

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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Volume 17

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Table of Contents

	Page
July 7	The Trial of Jesus 1
14	Peter's Denial of Christ 5
21	Christ Before Pilate 9
28	The Scourging, The Crown of Thorns, and The Calvary Road 13
Aug. 4	The Crucifixion of Christ (Part 1) 23
11	The Crucifixion of Christ (Part 2) 26
18	The Burial of the Body of Christ 31
25	Being Dead With Christ 35
Sept. 1	Jesus Christ Arises From the Dead 42
8	Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene and Doubting Thomas 46
15	On the Road to Emmaus 50
22	Jesus Appears by the Sea of Galilee 55
29	The Great Commission and Christ's Ascension to Heaven 58

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Theme for Third Quarter, 1985

We will endeavor in this series of lessons to finish our studies from the life of our blessed Lord and only Saviour, Jesus Christ. His visit to this earth will close out with the frightful scene of Calvary, the glorious Resurrection morning, and the blessed Ascension to the right hand of God. We have enjoyed these studies concerning the life of Christ. We send them forth, trusting each heart will be blessed thereby. Starting at the trial of Jesus before the chief priests and elders we will follow Him to the judgment hall of Pilate, sadly noting Peter's tragic denial of His Lord and Pilate's fateful decision to turn Jesus over to the Jews' maddening desire. Then down the Via Dolorosa, the street of agony, we see Him thorn-crowned and weary, perhaps falling beneath the weight of the cross, and being assisted by the stranger from Cyrene as he passed by. Let us gaze in quiet thought and serious meditation on the scene of Golgotha, the place of a skull. Try to picture it in your mind as best you can. Once again we will glean from the four Gospels and their various angles of description these sacred scenes from the saddest event of history. Thanks be to God, we can and will rejoice as we behold the empty tomb and the risen form of Christ going to and fro, comforting the sad hearts of His despairing disciples. We will behold their reactions and their joy as the truth begins to dawn upon them. Oh, let us gather to the Mount of Olives and watch Him as He slowly leaves this earth for the mansions of glory and the right Hand of Power. Let us open our hearts wide and let every ray of light from this blessed story of Jesus impress indelibly upon our lives His sacred image forever.

—Brother Leslie C. Busbee

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July 7, 1985

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

Matt. 26:57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

John 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever

taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

Matt. 26:59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Mark 14:59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

Matt. 26:62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

Memory Verse: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. Acts 8:33.

Central Thought: The trial of Jesus was a mock trial with no real justice administered. He was not even allowed the security and shelter of a prison in which to wait for judgment to be brought forth. Within twenty four hours He was arrested, tried, convicted, sentenced, executed, and buried. It was the plan of saving mankind from eternal ruin that willed it so.

Word Definition: *Adjure:* command.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our Scripture for memory this time is taken from Isaiah 53:8 which says: "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." This is really a true prophecy of the mock trial that Jesus was treated with of the envious Jews. It is sad how unfair and unjust people can be in their jealousy and prejudice! Luke tells us in chapter three verse two of his Gospel in telling the time of John's appearing unto Israel that Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests at that time. John 18:13, tells us that they took Jesus first to Annas who was father-in-law to Caiaphas who was the high priest that year. Probably Annas was the one in supreme authority, and some have thought that Caiaphas was really his deputy or assistant. These men were the rulers of the Jews in religious matters, and think how vain and dark their hearts were! To put Jesus to death was their chief objective. Regardless of the method or means to get it done, they were to stop at nothing to see it accomplished. It was not a just trial. Look how they ran through with many witnesses trying to find someone that would come up with an accusation that made any sense. He was taken from prison and from judgment. His judgment was taken away in His humiliation. He was denied the right to a fair trial. This was the workings and doings of God. It could not be a rightful victim for the sins of the world to have it just and right. They had no just cause to condemn and execute a just and holy man like Jesus. Yet, He must be slain for he was the Lamb prophesied to be slain for the sins of mankind.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the chief priests and the elders seek for false witnesses against Jesus?
2. Was Jesus really guilty of breaking any law or doing wrong?
3. What was their reason for wanting Jesus killed?
4. What did the high priest ask Jesus about?
5. Was it to Jesus' advantage that He had not done His works in secret, but rather in public?
6. What was it Jesus said that caused the deciding judgment to be given?

