was really serious and that he was a bad man indeed.

So I told her that, if her husband was so bad, she had better not tell him with words that she believed in Jesus. To this a Bible woman objected, saying that a young believer ought to witness for Jesus as that would strengthen her faith. In reply to this statement, I opened my Bible to 1 Peter 3:1 and read it. I then told her that if there was danger that her husband might get mad at her and even kill her and me also, she had better live out the change that Christ made in her heart and life.

A week later she came to the Sunday meeting with her husband, and told me the following story:

"Before leaving the city I bought some fish which my husband likes especially well. As soon as I got home I cleaned the house and made everything as nice as possible. In the afternoon I prepared the fish and was waiting for my husband at five o'clock. I was very excited and could hear my heart beat. When he came, I met him at the door and smilingly said, 'How do you do, Husband?' He looked at me in great surprise, and said, 'Well.' Seeing the water ready for washing his feet, he again looked at me and said, 'Water ready? That is funny!' He washed his feet and then I invited him to supper. That surprised him too, but when he saw his favorite kind of fish, he burst out, 'What is the matter with you? You are different.

You greeted me at the door, prepared the hot water and now you give me this fine fish. Who told you to do it?" But I smiled and said nothing.

"The next morning I was up first and prepared his tea. When he got up he exclaimed, 'What! You got up to prepare tea for me? It must be the first time since we have been married!' He went off to work with a puzzled look on his face.

"On the sixth evening he came home and said to me, 'I will not take any supper until you tell me who helped you to make such a different wife out of you. My friends also want to know so that they can tell their wives how to be changed too.'

"I could wait no longer. I had to tell him, but I begged, 'Promise me not to beat me, for my confession may be a shock to you.'

"He replied, 'No, no! Please go on and tell me.'

"Then I said, 'I believe in Jesus now. He has forgiven me of all my sins. I have given up smoking and card playing, and I want to be a good wife to you.'

" 'This I had not expected,' he replied very much perturbed. 'What will my friends say?' He grabbed his hat and rushed out into the garden where he paced up and down wrestling within his soul. 'We hate these foreigners, and now my wife believes as they do—but see what a great change came over her—there must be something good in this foreign religion after all.'

"Meanwhile I was earnestly pleading for his soul, 'Lord, help my husband to understand. Give him faith to believe too. Help me and keep him from beating me.'

"After a long time he returned and, earnestly looking at me, he replied, 'If that foreign religion is able to make such a great change in you, I will not hinder you. I don't care what my friends say or who will scold me. Tomorrow is Sunday. You may go to the church in the city—and I will go with you.' That was a great joy for me.

"On Sunday morning when we entered the church, she rose from her seat far back and came to me saying, 'Yesterday evening I told him everything and he did not beat me. He is sitting there in the back seat. Please, after the meeting speak to him.' "

How she smiled! At the close of the service I spoke to the man and he told me what had gone through his mind while he paced up and down in the garden. "When I saw the great change in my wife, I had to admit that to have faith in Jesus is indeed a very good thing. From now on I will also attend the church services—for what my wife has I want to have too."

Before long this man accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour. And about six months later both of them were baptized.

—H. Becker

July 28, 1974

MERCY MINGLED WITH JUDGMENT

Daniel 4:24, 25-37

Daniel 4:24 [Daniel speaking to Nebuchadnezzar] **This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:**

25 That they shall drive thee from men, and the dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; Thy kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned

unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Memory Verse: But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. James 4:6.

Central Thought: Mercy and judgment are the reflections of God's own character. Man is brought to the final judgment after he has trampled God's last drop of mercy under his feet.

Word Definition: "Keil observes that the malady of Nebuchadnezzar was that which is called . . . lycanthrophia, a malady in which men regard themselves as beasts, and imitate their manner of life. —Hom. Com.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Again I trust you were able to read the whole chapter at home before you entered into a study of this chapter. This chapter was written by a heathen king who was brought down from his pride through the judgments of God. He proclaimed God to be the true God. He uttered deep truths. "How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." (verse 3). This account is said to have been after the erection of the golden image and probably near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life.

We read in this chapter about the change of the richest man and king of the world. His pride was acknowledged and

abandoned; he preached about the true God to his subjects. He confessed his sin and related his chastisement and declared his repentance. We do not know very much about his final standing with God. He surely was brought down through God's mercy, and acknowledged the true God of heaven.

Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian who never was a Christian, states that Nebuchadnezzar's debasement was seven years.

The city of Babylon was founded after the Flood. (Gen. 11) Nebuchadnezzar remodeled it. He adorned the city with hanging gardens, which were one of the wonders of the ancient world. The whole city formed a perfect square, each side of which was 15 miles long, making a circuit of 60 miles, and an area of 360 square miles. Its walls rose to a height of 350 feet and were 87 ft. thick. Twenty-five streets ran in parallel lines, 150 ft. wide 15 miles long, north to south, and 25 streets crossed them from east to west. They had 100 brazen gates on them. The huge temple to their god, Bel, and the two royal palaces were magnificent. The houses were three and four stories high. The king took great pride in his city.

King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream. He called his astrologers, etc., to make known to him the meaning of the dream; but they could not. Daniel was called, and the king told him, "I saw a tree in the midst of the earth. The tree grew, and it was strong. Its height reached up into heaven and out of sight. It was a beautiful tree and gave fruit and meat for all. The beasts shadowed under it, and the fowls dwelt in its branches. A watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven and said, 'Hew down the tree; cut off its branches; let the beasts and fowls get away from it. Leave the stump of his roots in the earth. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.' This is decreed of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.' " (verses 7-17 paraphrased).

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream? 2. Describe the city of Babylon and how Nebuchadnezzar felt about it. 3. How was mercy mingled with judgment in his case? 4. What will pride do for people today? 5. Is it a sin to forget God? 6. What were the results of the king's experience?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Most men do not know how frail man is. History presents us with many incidents of individuals who swayed power over thousands in the morning, but were stricken down by evening. Herod Agrippa, in the height of his prosperity, received idolatrous praise from thousands, and in the evening was a pitiful victim of a loathsome and incurable disease. (Acts 12:21-23). In our lesson, the most exalted of all earthly monarchs was well in the morning and filled with pride as he looked at his accomplishments; but by evening, he was eating grass with the beasts of the field. In his pride he was worshipping the idol of his own hands, and himself as its creator. Babylon was indeed at that time a glorious and beautiful city. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built . . . by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" verse 30. He forgot God. This is a great sin. Psalms 50:22. The Bible says that for this sin, the nations will be "turned into hell." Psalm 9:17. They are robbing God of His glory. God is the One who gives us the very breath we draw. All of our strength comes from Him. We are living only through His mercy. Man may not want to admit that he has to give an account to God, but that doesn't alter the fact at all. Man may say that he will do as he pleases, and he may set out to carry out his intentions. He may go on for years, but still the fact is: he will have to give an account to God. God's mercy is great. He magnifies His mercy to people. They are given chance after chance to turn to God. Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream. Daniel warned him and prayed for him. God in His mercy dealt with him, but he forgot God. He was lifted up in his pride, but suddenly God spoke from heaven. "Thy kingdom is departed from thee . . . until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." verse 32. In this, mercy was mingled with judgment. Hope was held out to him. He would learn and would be restored. He would be a changed man after his experience. Oh, how we thank God, that today there is hope for those who are in sin! Through the gospel, we can have salvation. "Come unto me," we hear Jesus saying, "and I will give you rest." We must come and seek His forgiveness for our sin and must repent. Soul rest will be given. God will hear the cry that comes from a "broken and contrite heart." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us think about the dealings of God with this great king of Babylon. Before he met up with Daniel and his fellows,

Nebuchadnezzar was a proud and vain monarch, very much lifted up in his own achievements. But before the King of heaven and His humble servants, this heathen king found himself dwindled to extreme humiliation. Whether or not he was ever aware of these men refusing to eat and drink the food he prescribed, we know not. But we do know that the king communed with them and found them to excel all others in knowledge and understanding. This, of course, was the working of God, of which at the time he was unaware. Think of the effect that it had upon his heart when Daniel was able not only to interpret his dream, but to tell him what the dream was after it had taken flight from his memory. He had expected his wise men to do such a feat, and was enraged when they proved that they could not. This caused Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge the God of Daniel, but his heart was not humbled to really behold His majesty as the King of heaven and earth.

The building of the great image of gold proved that this king yet had vanity and pride in his heart. But see how it was snuffed down and proven to be vain and empty when he beheld the fourth man in the fire with the three children of God. He saw them come forth unharmed from the fire that had leaped out and killed the mightiest men in his army! See how the old image was forgotten, while he made a decree that no one speak anything amiss of this wonderful God. Still he had not bowed or worshiped God completely.

And then, as our lesson reveals, God dealt with him once more, and perhaps this visitation of God struck him closer to home than all the others. The pride of being king still ruled his passions. When the strange dream puzzled his mind, he sent for Daniel, and listened as this holy man warned him of what was coming. And then after seven years of living like an animal of the wild, he lifted up his eyes and blessed the most High and praised and honored Him and exalted His power and Kingdom. Surely this is the work of grace upon the heart of man, and we rejoice that we, too, have come to know the King of heaven and worship Him.

