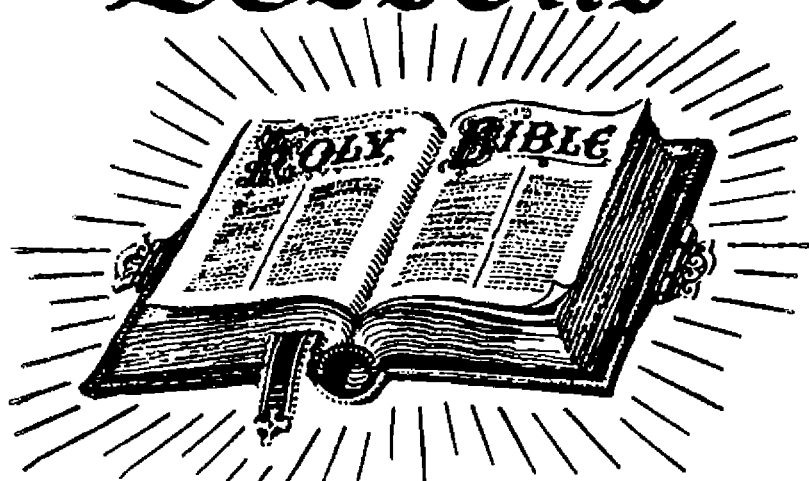


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 15, No. 3
July, Aug. Sept.
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 15

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Jesus Christ and His Church**

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Theme For Third Quarter, 1983

For our Bible Study series this quarter we will continue the study of the prophet Isaiah, beginning with chapter 32. There are vital and precious truths contained in these chapters. It will not be possible to present every detailed aspect of these Scriptures in these lessons. Everyone is encouraged to personally study these lessons and seek for inspiration and understanding in one's own heart. We will be referring much to the rendition of the Septuagint Greek text. We have found that much of the quotations in the New Testament from the writings of Isaiah closely follow the wording of the Septuagint. It was used as much or more widely than the Hebrew text in the time of Christ. Let us look forward with joy and prayer to these studies, and trust the precious Holy Spirit to unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures to us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

—————○—————
July 3, 1983

THE SPIRIT POURED UPON US FROM ON HIGH

Isa. 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

2 And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.

13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:

14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;

15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.

20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

Memory Verse: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. James 3:17.

Central Thought: In Christ Jesus we find a refuge from sin and death, and a preparation to receive the Holy Spirit who will work His righteousness and peace in our lives.

Word Definitions: *Rash:* hasty or impulsive. *Churl:* stingy or miserly. *Fruitful field:* a productive garden. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word from which this is translated is Carmel, a title which carries the same meaning, which was a hill and a town in Israel.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our previous lesson dealt with the inclination of man to trust in himself and the flesh. Since this has been man's universal and ancient fault and failing, it is not surprising to see the prophet dealing with this very thing. And in our lesson today we find the foretelling of victory and triumph for those who deny the flesh and worldly desires and seek for the outpouring of the Spirit of God. The first two verses of our lesson surely point to Christ as the refuge of our souls from the embattling influences of the flesh. I have found a clearer rendering of verses 3-5 in the Septuagint Version, which I will insert here. "3. And they shall no more trust in men, but they shall incline their ears to hear. 4. And the heart of the weak ones shall attend to hear, and the stammering tongues shall soon learn to speak peace. 5. And they shall no more at all tell a fool to rule, and thy servants shall no more at all say, Be silent." The remaining verses in our lesson are very similar to the Greek text. The thorns and briars upon the land and upon all the houses of joy, the forsaken palaces, and the forts and dens becoming dens for the wild animals—these are the expressive conditions prevailing because of the absence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the people. It is very evident that

God would have man become conscious of the absence of His Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God withdrew from man at a despairing distance because of his erring ways and attitudes. But through the influence of Christ and His marvelous grace man can find the humble way of life that will lead him into the land of uprightness and Holy Spirit outpouring and anointing. The terms judgment, righteousness, peace, quietness, and assurance are realities in the heart and life which are the result of the Spirit of God bearing rule. The fruitful field is the heart of man transformed from a desert or wilderness. The Septuagint renders verse 19 thus: "And if the hail should come down, it shall not come upon you; and they that dwell in the forests shall be confident, as those in the plain country." The basic meaning is the same. The place of being filled and led by the Spirit of God is a safe place. The sowing beside all waters would refer to the spread of the gospel as does also the sending forth of the ox and the ass. Both of these creatures carry a specific spiritual meaning as beasts of burden and labor, referring to ministers of Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How is Jesus our King and our hiding place at the same time?
2. Why are the ears and the eyes so important to spiritual blessings and welfare?
3. Why does God want a man to sense his own poverty and need before He will pour out His Spirit upon him?
4. What becomes of the desert in the soul of man when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon him? Why could not judgment dwell in the heart of man before?
5. Why is God so interested in us having peace and quietness in our lives?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

King David testified in 2 Samuel 23:3, that God had shown him that "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Jesus Christ is declared to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns in righteousness, but His reign is not according to the flesh on a temporal earthly throne. His rule is that of domineering the heart of man through the love and kindness of God Almighty. Man can only be ruled by winning his love and affections. Thus as Christ reigns over men, He is at the same time their refuge

and security. And the greatest security and safety that He could afford to mankind is that of acceptance and favor with the Heavenly Father. This He secured for us when He died upon the tree and arose from the dead the third day. He was crudely nailed and cruelly treated as a criminal. His life was taken from the earth and cut off from the land of the living. But it was only to make way for a greater life to inherit and give. The sorrows of heart, the emptiness of life, the vanity of mortal endeavor and achievement—all this becomes healed and fulfilled in the bountiful blessings and supreme satisfaction experienced when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the humble, receptive heart. The wilderness becomes a fruitful field. The fruitful field becomes a forest. No more are the righteous resolves and good will desires dwarfed because of the sin nature that brought man into woeful bondage! A forest produces timber and material for great enterprise. There is need for the garden, but there is also need for the forest. God, through His Holy Spirit, can produce either one in the heart according as He sees the individual is capable of handling. But whatever the accomplishment or produce, peace and rest reigns supremely within the bosom of man. Oh, how every child of God needs to seek earnestly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his heart and life! We can have the Holy Spirit as an abiding Comforter, but we also need fresh anointing and new outpourings upon our souls as we go along life's journey. Thus we can continue to bear fruit of righteousness and produce the quality of life and labor that is consistent with God's holiness. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We read in verse 17 that the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance. As we refer back to the 2nd verse, we discover the purpose for such. A hiding place was needed. One who seeks a hiding place looks for an area that is secluded, and offers ample concealment: a place to enter and quietly remain, so as not to expose himself to the dangers round about. God is our spiritual hiding place. It is on Him that we can rely and be safe from the devices of the enemy.

The second verse refers to a covert from the tempest. A person can duck under a roof and be protected from the storm, but those who run in and out are sure to get wet. Those who rest quietly beneath the shelter are offered protection from the elements.

A river of water in a dry place is of boundless benefit, but to be a recipient of its blessings we must abide nearby.

Traveling across the desert with no protection from the blistering rays of the sun has meant death to many travelers. Christ is the Rock that offers shelter, but if we wander from His care, we expose ourselves to the withering effects of sin and error.

Adam Clark offers some interesting definitions of a vile person and a churl. (5th verse). "The vile person—*nabal*, the pampered, fattened, brainless fellow, who eats to live, and lives to eat: who will scarcely part with anything, and that which he does give he gives with an evil eye and a grudging heart. The churl—*kilai*, he who starves himself amidst his plenty, and will not take the necessaries of life for fear of lessening his stock." How miserable to be either character! Let us seek to maintain a rest of assurance in God so that He may delight to pour out His Spirit upon us. —Wayne Murphey

July 10, 1983

THE DEVOURING FIRE AND EVERLASTING BURNINGS

Isa. 33:5 The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure.

13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?

19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.

20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

21 But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

22 For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.

Memory Verse: Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1 Cor. 3:13.

Central Thought: All who give to sin a place in their hearts and lives cannot stand before the just and holy Almighty God. Only those who seek for righteousness and flee from sin will be granted the wonderful blessings of His grace.

Word Definitions: *Stability:* firmness, security, fidelity. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word from which the word "stability" is translated, is the same as that for "faith". It is derived from the Hebrew word "aman" from which also comes the word "amen" which involves supported or rendered firm, faithful, and true. Through God's wisdom and knowledge in Christ we can be stable and faithful. *Zion, the city of our solemnities:* The city of the gatherings of God's people unto Christ. *Galley with oars:* A vessel or ship moved by oars rather than by the wind. This is the distinction literally between those who trust in God and the leadings of His Holy Spirit and those who resort to man rule and tactics of the flesh.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We beheld the glory of the advent of the Holy Spirit in our previous lesson. Let us continue to look for the spiritual values in our study of the book of Isaiah. The things that are the spiritual values and that are the most important to us have to do with Christ Jesus, His ministry, His work of salvation, the Holy Spirit and His operations with the souls of men, and the glory and function of the Church of God, the Bride of Christ.

Let us keep our spiritual eyes open for these truths in these studies. In our lesson today we see a continuation of these eternal values abounding. Those that persecute and spoil God's people do so to their own destruction. The people of God will not retaliate to even the score against their persecutors. They pray to God who watches from on high. They know that God is righteous and will recompense their sorrows. This stabilizes their souls and fills them with joy to know of their eternal treasure. The war of the flesh against the Spirit is seen here. Carnal minded and flesh-wanton professors cannot stand the blazing of Holy Spirit unction and anointing! The fierce people, the people with a stammering tongue, the deep minded philosophers of worldly wisdom find no place in the simplicity of the true gospel. Zion, the Church of the living God finds quietness, rest, and security in their faith and fellowship with God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Of what value is it to us for the Lord to be exalted and to dwell on high?
2. What is the stabilizing force of wisdom and knowledge and the fear of the Lord?
3. Why is holy fire so repulsive to the fleshly minded?
4. What kind of people will dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings?
5. What kind of city is Zion, the Church of God?
6. Why is there no galley with oars nor gallant (proud) ship in God's work?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

How wonderful to know that the Lord is exalted at the right hand of the Father, and dwells in power and glory far above the carnal strife of man! He rules and reigns from heaven above His beloved and His own. He, the Wonderful Counsellor, gives sound wisdom and guidance for His people in this world. Our treasure is His great salvation and we revere and honor Him as the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Oh, that more would humble their hearts and confess their own wretched need that His glory might burst upon their sight! Our God is a consuming fire. His fiery presence is reproof and judgment against all evil and variance with His holiness. The sinners and the hypocrites who profess to be the children of the Lord are startled at the flame of love that breaks forth from the hearts of those who are holy and

consecrated to the perfect will of God. We have seen fire mentioned before in Isaiah, have we not? Isaiah, in the vision in the temple, saw the burnings of God's holiness and blessings. He humbled himself and confessed his great need of God's mercy and help. But not many are willing to do this. Instead they are inclined to flee to their idols or take spite and vengeance against the holy. But those who are willing to obey the truth and lay hold of all that God has for them will be blessed far beyond what can be imagined. Security, rest, shelter, care, provision, and all else that pertains to life and godliness will be freely granted to the true and faithful. "Thine heart shall meditate terror." This statement comes in the midst of good things promised to the faithful. To meditate is to ponder or think to one's self. We surely need to hold the Lord in reverence and fear before Him concerning His righteous judgments. Doubtless when Paul said in 2 Cor. 1:20, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" he was alluding to this 18th verse in our lesson. The sentiment is the same. "Where is the receiver, which means, the trader or the weigher?" (which corresponds to the disputer in Paul's phrasing). We do not want to be of those who dispute and argue against the truth of God. The glorious Lord is the avenue upon which we move and function as the Church of God. We are led by His Spirit, and our sails are spread to the winds of heaven. We refuse to employ the ways and means of man. The children of God choose the humble ways and methods of the Lord. We do not spread ourselves and adorn our persons for men's admiration. For the Lord is our judge, our lawgiver, our King.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson today reveals some characteristics of the Church of God. The 6th verse describes the stability of the righteous. The 16th verse declares that "his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." The 20th verse speaks of Jerusalem, or the Church, as a tabernacle that shall not be removed.

