

1981

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Theme for Fourth Quarter, 1983

We will conclude this series of studies from the book of the prophet Isaiah in these lessons. The remaining chapters of this wonderful book of prophecy are fragrant with rich and inspiring truths of Christ Jesus and His Church. We saw in our last Sunday's lesson God's wonderful promises of victory and prosperity to His Church. God's wrath against sin and His promised deliverance from its woe and corruption will be revealed in this study. His love for the Church and outreach for precious souls is also to be found. A faint glimpse of the repose of those who die in the faith and a bright glorious view of the eternal phase of the Church of God is also seen. The exalted position of the Church in Christ is shown along with a clear description of Christ's ministry and that of the ministers of the gospel. Oh, we have some wonderful sights to behold in the studies ahead! May God inspire our hearts and open our spiritual eyes to His truth! —Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

October 2, 1983

EXHORTATION TO SEEK GOD

Isa. 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the brier shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Memory Verse: Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Hos. 10:12.

Central Thought: God invites freely all men to turn from sin and the unprofitable pursuits of this world and seek His pardoning love. He wants us to forsake our ways and thoughts, and allow His Word to instruct us in the right way.

Word Definitions: *Sure mercies:* The Hebrew word for "sure" is "aman" which is the root word for "amen." It means faithful, permanent, and sure; unfailing and true. Mercies refer to kindnesses. The sure mercies that God promised to David because of His favor to him are promised to us in Christ Jesus. *Myrtle tree:* An evergreen shrub with white or pink flowers and dark berries. *Fatness:* Abundance, richness, plentifulness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today follows the beautiful address to the Church we had in our last Sunday's lesson in chapter 54. He is speaking to the barren (those who found no satisfaction in the ways of sin and the world), to the forsaken and grieved in spirit (those who are disappointed and bruised by a life without God), to the afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted (those who find the ways of ungodliness incommensurable and of no profit), and those whose righteousness is of God (those who are not satisfied with the filthy rags of self-righteousness). The invitation is heralded to come and partake of true joys and blessings of God. If we will turn away from

the vanities of this present life and incline our ear to God and draw in our hearts and affections to Him, He promises to make an everlasting covenant with us. This everlasting covenant that God wants to make with every soul is labeled here the sure mercies of David. In Acts 13, Paul was preaching in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. Speaking of Christ in verse 34, he said, "And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." The Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the New Testament Greek all render this phrase the same: "the sure mercies of David." As Paul stated, the sure mercies of David involve being a partaker of the resurrection of the dead. Christ fulfilled this. We who are really in Christ have definite hope and assurance of partaking in this glorious resurrection. God's mercies to His saints are sure. Even if we come short and recognize any lack, failure, or need, we can humble our hearts, confess to God, and His mercies will enfold us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of waters is God calling us to drink of?
2. If money cannot buy salvation, what do we buy it with?
3. What is the reward promised for hearkening, inclining, and coming to the Lord?
4. Why should we be diligent in seeking the Lord?
5. Why should we forsake our ways and thoughts?
6. What does God's Word accomplish?
7. What effect does the gospel have in the believing heart?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, that men and women today could comprehend and visualize the great blessings and benefits that God is calling for them to come to! Our lesson today is a universal appeal to the sons of men. While men are raptured with the things of this present world that will decay and pass away, God is calling for them to come and share with Him the wonderful treasures of salvation and spiritual life in Jesus Christ. Money does not enter the picture as far as purchasing power is concerned. Here is a question that God is asking the souls of men: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" He is calling us to hearken unto Him. What God wants to bestow is to be given freely to those who will qualify. And the only qualifications that God desires is that we hearken diligently unto Him, eat, delight in Him, incline our

ear, and come unto Him, and hear. If a person will do this earnestly, the Spirit of God will communicate with him of the wonderful treasures that eyes cannot see. People need to seek the Lord. He is hidden from the carnal apprehensions of man. But all who seek to find Him with all their hearts will be rewarded. We must seek Him to the point of being willing to forsake our ways and our thoughts; otherwise, our efforts will be unrewarded. Our ways and our thoughts are the barrier that lies between us and the blessed fellowship with God. The disposition and attitude of the heart determines the worth and state of the character. God speaks through His gospel. His gospel is preached and He expects men to hear and respond. His Word will accomplish His will one way or another. If we refuse to receive it, the Word of God will be a witness against us. But if we will receive His Word, obey it, and walk worthily before Him, joy and rejoicing will spring forth in our hearts.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The children of Israel were just “spinning their wheels,” as the saying goes. They wanted to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, but were going at it in the wrong way. It is not of our own merits that we enjoy salvation, but because it is a free gift of God. Our own righteousness will get us nowhere with God.

If man were saved by works, there would be many an ambitious person on the way to heaven. The truth of the matter is, we must realize just how insignificant we are before God and be willing to incline our ear unto Him. This goes against human nature. If you are offered membership in an exclusive human organization, it is likely because you have made a name for yourself. Organizations are not hunting for the insignificant and poor to fill their membership rolls, but those who are influential.

The salvation that Isaiah told of is for the humble. I have discovered in dealing with people that often the financially affluent care little what an item costs, just so they feel that they have purchased the best. I recall one instance in which an individual was shopping for some merchandise and was offered a choice of two very similar products. The main difference between the two items was the price, and this individual chose the most expensive because he wanted to feel that he owned the best.

Isaiah declared that salvation could be obtained without money and without price, but that certainly does not mean it is of inferior quality. It costs a great deal for God to be able to offer it to us. The price was the death of His only Son.

—Wayne Murphey

October 9, 1983

THE CALL TO GOD'S HOUSE OF PRAYER

Isa. 56:1 Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it: that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

4 For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

8 The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.

10 His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

12 Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

Memory Verse: O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. Psalms 95:6.

Central Thought: God is making available to all men a golden opportunity to come to Him and enter upon a life of prayer and communion with Him. We are God's house, and God wills that we live a life of prayer and consecration to Him.

Word Definitions: *Eunuch:* We will give a general definition of this term "eunuch" and what the application of this word is in our lesson. I believe that we can term a "eunuch" basically as any person who is deprived of lawful or natural powers, abilities, functions, or associations. Jesus said that there are some eunuchs who are thus born, some who are thus by men, and that there are those who are made eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. To get our spiritual thought, let us use this application of a eunuch in this way. People who for the sake of their faith and integrity with God are deprived of any activity or benefit can be here termed as eunuchs.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a very serious message of God to us. We dwelt in chapter 55 on the need of seeking God. This is continued in today's lesson also. But He becomes more specific. He enjoins keeping judgment and doing justice, and warns against polluting the sabbath. The Jewish seventh day sabbath was a very important part of their worship and obedience to God. The New Testament sabbath, which is a spiritual sabbath, the rest of the soul, is just as important, and even more so. Then He urged the stranger and the eunuch not to bemoan their state. He promises to them and to us today a rich reward for our faithfulness to Him. He wants to bring all the outcasts and downtrodden of men who are weary with their own ways to His wonderful house of prayer and holy fellowship. In Mark 11, we find where Jesus went into the temple one evening and beheld all the buying and selling and trafficking of merchandise. The next morning He came back

and drove them all out, quoting verse 7 in our lesson. With His spiritual house today (which is us, our hearts and lives) He wills consecration, prayer, praise, quietness, peace, holiness, and everything that will promote a close walk with God. The Lord wants to draw all men into a holy solemnity with Him. But as the last 4 verses show, there will always be those who will refuse to walk in His holy ways. These exert much influence and cause great damage to the work of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God want us to keep judgment and do justice?
2. How does our lesson show the way any deprived person can overcome his sorrow and loss?
3. What is God calling all men to?
4. Of what importance would you say prayer is to the child of God?
5. What happens if we cease to pray and maintain communion and fellowship with God?
6. What causes a neglect and a ceasing of prayer in one's life?
7. Can you see any parallel between the cluttering of the temple in Christ's time and the cluttering of the temple of God today?
8. Some have applied the term "dumb dogs" to money paid preachers (D.D.'s) who will not cry out against sin and evil. Can you explain why this can be a true application?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a privilege to carry everything to the Lord in prayer! God willed that the house erected in His name under the old covenant to be a place of quiet, holy worship and communion with Himself. He wanted all men everywhere from all nations to come to that temple and to join in the worship of God. If a man cannot do things as he would wish to do, he can pray. Prayer is a song we all can sing, a light that the blind man can see. It is our blessed privilege to come to the Lord and make our lives a house of prayer. There are so many intrusions into the house of prayer that we must guard against. The world and its vain pursuits can take up its abode in the house of prayer, interrupting and corrupting its holy chambers. Strife and turmoil can darken the windows of prayer that let the sunlight of heaven in. Oh, we would encourage everyone to develop and maintain a life of prayer and communion

with God. Shut the world and all of its strife and vanity out. Let your life be a life of prayer and feasting on the Word of God. There is no need for anyone to say, "There is nothing for me to do." Prayer is the weapon and tool for us to grasp and wield for all of our needs of life. Let us draw near to God, cleansing our lives from all wrong and evil. Let us overcome every privation and loss, drawing close to God and learning of His blessed truth and ways. Let us live continually on His holy mountain in the refuge of His wonderful house of prayer.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Prayer is the vital life of a saint. In a previous lesson we studied where Isaiah said, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." As long as a person retains a tender longing toward God, the Lord will show mercy and deal with that soul. He does it with the hope that the spark will catch and become a blazing fire. That desire toward God is the life or possibility for the making of a Christian. As a desire develops within a person, it is lifted up to God in the form of prayer.

God said that He would "make them joyful in my house of prayer." Something is not a drudgery if we have a desire to do it. We will be joyful in it. Perhaps you've walked the halls of a hospital or nursing home and noticed those on their beds who barely react to what is about them. The vital signs of life are there but they take no interest in their environment. They aren't really living. It is when we consider prayer a vital outlet of our soul and not just a form that we fulfill the place in the house of prayer that God has called His people to.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25. Here we find that we are to LIVE in the Spirit. Then in Romans 8:26, we find that "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

How thankful we should be that there exists a direct avenue to the throne of mercy that each of us can make use of.

—Wayne Murphey

October 16, 1983

GOD'S DESIRE TO HEAL AND RESTORE

Isa. 57:1 The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

2 He shall enter in peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

12 I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord: and I will heal him.

20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Memory Verse: And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Hebrews 12:13.

Central Thought: God is angry and displeased with man because of his sin and disobedience, but is greatly desirous to heal and forgive all who will return to Him.