—L. Busbee

JUDGMENT FELL

Walking along the streets of Chicago one morning, I heard two elevated trains crash just over my head. Pieces of the wreckage fell on the street about me. I heard screams and cries and groans. Running upstairs, I found them carrying out the wounded and dying. In a few moments policemen were there, with tearful eyes and white faces. Patrols and ambulances came. Everyone was screaming and crying and praying. It was a time to pray.

I have seen many unsaved people die. From their dying testimony I know that hell must be awful. Hell is real. Ordinarily you believe what people say when they are dying. You expect them to tell the truth in such an hour as that. I have seen enough people die, testifying with their last breath that they were damned in hell. I do not want to be present any more when people die without God, without hope.

I saw a man die who had once been rich. He had been looked up to, had held the respect of many, far and near.

A few months before, I had seen this man in a great meeting where many were seeking God. I saw him under conviction. I heard preachers talk to him, heard his pious wife plead with him to turn to God. But no! He had money, influence, friends. This present evil world seemed to be his god. He turned away from that great out-pouring of grace—unsaved.

Now, the man's money was gone and his friends had failed him. One night the doctor drove by to say, "Mr. Reese, our friend is dying. Won't you go over to see him?" Unsaved himself, the doctor was not willing to see that man go into eternity unprepared and with nobody to pray for him. I bent over the dying man and asked, "My brother, can you pray?"

"When I attempt to pray, hell is . . . pressing . . . me . . . down," he whispered back. His hand dropped upon his chest and in a short time he was gone.

I saw a merchant die—a successful man who apparently had accomplished his purpose in the world. But he was Godless. He had heard the gospel message again and again. He had been invited to come to Christ, but had rejected Him.

I remember the day the merchant dropped into hell. A saintly friend had felt divinely impressed to call on him, warning him to flee from the wrath to come. He was not disrespectful to her. He merely treated the warning with indifference and turned away to his merchandise.

The friend left and walked perhaps no more than five blocks, when someone came running after her, begging her to return. But it was too late. In the meantime, I was sitting at my table only half a block distant, when I heard an unearthly cry. It came from the direction of the merchant's place of business. I rushed there and found him alone, suffering intensely. He dropped on the floor. In less than two minutes he was dead.

I have seen a formal church member die—a woman eighty years old. Formal church members will be at the last prayer meeting in great numbers. For church membership will never save you. It will take the blood of Jesus Christ to save you from all sin.

This woman's daughter sent for me. I hurried to their beautiful home. The mother looked at me as she walked the floor, wringing her hands and saying, "I am lost, I am lost!"

I thought the Holy Spirit was awakening her and told her that she was just the kind of person whom Jesus came to save.

"No," she answered, "it is too late. I might have been saved, but now I am lost."

She was then in good health, in good use of her mental powers, but as she walked the house, day and night, wringing her hands, she grew weaker. She took to an armchair, then to her bed. I visited her, but I could not stay. Her relatives said they could not stay and listen to her screams. Hired helpers would not stay. They could not endure the dying screams and cries of a good church member, wailing that she was going to hell.

A mere profession of Christianity will not keep us out of hell. We must have the real thing. There are people who say, "If I go to hell, I will have lots of company." Don't believe it. Each man in hell will be so miserable with regret and rebellion of heart and anguish of suffering that he will be no company for you nor you for him.

A day is coming (Rev. 20:12-15) when all around this world the dead will get up out of their graves. The sea will give up her dead. All the unsaved will be present on the great Judgment Day. Read it for yourself: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." —Sel.

August 4, 1974

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES

Daniel 5:1-6, 8, 13a, 17, 22, 23, 24-28

Daniel 5:1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

13a Then was Daniel brought in before the king.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

22 And thou his son [of Nebuchadnezzar], O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this [that happened to Nebuchadnezzar];

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee; and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

25 And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Memory Verse: All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits. Prov. 16:2.

Central Thought: There is only one hope for us to be weighed correctly, and this is if we have accepted Jesus as "the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 2:2. Being made one with Him makes His righteousness our own, and we will not be found wanting in that great day.

Word Definition: Mene, mene, whether in Chaldee or Hebrew, signifies to "number, count out, allot"; and is employed here in the sense it bears in Isa. 65:12. Tekel means: weighed. Peres or Upharsin means that the kingdom would be divided. The Medes and Persians were at that time employed in their united siege of Babylon. —Hom. Com. In other words, mene signifies "numbered"; tekem, "weighing"; and peres, "division." The words on the wall were written in "pure Hebrew." (Now termed "Samaritan.") —Clarke

LESSON BACKGROUND

When the writing on the wall was seen by the king, he cried aloud for his astrologers and soothsayers to tell him what it meant. He promised to give the one who read and interpreted the writing a chain of gold about his neck (which was one of the highest honors to be received) and clothing of scarlet. He would also be the third ruler in the kingdom. None could read the writing. The Queen, the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, remembered Daniel and the help he had given. She told Belshazzar (Bel-shaz'-er) about him. They sent for Daniel, and he told the king what the writing meant. Daniel reminded Belshazzar about the insanity of Nebuchadnezzar and the loss of the reign of his government which he suffered until he recognized God as the ruler of the universe. He warned Belshazzar that he had not humbled his heart even though he knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar. He had lifted up himself against God by bringing in the vessels of God and drinking from them. He had praised the gods of silver, gold, etc., instead of God. Therefore his kingdom was being taken from him.

History tells us that Cyrus made a siege against Babylon. The Medes and Persians became wearied with the length of the siege. Plans were devised for diverting the course of the river that flowed under the city wall. When this was done, those who had been assigned to that post entered into the city by the bed of the river when its depth was only to the thighs. They came upon the Babylonians unexpectedly while they were celebrating a feast with dancing and revelry.

Belshazzar is the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, but is called the son. "The solution of this difficulty is, that in Scripture

the name of 'son' is indifferently given to sons and grandsons, and even to great-grandsons." —Clarke's Com.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was God so displeased with Belshazzar? 2. Why was Daniel called? 3. Can we learn through observing the successes and mistakes of others? Discuss. 4. What had happened before Belshazzar's time that should have been a lesson and a warning to him? 5. What did the words mean, and what do they mean to us spiritually today? 6. What happened to the Babylonians that night? 7. When will we be weighed in the final balances?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Many things could be weighed and not be balanced according to what we would desire, but what a stupendous result there is when "the Judge of the quick and dead" holds the balances. God is the One who is omniscient, and whose knowledge is all great. No action, word, thought, feeling, wish, or secret motive, can be hid from His all-seeing eye, or His knowledge. He is the One who "searcheth the heart and trieth the reins." He is impartial and is no respecter of persons. God judges each act, thought, action, and feeling, according to its real character and circumstances; and then He rewards accordingly. The great weights in the balance to weigh those actions, etc., are His very own laws. We are weighed by the Word of God. His Word is just, pure and good. His laws are of such that are applied to man's moral nature. In fact, man is created to be in obedience to God's laws and to find true fulfillment to his inner happiness. His laws require him to have such a deep love for God that he desires to love Him with all his mind, soul, and body. "Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." This is what brings such sweet peace and contentment to those who obey it. God writes His laws in the hearts and minds of those who love Him. Their conscience is tender toward all that God desires. When they disobey, there is a law of penalty that falls upon them. Sin and disobedience pollute the soul. Rebellion against God brings condemnation. Adultery, uncleanness, and all sin, are against God's laws. Impurity in the life of man causes him to feel guilty. Thus when man is weighed, he is weighed against the law of God—the written and revealed law in his heart and mind. "The Lord weigheth the spirits." Prov. 16:2. "By him actions are weighed." 1 Sam. 2:3. Job had the desire, "Let me be weighed in an even balance." Job 31:6. Man is weighed now in this world each moment by every word, deed, thought, and feeling. But there is coming a

great weighing day. It's the final day. God shall "judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he has appointed." He shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. So our only hope is through Christ. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." Rom. 6:23. So many today are rejecting Jesus Christ and the laws of God. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Rom. 10:3. Dear reader, what have you to weigh against God's laws? Lose no time in accepting Christ as your righteousness. Don't wait until it is too late. How terrible it will be for those in that great Judgment Day who are weighed and found wanting!