If we profess to be a member of the Church of God, then our lives should be dependable. Our spiritual relationship should be founded upon the rock, which is Christ. Too many are building upon shifting sand. God has provided a plan of salvation that will endure, and we should not find those who

have claimed salvation returning to the ways of sin. God has a better way than that. Some individuals will cling to their profession of a Christian, but their works fail to indicate true righteous living.

Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 3:13 and 14, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon he shall receive a reward." This is what Isaiah was speaking of in the 14th verse of our lesson. God is a devouring fire, that will expose the hypocrite and make afraid the sinner. To sum it all up, we will either be dependable, steadfast saints of God, or we shall be shown for what we are by the devouring of His holy fire.

—Wayne Murphey

—————o—————
July 17, 1983

IRRIGATION IN THE SOULS OF MEN BY THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Isa. 34:16 Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

17 And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

Isa. 35:1 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out,

and streams in the desert.

7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Memory Verse: But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14:26.

Central Thought: The Word of God with the holy anointing and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of God brings life and understanding and the fruits of righteousness in the soul of man.

Word Definitions: *Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon:* We have already learned that Carmel means a fruitful field or garden. Lebanon was a mountain range in northern Israel from whence came the famous Cedar Tree. Thus Lebanon represents the forest, or heavy commerce and production. Sharon was a flat stretch of land in west Palestine famous for its beautiful rose. Thus Sharon signifies beauty and fragrance. Here are three attributes of the Christian who is guided by the Word of God and enlightened by His Spirit: Fruit, Beauty, and Produce. *Dragons:* Hideous or frightful creatures.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There can be no doubt that Isaiah is looking down through the eye of Holy Spirit inspiration to our Gospel day. The 16th and 17th verses of chapter 34, set the stage for what is revealed in the following chapter. He had just spoken of the various wild animals and birds who have their mate. He also spoke of the Lord's vengeance and recompense for the controversy of Zion. A dark picture is portrayed in the 34th

chapter with fire and brimstone burning unquenchable and the smoke going up forever. Revelation 14:9-11, speaks of those who worship the beast as being tormented with fire and brimstone and the smoke of their torment going up forever and ever. It is simply describing the woe that is to fall upon all who refuse to allow the Word and the Spirit to rule in their lives. But just as evil and iniquity produce offspring, so does the working of Almighty God in the lives of all who walk His highway of holiness. His mouth hath commanded, and His Spirit has gathered. These two anointed ones (seen by the prophet in Zech. 4) bring life and glory to the souls of men. Jesus was the Word of God. He brought the Word of God down to us and made it available and a possibility. He left His disciples with a promise of the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit is the agent of the covenant of grace. He writes upon the hearts of men the laws of the Heavenly Father. This is what brings life and victory to us. Beyond doubt the writer in Hebrews 12:12-24, is quoting from our lesson when he counselled us to make straight paths for our feet, lifting up the hands that hang down, and confirming the feeble knees. And oh, this wonderful highway of holiness! The unclean and ravenous spirits of men are not allowed on this highway. All this is possible because of the Word and the Spirit having free course in the hearts and lives of the saints of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it so important to have the Word of God accompanied by the Holy Spirit?
2. Where is the desert and wilderness found?
3. What influence causes the hands to be weak and the knees to be feeble?
4. What kind of highway was seen there, and who walks thereon?
5. To where do the ransomed return, and how do they return? Where do they return from?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The glory of the Lord is to shine in the lives of His saints, and His excellency is to be portrayed by the deeds and works that they do. God commands us to be strong. We need no longer be bowed down beneath the yoke of the devil. We do not need to be afraid anymore. Fear is a dominating influence that

can grip and fetter the soul of man with despairing clutches. God wants us to cast off our fears, step out and declare our liberty in Christ. Let us have an ear to what the Word of the Lord says. Let us open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. God wills that we present our entire being unto God as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, for this is our reasonable service. As Christ sanctified Himself by yielding to the will of the Father and going to the cross of Calvary, so we are to be sanctified through the truth. God is seeking for men and women, boys and girls, who will let His Word and Holy Spirit abide and have control. It is then, and only then, that we will become the fruitful garden, the productive forest, and the fragrant soil of the beautiful Rose of Sharon. The desert life of barren emptiness will be no more. The spiritual eyes will be opened and our ears will be unstopped. The way of holiness will be so plain that we will not go astray. Hereon we will find the way to Zion, the mountain of God's pleasure and truth, the city of the redeemed, the Church of God. On this way of holiness we return to the habitation of God, through the Spirit working and living in His people. All this is fulfilled in the full salvation of Jesus Christ. This becomes a living reality in the hearts of the saved and sanctified. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We are exhorted throughout the Scriptures to seek after God and make Him the primary interest of our lives. John the revelator was presented a book and told to devour it. When something is consumed, it becomes, in effect, a part of one's body. It is digested and absorbed. As we seek Christ, who is the bread of life, and diligently obey His commandments, then He becomes an inseparable part of us. Just as the food you eat is indistinguishable as a part of your body, so Christ will become an ingrained part of your daily character and attitudes.

As Christ prayed in the garden, He reminded the Father that He had given the disciples His Word, and then continued in prayer that those who had believed in the Word might be one, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." John 17:21. Isaiah admonished the Israelites to seek out the book of the Lord, for he knew that if God became a part of them, the blessings and fruits of righteousness would freely flow from their lives.

The muddle in which man finds himself is never so complex that God cannot deliver from it. God can remove a terrible temper, replace stubbornness with humility, and give a person the potential to cultivate the fruits of goodness. With the entry of Christ into your heart, comes joy and peace, and a song. We are not speaking of a millennial age to come, but are referring to the ransomed of the Lord who are dwelling in Zion, or the Church which God put into operation on the day of Pentecost.

—Wayne Murphey

A RIFT IN THE CLOUD

Andrew Lee came home at evening from the shop where he had worked all day, tired and out of spirits; came home to his wife who was also tired and dispirited.

"A smiling wife, and a cheerful home—what a paradise it would be!" said Andrew to himself as he turned his eyes from the clouded face of Mrs. Lee, and sat down with knitted brow, and a moody aspect.

Not a word was spoken by either. Mrs. Lee was getting supper, and she moved about with a weary step.

"Come," she said at last, with a side glance at her husband.

There was invitation in the word only, none in the voice of Mrs. Lee.

Andrew arose and went to the table. He was tempted to speak an angry word, but controlled himself, and kept silence. He could find no fault with the chop, nor the sweet home-made bread, and fresh butter. They would have cheered the inward man if there had only been a gleam of sunshine on the face of his wife. He noticed that she did not eat. "Are you not well, Mary?" The words were on his lips, but he did not utter them, for the face of his wife looked so repellant, that he feared an irritating reply. And so in moody silence, the twain sat together until Andrew finished his supper. As he pushed his chair back, his wife arose, and commenced clearing off the table.

"This is purgatory!" said Lee to himself, as he commenced walking the floor of their little breakfast-room, with his hands clasped behind him, and his chin almost touching his breast.

After removing all the dishes and taking them into the kitchen, Mrs. Lee spread a green cover on the table, and placing a fresh trimmed lamp thereon, went out and shut the

door, leaving her husband alone with his unpleasant feelings. He took a long, deep breath as she did so, paused in his walk, stood still for some moments, and then drawing a paper from his pocket, sat down by the table, opened the sheet and commenced reading. Singularly enough the words upon which his eyes rested were, "Praise your wife." They rather tended to increase the disturbance of mind from which he was suffering.

"I should like to find some occasion for praising mine." How quickly his thoughts expressed the ill-natured sentiment. But his eyes were on the page before him, and he read on.

"Praise your wife, man, for pity's sake, give her a little encouragement; it won't hurt her."

Andrew Lee raised his eyes from the paper and muttered, "Oh, yes. That's all very well. Praise is cheap enough. But praise her for what? For being sullen, and making your home the most disagreeable place in the world?" His eyes fell again to the paper.

"She has made your home comfortable, your hearth bright and shining, your food agreeable; for pity's sake, tell her you thank her, if nothing more. She doesn't expect it; it will make her eyes open wider than they have for ten years; but it will do her good for all that, and you, too."

It seemed to Andrew as if these sentences were written just for him, and just for the occasion. It was the complete answer to his question, "Praise her for what?" and he felt it also as a rebuke. He read no farther, for thought came too busy, and in a new direction. Memory was convicting him of injustice toward his wife. She had always made his home as comfortable as hands could make it, and had he offered the light return of praise and commendation? Had he ever told her of the satisfaction he had known, or the comfort experienced? He was not able to recall the time or the occasion. As he thought thus, Mrs. Lee came in from the kitchen, and taking her work-basket from the closet, placed it on the table, and sitting down without speaking, began to sew. Mr. Lee glanced almost stealthily at the work in her hands, and saw it was the bosom of a shirt, which she was stitching neatly. He knew it was for him that she was at work.

"Praise your wife." The words were before the eyes of his mind, and he could not look away from them. But he was not ready for this yet. He still felt moody and unforgiving. The expression on his wife's face he interpreted to mean ill-nature, and with ill-nature he had no patience. His eyes fell on the

newspaper that spread out before him, and he read the sentence:—

“A kind cheerful word, spoken in a gloomy home, is like the rift in the cloud that lets the sunshine through.”