Word Definitions: *Sorceress:* One who works deceitfully under cover with magic. Here is the Septuagint rendering of verse 15: "For thus saith the Most High, who dwells on high for ever, Holy in the holies [Most Holy] is his name, the Most High resting in the holies, and giving patience to the faint-hearted, and giving life to the broken-hearted."

LESSON BACKGROUND

After God's great call for all nations to the house of prayer, the last four verses of our previous lesson indicate that there are many people who will not respond to the call for fellowship with God. This indifference and rebellion against God promote conditions that develop into despairing problems in families and societies. Search for gain and drunkenness prevail. Our lesson today opens with another aspect of this sad state of mortal affairs. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart." The righteous perish through the cruel instruments of persecution and affliction. In His great wisdom, God has seen fit to work in this manner. That the righteous man is often the victim of the works of ungodliness we have only to read in history to prove. Death releases the godly from present evils and those to come. But, notwithstanding all of this, God still reaches out His hand of love and mercy, desiring to heal the wayward and the wicked. The reason why they are not healed is only defined by the stubbornness of the heart, and the unwillingness to acknowledge their own need. This is expressed in verse 10. Verses 15 through 19 are a sublime appeal from God Almighty to the souls of men. Verse 19 is referred to by Paul in Eph. 2:13, 14, and 19. He is speaking of the Jew and the Gentile both being reconciled to God. The Jews were those who were nigh, and the Gentiles were those who were afar off. It is interesting also to note that while the first two verses of our lesson describe the peace and rest of the righteous, the last two verses describe the unrest and trouble of the wicked.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do people not lay it to heart when righteous people die?

2. What is the state of the righteous when they are taken away from the evil?
3. Why would God want the wicked to draw near?
4. What is there about pride that will weary a person?
5. Why is it so hard for a person to confess their sad condition and need?
6. From His high and holy position what is in the heart of God to do for mankind?
7. What would happen to a sinner if the message of mercy and healing that we have in our lesson could be revealed to him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Although God is high and holy, His heart is full of compassion and desire to save. But, according to our lesson, God has had to hide from sinful man. In His anger and displeasure against sin, God has withdrawn and separated Himself to a certain extent. This separation is felt and realized on both sides. The sinner feels and experiences none of God's blessings. He is adrift on a sea of flesh and sin. This is the fallen, degenerated state of lost man. But God works to alienate man's affections from the vanities and worldly things. He sends trouble and adversity. He causes their works to be of no profit. The door He leaves open for all who recognize the useless mass of pride and self love. These will reach out for God and seek to put their trust in Him. God's Spirit will respond to them, leading them to the realities of His presence and holiness. All who find the Lord and learn of His gracious ways can help prepare the way for others to be saved. They can do much through their faithfulness to God toward taking the stumbling blocks and stones out of the way and lifting up a standard for the people. People can know and learn that God loves them and greatly desires their return to Him. He wants to restore their comfort and peace. He wants to heal their broken hearts. To those who are afar off and to those who are near, He wills wonderful and joyful blessings. All He expects from man is a deep consciousness of his need and a confession of the same. This will lead to earnest seeking and deep humility of heart. Peace and healing will break forth. We can be restored to that wonderful fellowship and favor with God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The first verse of our lesson gives us an insight into the condition of society during Isaiah's time. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart." This occurs when wickedness is so prevalent that it is difficult to find a righteous man. The life of the upright is a condemnation to the wicked, and therefore of little value to him; so when the good men die, the wicked are unconcerned. It is tragic for a nation or an individual to lose regard for high moral standards. Once a downward trend is begun, it quickly gains momentum. In a few short generations, a civilized society can become filled with gross spiritual darkness.

The verse goes on to say, "none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Sometimes it is difficult to understand why a good saint is called away when they appear to be so necessary to the work of God. In the months following their departure, though, events may transpire which we know would have caused them great heartache and we find comfort in knowing that they are free from the weight and care of such burdens.

The farther people remove themselves from God, the more unrest there is. Our nation is a prime example. There are unstable marriages, and a multitude of divorces, dissatisfaction on the job and increasing crime, as well as political corruption.

The tendency of those who are righteously indignant would be to call the evildoers into judgment, yet we find God's message was, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."

—Wayne Murphey

BREAD UPON THE WATERS

"Ah! Jacob, now you see how all your hopes are gone. Here we are worn out with age—all our children removed from us by the hand of death, and ere long we must be the inmates of the poorhouse. Where now is all the bread you have cast upon the waters?"

The old, white-haired man looked up at his wife. He was indeed bent down with years, and age sat tremblingly upon him. Jacob Manfred had been a comparatively wealthy man, and while fortune had smiled upon him he had ever been among the first to lend a listening ear and a helping hand to the call of distress. But now misfortune was his. Of his four boys not one was left. Sickness and failing strength found him

with but little, and had left him penniless. An oppressive embargo upon the shipping business had been the first weight upon his head, and other misfortunes came in painful succession. Jacob and his wife were all alone, and gaunt poverty looked them coldly in the face.

"Don't repine, Susan," said the old man. "True we are poor, but we are not yet forsaken."

"Not forsaken, Jacob? Who is there to help us now?"

Jacob Manfred raised his trembling finger toward heaven.

"Ah! Jacob, I know God is our friend, but we should have friends here. Look back and see how many you have befriended in days long past. You cast your bread upon the waters with a free hand, but it has not returned to you."

"Hush, Susan, you forget what you say. To be sure I may have hoped that some kind hand of earth would lift me from the cold depths of utter want; but I do not expect it as a reward for anything I may have done. If I have helped the unfortunate in days gone by, I have had my full reward in knowing that I have done my duty to my fellows. Oh! of all the kind deeds I have done to my suffering fellows, I would not for gold have one of them blotted from my memory. Ah! my fond wife, 'tis the memory of the good done in life that makes old age happy. Even now, I can hear again the warm thanks of those whom I have befriended, and again I can see their smiles."

"Yes, Jacob," returned the wife, in a lower tone, "I know you have been good, and in your memory you can be happy; but, alas! there is a present upon which we must look—there is a reality upon which we must dwell. We must beg for food or starve!"

The old man started, and a deep mark of pain was drawn across his features.

"*Beg!*" he replied, with a quick shudder. "No, Susan, we are—"

He hesitated, and a big tear rolled down his furrowed cheek.

"We are what, Jacob?"

"We are going to the poorhouse!"

"O God! I thought so!" fell from the poor wife's lips, as she covered her face with her hands. "I have thought so, and I have tried to school myself to the thought; but my poor heart will not bear it!"

"Do not give up," softly urged the old man, laying his hand upon her arm. "It makes but little difference to us now."

We have not long to remain on earth, and let us not wear out our last days in useless repinings. Come, come."

"But when—when—shall we go?"

"Now—today."

"Then God have mercy on us!"

"He will," murmured Jacob.

The old couple sat for a while in silence. When they were aroused from their painful thoughts it was by the stopping of a wagon in front of the door. A man entered the room where they sat. He was the keeper of the poorhouse.

"Come, Mr. Manfred," he said, "the selectmen have managed to crowd you into the poorhouse. The wagon is at the door, and you can get ready as soon as possible."

Jacob Manfred had not calculated the strength he should need for this ordeal. There was a coldness in the very tone and manner of the man who had come for him that went like an ice-bolt to his heart, and with a deep groan he sank back in his seat.

"Come, be in a hurry," impatiently urged the keeper.

At that moment a heavy covered wagon carriage drove up to the door.

"Is this the house of Jacob Manfred?"

This question was asked by a man who entered from the carriage. He was a kind-looking man, about forty years of age.

"That is my name," said Jacob.

"Then they told me truly," uttered the new-comer. "Are you from the almshouse?" he continued, turning toward the keeper.

"Yes."

"Then you may return. Jacob Manfred goes to no poorhouse while I live."

The keeper gazed inquisitively into the face of the stranger, and left the house.

"Don't you remember me?" exclaimed the new-comer, grasping the old man by the hand.

"I cannot recall you to my memory now."

"Do you remember Lucius Williams?"

"Williams?" repeated Jacob, starting up and gazing earnestly into the stranger's face.

"Yes, Jacob Manfred—Lucius Williams, that little boy whom, thirty years ago, you saved from the house of correction; that poor boy whom you kindly took from the bonds of the law, and placed on board your own vessels."

"And are you—?"

“Yes—yes, I am the man you made. You found me a rough stone from the hand of poverty and bad example. It was you who brushed off the evil, and who first led me to the sweet waters of moral life and happiness. I have profited by the lesson you gave me in early youth, and the warm spark which your kindness lighted up in my bosom has grown brighter and brighter ever since. With an affluence for life I have settled down to enjoy the remainder of my days in peace and quietness. I have heard of your losses and bereavements. Come, I have a home and a heart, and your presence will make them both warmer, brighter, and happier. Come, my more than father—and you my mother, come. You made my youth all bright, and I will not see your old age doomed to darkness.”

Jacob Manfred trotted forward and sank upon the bosom of his preserver. He could not speak his thanks, for they were too heavy for words. When he looked up again he sought his wife.

“Susan,” he said, in a choking, trembling tone, “my bread has come back to me!”

“Forgive me, Jacob.”

“No, no, Susan. It is not I who must forgive—God holds us in His hand.”

“Ah! murmured the wife, as she raised her streaming eyes to heaven, “I will never doubt Him again.” —Selected



October 23, 1983

THE FAST THAT GOD HATH CHOSEN

Isa. 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and

to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.

9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, and putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day:

11 And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Memory Verse: Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Isa. 58:6.

Central Thought: The fast that prevails with God is more than merely abstaining from food. It is the outreach of man to his neighbor and brother in love and mercy. It is the loosing of the yokes of strife and unforgiveness, and the healing of mortals' woes through the operation of His love in the hearts of men.