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us consider the responsibility that God placed upon Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, concerning what God had revealed to Nebuchadnezzar. The judgment was coming upon Belshazzar now, because he did not humble his own heart, even though he knew all about this. As we ponder this thought, let us consider ourselves and the things that we ought to know. History is full of good and bad examples of the lives and doings of people. It has been said that mankind would be way up the road of wisdom and understanding in the sight of God if people would start out where the preceding generation left off, remembering the lessons and experiences the former people had and proceeding to higher ground from there. But no, each generation has to learn the same lessons the hard way that those before had to learn. It seems that man is so prone to think, "Well, that just won't happen to me." I am speaking purely now from a spiritual and moral standpoint, for in material things such as inventions and earthly attainment, mankind has progressed from generation to generation. But in the way of wisdom and the fear of God it is even as the scripture says, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." Eccl. 1:8. Man looks at the wreckage of an automobile that crashed taking the lives of several who were proven to be drinking liquor and speeding, etc. But does he take heed and receive instruction? Very seldom he does. He goes right ahead in the same course with the hope and persuasion that such will not be his fate. Young people look at broken homes, wretched lives, and gloomy marriages. It is an awful sight to them, and they feel a warning to be careful. But how many are careful? They go right on in their erroneous ways of seeking the affection of the opposite sex without the guidance of the Lord. They know what they should do, but to deny them-

selves to take the safe way they are not willing to do. How sad that the examples that are given to the world in the holy scriptures and on the pages of history are so blindly ignored and despised. One mother prayed for her wayward son like this, "Lord, if he refuses to serve thee, make him a real example of ungodliness so that it may warn others." That sounds like an awful way to pray, doesn't it?" But when this boy knew that his mother was praying thus, it stirred his heart to seek the Lord. How much better it would be for us to strive to be righteous examples for others to follow! Let us not be discouraged if but a few follow. The scriptures are accounts of the lives of men and women, good and bad, and are recorded for our admonition and learning. Let us take heed to these examples.

—L. Busbee

GAIN

If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,
Were my life worth living for a day?
Could my yearning heart find rest and comfort
In the things that soon must pass away?
If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour
Would my gain be worth the life-long strife?
Are all earthly pleasures worth comparing
For a moment with a Christ-filled life?

Had I wealth and love in fullest measure,
And a name revered both far and near,
Yet no hope beyond, no harbor waiting,
Where my storm-tossed vessel I could steer;
If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,
Who endured the cross and died for me,
Could then all the world afford a refuge,
Whither, in my anguish, I might flee?

Oh, what emptiness!—without the Saviour
Mid the sins and sorrows here below!
And eternity, how dark without Him!
Only night and tears and endless woe!
What, tho' I might live without the Saviour,
When I come to die, how would it be?
Oh, to face the valley's gloom without Him!
And without Him all eternity!

Oh, the joy of having all in Jesus!
What a balm the broken heart to heal!
Ne'er a sin so great, but He'll forgive it,
Nor a sorrow that He does not feel!
If I have but Jesus, only Jesus,
Nothing else in all the world beside—
Oh, then everything is mine in Jesus;
For my needs and more He will provide.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 8:36, 37

August 11, 1974

FAITHFUL DANIEL DELIVERED

Daniel 6:3-5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 19, 20-23, 26

Daniel 6:3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

7 [They said to the king] All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, . . . and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save to thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

14 Then the king, when he heard these words [from Daniel's accusers], was sore displeased with himself, and

set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him, [but he could not.]

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

26 [The king said] I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

Memory Verse: We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 1 John 5:18.

Central Thought: Daniel's path to his prayer chamber led on to a path to the lions' den. If Daniel was safe in the lions' den, there can be no situation of danger or duty where we are not safe. God will deliver.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the second chapter of Daniel, we studied about the great image. Its head of gold was the Babylonian kingdom. It now had been conquered and the Medes and Persians had taken possession and were ruling the world. They were the "breast and

arms of silver." Darius, the first ruler, had divided the kingdom into 120 provinces. Over each province was a prince. Over the whole of the princes were placed three presidents, of whom Daniel was the chief. To these three, the 120 princes gave "accounts" and the king was then informed. (verses 1 and 2). Daniel was a man of wisdom. He was very conscientious about his duty to God, therefore he was the same in his duty to the king. This is a great contrast to the ways of the carnal, wicked man. Daniel's being a foreigner, a captive, a Jew, a man of an entirely different religion from that of others, brought hatred forth from those under him. "Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous; but who can stand before envy?" Proverbs 27:4. The presidents and princes consulted together about causing Daniel's downfall. They came up with a clever plan. To them it promised complete success. They would place Daniel's obedience to his God in direct disobedience to the king. The weak monarch was flattered by their proposal. He signed the decree and it became a law that could not be changed, although later the king tried to change his own decree in order to save Daniel. His princes held him firmly to his decree and he had to put Daniel into the lions' den. While Daniel was in the lions' den, the king passed the night in his palace in fasting. Sleep had fled from him. He did not seek instruments of music to help him. What a contrast to Daniel's peaceful night in the lions' den with an angel closing the lions' mouths.

In my research, I could not find any description of a lions' den in the Medo-Persian day, but here is a description of a lions' den in ancient days: "The lions' den was a large quadrangular hole in the ground, divided by a partition into two chambers. This wall has a door which can be opened or shut from above. The keepers of the lions throw food into the one division, and so entice the lions thither; then they shut the door from above and clean the other division. . . . The whole is under the open sky, and is encircled with only a wall over which people can look down in. The Emperor sometimes has men cast in." (—Pusey)

—M. Miles

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Where is the person who isn't thrilled when he hears the true story of Daniel and his deliverance from the lions' den? Even the child beams with glee when he is told that God sent an angel and shut the mouths of the lions and Daniel was kept safe. And that child will often think of the 23rd Psalm that they learned by memory and will know the last part is true. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me." If God was with

Daniel, He will be with you and me. In the path of duty, there is safety. It is our duty to obey God. It is our duty to pray. Daniel was a man of prayer. He was like the Psalmist. He had regular prayer times. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice." Psalm 55:17. Prayer is as necessary with every godly person as food is to his body. No doubt Daniel prayed at all times, but he felt it necessary to have certain times to meet God—kneeling before Him. (This is a good habit.) Daniel prayed in faith. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." James 1:6. Daniel prayed with supplication. "With prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God."

Daniel had been framed. Daniel knew about this. Carnal prudence might have suggested a different course for the present, but the scriptures tell us, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The den of lions would be a shorter way to paradise if God did not see fit to deliver him. Daniel trusted God's wisdom as well as His power. He prayed as usual. His enemies knew his habits. They "found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." (verse 11). Rejoicing at their success in trapping Daniel, they hurried to tell the king. The king was surprised. He saw his mistake, but it was too late. He loved Daniel and valued him. Like our Saviour who was buried, a stone was placed on the mouth of the cave. The stone was sealed with the king's signet. But this could not keep the angel of the Lord out of the den. Thank God, we are serving One who can go everywhere. Man cannot stop our God. He delivered Daniel in a glorious manner. Those who put him there were thrown in, and the lions broke their bones before they hit the bottom of the den. King Darius exalted the God of Daniel. He commanded men to tremble before Daniel's God, who is the living God. He uttered a prophetic truth by saying, "His kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." Thank God, today we are in that kingdom if we are obedient to God and are fearlessly loving and serving Him.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us consider the character of the men of the lesson. There were one hundred and twenty princes and two presidents who consulted together to find occasion against Daniel. They did this because they were jealous of Daniel's favor with the king in being chief president, which made him over them in authority and rank. It was the same spirit that caused Cain

to kill Abel and also the same spirit that caused Jacob's sons to sell their younger brother, Joseph, in to Egypt. It is the same spirit that rages in the world in many hearts. It is an evil desire in the heart of a person wanting honor for himself rather than the person who is honored. If they were honest and content to fill their allotted place, there would be no room for this terrible spirit. Pride is at the root of it all. And in high places this jealous disposition asserts itself. This jealousy blinded these men to everything else but vengeance. They considered not the power of Daniel's God nor the pure and blameless character that he manifested. Their hearts were evil, and their evil purposes produced the terrible judgment that brought them to the same destruction that they wished upon Daniel. Think of the sly and cunning device that they wielded to cause Daniel to fall prey to their designs. They appealed to the pride and vanity of their king. They wished him no honor. It was merely a jealous trick to put Daniel in a position to be condemned. They watched him to see what he would do, and can you not imagine their glee when they found him in prayer? Think of their triumphant attitude as they pressed the king to fulfill the law that they had influenced him to make! Think of how they smirked and rejoiced (perhaps not openly) when they saw their hated superior cast into the lions' den. Oh, but the Almighty God, whom Daniel served, was looking on. His righteous indignation and anger were being kindled against those men who had hardened their hearts to sin against his servant. Their judgment came upon them without remedy. Their wives and their children also suffered the same condemnation. There is enough warning in this for all to beware of the sinful spirit of jealousy. If you find it working in your life, you had better seek God to be delivered lest you come to a like end.

—L. Busbee

THE MINER'S LAST CHANCE

A miner was passing a meetinghouse one night, and went in. The minister was speaking of the holiness of God and the awful situation of those who were still unprepared, who might be called at any moment to meet God. He begged his hearers to ask themselves the question: "Am I ready to meet God?" He urged them to answer it now, for now was the accepted time. God was willing now; they were living men tonight; tomorrow it might be too late.

The miner thought: "I am not ready to meet God; I have lived a careless, godless life; I dare not meet His holy eye. How can I make peace with Him? I am such a sinner, I dare not stand before Him." These truths troubled him so much that he could not go away, but waited till the people went out, and told

the minister his fears. The man of God tried to lead him to Jesus. "Jesus is your peace," he said, but the miner found none. An hour passed by. The minister laid the way of salvation clearly before him, and prayed both with and for him.

"Now," he said, "it is late; go home and seek your Saviour there."