Lee struggled with himself a while longer. His own ill-nature had to be conquered first; his moody, accusing spirit had to be subdued. But he was coming right, and at last got right, as to will. Next came the question as to how he should begin. He thought of many things to say, yet feared to say them, lest his wife should meet his advances with a cold rebuff. At last, leaning towards her, and taking hold of the linen bosom upon which she was at work, he said, in a voice carefully modulated with kindness:—

“You are doing the work very beautifully, Mary.”

Mrs. Lee made no reply. But her husband did not fail to observe that she lost, almost instantly, that rigid erectness with which she had been sitting, nor that the motion of her needle had ceased. “My shirts are better made, and whiter than those of any other man in our shop,” said Lee, encouraged to go on.

“Are they?” Mrs. Lee’s voice was low, and had in it a slight huskiness. She did not turn her face, but her husband saw that she leaned a little toward him. He had broken through the ice of reserve, and all was easy now. His hand was among the clouds, and a few feeble rays were already struggling through the rift it had made.

“Yes, Mary,” he answered softly, “and I’ve heard it said more than once, what a good wife Andrew Lee must have.”

Mrs. Lee turned and faced her husband. There was light in it, and light in her eye. But there was something in the expression of the countenance that puzzled him a little.

“Do you think so?” she asked quite soberly.

“What a question!” ejaculated Andrew Lee, starting up and going around to the side of the table where his wife was sitting—“What a question, Mary!” he repeated, as he stood before her.

“Do you?” It was all she said.

“Yes, darling,” was the warmly-spoken answer, and he stooped down and kissed her.—“How strange that you should ask me such a question!”

“If you would only tell me so now and then, Andrew, it would do me good.” And Mrs. Lee arose, and leaning against the manly breast of her husband, stood and wept.

What a strange light broke in upon the mind of Andrew Lee. He had never given to his faithful wife even the small reward of praise for all the loving interest she had manifested daily, until doubt of his love had entered her soul, and made the light thick darkness. No wonder that her face grew clouded, nor what he considered moodiness and ill-nature took possession of her spirit.

"You are good and true, Mary. My own dear wife. I am proud of you—I love you—and my first desire is for your happiness. Oh, if I could always see your face in sunshine, my home would be the dearest place on earth."

"How precious to me are the words of love and praise, Andrew," said Mrs. Lee, smiling up through her tears into his face. "With them in my ears, my heart can never lie in shadow."

How easy had been the work for Andrew Lee. He had swept his hand across the cloudy horizon of his home, and now the bright sunshine was streaming down, and flooding that home with joy and beauty. —Selected

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July 24, 1983

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Isa. 40:1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5 And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift

up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10 Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

Memory Verse: The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10.

Central Thought: God wills that every heart of man be prepared to receive the King of Glory by being exalted from sin and weakness, by being brought down from pride and vanity, by being made straight according to the rule of His arm, and by becoming one of His sheep and experiencing the tender loving care of Christ Jesus, the good Shepherd.

Word Definitions: *Her warfare is accomplished:* The Hebrew word for "warfare" indicates a mass of persons which could be taken for war, gathering for worship, and can also be applied for that of hardship. The Septuagint renders this word as "humiliation". We conclude that the meaning of the prophet is that in Christ Jesus the travail and hardship of the people of God is to be turned for victory and accomplishment.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Chapters 36-39, of the prophet Isaiah are historical passages concerning events that featured the ministry of Isaiah in the days of Hezekiah, the good king of Judah. Since it is largely historical and contains very little prophetic portion, we deem it best to exclude this part from our studies, and take up in chapter 40 a resuming of the prophetic utterances.

However, it would be good to bear in mind that just as Isaiah in lessons past dealt concerning the current events and interwove prophetic visions of Christ, even so are these prophecies associated with the happenings then present and those near in the future as well as distant foretellings of Jesus. The carrying away of the children of Judah to Babylon was not very many years away. Israel has already been carried

away captive to Assyria. The return of Judah to Jerusalem after seventy years captivity is foreseen, also. But the main spiritual essence of these writings herald the coming of the age of Christ and the glorious kingdom of God relative to His Church. In our lesson today are utterances that are directly quoted in the New Testament. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," was that of John the Baptist. John directly insisted that he was that voice in John 1:23. Peter declares that "all flesh is as grass," and quotes from this chapter in his epistle. 1 Peter 1:23-25. In Romans 11:34, 35, and also in 1 Corinthians 2:16, Paul quotes the phrase: "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" He uses the Septuagint wording: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" So we see that our lesson today is pure prophecy, well adapted to Christ and His Church in the gospel day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God want His people to be comforted?
2. What were the four ways that the way of the Lord in the hearts of men was to be prepared? Can you give a spiritual application for each one?
3. Why is it vital for man to sense himself as being as grass?
4. Can you see from this lesson what Christ was to do at His coming?
5. What does this question imply: "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord?" Read from the two places where Paul quoted this question.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The way of the Lord must be prepared. It was that way in the days of John the Baptist, and it is even so now. Let us consider the four ways that the heart of man must be prepared to make himself accessible for God to come into his life. *Every valley shall be exalted.* The real valley that needs to come up is that depression in the heart and mind. It involves unbelief, doubt, fear, despair, immorality, degradation, and impurity. Zion is urged to the high mountain to lift up her voice with the good tidings of the gospel. It is the gospel that will inspire men and women to vaster and loftier ideals. "Be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" *Every mountain and hill shall be made low.* Pride and vanity of heart and mind must be erased. There is only one way to dissolve pride, and that is to humble one's self. And if we can

but realize just what we are made of and how frail we really are, it will help us to assume the humble attitude we should have. "All flesh is as grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." This will cause the mountain to be brought low. *The crooked shall be made straight.* The crookedness and dishonesty of people's lives must be straightened. Restitution is a Bible commandment. The wicked must restore the pledge, give again that he has robbed. Ezekiel 33:15. "The Lord comes with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for him." The Lord of glory is calling men to lives of righteousness. *The rough places shall be made plain.* God is calling for smoothness and rest in our souls. The rough ways and mannerisms of life are to be smoothed out into gentleness and kindness. It is the charming ways of Christ that will effect this. He deals with us like a shepherd feeds his flock, gathering the young and tender in His arm and carrying us in His bosom. Here in our lesson are found the secrets of being qualified to have the Lord of glory come lovingly into our lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." It is said that the inspiration for this verse was taken from a custom of the Eastern rulers. Prior to beginning a journey that was to lead them over roads that were not well traveled, a contingency of scouts was sent on before to clear obstacles or bridge chasms and otherwise prepare the route for the ruler to travel, in order to make the journey more comfortable.

When our President plans a tour, many individuals precede him to scheduled stops to prepare the way and to provide efficient, organized scheduling and protection.

Christ's ministry on earth was short. It lasted for approximately three years. It was of benefit to His cause to have others prepare the way before Him. In Matthew the 3rd chapter, we read that the people went out to John the Baptist from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. John preached repentance and instructed the people how to prepare themselves to be righteous and also baptized them.

It appears that John the Baptist had not seen Christ prior to baptizing Him. John had spent 30 years in the hill country

of Hebron, and Christ was raised in an obscure city of Nazareth, in the extreme borders of Galilee. Yet John the Baptist, being led of the Spirit, preached Christ, and recognized Him as He approached. Through John the Baptist, Christ acquired two of His disciples, Andrew and Simon, for they had been disciples of John. We cannot place enough emphasis upon the importance of that voice crying in the wilderness, for it was a precedent to a divine kingdom. —Wayne Murphey

July 31, 1983

PROMISES TO SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Isa. 41:4 Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.

5 The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

6 They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.

7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.

8 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9 Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

10 Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dryland springs of water.

Memory Verse: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom. 2:29.

Word Definitions: *Sharp threshing instrument:* It is interesting to note that the word "sharp" here is from the same Hebrew word as "decision" which is found in Joel 3:14, where it mentions the valley of decision. This indicates the definite separation between sin and righteousness. *The sifting of the wheat from the chaff* refers to the purifying of God's people from every thing unlike God.

Central Thought: God promises to those who trust and obey Him strength and help in the times of adversity and trial, and will make and use them as instruments in His great harvest of souls.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God is speaking in our lesson today to His chosen people, Israel. In chapter 40, the prophet was instructed to speak to Jerusalem (verse 2) and to Israel (verse 27). But we surely must be aware of just who this Israel really is. If we take these Scriptures as speaking to literal Jews in the flesh to be fulfilled literally, we are going to be in trouble. We will thereby miss the real essence of the prophetic writing. Jesus called the real children of Abraham as those who did the works of Abraham. John 8:39. He told the Jews who were trying to shield themselves in the fact that they were literal descendants of Abraham that their real father was the devil. John 8:44. Paul stated in Galatians 3:16, that the real seed of Abraham was Christ. Paul stated again in Romans 9:6-8, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." We can very plainly see from these sayings that merely being a descendant of Abraham in the flesh did not make one a true Israelite and child of Abraham. To be a child of Abraham and to have him as our father, we must be actual possessors and practicers of the faith that he had. It is to this Israel that the promises in our lesson apply. Man from any nationality on earth can be a true Israelite. Abraham, as stated by James 2:23, was called the friend of God. This was doubtless an allusion to verse 8 in our lesson. It is also interesting to know

that verses 15 and 16 were inspired in the heart of the Evening Light reformer, D. S. Warner, concerning the preaching of the truth to those in the cages of spiritual Babylon. As we study this lesson, be assured that these promises are for us who live by the faith of the Lord Jesus.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is God speaking to in our lesson today?
2. Of what benefit is it for us to know that God's plan for His people was laid out in the beginning?
3. Are there times when we are tempted to be dismayed? What Scripture in our lesson is good for those times?
4. How can we be the seed of Abraham today?
5. What does the process of threshing do? What does this typify in the spiritual realm?
6. To whom will the Lord open up rivers and fountains?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Knowing that these promises are for us who are saved and born again into the family of God, we should be strong and courageous in the Christian life. Seeing that God is the first and will be the last, we should respect and fear, and yet draw near and come to Him. We should encourage every one of us his neighbor, loving him as we do ourselves. Everyone has his own life to live and his own work to do. But we are members one of another. The carpenter can encourage and help the goldsmith. We can and must all be a help one to another. For God is calling all men to be a part of His great, holy, and righteous nation. He wants us to be strong in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. How sweet to hear in the time of sore trial and test the Holy Spirit whisper the words in verse 10 to our hearts! Be not dismayed! Fear and dismay seek to grasp us many times. The perils of life and its complicated problems overwhelm us. We cannot quite see how we are going to navigate the sea of life and surmount the raging billows. But if we hold steady and keep our eyes on Jesus, He surely will make a way for us. As we draw near to Him and follow closely His Word and Holy Spirit, He will accomplish in us His great work, and use us to glean out precious souls from the chaff of this present evil world and the deceptions therein. He will help and make us to be a sharp threshing instrument that has teeth. Our lives of purity and holiness will bring reproof and

conviction on others and will help guide them to the truth. There will be times when our souls will faint for thirst. We will be tempted to give up in despair. But as we recall these precious promises, we will hold on and keep praying to the Lord for deliverance. He will answer prayer and come to our rescue. Praise the Lord for the wonderful things that He has promised to His saints, which make up the Church of God, the spiritual Israel.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Note the perspective of verses 8 and 9. They illustrate how God views His people. In the first statement He declares Israel to be His servant. That alone is a desirable position. A servant has his needs provided for. He has a place to stay and knows where his meals are coming from. However, we are more than simply servants. We are the children of the Chosen One, and, as the verse declares, are not only servants, but friends. A friend is a trusted confidant. The Psalmist even spoke of being the apple of God's eye.