Word Definitions: *Fast:* The Hebrew word is "Tsoom," which basically means "to cover the mouth." In the light of our lesson we can readily see that this would be referring to covering the mouth by guarding our tongue and the words that we say as well as to refrain from food. *Debate:* A quarrel or contention. *Rereward:* That which gathers up; a guard

behind. *Breach*: A break, separation, or gap.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today reveals a highly important and valuable key to success in seeking God's blessings. There seems to be an inclination in humankind to believe or think that by afflicting one's self with severe body punishment and denial that God's favor will be invoked successfully. Earnestness, a heavy burden or concern, and a sincere outreach of our hearts to God might very well cause such humiliation and anguish of heart so as to induce us to practice such behavior. But that alone will not really affect God. The prophet in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reveals to us what the righteous Almighty God is really interested in. God is greatly concerned with our attitude and relationship with our fellowman. Since we have found much merit and enlightenment by comparing the rendering of many of these passages from Isaiah with the Septuagint translation, I feel that an insertion of verses 2-7 might be found worthwhile. "They seek me day by day, and desire to know my ways, as a people that had done righteousness, and had not forsaken the judgment of their God: they now ask of me righteous judgment, and desire to draw nigh to God, saying, Why have we fasted, and thou regardest not? why have we afflicted our souls, and thou didst not know it? Nay, in the days of your fasts ye find your pleasures, and all them that are under your power ye wound. If ye fast for quarrels and strifes, and smite the lowly with your fists, wherefore do ye fast to me as ye do this day, so that your voice may be heard in crying? I have not chosen this fast, nor such a day for a man to afflict his soul; neither though thou shouldst bend down thy neck as a ring, and spread under thee sackcloth and ashes, neither thus shall ye call a fast acceptable. I have not such a fast, saith the Lord; but do thou loose every burden of iniquity, do thou untie the knots of hard bargains, set the bruised free, and cancel every unjust account. Break thy bread to the hungry, and lead the unsheltered poor to thy house: if thou seest one naked, clothe him, and thou shalt not disregard the relations of thine own seed."

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the prophet of God to show to His people?
2. What were the people asking God?
3. Why was God not pleased with their fast?

4. What kind of fast was God really interested in?
5. What were these people really falling short in?
5. Do you think that human relations has anything to do with our relations with God?
6. What principle in man causes strife, debate, oppression, yokes, and heavy burdens?
7. How can we offset or turn back this unrighteous tendency?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God is displeased with strife and oppression. And yet the history of mankind is full of it. Wickedness and iniquity have heaped heavy burdens upon the human race. Think of the wars, broken homes, torn asunder families, murders, and the many forms of strife that mar the peace of this God-created planet! And the sad thing about it is that much of this goes on in the hearts and lives of people who profess to be the people of God. The yoke of Babylon lords, the creeds and schisms of men, the criticizing and condemning of man to man—all these are indicative of the great fault that God finds and exposes in our lesson today. It seems that mankind has never awakened to the fact that his attitude toward his fellow man affects his relationship with God. We are in trouble with God when we harbor wrong attitudes toward our neighbor. We all love mercy when it is coming our way, but the showing of mercy toward our brother has a different taste. God is righteous and just. He is no respecter of persons. And this same sense of justice and mercy He wants in our hearts, also. The yoke is mentioned twice in our lesson. Did you know that it is possible for us to make yokes of our own design and actually put them on others? Jesus speaks about His yoke being easy, and His burden being light in Matthew 11:30. We can even take the Scriptures, and without Holy Spirit guidance and inspiration put them on others with such force and pressure that it becomes a galling yoke, void of comfort and spiritual blessing from God. The putting forth of the finger of accusation and the binding requirements of unscriptural decrees fall under this category. As we study these Scriptures today, let us ask God to help us to really see what His pleasure is.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To understand better what this chapter refers to, we need an insight into the customs of that time. According to the old law, one day out of a year was appointed for a fast. That was

on the Day of Atonement. According to history, when the Jews were in captivity, they were observing four annual fasts. Modern day Jews observe eight fasts. The original design of a fast was to express national humiliation and to supplicate divine favor. The Jews turned it into a holiday. Isaiah told the people that, "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours." Adam Clarke says, "In numberless cases the fast is turned into a feast. Some disregard the most sacred fast, and will oblige their servants to work all day long; others use fast days for the purpose of settling their accounts, posting up their books and drawing out their bills to be ready to collect their debts. These are sneaking hypocrites; others are daringly religious."

We can observe a distinct pattern here as the Jews fell away from serving the Lord. First, the service of God becomes a form, habit, and a routine. Secondly, in order to make such service interesting and enjoyable, man couples the flesh with the semblance of things spiritual and the result is an abomination to God.

God help us not to lose a perfect vision of His salvation. It is not the observance of a creed, but the quickening of His Holy Spirit within our hearts and a life that bears good fruit before the world.

—Wayne Murphey



October 30, 1983

THE SEPARATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN BECAUSE OF SIN BRIDGED BY THE REDEEMER

Isa. 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

4 None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

15 Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.

19 So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

Memory Verse: He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8.

Central Thought: God has sent His Son Jesus Christ to be the Redeemer for fallen man's iniquity, and to bridge the gap between God and man caused by sin.

Word Definitions: *Iniquity:* Perverseness or moral evil. *Sin:* Offence. *Perverseness:* Moral distortion. *Transgression:* Revolt or rebellion. *Redeemer:* One who buys back or pays a ransom.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The state of man's sinful ways and dispositions had caused and allowed many conditions to prevail in the hearts of people which were displeasing, offensive, and repulsive to a just and holy God. Because of the presence of sin in the heart and life, the blessings and comfort of the Lord cannot enter.

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In the 3rd chapter of Romans, Paul emphatically makes that clear concerning the general condition of man. "All are under sin," he states in verse 9, and then proceeds to quote from the Old Testament writings places where the sinful condition of man is declared. He quotes from this 59th chapter of Isaiah, verses 7 and 8, as part of his proof. Now this chapter has some dark scenes. But no words can fully describe the misery, turmoil, sorrow, pain, despair, darkness, and every other terrible condition one can think of that sin and transgression has brought upon the human race. It is a dark picture but one that we had better acknowledge and recognize. As verse 15 states, it displeased the Lord that there was no judgment. This pretty well summarizes the whole thing. Without judgment in one's life, evil will abound. But from verse 16 on, we find the promise of God's deliverance. Read these Scriptures thoughtfully and carefully, and be assured that God has surely fulfilled them perfectly in the salvation that Jesus Christ, His Son, has brought down to us. This intercessor, this Redeemer, this One who put on the breastplate of righteousness, and was clad with zeal as a cloak, was none other than Jesus Christ. He has already come and fulfilled these prophecies. We can have victory over sin today, and be loosed from its woeful bondage.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is it that separates men from God?
2. What are some of the members of a man that have been used as instruments of sin?
3. How does a man conceive mischief?
4. Is it very important for a man to recognize his sin?
5. What was needed to bridge the gap between man and God?
6. How can we call Jesus the "arm of God"?
7. What did Jesus have on to accomplish the salvation of God?
8. Who will come from the west and the east?
9. What will happen when the enemy comes in like a flood?
10. Who will the Redeemer come to?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Paul quotes from our lesson in Romans 11:26, and 27, in declaring that salvation was for the Jews as well as for the Gentiles. The same sin that separated Israel from God also did the same for all men. Sin is a universal condition. The evil

and pride that infests the heart of man is a widespread disease of humanity. Our lesson today is a two-fold exposition of the dreadful condition of mankind under the yoke of sin plus the power, fury, and recompense that was to be handed out to sin and ungodliness in the work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. It was no small problem that weighed down the population of this world. And no small solution was to be found, either. Whoever would accomplish the deliverance of man from the frightful bondage of sin and wrong had an enormous job to do, a terrific warfare to accomplish, and a gigantic effort to put in action. When Jesus came down into this world, He knew full well and was aware of what was waiting for him. Thus the language of the prophet describes the preparation and girding for the fight. The weapons that He girt on are the same weapons that we as Christian soldiers are to engage combat with. The controversy and conflict between sin and righteousness still rages today. Christ overcame the devil. And if we will live with the fear and love of God upon our hearts, we can overcome the devil, also. Praise the Lord for victory over sin! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When a parent punishes a child, there are several things that are important to relay to that child's mind. The child needs to understand that he is loved. He should also be informed as to exactly what he did wrong and therefore why the punishment is deserved. It always helps if a child knows that there is a way for him to please his parents.

This chapter is a severe reproof to the Jews for their gross wrong doings. Notice how the chapter begins.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." The initial thing that God indicates to them is that He is interested in them, and is reaching forth to help. Their misdeeds have not destroyed His love and concern. If they will repent of their sin and forsake it, He will gather them back unto Himself like a mother hen would her chicks.

Secondly, God enumerated their wrongdoings. We are now in a dispensation of grace, but how awful to face God at the judgment and have sentence passed upon our lives. The presence of God makes man feel so insignificant.

God did not cut the Jews off, but foretold of a plan whereby a standard could be lifted up against the powers of the enemy.

The renowned evangelist, Jonathon Edwards, once said, "By Christ's purchasing redemption, two things are intended: his satisfaction and his merit; the one pays our debt, and so satisfies; the other procures our title, and so merits. The satisfaction of Christ is to free us from misery; the merit of Christ is to purchase happiness for us." —Wayne Murphey

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November 6, 1983

THE CHURCH OF GOD SHINING FORTH

Isa. 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

Memory Verse: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5:16.

Central Thought: The salvation of Jesus Christ brings forth a nation of redeemed souls who will shine out in this dark and evil world as a city set on a hill, giving light to all nations.

Word Definitions: *The Box [Tree]:* (verse 13). This was the cedar tree, along with the fir and the pine, all of which are evergreens, typical of the Christian life. *Exactor:* One who oversees and directs operations.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We would like to draw a comparison of chapters 59, 60, and 61 of this prophetic book of Isaiah with chapters 53, 54, and 55 of the same book. Chapters 53 and 59 deal with the sin problem and its cure, both uttering splendid and clear prophecies of Jesus Christ in His role as Redeemer. Chapters 54 and 60 are both messages of comfort and inspiration to the Church. And then chapters 55 and 61 are appeals to the souls of men, offering them hope and salvation through the grace of God. Our lesson today follows the wonderful prophecies of the Redeemer coming to Zion, coming to them who turn from their transgressions. Our lesson last week closed out with the wonderful promise of the Holy Spirit and His Word to remain in our mouths for life and utterance as the covenant of God with us. Then the exhortation breaks forth with comfort and inspiration: "ARISE, SHINE, FOR THY LIGHT IS COME!" These are the promises to the Church of God who will dare to walk in the light of Christ. Verses 3 and 4 promise children and converts. Verse 5 promises spiritual vision and unity. Verse 11 speaks about the gates being open continually. In comparing this chapter with Revelations 21, we see a great likeness. Both of these chapters are speaking of the Church of God, the city of the redeemed in Christ. Compare verses 11, 19, and 20, with Revelations 21:23, 24, and 25. Let us bring these Scriptures down to the plan of God for His Church in this world. To put it over in the world beyond is to miss the real purpose of it. God wants His Church to be a bright, shining light in this world.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the Lord call His Church to arise and shine?
2. How can the light be upon the Church of God while gross darkness is covering the world?
3. What does the light of God shining through His Church do in effect to those around about?
4. What do the gates of praise being open continually refer to?
5. Why does God want gold instead of brass, and silver instead of iron?
6. What is the light of the City?
7. How can we be assured that her sun will never go down and that the days of her mourning are ended?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We pray that the Spirit of God will enlighten every heart as we behold these precious Scriptures in our lesson of today. If you are saved from your sins and truly love Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Lord, this chapter is especially for you. It is the message of God to the Church. God wants us to let our lights shine. He wants eternal values in our lives. When the glory of God rises upon us, the influence of that glory will go out and touch other people's lives. God wants us to show forth His praise. We are not to put on a show, but we are to show forth the richness and joy that we have in Christ. We are not to "cut a shine," but we are to let our lights shine. And this thought of showing and letting our light shine has to be taken rightly. Notice verse 7: "For brass I will bring gold." Brass can be polished up to such a brilliance that it will almost look like gold. The human can polish and refine their manners and rituals to look very impressive to the observer. But this is only brass. God wants gold—that is, holiness and purity. "For iron I will bring silver." Iron can be polished to resemble silver. But God wants that quality of righteousness and godliness that is more than just mere human goodness. But brass will be brought for wood and iron for stones. God wants brilliance, strength, and durability in our lives. But He does not want it in the place of real holiness and righteousness. Perfect holiness and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that which is through faith, are the qualities that set the Church of God off from any other organization in this world. Let us seek for these things to abound in our lives and not be ashamed to show forth their value to mankind.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Light is a beautiful thing. It holds an attraction. On a warm summer night, insects will congregate about a light and even become entrapped in the light globe. Wouldn't it be satisfying if people would flock into the city of the Lord like bugs to a light? They would, too, if it were not for the blinding power of the enemy. God will remove the scales from the eyes of those who are honest hearted and such will see the beauty of Zion.