"No," said the miner, "I beg you to let me stay a little longer. It must be settled tonight."

"You must go home," said the minister. "It is late, and I can do no more for you. I cannot make it clearer to you."

"It must be settled tonight," answered the miner with increased earnestness.

Once more he spoke of Jesus, and gave him promise after promise. Once more he prayed, but in vain. The minister grew more and more troubled.

"I must go," said the minister reluctantly. "It will soon be morning. Go home. Tomorrow night there is meeting here and maybe you will find peace then."

"Sir," said the poor man, "I cannot leave this room until I find peace. Tomorrow it may be too late and I may be in hell. It must be settled tonight."

"By the help of God," the minister replied, "it shall be settled tonight, and I will not leave you until you find peace."

Again he spoke of the finished work of Christ. Again he prayed, the miner following his words with sobs and tears, and at last the light broke in on his darkness.

"I see it," he cried. "My peace is made with God. It is settled. I have to thank God for it! I do! I do! Praise His name! It is settled." And they knelt again, but this time to thank God that He had heard their cry, and saved the miner's soul.

The next day the miner went to his work. During the day he went alone to a distant part of the mine to fetch some tools, and, as he was long in returning, his fellow workers went to look for him. They found that a mass of rock had fallen upon him, and he was buried in the ruins. They worked with pick spade, hoping to save him, and at last they uncovered one of his hands. It was warm. He was still living; and as they bent over him, from beneath the fragments of rock, the rubbish and stone which hid him from sight, came a faint sound. He was speaking: "I thank God it was settled last night. Settled forever. I am His. Tonight would have been too late, but thank God it was settled last night!"

When at last they uncovered his crushed body, he had gone to be with God.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matthew 25:13. —Sel.

August 18, 1974

CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

Daniel 7:1, 2b, 3, 8, 21, 22, 25, 28a

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed.

2b Behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. (* 1. The first beast was "like a lion, and had eagle's wings." This beast represented the Babylonian Empire, which compares to the head of the great image in chapter two. 2. The next beast was like a bear, and it had three ribs in its mouth. This represents the Medo-Persian Empire. 3. The third beast was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. This represents the Greek Empire. 4. The fourth beast was "exceedingly strong and it had great iron teeth." It had ten horns, which represented ten kingdoms. This beast represented the Roman Empire.) (verse 7)

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. (* The horn is a symbol of a great political power. The eyes and the mouth are human characteristics. The combination of the two would represent a religious-political power. The talking horn, therefore, would be a symbol of Popery (Catholicism). The Roman Papacy is a union of church and state. Since this "little horn" came from a beast that was wild, ferocious and devoured everything within its reach, we know this is a symbol of a persecuting government.)

21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; (* Popery made war with the saints. In Revelation, we read about the historical trace of the scattered, persecuted remnants of God's saints who refused to conform to the Church

* Editor's note

of Rome during the Dark Ages. The saints, the Church of God, were crowded out of sight into a place of obscurity called, "in the wilderness.")

22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

25 And he [the little horn] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (* The last phrase about times

is a symbol of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, or 42 months. Counting 30 days to the month, we have 1260 days which equal 1260 years. Read Num. 14:34 and Ezek. 4:6 about "each day for a year." In the book of Acts, you can read about the history of the early church and the war it had with paganism. Paul was attributed with having "turned the world upside down" with his teachings. The government of Rome was then pagan. Finally Christianity won. But the devil worked. Innovations came in, according to F. G. Smith in "The Revelation Explained." He says, "I believe . . . that the year of 270 A. D. is a consistent date to mark the time when the visible, external church was wholly given over to the profane multitude of uncircumcised, idolatrous Gentiles to tread under foot." (Rev.11:2). In 260 A. D., "Proetextatus [a name, pronounced Proy-tex-taw-tus] a heathen who was praefect [a Roman officer] of the city, said, 'Make me a bishop of Rome, and I'll be a Christian, too!' " In A. D. 313, Constantine became emperor of Rome and immediately issued an edict of toleration, favorable to the Christians. The power of the Apostasy was greatly developed at this time. It was ripe for a Roman Church and State combination, and this came to pass. Roman Papacy then killed its millions. (55 million were martyred.) Its power was broken in 1530 A. D. (Protestantism took over until 1880.)

26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

* Editor's note

(* D. S. Warner and others brought in the glorious reformation truths. Light broke forth.)

27 And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (* The saints again possessed the kingdom.

The saints faithfully execute judgments. In so doing, they take away the dominion of the blasphemous horn, and the whole apostasy is consumed by the Gospel. It will be so until the end.)

Memory Verse: Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 1 Peter 4:16.

Central Thought: The "little horn," which is Roman Papacy, held sway for a period of 1260 years. God broke that power. In this evening time, the saints possess the kingdom through the judgments of God that are being executed and by their godly lives.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are making a change in our usual procedure. We are putting notes after some of the verses. Remember that Jesus was born during the rule of the Roman Empire. At this time it was pagan. The history of the church in the book of Acts informs us of how God gave victory over paganism through the Gentile's accepting the gospel. But by 270 A. D., the devil brought "a falling away." (2 Thess. 2:3-12). The Roman Empire in combination with Roman popery, ruled and killed those who would not submit and denounce Christ. By 1530, this was broken by the Protestant reformation. Luther was one of the reformers. Protestantism became very powerful. Protestantism killed thousands of Christians. In 1880, Bro. D. S. Warner and others brought in this glorious Evening Light. The oneness of God's people was taught, and there was a great ingathering of God's people into the full truth. The light will shine unto the end. —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What kingdoms did the four beasts represent? 2. What did the talking horn represent? 3. What dates should we re-

* Editor's note

member in connection with the Bible teachings concerning prophecy? 4. How did the saints overcome, and how will we overcome today? 5. Discuss the wonders of Bible prophecy and the certainty of God's sayings.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The "gates of hell shall not prevail against" the church. Matt. 16:18. Jesus has told us that God would always have a people. Even when the Roman popery was ruling and killing millions of Christians, God still had a people here on earth. They had to hide, and His church was not in full view; but there were always those who would not bow down before the creeds of man. In Rev. 12, the Apostle John saw in a vision some symbolical prophecies which were to come to pass. He said that the "woman [or church] fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God." God took care of those who hid. But millions of Christians were taken to glory.

After the "cloudy and dark days," God brought forth this glorious truth. Today, we are enjoying the blessings of salvation and freedom to serve the Lord. But we see the enemy working. Many are falling under the anti-Christ spirit. Witchcraft, devil-worship, and many other creeds are sweeping millions under their control. The saints will have to suffer. When God sees it is enough, He will take us to glory.

"And [Gog and Magog] went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil [pagan, anti-christ, communism] that deceived [and he is doing that today] was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast [Catholicism] and the false prophet [protestantism-sectism] are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever." Rev. 20:9, 10.

Protestantism (sectism) and Catholicism will be swallowed up into Communism (paganism) and devil worship. These are the last to go down. So we see that we are in the last days. Praise God, there will be a church of God in that day. Jesus will come for His Bride to take her home. I want to be among that number, don't you? —M. Miles

A FAITHFUL WITNESS

J. H. Crowell was converted at the age of 16 and within six months shipped on board a sailing vessel with a crew of 12. He was the only Christian on board, and had previously promised his mother that he would meet her three times a day at the throne of grace. To accomplish this he would go below, and, feeling that he was not making a satisfactory prayer un-

less it was audible, he made it a point to pray out loud. This brought terrible persecution upon him from the sailors. They tried to get him to give up praying, but he would not. They sang and danced around him while he was engaged in his devotion, but he would pray. They threw wood upon him and bruised him, and poured buckets of water upon him, but they could not put out the fire in his soul. Then they tied him to the mast and laid 39 stripes upon his back, the marks of which he carries today. But still he prayed. Finally they tied a rope around his body, under his arms and threw him overboard. He struggled and swam as best he could, and when he would take hold of the side of the ship to climb up, they would push him off with a long pole. At last his strength gave way, and supposing they really meant to kill him, he made a final effort, prayed that God would forgive them, and called to the sailors: "Send my body to my mother and tell her I died for Jesus." He then sank into the deep, and the water poured over him; but he was pulled out and up on the deck, and after being worked with for some time he came to. Conviction then began to seize hold upon these sailors. Before night, two of them were gloriously converted, and while they were praying down below with the young martyr the others thought they were up to persecutions again and called for them to desist, saying they had persecuted the boy enough. Inside of a week, everyone on board the vessel, including the captain, was blessedly saved.