To be one of God's own, we must be a special people. Verse nine declares that God's people are called from the chief men. God's children are those with integrity and character, people who will set their hand to the plow and not turn back, those who will relinquish their own way, and continue steadfast in the will of God.

In the 10th through the 20th verses of this chapter, we read of God's promises to His people. Consider carefully that He did not promise an easy road to heaven, but that He would uphold us and give comfort, help, and victory.

—Wayne Murphey

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August 7, 1983

JESUS CHRIST, THE SERVANT OF GOD

Isa. 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

5 Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

8 I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

10 Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

19 Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?

20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.

21 The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

Memory Verse: A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. Matthew 12:20.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ was sent as the Servant of Almighty God to bring light and salvation to all men. His approach to humanity is not with pride but with humility and

tenderness. He comes not to condemn, but to save; not to crush or wound, but to heal. Christ's work held such a priority in His heart that He allowed nothing to hinder or stand in His way from accomplishing it.

Word Definitions: *Judgment:* Justice and righteousness. *Gentiles:* "Gentiles" is synonymous with three other words from the Hebrew text. They are: Nations, Heathen, and People. The Gentiles are the peoples of the earth, the nations of the world, and the heathen to the earth's utmost bound. *Reed:* The shaft, stem, or stalk of a plant. *Flax:* Thread, wick, or fiber.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is pure prophecy of Jesus Christ. The first four verses are quoted in Matthew 12:17-21. It is interesting to note that the quotation from this part of Isaiah came in reference to Christ withdrawing Himself and charging the multitudes that He healed to not make Him known. Jesus Christ came not seeking the praise and adoration of the carnally minded. His desire was to help the poor, down-trodden souls of men who were bruised and crushed by the devil. The proud and vain did not visualize the real import of His mission. God wants us to behold and understand what Christ came for. The last three verses of chapter 41 sets the stage for the introduction of Christ as we see Him in our lesson. "I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that when I asked of them, could answer a word. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion." There was surely no one else who had the answer for the great needs of humankind. It is important for man to come to the realization of Christ being the only One. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved. The Bible declares this over and over. But in the midst of this void comes the bright rays of the gospel of Christ. There is One who can help. There is One who overcame the devil, who was not affected by anything. He pleased the Father well, magnified His law, and made it honorable in the hearts of His redeemed.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Of whom is our lesson today prophesying?
2. What kind of judgment does Christ bring forth?
3. Why did Christ not cry nor cause His voice to be lifted up on the street?
4. What does the bruised reed and the smoking flax refer to?
5. What kind of prison house did Christ seek to open?
6. In what way was Christ blind and deaf? Why?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

How we do rejoice in what Jesus Christ accomplished when He came to this earth! He came to set the captives free and bring light to those who sat in darkness. How different was His coming when compared to the ways of men! He made His appearing in a lowly manger. In poverty and simplicity He came to minister to the souls of men. His ministry was with much love and patience. He was gentle and kind. He was merciful and gracious. He sought not to promote Himself or His welfare. The sacrifice that He offered to God with His life and death was well pleasing. The antagonism of the Jews, the hardships of mortal life, the temptations of the devil, and all the other things that He met and suffered did not move Him from His holy purpose and work. He was not affected by what He saw from a human standpoint. As we have already learned, He judged not by observation. We can draw an important lesson for our own lives today. So many of us are so affected by what others do or say. We need to know what God's will is for us, and go forth to do that regardless of the consequences. One man who was a swift runner in his youth told about a race he had with a deaf mute. The deaf boy made a grunting sound when he ran. The other boy got his mind on that grunting sound and it so distracted him that he lost the race. If Satan can get us distracted, he will surely do it. If we make a success for God we are going to have to ignore a lot of things. The bruised reed and the smoking flax represent people who are just about ready to fall. The flax is smoking and the reed is bruised. There would be a tendency to give up on such people and say, "No need to fool with them any more." The flame is gone out and it is just smoking. But Christ will seek to fan a blaze again and add fuel. It may seem that we are that smoking flax. But let us not be discouraged. Jesus can revive and strengthen us. Let us be

encouraged to press on and never be discouraged by the devil. Victory is for us as we cling to Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God had a cause to promote in the earth and in this 42nd chapter of Isaiah, we discover how He purposed to accomplish it. We are aware that today many special interest groups exist—each with a particular cause that they wish to promote. Some are known as militants and have no use for those who fail to agree with them or share their peculiar sentiments. We read of individuals who have suffered persecution and even lost their lives because they failed to sympathize with a popular movement.

Some individuals seem to be “cause-oriented”. They are always looking for some great cause with which to join themselves. Let me recommend the most worthwhile cause that one can attach himself to. It is the cause of Christ, and that of promoting the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. Jesus came to promote peace, love, joy, and a salvation that will bring deliverance from the base things of life.

In Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7, we read an account of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. There is no record that He screamed like Hitler, banged His shoe on the table like Kru-shev, but we find that He sat and taught, or reasoned with the people. Christ propagated a reasonable salvation, one that was appealing and logical and that sought obedience through love.

We find that Jesus went out of His way to encourage and fan the spark of righteous interest. Once as He traveled a road, He noticed Zacchaeus in a tree and called him down in order to speak with him. Jesus didn’t condemn Zacchaeus for his former sinful deeds, for Zacchaeus was already condemned under the law, but Christ told him, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Herein is fulfilled the prophecy, “He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” Christ came to a world that was under the judgment of the law and brought about a dispensation of gospel, grace, and truth.

—Wayne Murphey

THE MAN IN THE WELL

While walking across the fields one night, I suddenly fell headlong into a deep, but empty well. I was stunned by the force of the fall, but as I gradually recovered, and realized the seriousness of my predicament, I began to wonder how I could get out.

Save for a single shaft of light that shone through the opening far above me, it was pitch dark. I felt the walls of the well and found them wet and clammy. I shuddered at the apparent hopelessness of my plight.

Presently my attention was arrested by a shadow that fell across the opening, and upon looking up I observed a man standing at the top of the well. Instantly hope stirred within me, and staggering to my feet, I cried aloud for help.

"My son," responded the man, "I am a religious teacher, and I will be glad to do anything I can for you. What is it you desire?"

"O Teacher," I exclaimed, my heart overflowing with gratitude, "I have fallen into this well and know not how to get out. Please tell me what I must do."

"Ah, yes, my son, that I will. It is always a pleasure to help the unfortunate."

He then proceeded to tell me what to "do" in order to get out, but it did not help.

Later came others of earth's teachers and they too told me that I would have to "do" something. But though I did all they said I was still in the well.

Then as the days went by and I got no help, I concluded that there must be another way.

No sooner had I reached this conclusion than, once again, a shadow fell across the well's opening. I glanced up, fully expecting to see another of earth's teachers with some other form of man-made "do" advice. And I did. Yet, somehow, He seemed different from all the others. Silently He stood there gazing down at me, while I, now utterly exhausted, lay flat on my back gazing up, far too weak even to sit, let alone stand.

"Friend, you are in need. Will you let Me help you?"

He had been the first to speak, but, oh, that voice—will I ever forget it! Not a word of reproof, not a single expression of condemnation did He utter. And, as I watched, He smiled. Such a smile! Never had I seen the like before.

"Help? Yes, help!" I whispered, too far gone to speak aloud, yet vaguely wondering what He would tell me to "do".

How it happened I do not know. I never have been able to fully understand. All I can remember is that, without answering a word, He was at my side. Putting His strong, loving arms around me, He picked me up in my weakness, and the next thing I knew we were sitting together at the top of the well. And lo, it was broad daylight!

"How could you do it?" I cried, my whole soul filled with ecstasy. "And who are you?"

In answer He showed me His hands, and His feet, and, to my astonishment, I saw in each the print of a nail. He silently pointed to His side, and there I discerned the mark of a spear thrust. At last, in answer to my question, He replied, in part, as follows:

"I earned the right, you see. I knew you were in the well, and that nothing you could "do" would ever get you out, and so I did all that was necessary to be done in order to deliver you. I took your place. It cost Me My life's blood. I went down to the very bottom of the well, but I did not remain in it. And now, since I Myself got out, it is possible for Me to deliver others."

But who are you?" I cried again, my heart flooded with joy and filled with unutterable peace.

"I am Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son," was His reply.

I fell at His feet and worshipped Him, for my love was such that I could have died for Him.

After a while I told Him about all the others, how they had come and offered help, what promises they had made, and my own conclusions regarding them.

"But you," I said, "You never told me to 'do' anything—not a thing. You did everything. And I, I just let you."

"That," said He, "explains it all. Don't you see the difference?"

Suddenly the light broke. This was God's plan. And it was better, oh, so infinitely better than man's "doing", for here I was, delivered. And yet I had nothing to do with it except to believe and receive.

Then there flashed into my mind another word. It was the word "done", for, lo, it had all been "done" by Another. And that Other—the Lord Jesus Christ. What a plan! What a provision! Oh, what matchless love! —Selected

August 14, 1983

**EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW AND
EVERY TONGUE CONFESS**

Isa. 45:5 I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it.

9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

10 Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

11 Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

24 Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25 In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Memory Verse: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:10, 11.

Central Thought: It is extreme folly for man to resist the plan and purpose of God. He is God and there is none else beside Him. What He purposes to do He will do regardless of man's feeble efforts to hinder. Every knee is going to bow before Him and every tongue is going to confess Him. It is for our own safety and welfare that we acknowledge Him now.