Consider the various kinds of light. Science has invented light by harnessing electricity. With a flick of a switch, an entire room can be bathed in light. This light is small in comparison to that of the sun, which pours freely and impartially over hill and valley. The light of the sun has life in it. Without it, plants would die and death would reign. Yet the light of the universe is as darkness compared to the light that issues from the throne of God. This light radiates eternal life. It illumines our reason and our conscience; it will instill worth and dignity within a person. It is the avenue by which a person can see their way from the life of a pauper to that of a king. What more needs to be said? The prophet declared, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." —Wayne Murphey

THE LITTLE SISTERS

"You were not here yesterday," said the gentle teacher of the little village school, as she placed her hand kindly on the curly head of one of her pupils. It was recess time, but the little girl addressed had not gone to frolic away the ten minutes, not even left her seat, but sat absorbed in what seemed a fruitless attempt to make herself mistress of an example in long division.

Her face and neck crimsoned at the remark of her teacher, but looking up, she seemed somewhat reassured by the kind glance that met her, and answered, "No, ma'am, I was not, but sister Nellie was."

"I remember there was a little girl who called herself Nellie Gray, came in yesterday, but I did not know she was your sister. But why did you not come? You seem to like to study very much."

"It was not because I didn't want to," was the earnest answer, and then she paused and the deep flush again tinged her fair brow; "but," she continued after a moment of painful

embarrassment, "mother cannot spare both of us conveniently, and so we are going to take turns. I'm going to school one day, and sister the next, and tonight I'm to teach Nellie all I have learned today, and tomorrow night she will teach me all that she learns while here. It's the only way we can think of getting along, and we want to study very much, so as to sometime keep school ourselves, and take care of mother, because she has to work very hard to take care of us."

With genuine delicacy Miss M——— forbore to question the child further, but sat down beside her, and in a moment explained the rule over which she was puzzling her young brain, so that the hard example was easily finished.

"You had better go out and take the air a few moments; you have studied very hard today," said the teacher, as the little girl put aside the slate.

"I had rather not—I might tear my dress—I will stand by the window and watch the rest."

There was such a peculiar tone in the voice of her pupil as she said, "I might tear my dress," that the teacher was led instinctively to notice it. It was nothing but a nine-penny print of a deep hue, but it was neatly made and had never been washed. And while looking at it, she remembered that during the whole previous fortnight Mary Gray had attended school regularly, she had never seen her wear but that one dress. "She is a thoughtful little girl," said she to herself, "and does not want to make her mother any trouble. I wish I had more such scholars."

The next morning Mary was absent, but her sister occupied her seat. There was something so interesting in the two little sisters, the one eleven, and the other eighteen months younger, agreeing to attend school by turns, that Miss M——— could not forbear observing them very closely. They were pretty faced children, of delicate forms, the elder with dark eyes and chestnut curls, the other with orbs like the sky of June, her white neck veiled by a wealth of golden ringlets. She observed in both the same close attention to their studies, and as Mary tarried within during the play time, so did Nellie; and upon speaking to her as she had her sister, she received the same answer, "I might tear my dress."

The reply caused Miss M——— to notice the garb of her sister. She saw at once that it was of the same piece as Mary's, and upon scrutinizing it very closely, she became certain that it was the same dress. It did not fit quite so nicely on Nellie, and was too long for her, and she was evidently ill

at ease when she noticed her teacher looking at the bright pink flowers that were so thickly set on the white ground.

The discovery was one that could not but interest a heart so benevolent as which pulsed the bosom of that village school-teacher. She ascertained the residence of their mother that same night, having found at the only store in the place a few yards of the same material, purchased a dress for little Nellie, and made arrangements with the merchant to send it to her in such a way that the donor could not be detected.

Very bright and happy looked Mary Gray on Friday morning, as she entered the school at an early hour. She waited only to place her books in neat order in her desk, ere she approached the teacher, and whispering in a voice that laughed in spite of her efforts to make it low and deferential—"After this week sister Nellie is coming to school every day, and oh, I am so glad!"

"That is very good news," replied the teacher kindly. "Nellie is fond of her books, I see, and I am happy to know that she can have an opportunity to study them every day." Then she continued, a little good-natured mischief encircling her eyes and dimpling her sweet lips—"But can your mother spare you both conveniently?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am, she can now. Something happened that she didn't expect, and she is as glad to have us come as we are to do so." She hesitated a moment, but her young heart was filled to the brim with joy, and when a child is happy it is as natural to tell the cause as it is for a bird to warble when the sun shines. So out of the fulness of her heart she spoke and told her teacher this little story.

She and her sister were the only children of a very poor widow, whose health was so delicate that it was almost impossible to support herself and daughters. She was obliged to keep them out of school all winter, as they had no suitable clothes to wear, but she told them that if they could earn enough by doing odd chores for the neighbors to buy each of them a new dress, they might go in the spring. Very earnestly had the little girls improved their stray chances, and very carefully hoarded the copper coins which usually repaid them. They had nearly saved enough to buy a dress, when Nellie was taken sick, and as the mother had no money beforehand, her own treasure had to be expended.

"Oh, I did feel so bad when school opened and Nellie could not go, because she had no dress," said Mary. "I told mother I wouldn't go either, but she said I had better, for I could teach

sister some, and it would be better than no schooling. I stood it for a fortnight, but Nellie's little face seemed all the time looking at me on the way to school, and I couldn't be happy a bit, so I finally thought of a way by which we could both go, and I told mother I would come one day, and the next I would lend Nellie my dress and she might come, and that's the way we have done this week. But last night, don't you think, someone sent sister a dress just like mine, and now she can come too. Oh, if I only knew who it was, I would get down on my knees and thank them, and so would Nellie. But we don't know, and so we've done all we could for them—we've prayed for them—and oh, Miss M———, we are all so glad now. Ain't you, too?"

"Indeed I am," was the emphatic answer. And when on the following Monday, little Nellie, in the new pink dress, entered the schoolroom, her face radiant as a rose in sunshine, approached the teacher's table, exclaimed, in tones as musical as those of a freed fountain, "I am coming to school every day, and oh, I am so glad," the teacher felt as she had never done before, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. No millionaire, when he saw his name in public prints, lauded for his thousand-dollar charities, was never so happy as the poor school-teacher who wore her gloves half a summer longer than she ought, and thereby saved enough to buy that little fatherless girl a calico dress. —Selected

November 13, 1983

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

Isa. 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities,

the desolations of many generations.

5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

7 For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

8 For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Memory Verse: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. Luke 4:18.

Central Thought: The gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed for all the world to hear and experience the liberty and salvation from sin and the devil. The grace of God will restore the soul to its rightful place in the favor of God, and we can all be a part of the bride of Christ.

Word Definitions: *Meek:* Depressed, lowly, humble, poor. *Acceptable* year of the Lord: This word "acceptable" means that which is delightful and pleasing to God. It is the time of God accepting souls who come to Him through Christ. *Appoint* unto them that mourn in Zion: To assign, promise, give, or bestow.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the 4th chapter of Luke we find where Christ returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee after overcoming the temptation of the devil in the wilderness. He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up: "and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written" in the place where our lesson is found today. He read the first two Scriptures. He then closed the book, handed it back to the minister, and sat down. As all eyes fastened upon Him that day, He spoke these words: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Praise the Lord, this Scripture is fulfilled today! To the meek comes good tidings, that is the gospel. To the brokenhearted comes healing and binding up. To the captive is offered liberty. Just as in the ancient day when the year of jubilee came around, all the captives were set free, the gospel brings the year of jubilee to the soul of man. He takes our ashes of corruption and dishonor and gives us the beauty of holiness. We trade our mourning for the oil of joy, and our spirit of heaviness for a garment of praise. Then just take notice of what all else follows this wonderful experience. In verse 10 we find Christ rejoicing as the bridegroom of the souls of men. God causes righteousness and praise to spring forth in the heart of man.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What enabled Christ to preach good tidings?
2. To whom is the message of salvation directed?
3. Because of this, what shall we be called?
4. How does the effect of the gospel in the heart build up and repair waste cities?
5. Why does Christ rejoice and how did He clothe and adorn Himself?
6. What does the grace of Christ cause to break forth in our hearts and lives?
7. Name some of the ornaments Christ was decked with.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The proud and self sufficient will not hear nor heed the appeal of the Almighty. But to the broken hearted and the captive prisoner in the prison house of sin, the Lord Jesus

comes in melting love. It is a day of vengeance of our God. The grace of God avenges the works of the devil. He destroys what Satan has built up and repairs what Satan has damaged. For the shame we have double joy, and for confusion we find rejoicing in our portion in Christ. Wonderful promises are here for those who will accept Christ and be willing to follow Him all the way! Verses 10 and 11 are really connected to the proclamations in the next chapter, so let us remember them. Christ comes forth to be our Saviour with joy. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him. He was joyful in the execution of His mission. He decked Himself with ornaments. But, praise the Lord, it was not with the ornaments of the flesh and the pride of life. It was the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which are in the sight of God of great price. He has faith and love. He has holiness and purity. He has wisdom and understanding. Oh, if the vain worldlyminded could but see what the real adornments are! If they could but see how superficial and ridiculous their artificial beauty program is! There is nothing wrong with putting on adornments, just so we put the right kind on. And the Bible shows what they are. Oh, if a person were as diligent to beautify his soul as many are to fix up and adorn the outer man, it would cause a great breaking forth of the righteousness and praise of the Lord. Praise the Lord, He can give us real beauty for ashes.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Undoubtedly, the message that Isaiah had to deliver in this 61st chapter was much easier to preach than the one in the 60th chapter. A servant of God must be willing to impart whatever the Lord has laid on his heart, but how much more pleasant to deliver a message of hope!