In a little while the vessel put into Provincetown Harbor, near Cape Cod, on account of an approaching storm. Other vessels gathered in to the number of nearly three hundred. The boy had been conducting religious services every Sunday on board the ship. Unbeknown to him, when the vessels were lying at anchor, the captain sent word around that at 10 a. m. Sunday there would be services on his ship, and a boy would give his experience of how he was persecuted and nearly killed for Jesus' sake. While the boy was down below, as usual, the people began to gather in. They filled the ship's deck, climbed into the rigging, filled every available space, and also sat in boats all around the ship. When the young preacher came on deck, this was the sight that met him. The crew formed a ring around him and they sang, and he prayed, and then took his text, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." The Holy Ghost began to work, and after the message an invitation was given for all who wanted to be prayed for to manifest it. In every direction came the response to be prayed for. The work of grace broke out, and people began to get saved, until by a careful estimate, there were about one hundred conversions that afternoon. And it did not stop there, for after

that, while the vessels lay in the harbor and out on the ocean, vessels would come to us, and those on board tell us of someone being saved. They had us keep our colors at the mast-head, to distinguish us from the other vessels. People were getting saved, and word kept coming in that on such and such a vessel they had a meeting and someone was saved. So it continued for weeks.

In this boy's experience we have an illustration of how the Holy Spirit may work in convicting power through those who are wholly surrendered to God, "Who love not their lives unto the death."

We cannot all be great preachers, but we can do some of the little things for our Master (Isa. 60:22), viz.: we can pass out God's Word in the form of tracts, etc.

May God mightily stir up His saints everywhere, to do what they can. The time is short and the days are evil. Satan's hosts are exceedingly active in filling the land with that which leads souls down to perdition.

Gal. 6:9, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." —Sel.

—O—

August 25, 1974

DANIEL FORESEES THE COMING MESSIAH

Daniel 9:2-4; 20-27

Daniel 9:2 In the first year of his [Darius'] reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4 And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments. . . .

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God:

21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning,

being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, [1] to finish the transgression, [2] and to make an end of sins, [3] and to make reconciliation for iniquity, [4] and to bring in everlasting righteousness, [5] and to seal up the vision and prophecy, [6] and to anoint the most Holy.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Memory Verse: Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Acts 15:18.

Central Thought: In answer to Daniel's supplications concerning Jerusalem, the angel informs him that 490 years are to pass; and at the close of which, his prayer will be fully answered; and the Messiah will have wrought His great redemption.

Word Definitions: Supplication: earnest prayer, entreaty, petition (Heb.). Desolation: drought, or a stunning or stupefying of life and understanding (Heb.).

LESSON BACKGROUND

In Jeremiah 25:12, we see the Lord telling the prophet that Jerusalem was to be desolate for seventy years. Daniel, in the setting of our lesson, knew that the seventy years were about finished; and his heart was burdened to see Jerusalem, the holy city, restored again. He set his face to seek the Lord earnestly about this in fasting and prayer. Daniel is now aged; but his heart is yet concerned for the welfare of his people, the nation of Israel. And to him is given this prophecy of how long it will be before all things are restored and fulfilled. But it is revealed in this prophecy that things are going to be finished in a much greater way than having the literal city of Jerusalem restored. Sin and transgression, the things that caused all the trouble in the first place, are to be reckoned with; and this can be done only by the coming of the long-awaited Anointed One, the Messiah. Let us look to the Lord; and we by His help shall be able to grasp real truth in prophecy here that more confirms the truth of the Bible. Remember that in this God shows His power: by prophesying before time, and then bringing it to pass. If we can grasp that the Jewish way of speaking of years was arranged in weeks just as our days are arranged in weeks, it will help us to better understand the lesson. When the angel said "seventy weeks," he meant seventy weeks of years; that is, seventy times seven, or four hundred and ninety years. Scripture reference of the Sabbath Weeks of years: Leviticus 25:8. —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. For whom was Daniel burdened and praying? 2. Where else in the Bible do we see Gabriel? 3. How many things are mentioned that will be accomplished at the end of the seventy weeks? 4. Who was to accomplish these things? 5. What is meant by the expression, "The Messiah shall be cut off"?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

In our lesson, we see the angel informing Daniel that seventy weeks are determined to bring to pass the fulfillment of his prayers. This is four hundred and ninety years from the time of the commandment to restore Jerusalem until the fulfilling of the Messiah's work. Note the three different periods of time mentioned in our lesson: (1) the seven weeks, (2) the threescore and two weeks, and (3) one week. The command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, given to Ezra by the king of Persia, was given in 457 B. C. Measuring 490 years from 457 B. C., the time extends to A. D. 33. The seven weeks

represent the forty-nine years that Ezra and Nehemiah were employed in restoring the sacred and civil establishments of the Jews in Jerusalem. The sixty-two weeks represent 434 years that bring us to A. D. 26, when Christ was baptized and anointed. This leaves one more week, or seven years, to make up the 490 years. This last week covers the ministry of Christ, the beginning of the work of the apostles, and the establishment of the New Testament Church and the spread of the gospel. In the midst of the week, the Messiah was to be cut off and the sacrifice and oblation was to cease. This took place about $3\frac{1}{2}$ years after Christ began His ministry when He was crucified on Calvary. The veil of the temple was rent in twain; thus signifying the Spirit of God was leaving the earthly tabernacle and the sacrificial system. After this, within a period of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, the gospel made a great spread among the nations. Thus the covenant was confirmed with many.

Note how we numbered the things to be accomplished in verse 24. Think of how each one of these was fulfilled in Christ. Thank God for the Messiah! Are you not grateful to God for sending Him for our souls' salvation? It all came to pass even as it was revealed to Daniel.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Bible is a wonderful Book. It is a marvelous thing for us to know that God, in His great wisdom, gave Daniel a glimpse of the time when Jesus was to be crucified. The time to count from was "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." So we need to check in our Bibles as to when this decree was given to restore Jerusalem. This is found in Ezra 7:1-28. We notice in verse nine that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem. This was in 457 B. C. (Some Bibles have dates at the headings of chapters or at the top of the pages.) The decree given to Ezra by the king is in verses 12-28. If we will measure forward 490 years from 457 B. C., when the commandment was given, we will arrive at the year of A. D. 33. The work did not begin until the middle of the year, so that would make it arrive in the fall of A. D. 33. Now we take 69 "weeks" or 483 years; it reaches to A. D. 26. This is the year Christ was baptized and entered into His personal ministry. We read that He was 30 years old when He started His personal ministry; but as most historians tell us, there was a mistake in time reckoning of four years. In verse 27, it says, "He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease . . . in the midst of the week." This was accomplished by His death. He was crucified at the age of 33. To me, this was a wonderful prophecy.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." Jesus was the Lamb that died for our sins, once and for all. The Jews had been killing animals as sacrifices for their sins. Jesus came to make an end of that kind of a sacrifice. He died on the cross and said, "It is finished." The temple worship of killing a lamb was finished. It had served its purpose. He caused the sacrifice to cease. He made "reconciliation for iniquity." He brought "everlasting righteousness" to us. Praise God for that perfect sacrifice! Through repentance from our sins and the forsaking of them, we can live each day in an acceptable manner before our Lord.

—M. Miles

FEED ME

The rest of the family were through with breakfast, but our five-year-old daughter was still struggling with her cereal. Listlessly she would stir the spoon in the bowl; but to her, the contents didn't look very appetizing. She didn't attempt to fill the spoon and eat the nourishing cereal. Suddenly, she requested, "Mommy, feed me."

"Feed you? Why, you're too big for me to feed."

She didn't think so, however; and after pleading in vain several more times, she finally consented to feed herself.

I couldn't help but draw the comparison between this little incident and that of spoon-fed Christians. How often do we insist that someone open the Scriptures for our understanding? Perhaps we depend upon the Sunday and Wednesday feedings at church, as the minister brings his messages. The fact that "these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so," is largely forgotten; and we take another's word for it, being too lazy perhaps, to go to the Word for ourselves. We need dedicated Bible teachers and ministers for the edification of the saints; but we also need to feed ourselves, and to see if the things taught us are really so. The admonition stands: "Search the Scriptures."

—B. G.

September 1, 1974

THE HEAVENLY MESSENGERS

Dan. 10:4-6, 12, 13; Heb. 1:7, 14; Zech. 3:1, 2;

Matt. 18:10; Luke 16:22a

Daniel 10:4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hidekel [Tigris];

5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Zechariah 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

2 And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Luke 16:22a And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

Memory Verse: The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psalms 34:7.

Central Thought: God has dispatched angels to minister to and to protect those who fear Him and obey Him. These angels are mighty and capable of bringing divine aid in times of need.