Word Definitions: *Potsherd:* "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." In the Hebrew, the word for "potsherd" can be applied to pottery or the earth. The Septuagint rendering of this sentence is: "Will the ploughman plough the earth all day?" The ploughman ploughing the earth and the potter molding the clay are parallel illustrations of God endeavoring to work His sovereign will in humanity. Just as there is no resistance in the ground or the clay, so should there be no resistance in our hearts to God's designs. *Incensed against him. [God]:* To burn with anger or jealousy.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Isaiah, in the latter part of chapter 44 and in the first part of this 45th chapter, is prophesying concerning Cyrus the king of Persia who was to permit Israel to return to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity. But the language God uses concerning His great purpose and divine authority has its special appeal to the children of God today. We see two places in our lesson which Paul referred to in his writings. In Romans 9:20, 21, he quotes the passage about the clay and the potter when he was writing of God's dealing with Jacob and Esau, and Moses and Pharaoh. If human clay resists God's will, it is only to their hurt and damnation. God can still use them for His own purposes. He will have to make one vessel to honor, and the other to dishonor. This goes hand in hand with the other quotation that Paul used from our lesson. In fact, he referred to this thought in verse 23 of our lesson, concerning every knee bowing, in two different places. One was in Romans 14:11, in speaking of how we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The other was in Phil. 2:9-11, in speaking of the honor and power given unto the name of Christ. It is concluded that if we do not bow the knee and

confess Christ now, we will at the judgment. The stout and defiant heart who will not yield to Jesus now will bow in that day, but it will be for everlasting destruction.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What will be the end of all who resist the will of God?
2. In what way do you see that God creates darkness and evil?
3. What causes man to resist the will of God?
4. Will man's disobedience change the plan of God?
5. Why should we look to Christ?
6. What can we say that we have in the Lord?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Since there are so many things that shape and form our lives, it is difficult for the mind to conceive how that God knows our comings and goings long before our time. There are some things that are brought upon us because of our own doings. The plan of God did not call for these things, but we chose them. God leaves us that right to choose our destiny. But when it comes to the fulfilling of His will, we must realize that God had it planned before time. One minister of the gospel, whose call was to travel here and there hunting souls who were hungry for truth, testified that as a young man working in the fields he had visions of himself going here and there. He did not know what it meant at the time. We should be aware that God has explicit plans for each one of us. But we must be willing and yield our lives to Him, or else He cannot fulfill His initial will for us. If we resist His will, He will have to take another course concerning us. But let us be assured of this one thing. God will have His way with us one way or another. We cannot successfully resist the will of God. It is going to be done regardless of what it means to us. It is wise for us to submit ourselves to His wonderful purpose, and live close to Him all of our days. If we can be on God's side, nothing will harm us. All will go well. We will ever increase in goodness and blessings and success. God causes good things to come our way, and He can cause evil things to come. Job said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job 2:10. Jeremiah, in Lam. 3:38, said, "Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?" God is not evil. But He does permit evil things to come to us as disciplinary measures for our spiritual good. If we will

take it right, all will work for our eternal good. It is not that God is the source of evil and unrighteousness. It is that He designs seemingly evil things to come our way to refine our spirits and teach us more vividly of His goodness.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I believe that in this chapter, God wished to impress the hearts of the people to reverence His divine authority. As Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, those who heard were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Jesus shared in the Father's dominion, and in a measure, the children of God also are partakers of it. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16:19. It should be the aim of every saint to take advantage of possessing this divine right.

God revealed His supremacy when He created light and darkness, the earth and inhabitants, and His power should still be displayed in our daily lives. The world should have just cause to respect the manner in which we live and the way in which we conduct ourselves. Christ's ministry was not one that promoted argument and strife, but was one of sound doctrine that could not be condemned.

If we humble ourselves before Christ now, and make Him supreme in our lives, then on the great Judgment Day, our hearts will be filled with overwhelming gladness. What a woe-ful thought, though, to the willful soul who has established *himself* as first priority and rebelled against the authority of God's Word.

—Wayne Murphey

CAUGHT IN THE QUICKSAND

Victor Hugo gives the following impressive description of a death in the quicksand off certain coasts of Brittany, or Scotland. He says:—

It sometimes happens that a man, traveler or fisherman, walking on the beach at low tide, far from the bank, suddenly notices that for several minutes he has been walking with some difficulty. The strand beneath his feet is like pitch; his soles stick to it; it is sand no longer—it is glue.

The beach is perfectly dry, but at every step he takes, as soon as he lifts his foot the print which it leaves fills with water. The eye, however, has noticed no change; the immense strand is smooth and tranquil; all the sand has the same appearance; nothing distinguishes the surface which is solid from that which is no longer so; the joyous little cloud of sand fleas continue to leap tumultuously over the wayfarer's feet. The man pursues his way, goes forward, inclines to the land, endeavors to get nearer the upland. He is not anxious. Anxious about what? Only he feels somehow as if the weight of his feet increases with every step he takes. Suddenly he sinks in.

He sinks in two or three inches. Decidedly he is not on the right road; he stops to take his bearings. All at once he looks at his feet. They have disappeared. The sand covers them. He draws them out of the sand; he will retrace his steps; he turns back; he sinks in deeper. The sand comes up to his ankles; he pulls himself out and throws himself to the left; the sand is half-leg deep. He throws himself to the right; the sand comes up to his shins. Then he recognizes with unspeakable terror that he is caught in the quicksand, and that he has beneath him the fearful medium in which man can no more walk than the fish can swim. He throws off his load if he has one, lightens himself like a ship in distress; it is already too late; the sand is above his knees. He calls, he waves his hat or his handkerchief; the sand gains on him more and more. If the beach is deserted, if the land is too far off, if there is no help in sight, it is all over.

He is condemned to that appalling burial, long, infallible, implacable, and impossible to slacken or to hasten, which endures for hours, which seizes you erect, free, and in full health, and which draws you by the feet, which at every effort that you make, at every shout you utter, drags you a little deeper, sinking you slowly into the earth while you look upon the horizon, the sails of the ships upon the sea, the birds flying and singing, the sunshine and the sky. The victim attempts to sit down, to lie down, to creep; every movement he makes inters him; he straightens up, he sinks in; he feels that he is being swallowed. He howls, implores, cries to the clouds, despairs.

Behold him waist deep in the sand. The sand reaches his breast; he is now only a bust. He raises his arm, utters furious groans, clutches the beach with his nails, would hold by that straw, leans upon his elbows to pull himself out of this soft sheath, sobs frenziedly; the sand rises. The sand reaches his shoulder; the sand reaches his neck; the face alone is visible now. The mouth cries, the sand fills it; silence. The eyes still

gaze, the sand shuts them; night. Now the forehead decreases, a little hair flutters above the sand; a hand comes to the surface of the beach, moves, and shakes, and disappears. It is the earth-drowning man. The earth filled with the ocean becomes a trap. It presents itself like a plain, and opens like a wave.

Could anything more graphically describe the progress of a young man, from the first cup of wine to the last?

—Selected

August 21, 1983

THE MESSIAH FORETELLS HIS WORK AND MISSION

Isa. 49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.

5 And now, saith the Lord that formed from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

8 Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

Memory Verse: For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Central Thought: In Jesus Christ God shone forth the light of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, bringing everlasting life and liberty for the souls of men.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is pure prophecy of Jesus Christ, and as it were Himself speaking. In verse 3, He is called Israel, but this is not meaning the man Jacob or the literal nation of his descendents. Jesus Christ and His Church are the real Israel. We must accept the New Testament application of our lesson. Three different parts of this chapter are quoted or referred to in the New Testament. Verses 1 and 2 indicate the birth of Christ from Mary and the obscure years of His preparation for the ministry. An expression of sorrow is seen in verse 4 concerning vain labour and strength for nought, but a consolation to know that He was justified of God. Then in verses 5 and 6 we see two things: the attempted gathering of Israel as a nation and the dispersing of the gospel to the Gentiles and the ends of the earth. Paul and Barnabas quoted this in Acts 13:47, when they rebuked the Jews for rejecting the gospel, saying: "We turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." This was good news for those who were not Jews. Paul quoted verse 8 in 2 Corinthians 6:2, which we have chosen for our Memory Verse. He quoted this in his entreaty to those brethren to not receive the grace of God in vain, but to approve themselves as the ministers of God. Very beautiful language is found in our lesson today, and we cannot help but be enraptured with admiration of how sublime is each expression. Christ was to be given for a covenant of the people. And take careful note of what purpose this was to serve. Verse 10 is quoted vividly in Revelation 7:16, concerning that great host innumerable of the redeemed in Christ. The

prisoners captivated by sin and those in darkness are reached and brought out. The pastures and ways for God's people are exalted from the vanities of this world. Thus we have brought out here the plan of God for Christ's coming to this earth.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How was Christ's mouth like a sharp sword?
2. Can you think of any time in Christ's life when it appeared that much of His labor was in vain?
3. What did He say that showed His triumph over this seeming failure?
4. What was Christ's mission beside trying to restore the preserved of Israel?
5. How can we know that we are living now in the acceptable time or year of the Lord?
6. What does the gospel tell the prisoners to do? What are those in darkness to do? Can you explain these two calls?
7. Will we have to wait until we get to heaven for Christ to lead us to living fountains of water?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus the Christ, the Anointed of God, brought salvation down to man. Now is the acceptable time, and today is the day of salvation. Right now is our opportunity to be saved from the power and dominion of sin into the glorious spiritual liberty of the saints of God. He says to the prisoners, "Go forth." We need not be bound by sin's dark wages any more. If we will to be saved forevermore, we can be saved forevermore. Christ has opened the prison doors wide open, and He tells us to go forth. Go forth and live a pure and holy life in this world. You do not have to smoke another cigarette. You do not have to curse and swear and make life miserable for yourself and others. You can arise and come back to the blessed old Bible. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" Ephesians 5:14. Go forth and leave your prison behind you. Be strong and stand fast in that liberty that Christ gives you. He says to those in darkness, "Shew yourselves." Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. How blessed to quit the life of covering up our wrongs by dishonesty and putting on a front! We can step out of the shadows and the hidden paths of deceit and hypocrisy. We can be just what we really are. Christ

satisfies the hungering and thirsting of the soul. Oh, what a beautiful picture for a person to be led by Christ to fountains of living waters! The infilling and anointing of the Holy Spirit in one's life is truly the richest and most wonderful joy one can ever know. It makes every earthly pleasure look sick. This high and holy way that God would have His children to walk is the highest and most noble way to live. Holiness, purity, honesty, humility, generosity, mercy, kindness, peace, and all the other attributes of godliness are found on this high and holy way. Oh, how we rejoice in the truth of what Jesus Christ has brought to us!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This chapter in our lesson foretells of the establishment of an inheritance that had been left desolate. The desolation didn't necessarily indicate that there was something wrong with the inheritance, but that it hadn't been put into operation and taken advantage of. God made many covenants with the patriarchs concerning the generations to come.

In Hebrews 9:15-17, we read, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

In the light of these Scriptures we see that an inheritance is meaningless to the heir unless the testator no longer exists.