Once, Jeremiah, in agony before the Lord, declared, "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out my lips was right before thee. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil." Jer. 17:16, 17. Isaiah had a joyful message to preach. It was a message of freedom.

It is sad to see mankind pursue his natural course without including the divine in his life. People are steeped in "religion" that soothes their conscience but in effect, they are bound in the prison of sin. There are none who are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe that they

are free. Real freedom comes from the mastery of self. Paul summed up the condition of many when he said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Rom. 7:19. Paul also was able to preach the same message that Isaiah preached. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. 6:17, 18. —Wayne Murphey

WHAT IS YOUR CLAIM?

In the early years of my ministry, as I studied the Bible, I saw, as it were, three men standing before the Lord. And as I watched, they spoke.

"Lord," said one, "I have come for a pardon."

"And who are you, friend," replied the Lord.

"Who am I? Why, don't you know, Lord? I'm the best man in my home town. I've been as honest and upright with my neighbours as it is possible for a man to be."

"And your name?"

"My name, Lord, is Mr. Morality."

"Mr. Morality, let me see. Most of these pardons read: 'I came *not* to call the righteous, but *sinners*.' I don't see any made out for Mr. Morality. Are you a sinner, Mr. Morality?"

"A sinner? I should say not! There isn't a person who knows me who can charge me with a single wrong. Why, I'm the most respected citizen in my town!"

"Well now, Mr. Morality, perhaps this pardon will do. It reads: 'There is none righteous, no, not one!' Are you unrighteous, Mr. Morality?"

"I *unrighteous*, Lord! How could I be when my name is Mr. Morality?"

"Well, Mr. Morality, I'm sorry, very sorry, but I'm afraid then that there isn't a pardon for you."

Another steps forward then and asks for a pardon.

"Who are you, friend?"

"Mr. Religious, Lord."

"And what claim have you to present for a pardon, Mr. Religious?"

"Have I not been the most faithful worker of all in my home church? Was I not a deacon and then an elder? Yes, and more than that, did I not give thousands of dollars to the church? Surely, for all this I deserve a pardon, Lord!"

"But are you a *sinner*, friend?"

"A *sinner*? Indeed I am not! I have been religious all my life. I never strayed from the fold. In fact, I was brought up in the church."

"Well, Mr. Religious, your claim of being religious I do not for a moment dispute. You are certainly well named. But I am compelled to tell you that all these pardons are made out to *sinner*s. I have none for you."

"None for me, Lord, me! the most faithful churchman in the community! None for me! Don't I deserve one? Why, I have always been a Christian."

"Perhaps so, friend, perhaps so; but I cannot recognize such claims as you present. My pardons are not for you. They are for *sinner*s."

There comes another. He bows low as he approaches, and humbly requests a pardon.

"And who are you, friend?"

"Who am I? Oh, I'm nobody at all, Lord. I'm just a poor, sinful man."

"Well, upon what ground do you expect to get a pardon, then?"

"Only on the ground of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have never done anything to merit or deserve it. I'm just a poor, guilty *sinner*, Lord. Is there a pardon for a *sinner* like me?"

"Indeed there is, friend, and an abundant one, too. Here, take this one. It reads, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinner*s.'" I have plenty for *sinner*s like yourself. But, oh, it is so hard to find *sinner*s! You are pardoned."

—Selected

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November 20, 1983

WATCHMEN ON THE WALLS OF ZION

Isa. 62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

5 For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence,

7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

8 The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured:

9 But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

11 Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

Memory Verse: Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they

that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Heb. 13:17.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ guards and keeps His Church with the greatest of care. He intercedes for her with God, and works with her through the guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit. His called and chosen ministers share in this burden and responsibility just as watchmen on the walls of a city stand guard as leaders in the cause of Christ.

Word Definitions: *Hephzibah:* A Hebrew word meaning "My delight is in her." *Beulah:* Married (to Christ).

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is to be noted that this chapter links directly with the preceding chapter. Christ and His ministers, in their administration of the work of salvation and His cause in the earth, make up the greatest corporation and business there is. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He ascended on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. He gave these for the perfecting of the saints for the work of His service, and for the edifying of His spiritual body, the Church. He wants all to attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Himself, and of the measure of the stature of His truth and holiness. Christ will not hold His peace. The ministers will not hold their peace. That is why the true ministers preach as they do. They share in the same burden with Christ who desires to see Jerusalem (or the Church) a praise in the earth. In the olden time, when cities were surrounded by walls, there were watchmen employed day and night for the safety of the city. In our time we no longer have walls, but we have policemen and law enforcement officers on duty around the clock for the safety of our communities. The Church has that, too. Christ is keeping the watch, and so are those who are called His ministers. Oh, that men would awaken to the seriousness of this. Be thankful for those who watch for your souls, who seek to get messages from heaven for food to your souls. They are watchmen on the walls. God wants His Church to be a shining light in the world, and He wants us to prepare the way and lift up a standard for the people.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do Christ and His ministers not hold their peace?
2. What kind of relationship does God desire to have with

His Church?

3. What kind of feeling do the children of Zion have for her?
4. What does God want to make Jerusalem in the earth?
5. What kind of stones do we need to get out of the way?
6. How do we lift up a standard for the people?
7. What will we be called?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God wants His Church to be a praise in the earth. The Holy Spirit is constantly communicating with the people of God in their private devotions and personal experiences concerning Christ and His perfect holiness. He anoints called and qualified men and women to be messengers and witnesses, bearing His gospel and sacred laws to people. We should have a love for the cause of the Lord and the spread of His gospel. We should live pure, holy, clean, upright, faithful, and trustworthy lives, adorning the doctrine of God in all things. He wants us to go through the gates. He wants others to enter in through the gates into the city. We enter the gates of the city of God when we keep His commandments and exemplify in our lives His holy statutes. He wants us to prepare the way of the people. He wants us to gather out the stones. I well remember a time when I was with Brother James Huskey on a trip to Mexico. We were approaching Rancho Martinez. We could see it just a short distance away. But our way became barred with great big rocks and the road became impassible. So we got out and began to remove the stones. A working man nearby came and helped us. When we finally got to the street of the village, our way was barred again by a line of large rocks. When the men who met us began to take out the stones and had them put aside, that made us know that we were welcome. There are stones that stand in people's way. God wants everything that will discourage people from serving Him to be removed from our lives. He wants us to lift up a standard of truth and righteousness for others to see. It will not be nearly as hard to get people measured up to the truth if it is set in good array by those who already profess.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When we refer to watchmen, there are two subjects that need to be dealt with: the watchmen and those over whom he is keeping watch. God has established offices in the Church

for the good of all concerned. It is not a simple task to be a watchman, for not only must you be alert for danger, but you must remain alert yourself though the hour and everything about you declare that it is time to sleep.

A watchman must employ wisdom in carrying out his duty. In exhorting the elders, Peter instructed, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." The watchman is not for the purpose of wielding the strong arm of the law, but to expound the perfect plan of salvation. This is why it is so important that what is given out is of God and not of man. Sometimes it requires as much wisdom and reflection to know what is not to be put into a sermon, as what is.

Those who benefit from the watchman's care should render due respect unto him. I read a quote once that proclaimed, "The trouble with being a leader today is that you can't be sure whether the people are following you or chasing you." A true child of God is one with whom you can reason and be assured of receiving an audience with. This is one characteristic that sets the Church of God apart from other organizations.

—Wayne Murphey



November 27, 1983

CHRIST TREADING THE WINEPRESS

Isa. 63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?

3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

4 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

5 And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath

bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

15 Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

16 Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.

17 O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

18 The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

19 We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

Memory Verse: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. 1 Pet. 3:18.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God and took our punishment for sin. He bore the reproaches of all people in His body on the cross that He might bring down pride and rebellion. Although we like sheep had gone astray, the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Word Definitions: *Bozrah:* A place in the land of Edom referring to where grapes are gathered. *Edom:* The name given to Esau because of his reddish hair, the same word as Adam which was given to Adam because of him being formed from the red earth. The red color is being applied to the blood of grapes which refers to the blood of Christ.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are now being directed by the prophet to a change of spiritual vision. We have the scene of a Mighty One coming from the winepresses of Bozrah in Edom. His raiment is stained with the blood of grapes. Who is this One? The answer: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." It is

not difficult to readily recognize who this is that is speaking. It is Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. And why are His garments red and stained with blood? And the answer: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Their blood, the blood of the people that He is wanting to save is upon His raiment. Verse 5 is similar to the expression in 59:16. There was no intercessor, none to help, therefore His own arm brought salvation, and His righteousness and His fury upheld Him. This is all spiritual language. How could Christ save and yet at the same time trample the people and tread them down in His fury? Why did He bring down their strength to the earth? This is truly what has to take place in the soul before one can really experience the saving grace of God. The pride of man and the rebellion of his own way must be brought down. This was accomplished when Christ was crucified in weakness. As He bore their sin, He was also treading them down in His anger. He was treading the winepress of the wrath of God. The rest of the chapter speaks about the sin and rebellion of Israel despite the lovingkindnesses of God toward them. How they vexed and provoked His Holy Spirit! But He remembered the days of old, namely, Moses, Abraham, and Jacob. In His anger, Israel was punished and brought to desolation. But it was all to bring out His goodness and mercy in Christ. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is Christ mighty to do?
2. Whose blood was sprinkled upon His raiment?
3. Why would the wrath of God be likened unto a winepress?
4. What must happen to the grapes to procure the rich wine?
5. Why does our rebellion have to be trampled under the feet of Christ? How did He do this?
6. What kept God from utterly destroying Israel? Who did He remember?
7. What is the lamentation of the prophet in the last few verses of our lesson?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There are two main ingredients in our lesson today that are very relative to each other. The first scene is that of Christ treading the winepress of the wrath of God and being stained in His raiment with the blood of the people. The last scene shows the rebellion of Israel, and the sad consequences of their rebellion. As history shows, the ten tribes of Israel were

carried away captive and were lost. The tribe of Judah remained for a time, and finally, because of their sin, were carried away to Babylon. It was this rebellion and sin against God that Jesus was bearing in His body on the cross. That is why He had to die. This rebellion must be crushed. This proud and disobedient nature of man must be melted into submission and devotion. As we read of the sad state of those who were carried away captive from the land of Israel, we see where their hearts were humbled and brought down before God. Psalms 102 and 137 were written during the captivity. It was a sad time. But it was a time when Israel was made to recognize her error. God has ways of working with people. In His severity He is seeking to bring hearts to consciousness of their need. And above all is One who bore their stains of crimson in His body on the tree of Calvary. Oh, how we should love Him and allow His mighty power to break every bone of pride and stubbornness in our nature.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Once a newspaper printed a picture of a large oak tree with signs nailed to it. The signs were placed one above the other, and their message was obvious. On the top sign were printed the words: "No Trespassing"; on the middle one: "No Hunting"; and on the bottom sign: "No Nothing!" The caption under the newspaper picture declared, "No trespassing . . . no hunting, well, that's a landowner's prerogative. But 'no nothing' makes you want to beep your horn, shout out the window—anything to resist a little."