7. Why should the high priests have any ill will against Jesus for what He prophesied about Himself?
8. What was their verdict in this trial?
9. Was there any way that all of this could have been avoided?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

When we think of how Jesus was condemned without a fair trial, and how He took it all so meekly, we ought not to be faint at any persecution or injustice that may be leveled at us as His followers. Jesus would never have been crucified had justice and true judgment been administered. In our later lesson we will see that Pilate saw the injustice of it all. However, this was prophesied to be. Why did God allow His only Son to be treated thus? Because it was part of the price paid for our atonement. Jesus did not take His disciples outside the city and say, "I must be crucified for the sins of the world. I want one of you to nail me to the cross." Could it have been possible for these men who loved Him so to have done such a thing? Of course not. Then it had to be at the hands of wicked men, enraged at the popularity and purity of Christ, doing it under the cloak of an unfair trial, clamoring and roaring for His destruction because of the condemnation that He was bringing upon their own hearts and minds. If Christ suffered for us in the flesh, we should arm ourselves with the same mind. We are not always going to be treated right. Injustice and dishonor are going to be heaped upon us. There will be times when those we have held in confidence will misunderstand us. Jesus had a spiritual mind, motive, and purpose in His way. People who were spiritually blind were offended at Him. It is strange that people react to things the way they do. However, it is a trait of humanity to mistreat things that they do not understand or agree with. It shows up in children. Take a child that is different and cannot relate to others. See how they are made fun of and ridiculed. So it was with Christ. And so it is with His people today.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christ was a perfect example while suffering injustice. Those who possess any sense of justice will clearly discern the circumstances surrounding this trial as an extremely outrageous affair. Anyone who has an insight into humanity will also note that Christ was entirely in control of His emotions and attitudes in these extreme conditions.

No doubt Christ felt a sense of fear, for He was human, yet by the replies he offered His inquisitors, we can see that there was no fear in His soul. Puny man could not threaten His divinity. Christ was putting into action the words of some of His preaching when He said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. 10:28.

Justice is symbolized on courthouses and elsewhere by the figure of a blindfolded woman with scales in her hand. The implication is that the essence of justice is the weighing of the facts in hand with an impartiality, which might be lost if we could see the parties involved. Many times justice would be better served if the blindfold were removed and an intent study were done of the character and the background of the accused. In some instances, this would convict and in others it would exonerate. In the case of Christ, it would have exonerated. Think of the witnesses that Christ could have brought before the chief priests and elders to vindicate his character, which was misrepresented by false witnesses. Some of His defense could have been comprised of the attendants at the marriage feasts in Canaan, blind Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus, Lazarus, the Syrophenician woman, Mary Magdalene, the centurion, Peter's mother-in-law, and many more. The charge the Jews made against Him would not have held much credence in the face of all these who had received only good through Christ.

—Wayne Murphey

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July 14, 1985

PETER'S DENIAL OF CHRIST

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

John 13:36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

John 18:12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

Luke 22:54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

Mark 14:66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:

67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

Luke 22:60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Memory Verse: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. I Corinthians 10:12.

Central Thought: Peter did not have the grace at this time of his experience to stand up for Jesus and acknowledge Him as His Lord. The fear of being arrested and sharing a like fate overpowered his righteous zeal. No matter how confident one might feel in himself, without the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit we are not able to triumph over the enemy.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Simon Peter was a very forward type of a person; impulsive and always ready to speak his mind about everything. It was Peter who asked the Lord to bid him to walk on the water. It was Peter who suggested the building of three tabernacles on the mount of transfiguration. Peter rebuked the Lord when Jesus foretold the death He was going to suffer. Peter was