The inheritance that Christ bequeathed is eternal life and more abundant living to those who serve Him in this life. We can enjoy each day that God permits us. We can bask in the glory of sins forgiven and the joys of salvation.

For many, the inheritance is still of no effect. Many have refused their inheritance and continue to dwell in the prison house of sin.

—Wayne Murphey

August 28, 1983

GOD'S LOVING CARE FOR ZION

Isa. 49:13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

14 But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

Isa. 51:1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

Memory Verse: Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy

shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. Isaiah 51:11.

Central Thought: God loves His people with the same deep, tender feeling that a faithful parent possesses for her child. He has made every provision for our eternal happiness and prosperity. Heaven and earth shall pass away but His salvation is forever.

LESSON BACKGROUND

As far as we can tell at present, none of the verses in our lesson are found as direct quotations in the New Testament. But we know that it surely contains a great comforting message for the Church of God today. Zion, beyond all doubt, is a figurative expression of the Church. As we have learned in previous studies in the past, the term "Zion" was first introduced in the life of David. A hill within the bounds of the city of Jerusalem was called Zion. It was a stronghold, or a fort. David chose Zion for his own habitation. The Hebrew word is "Tsee-own" with the accent on the last syllable. It means conspicuous, bright, like a shining ensign or pillar for guidance or information. Somehow in Holy Writ the term Zion became associated with God's people. We find it mentioned many times in the inspiration psalms of David. It is no doubt through the nearness of David with God that the application of the term Zion became associated with the people of God. Thus we are very assured that the addressing in our lesson to Zion is a direct message to the Church. It can be readily and assuredly taken that way with no fear of doing violence to the Scriptures in any way. God loves Zion; God loves the Church likewise. Abraham and his call from God is once again referred to. It is a comforting message to us with God declaring His love and eternal interest in us. The natural life will fade and perish in time, but we who trust in God have hope of eternal inheritance. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Are there ever times in a Christian's life when there is a sense of God forsaking or forgetting us?
2. What does God say to assure us that this is not true?
3. Of what value is looking to the Rock from whence we are hewn, or the hole of the pit from whence we are digged? Of what value is Abraham and the account of his life to us?

4. Are there any clues in today's lesson as to how we can qualify to be part of Zion?
5. What did God plant the heavens and lay the foundation of the earth for?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We are encouraged and commanded to sing for the comfort and mercy that God has shown to His people. Oh, how the Lord has wrought wonderful deliverance and liberty for our souls in the saving strength of the Lord Jesus Christ! We can go on our way rejoicing. We are told to rejoice forevermore. But if we are not careful, we will find ourselves with our heads down, so to speak. The sense of God's comfort and goodness can get at a distance from us very easily. We must rise from the fleshly apprehensions and feelings and walk in the Spirit. To be Zion, we must be of faith. We are not the literal seed of Abraham, but the spiritual products of sharing in the faith that he had. There will be times in our lives that we will feel like we are in the desert, far from the voice of melody and joy. But let us look to God and hold fast our confidence. He has a way of working and blessing that is beyond the human to comprehend. Many people give up right at this point of trial. The flesh asserts itself and the feelings and emotions of the circumstances that we meet all spell out defeat and despair. But we must press against these things. We must not allow our insight to God's marvelous wisdom to be dimmed. God hides behind a frowning providence a smiling face. Why does God choose to work this way? It is to test our faith in Him. If we believe God in the midst of plenty and ease and prosperity all the time, our love and devotion to Him would not mean near as much. Give no heed to how things appear. All this material world is doomed for eternal destruction. Let us hold fast our faith in His great power to save and keep. He created all these things so that He could say unto Zion, "Thou art my people." So we know that His people is the dearest treasure of His heart. Let us strive to keep joy and rejoicing as a vital part of our lives; rejoicing in the love and faithful care that God shows to us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is a forgetful person indeed who cannot recall what they hold in their hand. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken

me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." This is the typical feeling of every Christian at some point in their life. There was a time when Elijah felt forsaken and all alone. Job also looked around and couldn't find God. It is not that God is not near, it is simply that the night is so dark that we are unable to see Him. If we will just hold to His hand, the darkness will in time pass away, and once again we can enjoy God's blessings.

The first verses of the 51st chapter contain an exhortation to trust in God. God instructs Israel to look back from where they came. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you." God promised Abraham that He would be the father of a great nation and it took a miracle for God to fulfill that promise, because Sarah was past the childbearing age. "For I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." If God could take one man and make a great nation arise through him, consider what God could do with a whole nation of people. Though Israel felt forsaken, God was still there to do great things for them.

In the seasons of our distress, it is well to recall God's past blessings. This will encourage us and increase our potential to be a blessing to the cause of Christ.

"I've seen the lightning flashing
And heard the thunder roll.
I've felt sin's breakers dashing
Trying to conquer my soul.
I've heard the voice of my Savior,
Telling me still to fight on—
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone."

—Wayne Murphey

RICHEST MAN IN THE PARISH

The richest man in our parish was the squire. He dwelt in a great house on the hill that overlooked, with its broad white face, the whole of the village below, with its clustering cottages and neat farmers' houses, and seemed to say proudly, as it looked down, "I have my eyes on you all, and intend to keep you in order." And in truth, a great many eyes it had, with its rows of high windows brightly reflecting the summer sun, from early morning till evening, when not infrequently the last flush in the west left them glowing as with red fire. When strangers looked up at the great house, and inquired about it,

the people of our parish used to tell them with some awe what treasures of grand furniture, and pictures, and choice specimens of art, the squire had collected in its many handsome rooms; what was the worth of one picture alone, that he had refused thousands of pounds for, and the number of others that were beautiful enough, and valuable enough, to have adorned a palace.

They were very proud to be able to say that so rich a man belonged to them, and lived among them, and to point out his crimson-lined and curtained pew at church, and the great tombstone that stood behind the pathway in the churchyard, recording the virtues of his ancestors, and testifying, as well as it could, to his own riches.

I suppose the squire knew the homage that was paid to him, and liked it, and was proud in his turn, not of his neighbors, but of himself, and of the wealth he possessed. Whenever he rode abroad, he met with bows and smiles from rich and poor, everybody made way for him, everybody courted him. A man with so much money, and so much land, and such fine furniture, and pictures, and statues, and gardens, was not to be pushed in a corner and thought little of, and he knew it, as he went along the lanes and roads on thorough-breds, and nodded to this man, and "good morninged" that, with some degree of condescension. He knew that he was courted, and admired, and deferred to, because of his riches, and was quite satisfied that it should be so. He did not wish to be thought ill-natured, so he gave, every year, a treat to his workpeople, and sent money, and coal, and blankets to the poor at Christmas, but he thought little more about them. They were poor, and he was rich; those two words, "poor" and "rich," indicated a great difference, and he was quite well pleased that there should be such a difference.

One summer morning, he was taking a ride through the woods that skirted one side of his estate. It was very hot, and in the lanes the sun and the flies teased both him and his horse, so when they turned in beneath the shadows of the oaks and beeches, it was a great relief to both. The squire gave Dandy the rein, and went along softly. He was soon thinking of other things than oaks and beeches. Perhaps the glitter of the sunshine here and there, as it lay upon a cluster of trembling leaves, or turned to richer red the tall heads of the willow herb beside his path, suggested the crimson draperies and golden ornaments of his home, for he was thinking of a sight he had seen there only the day before; when there had been at the

birthday of his eldest son a grand gathering of friends, and a feast such as a rich man makes to the rich, with dainties, and spices, and wines, served in gold, and silver, and rarest china, in the utmost profusion, and with the greatest display. He remembered the hilarity of the guests, the healths drank, the speeches made, the compliments so freely given and taken; and with some pride he remembered, too, it had been said, that within the memory of man, no one had given so grand a feast in the parish as he had done that day.

Dandy's feet fell softly, and made little noise on the soft carpet of grass and last year's leaves, that covered and hid the stout roots of the oaks. It was no wonder, then, that presently the squire heard a gentle sound not far away. He became aware that some other human being than himself was in the wood, and checking his horse, he listened a moment, as words, half prayer, half praise, met his ears. "Who can be praying here?" he asked himself, and as the voice was near, he pushed aside a bough or two, and stretched his head, till he could see into a little shady hollow not far from the roadside, and discovered the strange wood-guest.

Ah! It was only an old man, a pauper, or next door to one, whom he had frequently seen before, breaking stones by the highway.

But what was the deaf old man about? "*Praying!*" With his eyes shut, and his head uplifted, and his hat just taken off, held in his toil-swollen fingers, while before him was spread out his dinner—a piece of dry bread, part of a small loaf, and a can of water by his side—bread and water, nothing else; but the old man was thanking God for it, and was content. *More than content.* An expression of happy praise was on his uplifted face. Such an expression the squire had not seen on any face at his own loaded table for many years. And he was thanking God for bread and water, and was happy! The old man was a sincere Christian.

The richest man in the parish did not understand how, when the soul loves God, the least mercies from His hands are felt to be priceless blessings; how bread and water, with a thankful heart, are sweeter to the taste than any food without it; and he felt humiliated. What right had that old man to thank God for bread and water, when *he* never thanked Him for all his great possessions?

The woods closed in on him again, he left the stone-breaker behind, and his face soon assumed its usual self-satisfied expression. But during that morning's ride, again and again

returned to him the picture he had seen in the green hollow, of the man who had thanked God for bread and water, and the thought of his own great riches did not give him quite its usual satisfaction. Had those riches ever made him as happy as that old man looked to be over his poor meal? He was obliged to confess to himself that they had not, and it was to him a sad confession. His pride was sorely touched, and his heart disquieted, and the farther he rode, the more he felt a sense of discomfort and discontent, that was strangely new to him.

Presently the bright sun became overcast, great clouds gathered, and the woods looked dark and gloomy. Dandy walked along untroubled by nervous fears and fancies, but an influence came over the squire for which he could not account. A strange sinking was at his heart, and impression of coming calamity. Then a voice struck his inward ear, a voice not of this world, one of those voices God sends sometimes to be heard for our good and guidance, and the words it uttered were terrible to him. That voice spoke to him clearly and distinctly, "This night the richest man in the parish will die." Strange and fearful were these words. He did not look round to know whence they proceeded; he knew it was an inward and spiritual voice that spoke, and he believed what it said. With a shudder he remembered the parable of the rich man in the Gospel, to whom had come the same terrible warning—"This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" were words that haunted him now, and a cold perspiration covered him from head to foot. He felt that he had been an unwise merchant, who had exchanged his soul for very little. Unable at length to bear his own reflections, he galloped home.

(To Be Continued)

September 4, 1983

THE STEADFAST CONFIDENCE OF THE MESSIAH

Isa. 50:1 Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

2 Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

4 The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

5 The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

7 For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

8 He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

9 Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

10 Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

Memory Verse: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the

right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Romans 8:34.