Word Definitions: Uphaz: the same as Ophir, a region where much precious gold was found. Beryl: a very precious gem.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Daniel is visited by a heavenly messenger whom he describes in the most beautiful terms. We pause in this lesson to consider and study about this wonderful ministration of God to mankind—the ministration of angels. Try to recall as many times in the Bible as you can where angels were employed to visit men on errands from God. Is this not a most wonderful blessing and experience? Since Jesus has brought us full and free salvation and direct communion with God through the Holy Spirit, angels are not so often manifest; but they are there as unseen ministering spirits and minister oftentimes just as miraculously as they did in these times of long ago. It was a very deep conviction of the people of Israel that an angel was assigned to each person to go with them through life, and it is evident by the scriptures that this is true.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the purpose and work of the angel of the Lord?
2. Do you live with a consciousness that there is an angel or angels watching over you always?
3. Can we believe from the scriptures that this is true?
4. Why do not angels administer openly now as they did then?
5. What is the one thing that the redeemed have that the angels cannot testify of?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Let us behold the wonderful value of the truth of our lesson. Hebrews 12:22 tells us that in coming to Mount Zion, we are also coming to an innumerable company of angels. These ministering spirits are performing the function Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel—ascending and descending the ladder of God. Even in our day, there are testimonies of holy people who had visions of angels round about them; and these beings protected or comforted them in some special manner. Dying saints often testify of seeing angels coming for them. If we were to take this truth at its true value, fear and gloom would be wiped out of our lives. We also have something greater than

angels; and that is the ministration of Jesus, the Son of God, in the personage of the Holy Spirit. But yet, the angels are not forgotten. They are ever near as before; for the Bible declares that the things of God in the lives of redeemed souls are things that angels desire to look into. 1 Peter 1:12. The angelic being that visited Daniel in our lesson was described similarly in the way John pictured Jesus in Revelation 1. The book of Hebrews declares that Christ is made so much better than the angels, as He by inheritance hath obtained a much more excellent name than they. And unto angels He has not put in subjection the eternal world. These angels are ministering spirits. They minister to those who are heirs of salvation. Just think of the royal honor we have as children of God, to have divine angels attending unto us as bodyguards, protectors, guides, company, and many other things. Our angels are beholding the face of the Father, watching and listening for His word concerning us. Oh, how wonderful that we can have angel food, too, and feast upon things eternal! Angels excel in strength, do His commandments, and hearken to the voice of His word. Psalm 103:20. These are some of the benefits that we as saints inherit when we are born into the family of God.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us think about the truth of the fact that we are in the middle of a ring of angels, and they are encamped all around us. Now, this is God's Word to us. We must believe that it's true. So, if trouble touches our lives, then the angels must step back and open up the way. Since they are God's ministering servants, then they must move at His command. If trouble comes, then it must be for a purpose. Some will reason that many troubles that touch our lives come through wicked men. Yes, it may be the sin of man that originates the trouble; therefore, the thing itself cannot be said to be the will of God; but by the time it reaches us, it has become God's will for us, and must be accepted as directly from His hands. There is not a man on earth, nor a company of men, nor any power on earth or in hell, that can touch the life that is abiding in Christ, without first passing through that ring of angels. They will have had the permission of our precious Christ, whose abiding presence encircles our lives. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31b. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he

shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, in all thy ways." Psa. 91:7-11. What a precious promise, and it's for you and me! God loves us more than our parents loved us.

We think of Joseph. It seemed cruel that his brothers sold him into Egypt. The years passed, and the time came when he met them again. He said, "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." Gen. 50:20a. "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Gen. 45:5. It was sin on the part of Joseph's brothers; but by the time it reached Joseph, and the angels had stepped back by the command of God, it became God's will in Joseph's life. If we can get hold of this, it will be a blessing to us all the days of our life.

—Sister M. Miles

AMONG BEASTS AND ANGELS

"And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him. (Mark 1:13).

Strange companions—wild beasts and angels! And yet it is often so. For it is in the places of trial, that glory is so often revealed. It was so with David; for it was when he was afflicted that he saw the fortunate situation of the righteous in its true light. It was so with Job, for it was in the midst of bereavement, poverty, and sore affliction that his fullest vision of God came into being. It was so with Paul and Silas; for it was in the prison at midnight that their souls broke forth into songs of praise. So generally, in fact, are beasts and angels associated in the experiences of the righteous, that "No cross, no crown" has assumed the place of a motto among the people of God.

None of us need to be told there are wild beasts in the experiences of life in this world—we know that already. What we need to know and to remember is that these beasts are yet our servants, and that it is our right to make their intrusion the occasion for claiming the presence and support of angels. The presence of the beasts is not of our choosing; but the angels come on invitation. That is why we sometimes have the beasts without the angels. Trials, tests, affliction, and bereavements come into the life experiences of all. But if we do not invite the angels too, these beasts will tear, torture, and devour. Witness the sick complainers, the bereaved who are embittered, the tempted who are discouraged: these are they who try to meet the beasts without the angels.

—J. B. Chapman

September 8, 1974

NEARING THE END

Dan. 12:1-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-10a

Daniel 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.

6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?

9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

2 Thess. 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10a When he shall come to be glorified in his saints.

Memory Verse: But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. 1 Peter 4:7.

Central Thought: Although the end of the world was far off from Daniel's time, his end was approaching, as it is true with every one of us. We may not understand everything about how or when the end will be, but it is for us to prepare our hearts and remain faithful to the end of our days.

Word Definition: Scatter: To be broken or dashed in pieces, that is, to spread or disperse.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first four verses of our lesson are the final words of the vision that Gabriel has just revealed to Daniel, concerning the future of the people of God. He is bringing his thoughts down now to the end of the world and the reward that is to be given to the righteous and the wicked. The personage here, named Michael, is mentioned in Revelation and Jude. He is called the archangel; and then in other places, he takes a likeness of the Saviour. We may not have to understand all about this, but we do know that Jesus is standing up for us at the right hand of God now, even as He did for Stephen in his final hour. As the end approaches, more trials and battles are in store for God's people. We do not know what all is ahead of us. Daniel did not know. But the angel comforted him with an exhortation to seal up the words, commit them to God, and be ready for his end. His life was soon to come to a close. And so it is with us. We do not know what all God may be doing, but we can know that we are ready to meet Him.

QUESTIONS:

1. How close should we consider the coming of the Lord to be? 2. Why did God design to scatter the power of the holy people? 3. Did Daniel understand everything that the angel told him? 4. What was he to do with what he did not understand? 5. What should be our main concern here in this short life?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Eternity is looming in sight. If we really knew how close the end of all things is, our hearts might be more stirred to diligence and hope. The end is near. The saints and holy men of God have been telling us this for a long time. Soon it will all be a reality. The dead shall be awakened from their long slumber and shall arise to meet their deeds in this world. Some shall awake to blessed eternal life and joy with the Lord. But for some, it will be to awake to a wretched existence in shame and everlasting contempt. Just think of that word, "contempt." The Bible margin renders it "abhorrence." Those who reject the Lord are sentenced to be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels and of the Lamb, and their torment shall last forever and ever. They will be held in everlasting contempt. How we need to take heed and live before God so we shall not be a castaway! It would be better to be in contempt now by the world and suffer the shame of the cross, than to be cast off by the Lord into eternal night.

It was not given to Daniel to understand all the words of the angel, but he was exhorted to commit himself to God and to trust in Him to the end. The power of the holy people was to be scattered; that is, dispersed throughout all the world before the end would come. Jesus declared that the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached throughout all lands ere the end. So let us be true to the charge that He left us, and do the will of God in working and living for Him. Not everyone will have this gospel, but all must have their opportunity. Let us be lights for the Lord, as Daniel was. By doing the will of God from the heart, our names will be recorded and preserved in the Lamb's book of life; and we shall be delivered from the destruction that is to come upon this world. Let us be wise unto salvation that we may shine in the heavenly places. The end is nearing; let us watch and be sober. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is a great day coming, a day that this world has never faced before. We can't even imagine just what it will be like. It will be more than we can realize, yet there are sufficient facts given to us about that great day that we can get ready for it. The Lord will appear in the heavens with "ten thousands of his saints." (Jude 14). He will descend with a shout, "with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God." (1 Thess. 4:16). He will come with "his mighty angels in flaming fire." All the dead—righteous and wicked—will be resurrected at the same time. (John 5:28, 29). The saints that are alive will be changed and "caught up together

with them [the resurrected righteous] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (First Thessa. 4:17). He will take "vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel." He will execute judgment upon the ungodly who have committed "ungodly deeds . . . and their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." It will be a day of fast-moving events. It will come suddenly. It will come when very few are expecting it. It will be a day like the day when God rained fire and brimstone down upon wicked Sodom. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17:28-30). Notice it says the wicked were "destroyed." Oh, dear ones, it will be a severe time for the wicked. The righteous will be taken to glory with the Lord. Are you ready today for that day to come? We must live every day as if it is the last day. We must be ready to meet our Lord.

We see the time that has been prophesied being fulfilled. The dragon, which is paganism, anti-God, and is "called the Devil and Satan," will be loosed for a season before the end. (Rev. 20:7; 12:9). The released dragon (Satan) will "go out to deceive the nations." Today we see this happening in the cults of Satan worship, witchcraft, and false teachers. Some are saying, "God is dead," etc. The time is near for the Lord to come. He will come to take vengeance upon the wicked.

—M. Miles

JESUS IS NEAR

"He drew very near," solemnly uttered a youthful believer within a few hours of death. "Who drew near?" anxiously inquired a friend who was present, fearful to hear her pronounce the word, "death." "Jesus," she replied, with an unutterable earnestness of expression. "I felt just now as if He stood close beside me." Soon after, she was asked by her sister if she would like to pray with her. She gladly assented. But while she prayed, the countenance of the dying one changed: the expression of supplication was succeeded by one of adoring contemplation. It would have been rapture but for its perfect calm. A kind of glow suffused her features, then faded gradually away; and before that prayer was ended, she was gone. Her "amen" to it was her first hallelujah in heaven. Jesus had "come again" and received her unto Himself.

—Sel.