quick to declare who he believed that Jesus was, and it was Peter who firmly held to the Lord when so many were going back, saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Peter was the one who questioned the Lord about the tribute tax, and he was the one who got to go out and catch the fish which contained the needed money. Peter was the one who asked the Lord how many times that he was to forgive his brother. He was continually at the front as spokesman. He was the only one who raised an objection to Christ washing his feet, and later was the only one who sought to defend his Lord with the sword, cutting off a man's ear. Now here he is again, but not as one of the front, but as one following Christ afar off. He is to learn the depth of his weakness, and the depth also of Christ's forgiving love. How glad we are to know that this lesson he learned well and came out to be a valuable and efficient vessel for the Master's use. No man was able to accompany the Master on this lonely trek through the sufferings of the atonement. He was to tread the winepress alone, just as Isaiah had foretold. Even though Jesus had told him that he would deny Him, Peter was confident in himself that he would make it. Think of the sorrow and remorse that filled his heart when he caught the Lord's eye when He turned and looked on Peter! Then he remembered what Jesus had said unto him just a little while before. His going out and weeping bitterly showed how sorry he was that he had failed his Master when He needed him so much.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is Peter the only one who ever had this sort of problem and weakness?
2. Was it a great big man threatening that caused him to fail?
3. Did Jesus know what was going to happen to Peter?
4. What did Jesus say about it?
5. Why could not Peter have followed the Lord then?
6. Did Jesus give Peter hope of overcoming later?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Fifty days after the happening in our lesson Peter boldly proclaimed the good news to the multitudes at Jerusalem of Christ and His risen power. He could have been so discouraged about what happened that he would have completely forsook ever trying to serve Christ again. However, Christ

brought him out of all of this. We are also sure that Peter always remembered this incident. It is recorded for us also. There is a lesson to be learned here. The world speaks about having self-confidence. Peter was confident that he was able to follow the Lord all the way. However, he learned the hard way that his human strength could not go very far when it came to bearing the reproach of Christ. When he was later filled with the Spirit of God, he went forth not in his own strength or self-confidence. Think how patient and merciful the Saviour was to Peter. I have always been impressed with that moment when the Lord turned and looked upon him. No doubt it was a look mingled with rebuke, compassion, pity, and love. The Lord knew that Peter was not able to follow Him then. Peter was so sure that he would stay with Jesus, and when he woke up to the reality of what he was doing, how ashamed and sorry he was! A young girl had caused him to deny the One that he had loved so much. What was it that caused him to do such a thing? It is the same problem that many have today. The reproach and shame mingled with the fear of the danger and peril of death is still the thing which is so hard for us mortals to overcome today. I am sure that there are many people who would like to be the children of God. However, "by and by they are offended". In the Scriptures we are encouraged to go forth unto Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek for one to come. (Hebrews 13:13.) It is so hard to come forth from the vain security of the flesh and this present world. At this point many weaken and go down. Let us catch a vision of the eternal glory that is in Christ and willingly follow Him all the way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

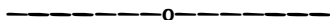
Although Peter denied Christ, he did not lose his love for Him, nor faith in Christ's mission to earth. Although it was an act to be repented of, Peter's denial was more of a failure than a sin. We see people who lose out with God, deny Him, and then show very little interest thereafter. This is sin. Peter still possessed a great desire and love for God. It hurt deeply when Jesus looked at him. He was sorry for his failure. When we fail, God also looks at us. He does care whether or not we make a spiritual success of our Christian life. We should be deeply repentant for our failure.

God looked upon Peter's humility and completely forgave him. The angel told the women at Jesus' empty tomb, "But go

your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." Mark 16:7. Don't you know that it thrilled Peter exceedingly when he heard that he had been singled out? He knew then that Christ had completely forgiven him and had made a special effort to encourage him.

God's love goes beyond our human failures. The Psalmist David said, "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Psa. 103:14. God is not so exacting that He fails to sympathise and understand our humanity. However, it is not advisable to live an up and down life. God has the grace and power to enable us to face conflict of every kind and emerge victorious.

—Wayne Murphey



July 21, 1985

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

Matt. 27:1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

Matt. 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Mark 15:6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

Matt. 27:21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Memory Verse: For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Hebrews 12:3.