Central Thought: Because Jesus held fast His confidence in the Father and submitted to His perfect will, He now fills the place no other man could ever fill with a ministry to the souls of men for their eternal redemption.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is more prophetic expressions of the Christ, the Saviour. Verse 1 reminds that iniquity and transgression lie at the root of man's trouble with God. There was no man who could fill the need. Christ's hand was not shortened. His ministry to the souls of men is that of intercession and counsel. He has the tongue of the learned, and knows just what our weary hearts stand in need of. A prophecy of Christ's suffering is seen in verse 6. His back to the smiters, and his face to shame, spitting, and plucking off the hair proved a part of His atoning power. This all came to pass when Christ was so shamefully treated before His death. He willingly allowed them to do that to Him. But His confidence reigned supreme. He was able to commit Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. He knew where He stood. Verses 8 and 9 have language very much like the apostle Paul, and he seems to refer to this writing in his expressions in Romans 8:33-35. The last two verses speak of two different lights. One light is that of God which comes to that person who is walking in darkness, and has no light of his own, who trusts and stays on the Lord. The other light is from sparks kindled by men. It is not the light of divine and holy inspiration, but that which comes through human endeavor. This relates to the words of the prophet in Micah 7:8, 9, where he says, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord . . . until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." It means much for us to realize our darkness, and wait on the Lord to give us HIS light. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the cause for the breach between God and man?
2. What does the tongue of the learned enable one to do?
3. How did Christ prove that He was obedient to God and not rebellious?

4. What gave Christ such confidence of triumph?
5. Who is it that will have the light of God?
6. Is it possible to kindle our own fire and not have the true light of God?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We have in this lesson an introduction to the sufferings of Christ, and also the purpose revealed as to why He must suffer. Let us notice verses 5 and 6. First He says that the Lord had opened His ear. A like statement is found in another prophecy of Christ in Psalm 40:6, which says concerning God's rejection of sacrifice and burnt offerings for sin: "Mine ears hast thou opened." When this particular text from Psalms is quoted by the writer in Hebrews 10:5, he renders it thus: "A body hast thou prepared me." In comparing the rendering of the same phrase in Psalms 40:6, in the Septuagint Greek translation, we can find it identical with the quotation in Hebrews: "A body hast thou prepared me." We can conclude from this that Christ's ears were not fully open to the depths of man's need until He had actually taken on human form. Though He was in the form of God, yet He was willing to empty Himself of this and come down in the likeness of man. This is a very important point. And being in human form, He must accomplish a deliverance for man from the power and dominion of sin. The problem of sin in a person's life involves the subduing of one's self. And this obedience and subjection of self to the will of God was accomplished only by one thing. And this was through suffering. Christ was not rebellious to the suffering that was heaped upon Him. He gave Himself to it. He gave His back to the smiters. He gave His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. The Septuagint says, "He gave his cheeks to blows." He gave His face to shame and spitting. He gave Himself to this suffering to show us and enable us to be subject also to God's will. This area is a great problem in humanity. This lies at the root of the age old problem. Man is not willing to be subject. But it is, according to what we see in our lesson, the way for us to have the confidence that Christ had. To be patient in tribulation and take the path that Jesus trod will cause us to be possessors of the same confidence. And the light of God will shine on our lives, and we can have perfect understanding of His blessed holy will.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

At the time that Isaiah was living, it was common for man to write his wife a bill of divorcement. This was allowed under the Mosaic law. Those in debt could sell their children to pay it. God declared that He had done neither of these things to the children of Israel. Any separation that occurred was due to their desires to pursue sin. God has always been long-suffering and of great mercy toward mankind.

The 6th verse gave a glimpse of what Christ was to suffer, but the 7th verse indicates that He would face such sufferings with confidence, for He knew that the source of His strength was God.

In the 10th verse we find that, through the fear of God and obedience to the same, we can have confidence and steadfastness. We can have an avenue through Christ to the same source of strength.

Have you ever noticed someone who walked in the light of their own fire? They fail to obey the commandments of God, trust in their own abilities and intellect, and yet retain a great profession. It is like we find in Isaiah 4:1, where "seven women shall told hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." Many people cling to their own religion, and go their own way, yet become highly offended if one dares to doubt their experience of salvation. There is nothing in store for these but sorrow. It is hard to kick against the pricks.

—Wayne Murphey

THE RICHEST MAN IN THE PARISH

(Continued From Last Lesson)

There he arrived in a state of great agitation, and alarmed his wife and family by sending at once for a physician. To all inquiries he gave the answer that he was about to die, and must prepare for it. In vain they tried to persuade him that his health was as good as ever, that he was only the subject of a nervous fancy. The physician arrived, and laughed at his fears, but he heeded neither ridicule nor entreaties. Death was not a thing to be laughed or entreated away, and to death he was doomed. What did it signify what the world said about it? He must make ready for it. His solicitor was called in, and his worldly affairs settled. Wife and children were all provided for, and houses and lands were proctored out to his beloved ones.

Then he had nothing to do but prepare himself for the great change; that, however, he found impossible. In great perturbation of mind he awaited the coming of his great enemy, Death. When night drew on, his fears increased; every time the great hall clock sounded the hour he shuddered, not knowing if he might ever hear it again. The physician and lawyer remained with him at his request, but they could not bring calm to his agitated mind. They could only listen to what he said, as to the ravings of a madman, for mad they judged him to be.

Hour after hour went by, and the richest man in the parish, lying in his splendid bed, expecting Death every moment, found how poor he had become, and of how little real use all his vast possessions were to him now. Midnight passed away, early morning came, light dawned upon the hills. A faint color came into the sky, and with it color once more stole back into the cheeks of the squire, and hope returned to his heart. Death had not arrived as he had feared; he was still living. The night was passed, the morning was come, and the prophecy of the mysterious voice was not accomplished. His family gathered about him, and with smiles congratulated him, advising him to take his rest, now the danger was past. But how could he rest after such a night, such an upturning of all the cherished thoughts and aims of his life, such a revelation of the poverty of riches? He chose rather to walk abroad, and with thoughtful face and slow steps proceeded towards the village. There he heard that Death had indeed been a visitor in one house during the night, but instead of appearing in his own grand mansion, he had entered the poorest cottage in the place—the old stone-breaker had died during the night. With a still more thoughtful face he returned home, for his heart smote him. He remembered the old man's simple dinner; he saw again the uplifted face, on which God's sunshine rested in a double sense; he heard again the words of his thankful prayer, and his own laugh of derision, and he was again humiliated, but this time to better purpose.

His wife met him at the threshold of his house, with a smiling face, glad to see him once more, "clothed and in his right mind," for she, too, had feared for his reason. She accompanied him in, and then, when seated at his side, gently chided him for his last night's fears, and what she called "superstitious fancies." "I hope now," she added, "you are quite satisfied that there was no truth in what that mysterious voice told you. The night is past, and you are alive, as well as ever."

"True, my dear," he replied, "the night is past, and I am alive and well. But nevertheless the richest man in the parish

has died. If you will take the trouble to inquire in the village, you will find it so."

"How is that?" she asked, and as she spoke she looked round somewhat proudly, as though a rival to her grandeur appeared. "Who can be richer here than you?"

"The man who can say to God, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' I cannot say that, for I have desired many things and persons besides God, and almost all things more than God. But there was a poor stone-breaker alive yesterday, who in possessing God possessed all things. I call him poor after the manner of the world, but he was really rich—an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Last night I was shown his riches and my poverty. People will tell you he is dead, and I dare say that he did not leave a shilling to pay for his burial; but *he was 'the richest man in the parish.'*"

—Selected

September 11, 1983

PUT ON THY BEAUTIFUL GARMENTS, O JERUSALEM!

Isa. 52:1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from hence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Memory Verse: And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Romans 10:15.

Central Thought: God is calling His Church to purity, holiness, freedom, and power. Through Christ Jesus He has provided that His people rejoice in strength, going forth, proclaiming the everlasting gospel to every creature, warning all to flee from the corruption of the world.

Word Definitions: *They shall see eye to eye:* The watchmen (ministers) shall be of one mind. The Septuagint says, "eyes shall look to eyes." We should never have an independent spirit or attitude. We should look to God and not fail to consider one another. *The God of Israel will be your rereward:* The Hebrew word for "rereward" means to gather up or receive. Since this experience is used with the thought of God going before, we can assume that this is referring to a rear guard, or a protection behind. The Septuagint says, "The God of Israel shall be he that brings up your rear." *Visage:* Appearance, shape, countenance. Christ's visage was so marred from His sufferings. *Sprinkle many nations:* The usage of this word means to surprise or startle, just as spurting water on people would do.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson is a glorious message to the Church today. It is all a challenge to victory. He finishes up in chapter 51 saying that He has taken out of our hand the cup of trembling, and

given it to our enemies. Thus He wants us to awake to righteousness and truth, and put on the strength of Christ. God is calling His people in the gospel of Christ to a life of reigning and triumphant grace. The message to Zion, the Church is: Thy God reigneth! Paul quotes verse 7 in Romans 10:15, (which is our Memory Verse) in connection with the preaching of the gospel. No doubt Paul is referring to verses 11 and 12, when in 2 Cor. 6:17, he wrote: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." God is calling for a people who will separate themselves from everything that is not consistent with His holiness. Paul again quotes from this chapter, verse 15, when in Romans 15:20, 21, he stated that he had striven to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named. "But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand."

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does God want us to put on, and what must we put off?
2. What does it say about the feet of those who preach the gospel?
3. What do they publish?
4. What do you think "bring again Zion" would mean?
5. What does God want His people to do concerning the evil and corruption in the world?
6. What was to happen to the visage of Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Zion and Jerusalem are identical terms applied to the New Testament Church of God. It is the people of the Lord, called out from the world and separated unto God. It consists of those who have humbled their hearts from pride and vanity, and have taken up their cross to follow Christ, having left all to follow Him. God does not want such to be down in defeat and timidity, but rather He wants them clothed in strength and Christian beauty. He wants all of our waste places adorned with the graces of holiness and truth. We can live close enough to the Lord that we can know His voice when He speaks. We can rejoice and give praise to God, and live on the sunny side of life. Holy women and men who are called to go forth with hearts aflame of God's love with the gospel message for a lost world are to see eye to eye. And they will

see eye to eye in the Zion and Jerusalem of Spirit-led lives. The Lord brought again Zion when Jesus established the New Testament Church in all of her purity and power. He brings her again when hearts and lives are united to Him and all is consecrated to His perfect will and the Holy Spirit comes into the lives of men and women. Oh, that people would so yield to the Lord that these Scriptures would become a reality. God wants all the ends of the earth to see His salvation. But He needs a people to shine it through. He wants a clean people, a people willing to separate themselves from every filthy stain, to perfect holiness in the fear of God. He wants a people who are willing to suffer and die for the gospel, to give up earthly idols and become sold out for Him. Thus He can have material to work with, to send forth the saving message of salvation to people who have not heard. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is with great carefulness that a bride adorns herself for her marriage. She dons more than ordinary work clothes, and strives to make herself as attractive as possible to the one awaiting her. She musters all of her skill to highlight her beauty. When Christ returns for His bride, He expects one that is adorned with holiness and full of the graces of love and humility. Now is the time for the Church of God to put on her beautiful garments and shine forth in preparation for Christ's coming.