September 15, 1974

PURIFIED, MADE WHITE, AND TRIED

**Dan. 12:10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rev. 7:13, 14; 1 Peter 1:6-9;
1 Peter 4:12, 13**

Daniel 12:10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

1 Cor. 6:9 Know ye not the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Rev. 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me [John], What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

1 Peter 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Memory Verse: But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. 1 Peter 5:10.

Central Thought: All who will be saved must be purified from their transgressions, made white, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus. They must also endure the process of being tried and tested through tribulation and adversity.

Word Definitions: Purified: clarified, brightened, examined, selected. Tried: to be refined as metal (Heb.) Effeminate: showing qualities generally attributed to women; unmanly. Extortioners: people guilty of getting money by threats, violence and misuse of authority. Manifold temptations: many and various kinds of temptations.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We want to study this 10th verse of Daniel 12 and consider the different New Testament Scriptures that will go along with it. Daniel is speaking of the last days in which we are now living. We have quoted Paul, John, and Peter concerning being washed and purified from sin, and also, of the process of being tried through the fiery trials we meet. Let us note that trials and tests in the Christian life are nothing new. They have been the route that God has taken His people through ever since time began. Even Adam and Eve were to prove their love to God by being tested and tried by the enemy. It is God's will to try His people today and to prove their love and devotion. Peter had much to say in his epistle about enduring trials, and said that the trial of our faith is much more precious than gold.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why will not the wicked understand? What is it they will not understand? 2. What effect does sin and disobedience have upon the heart of man? 3. What is the only means by which a man can be purified? 4. How can we love and rejoice in someone we have never seen? 5. What is the purpose of the trial of faith, and of what value is it to us?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

This 10th verse of Daniel 12 is being fulfilled today. While there are those who are sincerely serving the Lord, following Him, and enduring great trials, sorrow, and battles with Satan; the wicked are doing wickedly, not understanding the righteous and the way they live. But the wise understand. They are fully aware of what their battles and trials are going to produce. The world has lost its charm for them. They have heard and heeded the voice of the Saviour that has called them to Himself. As they have trusted in the atoning grace of God and found deliverance from the stain and bondage of sin, they go on to perfection and find full cleansing from inbred sin and the depravity of nature. With their hearts thus purified from the evils of the world, the flesh, and Satan; they endure great trials and battles with the devil. The Lord permits and ordains that such should be.

The trial of our faith is more valuable than all the gold and wealth this world could heap up together. It is preparing us for the great glory and honor that will be ours when the object of our faith and affection appears. When He descends from above in His glorious array, He will bring a rich reward with Him for all who have served and followed Him when He was yet unseen to them. Their obedience to His commands will bring a great recompense, and their trust in His free grace will pay off in eternal profit. Yes, when you are willing to forsake the pride and vanity of this world and go after things unseen and eternal, you are going to meet with the contradiction of the men of this world. But in this, we can rejoice; because we know we are being a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. And if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. So we see that the trying of our faith is the normal and wise process of God in taking us through this world of sin and evil unto that time of rejoicing when we will be welcomed into our heavenly home.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We love the blessings of the Lord upon our souls. We love to shout the praises of God with victory in our souls. We enjoy the presence of the Lord and the deep sweet peace of God. We want to be ready when God calls for us. We want to be a blessing to others. We desire to be used of God. We love the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon our souls and upon our testimony. We love to see souls be "born again." We love to lead others to the Lord. Oh, we love the work of the Lord and every virtue of His working in our souls. But there is a price to pay for these wonderful experiences. Trials bring

experience. Experiences make us wiser. Experiences with God make us humble and increase our faith. Our lesson tells us that "the trial of our faith" is much more precious than gold. We think gold is very important, but the "trial of our faith" is much more precious or important than all the gold of this world. Sometimes the trials are filled with fire. They are severe. They shake the very foundation of our life. We have to deepen our determination and decision to cling to the Lord. But they are precious. They bring us forth out of the furnace with some of those things in us destroyed that needed to be. So we are instructed to believe that if we come forth victorious, we will "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Now we surely want that to be a fact and a reality. So dear ones, it is needful for us to be tried and to be in "heaviness through manifold temptations." If we will look at the results of the trial and the purpose in it, we can then rejoice. We can't rejoice in suffering because the suffering hurts. We look past the suffering and rejoice because it's God's will for us. We know that He does all things well for our souls' good. In looking at it this way, then we do not think it "strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

—M. Miles

CROSSES

Does your cross seem too heavy for you to bear?

Oh remember, 'twas God's love that placed it there.

Every cross fits just right be it large or small,

"As thy day so thy strength," Jesus says to all.

Oh, our God is a most faithful God indeed,

And all-wise, He knows just what His children need.

If we carry them gladly without a frown,

Crosses never can crush us, or drag us down.

Massive crosses prove light that with faith radiate,

So the size of the cross is no true test of weight;

Some are magnets that draw us to Jesus' breast

And to glory forever, where we shall rest.

—Sel.

September 22, 1974

BETROTHED FOREVER TO CHRIST

Hosea 2:19-23; Rom. 9:25, 26; Eph. 5:25-27, 29;

1 Peter 2:9, 10

Hosea 2:19 And I will betroth thee [antitype: spiritual Israel] unto me [Christ] for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;

22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. [chastisements lifted]

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them [Gentiles] which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Romans 9:25 As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them [Gentiles] my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; [all born-again believers—Jews and Gentiles]

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Memory Verse: But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 1 Cor. 6:17.

Central Thought: Christ loved us so much that He gave Himself to redeem us from sin and to reconcile us forever to full and complete fellowship with God, thus including both Jews and Gentiles.

Word Definition: Betroth: To engage for matrimony (Hebrew). Peculiar people: A people for a purpose or special preservation.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God sought to give an impressive object lesson to Hosea, concerning the future of Israel and His plan for all people. Hosea was instructed to marry a harlot. Hosea obeyed, and the first child born was named Jezreel. The meaning of the name Jezreel is, "whom God sows or plants." This child, Jezreel, stood for the vengeance of God upon Israel. Israel had transgressed and turned away from God's holy commandments and divine purpose. But God endeavors to reveal now that all of Israel's apostasy does not frustrate His purpose and plan. He will find a people who will serve Him. The second child born was a daughter, and she was named Loruhamah, which means, "not pitied"; and God stated with this that He was to have no more mercy on Israel, but was to utterly take them away. Then a third child was born, a son; and he was to be named Loammi. This meant, "Not my people," and declared that Israel was no longer the people of God. But then God said that in the place where it was said, "Ye are not my people"; there it would be said, "Ye are the sons of the living God." This scripture (Hosea 1:10) is quoted in our lesson. Remember that these children were born of a harlot, an unfaithful woman to start with. This is all a type of literal Israel, a nation that God made His own, whose heart was not right. It is clear by now that God is through with Israel as a literal nation, but seeks to draw the souls of men in Israel and those in all the world to be His true Bride, the Church of the living God. The harlot nature, the unfaithful spirit that is not steadfast with God, wanders away from His loving embrace; but in the grace and love of Jesus, the heart of man is allured back; and through the sacrifice of Christ, the souls of men are betrothed unto Him forever.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who betroths the hearts of men to God? 2. They are betrothed unto Him in five different natures. Name them. 3. Just how much did Christ love the Church, and what did He do for the Church to manifest and prove His love? 4. Why did God have to bring Israel to a cast off and condemned state before He could have mercy on her? 5. What would you say that corn, wine, and oil refer to in the New Testament?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a wonderful picture and truth this lesson today presents to us! It shows us that Israel as a literal nation in God's sight and plan is no more; and that His mercy reaches all men and gathers them into one holy nation, a spiritual people to show forth His praise. The harlot that Hosea married was a type of Israel after the flesh, whose heart was not inclined toward the truth of God. But in the ultimate end of God's plan, He was to ransom both Jew and Gentile in one body back to Himself. He was to send Christ to die for the sins of the entire world and to save the souls of men and women from eternal ruin. What a wonderful, loving and wise plan He developed for us today.

He said that He would betroth us to Himself. It is the work of grace that begins in the heart and life that wins a person to the Lord. His dying love and goodness lead men to repentance. By Him being lifted up, He was to draw all men unto Himself. This love that is inspired and built up in the soul of man as He beholds the love and beauty of Christ, spoils him or her forever for anything else. We are united with Christ in the bonds of holy and unfailing love. We love Him because He first loved us. He looked beyond our sins and the things that separated us from Him, and gave Himself that we might be pure and holy, fit to walk and live by His side. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. How He yearned to have fellowship with man again as He did in the Garden! And He has brought us back to Him, engaged our souls, and wedded us to Himself in righteousness, (sin and evil will depart from our hearts); in judgment (we will know and understand that which is good and acceptable in His sight); in lovingkindness (we will not have the spirit of fear, but of love, power, and of a sound mind); in mercies (we can fall back in the arms of His mercy and they will hold us up); and in faithfulness. Our faith and love in Him will never be ashamed. We, who were not a people and separated from His loving embrace, are now restored to His image and likeness, and live

and feast continually in His loving presence and goodness.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a glorious truth we have in our lesson today! We are to look at the closest relationship that is exhibited here in this world, and are to get a glimpse of the beauties of being brought to Christ. God betroths thee in righteousness, judgment, lovingkindness, and mercies. Without judgment, there could not be righteousness. Righteousness, then, requires the punishment of the sinner. God has provided a way in the gospel whereby sinners' sins fall upon another. The law is magnified and honored in Christ. God could not admit the sinner into communion with Him. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" God is holy in all of His ways and and works. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." So through Christ, we are brought into the good graces and pleasure of Christ.