Central Thought: Upon examining and questioning Jesus, Pilate confessed that he could find no fault at all in Him, and he wanted to release Him. However, the voice of the people prevailed, and Pilate sought to evade the responsibility by publicly washing his hands of the whole affair.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Adam Clarke informs us that Pontius Pilate governed Judea ten years under the Emperor Tiberius; but, having exercised great cruelties against the Samaritans, they complained of him to the emperor, in consequence of which he was

deposed, and sent into exile, where he killed himself two years later. Clarke also is of the opinion that Pilate could have spared and released Jesus had he but exercised his authority and military force that he had access to. Pilate was in a close place. He recognized that Jesus was innocent and just, and was no doubt impressed with the words that Jesus said. However, he sought to escape the awful challenge before him. It was a custom with the Hebrews to ceremoniously wash hands in matters to portray and declare one's innocence. It is one thing to do something in a ceremony, however, and quite another thing to really be innocent and clear. Jesus spoke very weighty and important words of truth to Pilate. As Jesus was accused of assuming the title and role of a king, Pilate was interested in that, but he was totally unprepared for Christ's explanation of His kingship. The words "My kingdom is not of this world" contain much important truth. They are parallel with Christ's expression to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." So we see that carnal minded men cannot perceive of the true aspect of Christ's kingship. Christ is king today, but in what way? Does He sit on an earthly throne and rule with force and threats of destruction? No, that is not the nature of that kingdom of Christ. That is the kind of kingdom that Pilate was used to. Bloodshed, force, threats, display of power, and domineering oppression were the tools used by the earthly rulers of that day. Oh, if Pilate could have but understood that! He could have accepted Christ and been born again into the kingdom of God, but, alas! it is evident that he did not.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Pontius Pilate?
2. What was the accusation that the Jews brought against Jesus before Pilate?
3. Why was Pilate's wife troubled?
4. What did Jesus say about His kingdom?
5. What effect should it have upon us to know that Christ's kingdom is not of this present world? Of what world is it then?
6. Can you think of other Scriptures that would go along with this thought of the kingdom?
7. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice"?

8. What would be your answer to Pilate's question: "What is truth?"
9. Why did the people want Barabbas instead of Christ? Why do people today want the world instead of Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Christ was on Pilate's hands. He had to do something with Him. He sought to transfer the responsibility from his own soul to that of the people, making a feeble plea of being clean from His blood. However, there is a much greater way of having the blood of Jesus on our hands. To reject Him from being our Lord and Saviour is to make us guilty of the blood of Christ. The apostles later were accused by the high priest of intending to bring Christ's blood upon them. They were no doubt smitten to the heart by what they had done. It is a terrible thing to be responsible for someone else's blood. It was their own rejection of Christ that put His blood upon their souls, not for salvation, but for condemnation. We can have the blood of Christ administered to our souls through faith and acceptance of Him, but if we reject Him, His blood will be upon us for damnation. Oh, how we desire to have the blood of Jesus applied to our hearts! We surely do not want His blood to be on us in any other way. The Jews were willing for His blood to be on them and their children. We know it is on everyone who rejects Him. What a terrible time this was! The morning had arisen on this fateful day. Death was the decree, but the Jews had no power to put to death. This must be done by the Roman over-lords. So to Pilate, the Roman governor, they went on that morning. Pilate could have saved Jesus, but he gave over to content the people. Is it not that way today? It is much easier to please and go with the crowd than to stand up and follow Christ. The way of least resistance is taken by the crowd. It takes strong and determined hearts to go God's way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Much could be said concerning Christ's statement, "Every-one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Let us notice just a few things concerning the kind of people who possess truth.

Those who have truth are completely sincere. There must not be deceit or impurity in their lives. Man's ideas and opinions may pass them by, but when "thus saith the Lord" is read, they will sit up, listen, and take it seriously. Their

salvation is a precious possession. In ancient Rome, those who worked in marble would occasionally chip their artwork and would fill in the chipped places with wax, which was the same color as the marble. They would then sell their product as undamaged or perfectly wrought. Other statue makers, wishing to sell honest products, stamped their product "sine cera" (without wax). From this custom the word sincere is derived. Do we not find in Christ, One who possessed truth, in that He never deceived the people, but was sincere in all He said and did?