Consider the beauty of the Church. At a wedding, the bride seems to outshine everyone else. She approaches with such an expectation that it seems her face glows. It is a special day and she looks unusually lovely.

When a child is born into the world, it possesses an appeal, too. Everyone is anxious to see it. It is so innocent that it seems precious indeed. However, as it grows, sheds its innocence, and throws little tantrums, it quickly loses its attraction!

There is an attraction to a child of God who is clothed in humility and filled with love. There is an inner quality that shines out, and that differs from the characteristics of jealousy, strife, and self-interest that are common to the world. It seems that everyone would desire the beautiful garments of the bride of Christ, but many are unwilling to forsake the filthy rags of the world in order to wear them. God will not clothe those who are polluted with sin. —Wayne Murphey

September 18, 1983

THE SUFFERINGS AND ATONEMENT OF CHRIST

Isa. 53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Memory Verse: For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. 1 Peter 2:25.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ bore in His body on the cross our sins, transgressions, and sorrows that we might be saved, sanctified, healed, and kept by the power of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson from the gospel prophet Isaiah today is pure prophecy of Jesus Christ. It seems that this 53rd chapter is a continuation of the 52nd. He had just stated that Christ would sprinkle, or startle, many nations, for that which had not been told them they would see; and that which they had not heard would consider. He also said that His visage would be marred. This sets the stage for the first verse in our lesson: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" This is quoted two different times in the New Testament. In John's gospel, he stated that "though he [Christ] had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" John 12:37, 38. Paul quoted it in Romans 10:16 "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" Matthew 8:17, quotes from verse 5, thus: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." This was given with the report of Christ's healing ministry. 1 Peter 2:24, 25, alludes to verses 5 and 6. Verses 7 and 8 were in the place of the Scripture that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when he met up with Philip in Acts 8:32, 33. So we see that this chapter is a well quoted part of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Every verse is full of deep and tender meaning. This chapter was fulfilled to the letter in Christ. Even the parts that are not quoted in the New Testament are clear in their application to Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is there a question as to who will believe the report of Christ?
2. Why was it difficult for people to accept Christ in His day?
3. Do you know why the price of the atonement was suffering and death?

4. What had we all done? What did the Lord do with our iniquity?
5. How did Christ act before those who crucified Him?
6. Why was Christ not permitted the security of a jail or the fairness of a trial?
7. Why did it please God to bruise Him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is moving and touching to the heart to behold the sufferings and humiliation that Isaiah foretold. What Christ in obedience to the will of God had to suffer was so important for the atoning of man's disobedience. Have you ever pondered the reason for this? Why did God demand suffering and death for man's salvation? We have already seen in chapter 50 that Christ submitted to the suffering as proof of His willingness to do the will of God. Man yielded to the flesh and the wrong desires, thus bringing transgression with condemnation and guilt upon him. Atonement and reconciliation with God must include a discipline and a turn-around in man's desires. Thus suffering is enjoined. As Christ suffered for us, we must arm ourselves with the same mind, knowing that He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin (1 Pet. 4:1). As it is man's inclination to seek friendship with the world and follow the carnal things of life, Jesus set the pattern of bearing the rejection and hatred of men. Forgiveness, healing, mercy, and reconciliation must all be bought with the price of suffering and death. No one could do this but Jesus. Verse 6 in our lesson is so impressive. We had all gone astray because we had turned everyone to his own way. We had lost sight of God's way and gone to our own way. But the Lord laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. He took our blame for going astray. He was taken from prison and judgment. The quotation of this in Acts 8:33, says, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." The Septuagint translation also renders this text likewise. Christ was not allowed proper and right judgment by the world. He was not even given the chance of a fair trial. A fair trial before an impartial jury would have resulted in His release, but He was denied that. But it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Why? This was the price for man's salvation. The effect of this sacrifice would mean hosts of redeemed souls back in fellowship with the Father. God looked upon the travail of Christ's soul and was satisfied. All the sorrow and displeasure God felt toward sin

was appeased in the light of Christ's suffering. Oh, what wonderful truth! Behold your Saviour—give your heart and life to Him, and be willing to suffer for the sake of others.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In the first verse, Isaiah was commenting on the fact that so few believed his word. We need not be surprised today if people refuse to believe the gospel. The majority have always turned away in unbelief. The Israelites were a proud people. Even after they refused, rebelled, and left God, they held themselves aloof from other nations. Though the prophets would warn them with messages of "Thus saith the Lord," they failed to humble themselves, and retorted with such tauntings as, "Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now."

Under such circumstances, we find Isaiah prophesying that the Messiah would have no form nor comeliness: that there would be no beauty that He should be desired, that He would be despised and rejected of men, and a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Such a prediction would not be joyously received by a people whose hearts were set on the establishment of an earthly kingdom. They were too proud to accept a man like that.

Christ was treated with disrespect in His lifetime. He was misrepresented at His trial, and disdained in His death. However, it was all a part of the plan of salvation. We read in the 11th verse, "He [the Lord] shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Some may think that we must serve a sadistic God who takes pleasure in inflicting pain. It is quite the contrary. Consider this. Think of the disgust you feel when you observe the sin about you. God sees into every corner of the world and beholds the total picture of depravity, and yet, in His mercy, withholds judgment for a season. However, His indignation must be appeased by a sacrifice, and Christ was willing to suffer that we might go free.

—Wayne Murphey

September 25, 1983

**WORDS OF COMFORT FOR THE JERUSALEM
WHICH IS ABOVE**

Isa. 54:1 Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;

3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

6 For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

13 And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

Memory Verse: But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. Galatians 4:26.

Central Thought: The real Jerusalem is the city of the children of faith, those who are taught of God, being born from

above by the Spirit of God. Great price and comfort are reserved for those who will faithfully dwell in the Church of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In chapter 52, we had a message to Zion (the Church), and in chapter 53 we have the prophecy of Christ, the Bridegroom, who was to atone for man's sin. Now in chapter 54, the focus of the writer inspired by the Holy Spirit is on the Church again. It may be difficult through observation to detect the accurate application of this chapter in prophecy. But, once again as in the past, we have two golden clues as to what the Holy Spirit had in mind. By noting two different places in the New Testament where this chapter is quoted from, we can catch a vision of the glorious message found here. The first verse of this lesson is quoted in Galatians 4:27. To the Galatians Paul was directing a message concerning the expiration of the old law system and the dawn of the dispensation of grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. He puts the law system as parallel to Hagar, (the handmaid of Sarah who bore a son from Abraham without faith), and also to the old literal Jerusalem who was in bondage with her children. He presented the grace of God through faith in Christ as parallel to Sarah, (the wife of Abraham who bore Isaac under the terms of faith) and the New Jerusalem. He called the old Jerusalem as being in bondage with her children. But then he said, "But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Then he quoted from Isaiah 54:1. This Scripture is applied to the Jerusalem which is above, which is the Church of God. Our Saviour Himself quoted from this chapter in John 6:45. In this chapter it tells how He was dealing with the Jews concerning Himself. He asserted in verse 44 that no man could come to Him (Jesus) except the Father draw him. And then He quoted from verse 13 in our lesson. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Using these two quotations and their application we can pretty well determine the right application for the rest of the chapter of our lesson today.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

Closely examine verse 1. This is a message to the true Church. Here are some questions you should seek to answer:

1. Why is the Church called barren? Why is she told to sing? What is meant by "the children of the desolate"? What is meant by "the children of the married wife"? Why are the children of the desolate more than the children of the married wife?

Now find these answers:

2. Who is the husband of Jerusalem?
3. Why is she called the Mother of us all?
4. Why must the children of Zion be all taught of God?
5. What verse in our lesson shows the protection and security of the people of God?
6. What kind of precious stones does the Lord want His Church decorated with?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God wants His people to live by faith. He wants us to share in the same faith that Abraham had in his life. That is why the true Church is compared to Sarah. The true Church of God is the Jerusalem that is above. Jesus taught that we must be born again. The word "again" and the word "above" are translated from the same Greek word, "ano" which also has been translated "from the beginning." Eph. 3:9. Thus, to be born from above is to be born again. God has seen fit to bring to light His working through the medium of a barren woman. We call to mind several women in the Bible who were barren. The first we have on record was, of course, Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Rebekah, the wife of Isaac was barren also, until the Lord was entreated of Isaac (Gen. 25:21). Rachel, the wife of Jacob, also endured a season of being barren. Two other notable women in the Bible who were barren were Elizabeth and Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Why has God purposed to give His Church this aspect also? God wants us to feel our barrenness. We are barren in ourselves. Woe to the man or woman who never senses their own weakness and inability. Woe to those who seemingly are complete in themselves, who never seem to realize their need of help from God. Through faith and the help of God we can be fruitful. Otherwise we are barren. The desolate has more children than the married wife. The desolate here refers to that which is not of faith. Yet through natural talent, material wealth, humanistic ways and doctrines, the desolate organizations of men often procure many more converts than what the true Church does. But it is much better to be one of the few who are taught of God than

to be among the number in darkness and ignorance who are the children of the desolate. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The diaglott reading of Galatians 4:25, 26, is thus: "Now Hagar signifies Sinai [a mountain in Arabia] and it corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in bondage with her children. But the exalted Jerusalem represents the Free-woman, who is our mother."

At the time that Paul wrote to Galatians, the people of Jerusalem were in bondage. The Jews had rejected Christ and were still living under the law as given at Mt. Sinai. There was no freedom found in the law, only condemnation. It brought about death. (Read Romans 7:9-21). The Jews were also in bondage to the Roman empire. They were taxed and under the dominion of another nation. Despite the existing conditions, Paul had discovered a spiritual Jerusalem that was free from all bondage.

This same Jerusalem offers us freedom today. As we observe the sins that captivate those around us, we appreciate more and more the precious freedom God has provided. It stirs up our pity to behold those who are held in the grip of evil habits and the lusts of the flesh, for they are servants of sin and unable to help themselves.

The 11th through 14th verses portray a beautiful picture. The 11th and 12th verses are symbolizations and the last two verses speak of things inanimate, but are very real to those who are in the heavenly Jerusalem. No wonder Paul referred to it as an exalted Jerusalem. There is nothing comparable.

—Wayne Murphey

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