The Apostle Paul was very familiar with the urge behind such a response. Prior lessons have mentioned how that Paul, while in sin, served the flesh. He did not have the power to do the things that he knew he should do.

The Israelites were steeped in laws and ordinances, yet they rebelled against God time and again. The law did not conquer the inner man. This is why it was necessary for Christ, in His death, to tread the winepress. The sins of all the people, their rebellion and disobedience, would fill up the cup of God's wrath.

God's vengeance was not only directed toward the children of Israel, but against the sin principle in general.

"Though freed from the law with its stern demands,
No longer ruled by its harsh commands,
I'm bound by Christ's love and am truly free
To live and to act responsibly." —Wayne Murphey

UNFORGOTTEN WORDS

"Have you examined that bill, James?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anything wrong?"

"I find two errors."

"Ah, let me see."

The lad handed his employer a long bill that had been placed on his desk for examination.

"Here is an error in the calculation of ten dollars, which they have made against themselves; and another ten dollars in the footing."

"Also against themselves?"

"Yes, sir."

The merchant smiled in a way that struck the lad as peculiar.

"Twenty dollars against themselves," he remarked in a kind of pleasant surprise. "Trusty clerks they must have!"

"Shall I correct the figures?" asked the lad.

"No, let them correct their own mistakes. We don't examine bills for other people's benefit," replied the merchant. "It will be time to rectify those errors when they find them out. All so much gain as it now stands."

The boy's delicate moral sense was shocked at so unexpected a remark. He was the son of a poor widow, who had given him to understand that to be just was the duty of man.

Mr. Carman, the merchant in whose employment he had been for only a few months, was an old friend of his father, and a person in whom he reposed the highest confidence. In fact, James had always looked upon him as a kind of model man; and when Mr. Carman agreed to take him into his store, he felt that good fortune was in his way.

"Let them correct their own mistakes." These words made a strong impression on the mind of James Lewis. When first spoken by Mr. Carman, and with the meaning then involved, he felt, as we have said, shocked; but as he turned them over again in his thoughts, and connected their utterance with a person who stood so high in his mother's estimation, he began to think that perhaps the thing was fair enough in business. Mr. Carman was hardly the man to do wrong. A few days after James had examined the bill, a clerk from the house by which it had been rendered, called for settlement. The lad, who was present, waited with interest to see whether Mr. Carman would speak of the error. But he made no remark. A check for amount of the bill rendered, was filled out, and a receipt taken.

"Is that right?" James asked himself this question. His moral sense said no; but the fact that Mr. Carman had so acted, bewildered his mind.

"It may be the way in business"—so he thought to himself—"but it don't look honest. I wouldn't have believed it of him."

Mr. Carman had a kind of way with him that won the boy's heart, and naturally tended to make him judge of whatever he might do in a most favorable manner.

"I wish he had corrected that error," he said to himself a great many times when thinking in a pleased way of Mr. Carman, and his own good fortune in having been received into his employment. "It don't look right, but it may be in the way of business."

One day he went to the bank and drew the money for a check. In counting it over he found that the teller had paid him fifty dollars too much, so he went back to the counter and told him of his mistake. The teller thanked him, and he returned to the store with the consciousness in his mind of having done right.

"The teller overpaid me by fifty dollars," he said to Mr. Carman, as he handed him the money.

"Indeed," replied the latter, a light breaking over his countenance; and he hastily counted the bank bills.

The light faded as the last bill left his fingers.

"There's no mistake, James." A tone of disappointment was in his voice.

"Oh, I gave him back the fifty dollars. Wasn't that right?"

"You simpleton!" exclaimed Mr. Carman. "Don't you know that bank mistakes are never corrected? If the teller had paid you fifty dollars short he would not have made it right."

The warm blood mantled the cheek of James under this reproof. It is often the case that more shame is felt for a blunder than a crime. In this instance the lad felt a sort of mortification at having done what Mr. Carman was pleased to call a silly thing, and he made up his mind that if they should ever overpay him a thousand dollars at the bank, he should bring the amount to his employer, and let him do as he pleased with the money.

"Let people look after their own mistakes," said Mr. Carman.

James Lewis pondered these things in his heart. The impression they made was too strong ever to be forgotten. "It may be right," he said, but he did not feel altogether satisfied.

A month or two after the occurrence of that bad mistake, as James counted over his weekly wages, just received from Mr. Carman, he discovered that he was paid half a dollar too much.

The first impulse of his mind was to return the half-dollar to his employer, and it was on his lips to say, "You have given me half a dollar too much, sir," when the unforgotten words, "Let people look after their own mistakes," flashing upon his thoughts, made him hesitate. To hold a parley with evil is to be overcome.

"I must think about this," said James, as he put the money in his pocket. "If it is true in one case, it is true in another. Mr. Carman don't correct mistakes that people make in his favor, and he can't complain when the rule works against him."

But the boy was very far from being in a comfortable state. He felt that to keep half a dollar would be a dishonest act. Still he could not make up his mind to return it, at least not then.

James did not return the half-dollar, but spent it to his own gratification. After he had done this it came suddenly into his head that Mr. Carman had only been trying him, and he was filled with anxiety and alarm.

Not long after Mr. Carman repeated the same mistake. James kept the half-dollar with less hesitation.

"Let him correct his own mistakes," said he resolutely; "that's the doctrine he acts on with other people, and he can't complain if he gets paid back in the same coin he puts in circulation. I just wanted half a dollar."

(to be continued)

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December 4, 1983

THE PROPHET'S PRAYER FOR DIVINE REVELATION

Isa. 64:1 Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

2 As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

3 When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

8 But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

9 Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

10 Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

Memory Verse: But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Isa. 64:6.

Central Thought: The prophet, in the midst of his lamentation for the sad state of affairs with Israel, is praying for God to show His power and manifest Himself before the nations.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This chapter is connected directly with the preceding one. It is a lamentation for the sad condition of the nation of Israel, a recognition of the national sins of the people, and a plea for mercy and intervention. I am especially impressed with the first four verses. The prophet is no doubt thinking of the time at Sinai when God came down in mighty power, when the mountain quaked and great fear was stirred in the

hearts of the people. He is yearning for a manifestation of the power of God so that the souls of men might be moved to fear. Is this not our prayer sometimes, too? There have been some people who have ventured far enough to say, "Well, if there is a God, why does He not show Himself?" But let us notice verse 4. Let us also know that Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 2:9. He was speaking there about the hidden wisdom, and how that the princes of this world did not know this wisdom, or they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them who love him." Here we see the darkness and blindness of mankind described. It is a very important thought. For this reason this Scripture in our lesson is standing out as a stark witness of the main problem that God has with mankind. It is the rebellion of his heart, causing blindness and spiritual darkness. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What causes God to withdraw Himself and hide from man's view?
2. What are all of our unrighteousnesses?
3. What takes us away, like the wind?
4. Is there any hope for the despairing blindness and hardness of men's hearts?
5. How did the destruction of Jerusalem and the beautiful temple prove to be of spiritual benefit?
6. Can you describe or identify the state of mind and heart that caused the prophet to utter the words in verse 12?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Our lesson today presents a sad picture indeed. The blindness of the heart of man, the pitiful state of wickedness and iniquity that binds him, and the seemingly shut up mercies and compassions of God all add up to one sad state. But there are rays of hope shining in this chapter. Can you see them? I see one ray shining in verse 4. It shines in the words: "beside thee." Although man is blinded, God can still see. Paul solves this problem by a strong declaration as he quotes this verse in 1 Cor. 2:10. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Here is another ray of hope: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thy ways." Then again in verse 8: "But

now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." Yes, there are rays of hope shining in the depths of this lamentation. The weight of sorrow and remorse is still upon the prophet, but he has hope. The holy cities are a wilderness and a desolation, and the beautiful temple of God is burned with fire. The plea is left before God in verse 12. Let us remember this verse, because in our next lesson we will hear what the answer of God is going to be to all of this lamentation and prayer.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The streets of a certain city were in bad disrepair, but so was the treasury. City officials were faced with the problem of a shortage of funds, and were unable to fill in the potholes which were a danger to drivers. Then someone came up with a bright suggestion. Why not sell the potholes in the same manner as any product is marketed? Christmas was near, and those road hazards would make ideal gifts for the person who had everything. Therefore potholes were advertised and sold, much to the delight of the city fathers and consumers alike. For \$10.00 the purchaser received a "standard job." It included a certificate of the pothole's location and the date it was filled. For \$20.00 there was a "deluxe job." It came with the recipient's name embossed in fluorescent orange paint on top of the patch. The potholes were soon all filled.

In today's lesson, we learn of a far worse type of disrepair. "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation." There are too many people who come up with bright ideas about how to repair the Church of God. When it comes to the Church, keep in mind that man's ingenuity and wisdom are sometimes a great hindrance.

Isaiah realized what the answer was to Zion's desolation. It wasn't a clever new scheme, but a humbling and submission to God. "But, now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

—Wayne Murphey

UNFORGOTTEN WORDS

(continued from last lesson)

From this time the fine moral sense of James Lewis was blunted. He had taken an evil counselor into his heart, stimulated a spirit of covetousness—latent in almost every mind—which caused him to desire the possession of things beyond his ability to obtain.