Hasty marriages are not wise. Judgment is needed in the selection of a companion. Wisdom is so important in your choice. For this reason, I maintain that petting should be left out of a courtship. It will cloud one's wisdom, and God knew this. That's one of the reasons why Jesus plainly tells us that a man is not to look upon a woman with a lusting eye. (Matthew 5:28). This is the beginning of adultery. Wisdom makes one to know that this is blinding to the person's evaluation of the one they are thinking about as a life's companion.

God looks at the penitent sinner. He knows the very intents of his heart. He knows if he truly is turning away from sin. In judgment, righteousness, lovingkindness, and mercies He brings him unto Himself. All become one in Christ. And isn't it beautiful? There will never be any widowed state in this relationship. We belong to Him forever. Only when we take ourselves out of His love are we severed from Him. If we continue in this state and come to the judgment, He will say, "I never knew you."

God had mercy upon the Gentiles, and they were brought into His graces. The Jew and the Gentile alike, are invited to be "born again." What a glorious time we are living in today! The beautiful church of God is resplendant. Its light is shining out to the world. Those who make up His Bride are spotless, and their lives are holy. If you are living in this manner, you are one of the number.

—M. Miles

ANSWERING CHRIST'S CALL

Christ's call to the young man of our story challenged him to go to some distant islands of the sea where cannibals inhabited the land—nevertheless, he was determined to do Christ's bidding with a willing heart.

The young man went to the captain of a New York liner, but he refused him booking—however, the young man did not take "No" for an answer; and finally arrangements were made for his passage. The islands had been known as "The White Man's Grave." The captain said he would not land at the shore on account of the savage natives; so he offered to stop in mid-ocean and give the young man a small boat with which he might go to shore.

The small boat was loaded with all the young man's baggage and sent on its way. The captain followed its every movement with distant-glasses to see how matters would fall. He saw the natives on the shore seize his friend and carry him inland; so it was concluded that the natives had eaten him for food.

Two years later, the same captain spotted a church spire on the island. Landing the steamer, he headed toward the church spire; and to his amazement, found his young friend in the midst of a group of natives, teaching them out of the Bible, the "Book of books." He said, "Tell me all about it."

"It was this way. While the natives were preparing to cook me, I asked God to show me what I should do, to give me grace to face death bravely for His sake, and to bear a testimony that would count with them for whom I would be giving my life. While praying, the idea of giving the natives a taste of my leg came to my mind; so out came my pocket-knife, and I cut off a piece of my leg and gave it to the chief. He did not seem to like it; so he passed it down the line to his head-man, who, in turn, showed his dislike of it.

"After talking matters over between themselves, the decision was reached that I should be released. You see, I have one cork leg, and it saved the day because God had prepared the way.

"Since being here, Christ Jesus, my Lord, has become more real day by day. He has proved Himself strong in my behalf, over and over. 'There is nothing too hard for the Lord.' Now, after two years of service, I can say, 'And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' (Psalm 50:15)."

—Sel.

September 29, 1974

RETURN TO GOD, O ISRAEL

Hosea 6:1-3, 6, 7; 13:9-11, 14; 14:1, 2, 4, 5

Hosea 6:1 Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

Hosea 13:9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.

14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2 Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

Memory Verse: For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. Hosea 14:9b.

Central Thought: Our own ways and thoughts lead us into the paths of destruction, but God is calling us to return to Him, to find abundant mercy and pardon, and to prove that His ways are right and true.

Word Definition: Calves of our lips: The fruit of our lips. —Heb.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Be sure to refer to Lesson Background in Lesson 12, as these two lessons go together. The theme of the burden of the prophet Hosea is found in our scriptures before us. Israel has gone away from God and is suffering for it. It is God's mercy to correct and rebuke man for his iniquity. Iniquity will be a man's ruin. Therefore, we see God calling man away from his destructive paths to the good and holy way again. In the final verse of chapter 5, just before our lesson begins, we hear God saying, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." Thus, the prophet exhorts Israel to return again to God and find the abundance of His goodness and grace. Hear Him say, "I will be thy king." God remembered how Israel as a nation grieved Him by desiring a king, and now reminds them of the trouble that it has brought them. Their king has proven to be a snare to them. So is the way and thought of all who go against God and His truth.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why had the Lord torn and smitten Israel? 2. What is the earnest desire in the heart of God that is expressed in this lesson? 3. What is it that God desires more than sacrifice or burnt offerings? 4. What kind of words should a soul bring in prayer to the Lord for salvation? 5. In the light of this lesson, what should we do if we find ourselves falling short of the pleasure and will of God? Does our lesson encourage us to come to the Lord and find mercy, forgiveness, and help?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Here is God's message to the people in Hosea's time, but it surely holds great counsel and truth for us today. Whether we are saved, unsaved, discouraged, confused, backslidden, afflicted because of the error of our way, or accused and tempted of the devil; this reading from Hosea will encourage us to know that God yearns for and earnestly desires our fellowship. He longs for us to return to Him and to behold the depths

of His great mercy. While telling us to return to the Lord, Hosea prophesies of the resurrection of Christ bringing us life and power to live in His sight. "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up." Could we not say that this is a prophecy of Jesus' being raised the third day? For when God raised up Jesus, He wrought the power to raise us up, too, from the dead state of sin to a life of righteousness.

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; that His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He will come unto us as the rain. What wonderful, encouraging words, and what a wonderful secret is enclosed here! If we will not turn away in discouragement and anger or go down in despair, but rather keep holding on to the Lord and looking to Him for help, we will know things that we otherwise would never know. Make this your motto: Follow on to know the Lord. Do not give up, for God loves us and is very anxious to do all in His great power to help us.

Make God your King. Bow before Him, and worship Him alone. Seek not the support, guidance, or help of man. You are dealing with God alone. Get and keep a balanced and settled relationship with Him, and people will fall into their proper place in your life. If you trust in anything other than the love and grace of your Heavenly King, you will be disappointed. Think what this King can do: He can redeem us from death; and He will be the destruction of the grave. Repentance shall be hid from His eyes. In other words, He will give us a life and righteousness that need not to be repented of. He loves us. May God help us to ever hope and trust in Him.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We trust that souls who start out for God will be steadfast and cling to the Lord. But we do know that many have fallen into the traps and snares of the devil through manifold temptations. Not that God's grace was not sufficient, but because they became careless and their love began to grow cold. But dear one, if you are away from the Lord, remember that God is still calling for you to come back. What wonderful words are spoken in our lesson. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." God does love you.

The devil has many snares to keep a person from really coming to God. One false teaching is called "eternal security" or, "once saved, always saved." Now this is a snare. Sin cuts us off from God. The Apostle plainly tells us in James 1:14, 15 about sin and how it cuts one off. Let us look at these verses. A "man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust,

and enticed." To tempt is to allure, to test, to persuade, etc. Lust means, "an overmastering desire." Entice means, "to attract by hope of pleasure or reward." So we see that when a person is tempted, he must take a stand against it; or it will cause him to have an excessive or an overmastering desire to do wrong. And when he consents in his mind to do the wrong, then he is on dangerous grounds. It is getting down into his heart. The next verse tells us that "when lust hath conceived [formed in one's mind, a plan made to fulfill the desire] it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished [accomplished], bringeth forth death." We must immediately turn to the Lord and correct the sin, seek forgiveness, and be restored in His good graces. He that "knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. So sin is a deliberate, wilful transgression of God's laws. But God's mercy is great, and forgiveness is extended to us. Sin causes one to fall from grace. God is ready to heal our backslidings. Praise the Lord!

Read John 10:25-29. We read here that we are God's sheep if we follow Him. His sheep are given "eternal life." But if we quit following Him, we are not His sheep; and eternal life is taken away from us. By God's grace we can be "once saved always saved," but a person who has been saved, who backslides and commits sin, is not following the Lord. Eternal life is in God's Son. Read 1 John 5:11. When we turn away from God, we lose eternal life because we turn away from God. —M. Miles

DO OR DONE?

"There is a wide difference between your religion and mine," said a Christian lady to one in whose spiritual condition she had long been interested. "Indeed," said he, "how is that?" "Your religion," she replied, "has only two letters in it, and mine has four."

"What do you mean," said, he, "by two letters and four?"

"Why, your religion," said the lady, "is d-o, DO; whereas mine is D-O-N-E." This was all that passed.

When he next met his friend, he said to her, "Well, I can now say with you that my religion is DONE." He had learned to fling aside the deadly doings, and rest in the finished work of Christ. He was led to see that it was no longer what he could do for God, but what God had done for him.

Jesus said, "It is finished." John 19:30.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; . . . not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us." Titus 3:5.