James had good business qualifications, and so pleased Mr. Carman by his intelligence, industry, and tact with customers, that he advanced him rapidly, and gave him, before he was eighteen years of age, the most reliable position in the store. But James had learned something more from his employer than how to do business well. He had learned to be dishonest. He had never forgotten the first lesson he had received in this bad science; he had acted upon it, not only in two instances, but in a hundred, and almost always to the injury of Mr. Carman. He had long since given up waiting for mistakes to be made in his favor, but originated them in the varied and complicated transactions of a large business in which he was trusted implicitly.

James grew sharp, cunning, and skillful; always on the alert; always bright, and ready to meet any approaches towards a discovery of his wrong-doing by his employer, who held him in the highest regard.

Thus it went on until James Lewis was in his twentieth year, when the merchant had his suspicions aroused by a letter that spoke of the young man as not keeping the most respectable company, and as spending money too freely for a clerk on a moderate salary.

Before this time James had removed his mother into a pleasant house, for which he paid a rate of four hundred dollars; his salary was eight hundred, but he deceived his mother by telling her it was fifteen hundred. Every comfort that she needed was fully supplied, and she was beginning to feel that, after a long and painful struggle with the world, her happier days had come.

James was at his desk when the letter was received by Mr. Carman. He looked at his employer and saw him change countenance suddenly. He read it over twice, and James saw that the contents procured disturbance. Mr. Carman glanced towards the desk, and their eyes met; it was only for a moment, but the look that James received made his heart stop beating.

There was something about the movements of Mr. Carman for the rest of the day that troubled the young man. It was plain to him that suspicion had been aroused by that letter. Oh, how bitterly now did he repent, in dread of discovery and punishment, the evil of which he had been guilty! Exposure would disgrace and ruin him, and bow the head of his widowed mother even to the grave.

"You are not well this evening," said Mrs. Lewis, as she

looked at her son's changed face across the table, and noticed that he did not eat.

"My head aches."

"Perhaps a rest will make you feel better."

"I'll lie down on the sofa in the parlor for a short time."

Mrs. Lewis followed him into the parlor in a little while, and, sitting down on the sofa on which he was lying, placed her hand upon his head. Ah, it would take more than the loving pressure of a mother's hand to ease the pain from which he was suffering. The touch of that pure hand increased the pain to agony.

"Do you feel better?" asked Mrs. Lewis. She had remained some time with her hand on his forehead.

"Not much," he replied, and rising as he spoke, he added, "I think a walk in the open air will do me good."

"Don't go out, James," said Mrs. Lewis, a troubled feeling coming into her heart.

"I'll walk only a few squares." And James went from the parlor and passed into the street.

"There is something more than headache the matter with him," thought Mrs. Lewis.

For half an hour James walked without any purpose in his mind beyond the escape from the presence of his mother. At last his walk brought him near Mr. Carman's store, and at passing he was surprised at seeing a light within.

"What can this mean?" he asked himself, a new fear creeping, with its shuddering impulse, into his heart.

He listened by the door and windows, but he could hear no sound within.

"There's something wrong," he said. "What can it be? If this is discovered what will be the end of it? Ruin! ruin! My poor mother!"

The wretched young man hastened on, walked the streets for two hours, when he returned home. His mother met him when he entered, and with unconcealed anxiety, asked him if he were better. He said yes, but in a manner that only increased the trouble she felt, and passed up hastily to his own room.

In the morning the strangely altered face of James, as he met his mother at the breakfast table, struck alarm into her heart. He was silent, and evaded all her questions. While they sat at the table the door-bell rang loudly. The sound startled James, and he turned his head to listen, in a nervous way.

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Lewis.

"A gentleman who wishes to see Mr. James," replied the girl.

(To Be Continued)

December 11, 1983

GOD'S ANSWER CONCERNING HIS PEOPLE

Isa. 65:1 I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;

5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

6 Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom,

7 Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

8 Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's

meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

Memory Verse: For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Romans 10:12.

Central Thought: God promises to offer to the Gentiles His saving grace and to bring out of Israel a choice remnant of those who are true and faithful to Him.

Word Definition: *Elect:* Chosen, choice, select.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our last lesson ended with an earnest appeal to God, a distressful lamentation and plea for His divine response to the sore need of Israel. It is very important for us to realize the weight and humiliation that was upon the Israelite nation because of their captivity and exile from the land of their sacred history. And although it was because of their sins that such was their fate, yet God used that punishment to prepare them for the final fulfillment of His plan. Our lesson today is the answer of God to that lamentable appeal. He shows that Israel is not the only nation that He is interested in. The first two verses of our lesson are quoted by Paul in Romans 10:20, 21. After quoting Moses from Deut. 32:21, in which God promised to provoke Israel to jealousy by another nation, he said: "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The prophet in our lesson also quotes from Deut. 32:35, in verse 6. This is one of the rare occasions when an Old Testament writer quotes from another. But this is God speaking. God remembers the song that Moses wrote as a witness to the children of Israel. Recompense will be given to those who refuse to cease from their evil ways, but blessings and peace are reserved for those who will yield to God. God promises a new heaven and a new earth. The new spiritual order in Christ could well be termed a new heaven and new earth, but Peter declares in 2 Pet. 3:13, that this promise includes a new world after this present earth and heavens are destroyed.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did God feel about the other peoples of the earth?
2. What was His feelings toward Israel as a nation?
3. What did He promise to do for those who were faithful in Israel?
4. Who are the new heavens and new earth for?
5. What is the new Jerusalem and her people to be?
6. What kind of spirit prevails in God's holy mountain?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God called Abraham from his kindred and land, leading him to the land of Canaan where he sojourned. From Abraham's seed there sprang a mighty nation. After a sojourn in Egypt they came forth in power to repossess the Canaan land. But Israel as a nation left a tale that is scarred with sin, disobedience, rebellion, folly, and iniquity. Surveying the whole account of the straying of this people from God, it is no wonder that the answer of God comes as it does today in our lesson. All the way God had spread out His hands to this rebellious people. But this brings out more vivid proof that if we refuse to obey God, we will heap upon ourselves great sorrow and destruction. Israel did not get away with disobeying God, and neither shall we. God promises to bring out those who really mean to follow Him faithfully. There is new wine in the cluster. After the winepress is trodden, and the precious grape juice is stored for use, the refuse is discarded and forgotten. In Israel there were those who were true. They were brought out, but those who refused were discarded. It is that way today. We gain nothing by drawing back and following the way of the flesh and the world. Far better it is to follow Christ and bear His cross. Far better it is to deny ourselves and leave all to follow Him. God promises a new heaven and a new earth, in which (as Peter says) "dwelleth righteousness." 2 Pet. 3:13. We can be in that new heaven and earth now in a spiritual sense. We can be made new creatures in Christ, old things passing away, and God will give to His faithful saints dwellings in that world without end. Surely it pays to serve God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Isn't it strange how human nature exalts itself in spite of the fact that it has made itself base and low? In the 2nd verse

of our lesson, God declares that He spread out His hands "all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." Then in the 5th verse, we find what the people think about themselves. "Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou." What great delusion those in this condition suffer. Satan will cause those who have become defiled and degraded to maintain an air of self righteousness and justification.

The Israelites mentioned here are the same ones whom Isaiah, in the fifth chapter told, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." Perhaps you've noticed those who delight in sin, taunt and torment one who is endeavoring to walk uprightly. It is to such erring ones that God declared, "I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom."

Have you ever been near a campfire and had the wind blow smoke from it into your face? The smoke burns your eyes and makes them water, gets in your nose and causes you to choke and cough. God views hypocrites and those who are self righteous as a "smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." When smoke is tormenting a person and the wind won't change directions so as to ease the discomfort, the individual takes measures to change the situation and rid himself of this nuisance. Let us live in such a manner that God will find us a sweet smelling savor of Christ unto Himself and not a provoking odor.

—Wayne Murphey

UNFORGOTTEN WORDS

(Continued From Last Lesson)

James arose instantly and went out into the hall, shutting the dining-room door as he did so. Mrs. Lewis sat waiting her son's return. She heard him coming back in a few moments; but he did not enter the dining-room. Then he returned along the hall to the street door and she heard it shut. All was silent. Starting up, she ran into the passage, but James was not there. He had gone away with the person who called.

Ah, that was a sad going away. Mr. Carman had spent half the night in examining the accounts of James, and discovered frauds of over six thousand dollars. Blindly indignant, he sent an officer to arrest him early in the morning; and it was with this officer that he went away from his mother, *never to return.*

"The young villain shall lie in the bed he has made for himself!" exclaimed Mr. Carman, in his bitter indignation.

And he made the exposure completely. At the trial he showed an eager desire to have him convicted, and presented such an array of evidence that the jury could not give any other verdict than guilty.

The poor mother was in court, and audibly in the silence that followed came her convulsive sobs upon the air. The presiding judge addressed the culprit, and asked if he had anything to say why the sentence should not be pronounced against him. All eyes were turned upon the pale, agitated young man, who rose with an effort, and leaned against the railing by which he stood, as if needing the support.

"Will it please your honors," he said, "to direct my prosecutor to come a little nearer, so that I can look at him and your honors at the same time?"

Mr. Carman was directed to come forward to where the boy stood. James looked at him steadily for a few moments, and turned to the judges.

"What I have to say to your honors is this [he spoke calmly and distinctly], and it may in a degree extenuate, though it cannot excuse, my crime. I went into that man's store an innocent boy, and if he had been an honest man I would not have stood before you today as a criminal!"

Mr. Carman appealed to the court for protection against an allegation of such an outrageous character; but he was peremptorily ordered to be silent. James went on in a firm voice,—

"Only a few weeks after I went into his employment I examined a bill by his direction, and discovered an error of twenty dollars."

The face of Mr. Carman crimsoned.

"You remember it, I see," remarked James, "and I shall have cause to remember it as long as I live. The error was in favor of Mr. Carman. I asked if I should correct the figures, and he answered, 'No; let them correct their own mistakes. We don't examine bills for other people's benefit.' It was my first lesson in dishonesty. I saw the bill settled, and Mr. Carman take twenty dollars that was not his own. I felt shocked at first; it seemed such a wrong thing. But soon after he called me a simpleton for handing back a fifty-dollar bill to the teller of a bank, which he had overpaid me on a check, and then—"

"May I ask the protection of the court?" said Mr. Carman.

"Is it true what the lad says?" asked the presiding judge.

Mr. Carman hesitated and looked confused. All eyes were on his face; and judges and jury, lawyers and spectators, felt

certain that he was guilty of leading the unhappy young man astray.

"Not long afterward," resumed Lewis, "in receiving my wages I found that Mr. Carman had paid me fifty cents too much. I was about to give it back to him, when I remembered his remark about letting people correct their own mistakes, and said to myself, 'Let him correct his own errors,' and dishonestly kept the money. Again the same thing happened, and I kept the money that did not of right belong to me. This was the beginning of evil, and here I am. If he had shown me any mercy, I might have kept silent and made no defense."

The young man covered his face with his hands, and sat down overpowered with his feelings. His mother who was near him sobbed aloud, and bending over, laid her hands on his head, saying:—

"My poor boy! my poor boy!"

There were few eyes in the court-room undimmed. In the silence that followed Mr. Carman spoke out:—

"Is my character to be thus blasted on the word of a criminal, your honors? Is this right?"

"Your solemn oath that this charge is untrue," said the judge, "will place you in the right." It was the unhappy boy's only opportunity, and the court felt bound in humanity to hear him.

James Lewis stood up again instantly, and turned his white face and dark, piercing eyes upon Mr. Carman.

"Let him take his oath if he dare!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Carman consulted with his counsel, and withdrew.

After a brief conference with his associates, the presiding judge said, addressing the criminal:—

"In consideration of your youth, and the temptation to which in tender years you were unhappily subject, the court gives you the slightest sentence, one year's imprisonment. But let me solemnly warn you against any further steps in the way you have taken. Crime can have no valid excuse. It is evil in the sight of God and man, and leads only to suffering. When you come forth again after your brief incarceration, may it be with the resolution to die rather than commit crime!"

And the curtain fell on that sad scene in the boy's life. When it was lifted again, and he came forth from prison a year afterwards, his mother was dead. From the day her pale face faded from his vision as he passed from the court-room, he never looked upon her again.

Ten years afterward a man was reading a newspaper in a far western town. He had a calm, serious face, and looked like one who had known suffering and trial.

"Brought to justice at last!" he said to himself, as the blood came to his face; "convicted on the charge of open insolvency, and sent to State prison. So much for the man who gave me in tender years the first lessons in ill-doing. But, thank God! the other lessons have been remembered. 'When you come forth again,' said the judge, 'may it be with the resolution to die rather than commit a crime!' and I have kept his injunction in my heart when there seemed no way of escape except through crime; and God helping me, I will keep it to the end."

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December 18, 1983

**EVERLASTING SALVATION FOR THE
PEOPLE OF GOD**

Isa. 66:1 Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

5 Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies.

7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

12 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

15 For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

18 For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.

23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.

24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Memory Verse: Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Rev. 22:14.

Central Thought: All who are poor and of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at His Word, God will bring forth to everlasting salvation. He speaks through His Church, who shall be as a mother bringing forth through travail her children, to love and to cherish forever.

Word Definitions: *Tremble:* To fear or reverence. *Dandled:* Fondled or carressed as a child upon the lap of its mother.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This is our concluding lesson in this series of studies from the book of Isaiah the prophet. It is the summing up and final conclusion of God's eternal purpose for His saints. There are several parts of this chapter that are either quoted, or referred to, or verified in the New Testament. In Stephen's defense address against the Jews who were condemning him to death, he quoted from verse 1 of our lesson, declaring that, although Solomon built God a (literal) house, "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet," and then he quoted verse 1 and part of verse 2 of this chapter. The voice of noise from the city and from the temple that was to render recompense to his enemies was that of Christ and His disciples. Verses 7 and 8 are prophetic utterances pointing toward the New Testament Church put into motion on the day

of Pentecost into which a nation was born—three thousand souls. Here the Church is revealed as a mother having peace and glory, loving and nourishing her converts. In verse 15, we see a two-fold application. The Lord goes forth in His Church in the fire of the Holy Spirit to plead with all flesh. Then we know that the Lord will, at the end of time, come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the ungodly. In verse 22, the new heavens and new earth are mentioned once more, with a promise of their remaining before God as His people will also remain. Verses 23 and 24 must be applied to the world to come. Jesus referred to verse 24 in Mark 9:43-48, speaking of those who will go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. Three times He repeated this statement: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." This is a serious statement. It comes from the last verse of our lesson, a final warning of the surety of everlasting punishment.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. If heaven is God's throne, and the earth is His footstool, is it possible for man to build Him a house?
2. Where is God really wanting to dwell?
3. Who is she that brought forth a child before her pain? What was the nation born in one day?
4. What is God extending to the Church?
5. What will our relationship be with the Church of God?
6. What will God's attitude be toward His enemies?
7. What will be the end of those who transgress against God?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There is surely going to be an everlasting world to come. But to qualify for admittance and entrance into that new heaven and new earth, one must be a partaker of the same element of love and holiness that is the law of the Church of God on earth. It is vain to look off away to a better world and hope for entrance therein, if we are not willing to live to the law of Christ which is for us now. In our lesson we have one of the keys for being potential for the Bride of Christ. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." If we will assume this kind of spirit and attitude, God will be able to work with us, and we will see the rest of this prophecy fulfilled in us for our good and eternal welfare. But if we refuse to humble our hearts to obey the Lord, there is an awful future waiting for us. I want

us to pay particular attention to the last verse of the book of Isaiah. The Septuagint translation reads almost identically with what we have in the King James translation. Jesus labeled this worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched as hell fire. It would seem from the reading of this Scripture that those who will be accounted worthy of obtaining entrance to that world of eternal life will have a chance to go forth and look upon those who are being punished for their transgressions. This would be a hard thing for us to comprehend. I will make very little comment on it, but leave it with each individual to draw their own conclusions. But it is a serious warning. The worm here is defined in the Hebrew as a maggot. The gnawing maggot of the conscience will torment forever. Those who are lost in hell will burn, but never be annihilated. The flame will never be quenched. May the fear of God and the love of God stir our hearts as we behold the truth in the book of the prophet Isaiah. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As I read the verses of today's lesson, one thing stood out in my mind: you and I are responsible creatures. We had nothing to do with being born, and no choice as to when or what family. The time is coming when we shall die and it is not left up to us as how or when. However, the short space between birth and death is ours. We can do with it as we please, but inevitably we will be required to give an account of it.

This chapter aptly portrays the life of a Christian and the death of a sinner. The Christian life offers peace through the comfort of God. Here is a quote from one who experienced heavenly comfort. "I have enjoyed many of the comforts of life, none of which I wish to esteem lightly; yet I confess I know not any joy that is so dear to me, that so fully satisfies the inmost desires of my mind, that so enlivens, refines, and elevates my whole nature, as that which I derive from religion . . . from faith in God. May this God be thy God, thy refuge, thy comfort, as He has been mine."

Even if God offered no comfort for our present temporal existence, the fire that Isaiah pictures should serve to make one want to live right. The horror of constant eternal torment is beyond human comprehension. We may be able to soothe and stifle our conscience in this life, but in eternity we will be utterly powerless to comfort it at all. —Wayne Murphey

December 25, 1983

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Memory Verse: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary, in fulfillment of the prophecies, and according to God's promise. The angels heralded His birth to lowly shepherds of

that country. We, today, can rejoice for what the birth of Christ means to us.

Word Definitions: *Espoused:* Betrothed or engaged. *Not willing to make her a publick example:* The Greek text says: "Not willing to expose her to infamy or reproach. *Privily:* Secretly. *Swaddling clothes:* Strips of cloth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Luke 1 tells the story of how the angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth to the home of a young maiden who was a virgin, whose name was Mary. He informed her that she was chosen of God to be the mother of the Saviour of mankind. He explained that this was to be done through the power of the Highest and the Holy Spirit coming upon her. Mary was at this time engaged to be married, and had not yet entered into the sacred state of matrimony. Our Scripture text begins in Matthew with the truth of her expectancy being found out. No doubt it was learned by Joseph from Mary's own lips. One can imagine the terrible feeling and shock that Joseph experienced as this confession came to his ears. No doubt Mary tried to explain it all to him about the visit of the angel and that it was of God, but we see that Joseph could not take it all in. He loved Mary, but his just principles could not allow him to take her in this condition. He did not want to put her to shame before the public, and so was arranging to break off their engagement quietly. It was a difficult position that he was in. But it was God's way. Many times God's ways bring hardships upon His children in the flesh. But it will work out for great blessings. We today are still receiving great benefits from the birth of Christ. His birth meant His entrance into this world. His entrance made it possible for His great work to be accomplished. Had He not come down and taken on human flesh, we could never have been saved. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. When was Mary found with child?
2. What was Joseph's reaction to this?
3. Would he have been justified in putting Mary away?
4. What changed his mind?
5. Why did Jesus have to be laid in a manger?
6. Who were the first ones to hear the news of His birth?
7. What is the most practical and godly way to commemorate the birth of Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There is something about the story of Christ's birth that has a special appeal to the heart of man. Christ's birth was a miracle. It was not the result of a work of nature. The truth of the virgin birth of Christ is hard for the carnal mind to receive. It was doubtless difficult for Mary and Joseph to take in, also. I would guess that even at the moment of the birth of this, her first-born, that Mary's heart was filled with wonderment. She had done her best to believe and accept it as the handmaid of the Lord. But still it caused her to ponder many things in her heart. Think of Joseph, too. It took a lot of faith for him to obey the voice of the angel and go ahead and take Mary to be his wife. In considering the role of Joseph in this real live drama, I have gained a respect and appreciation for this man. He truly manifested the kind of spirit and attitude that God was pleased with. He was right there with Mary in the stable when the shepherds came to worship the child. He was obedient to hazard the long journey to Egypt for the safety of Mary and Jesus, and then to go to Galilee for their safe keeping later. The birth of Jesus is the story of faith, love, devotion, obedience, hardship, suffering, and courage. It was the Lord's plan that He be manifest in the flesh, to come down into a human body. For this to be carried out meant difficulty and hardship for those involved. Even so do God's workings today bring about problems and difficulties. But it is worth it all to see what God brings about. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As indicated in our memory verse, Christ is the great deliverer of mankind. We read of great men throughout the ages who delivered others from bondage. One of the most outstanding was Moses, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt. The Israelites were enslaved by one who showed no mercy. They cried to God for deliverance and He sent Moses to help them.

President Lincoln is remembered for the emancipation proclamation.

Today we are studying about a deliverer who stands head and shoulders above any other. Moses faced a brutal king; Lincoln faced an angry confederacy; Christ faced the arch fiend of hell and gives us freedom from every besetting sin.

It can safely be declared that nothing in the history of mankind has ever made an impact on society like that of the

coming of Jesus Christ. Reformers and philosophers have come and gone, realizing that in fact man is by nature corrupt and undesirable. However, discerning a problem and providing the solution are quite different. No system or philosophy has ever provided the elevating grace to enable man to be what he ought to be outside of divine redemption.

In return for salvation there are three things that Christ desires of us: our heart, the center of our affections; our praise; and the submission of all our plans, problems, and cares.

—Wayne Murphey

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