Another trait to search for in discovering truth, is those who are at peace in their souls. Wherever there is warring and strife, you will be certain to discover deceit and propaganda also. The night before President Woodrow Wilson made his address to Congress, ushering us into World War I, he told Frank Cobb, the editor of the *New York World*, "From now on we shall not be able to tell the truth."

Christ not only had peace in His soul, but He brings peace to all who will accept truth. —Wayne Murphey

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July 28, 1985

THE SCOURGING, THE CROWN OF THORNS, AND THE CALVARY ROAD

John 19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

Matt. 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Mark 15:20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

John 19:17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a

place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

Mark 15:21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Luke 23:26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Matt. 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Memory Verse: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. I Peter 2:24.

Central Thought: The scourging, the crown of thorns, the smiting, and all the humiliation and torment that our Saviour suffered was the fulfillment of the Word of God. It was the atonement for our souls to be saved from eternal ruin.

Word Definitions: *Scourge:* whip, lash, and flog. *Platted a crown:* twined or braided. *Golgotha and Calvary:* Both of these words mean the same thing, that is, the place of a skull. Golgotha is a Hebrew word while Calvary is actually a Latin word. The Greek word is Cranium. The place was named this either because of the many scenes of death that took place there, or because the brow of the hill might have had an appearance of the top of a skull. *Vinegar:* While

Matthew said that they offered Jesus vinegar to drink mingled with gall (a greenish liquid like bile), Mark described it as wine mingled with myrrh (another bitter extract). The real definition for vinegar here is sour wine. It was given to help dull the senses and the pain.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today portrays the accomplishing of the atonement of Christ for our sins and sorrows. Isaiah 50:6 foretold this: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isaiah 53:5 says: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." These wicked men in their vile treatment of Jesus were only fulfilling Scripture, although they were completely unaware of it. Think of the crown of thorns. Thorns and thistles came as a result of the curse given to the ground because of sin. Thorns are symbolic of the troubles and sorrows of life. Before Christ could be crowned as King of kings, He must wear the crown of thorns. The frenzy of the people were at a high pitch. Jesus was swept along on the crest of this angry mob to His death. The way from the Judgment Hall of Pilate to the cross has been called the Via Dolorosa, that is, the way of grief and sorrow. Down the Via Dolorosa our Saviour went bearing His cross. It is probable that the cross became too much for Him in His human strength. The Bible does not say this, but we must unite the accounts. John said that He went forth bearing His cross. The other three accounts tell of Simon, the man from Cyrene, who was compelled to bear the cross after Him. Cyrene was a celebrated city of Libya on the African coast to the west of Egypt. Alexander and Rufus, it appears (as Adam Clarke expressed it), were well known among the first disciples of our Lord. It is likely that this is the same Alexander who is mentioned in Acts 19:33, and that the other is the Rufus spoken of by St. Paul in Romans 16:13. There is no mistaking that the words Christ spoke to the sorrowing women were formed in a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in 70 A.D.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus have to be scourged?
2. What did the soldiers do to Jesus?

3. How do you think Jesus took all of this mistreatment?
4. Did He ever threaten, strike back, or try to defend Himself?
5. Why do you think He refused the vinegar?
6. Try to picture, if you can, the man who happened to be passing by, perhaps on a journey, and what was in his mind at that event. What questions would he have asked, and what curiosity would have arisen in his heart?
7. Find a map of Jerusalem and trace the Via Dolorosa and the hill of Calvary.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE' COMMENTS

It is said that the Roman mode of scourging, or whipping, criminals was a much more severe way than that of the Jews. The Jews were limited to 39 lashes and the whip, according to Adam Clarke, was not to abuse or cut into the flesh of the one being chastised. However, the Roman way of scourging was with a whip laced with bits of metal and they did not stop at 39 lashes. They would go on until the victim was almost unconscious. That is the kind of whipping our Lord received for our salvation and for our healing. Then after all of this He was ordered to shoulder His cross and start down the street which was no doubt lined with spectators. A certain man who was probably innocently on a journey through that area at that time happened upon the scene. He became a witness and a spectator of what was taking place. His name was Simon and he was from the city of Cyrene. How surprised he must have been when the Roman soldiers singled him out and demanded that he take up the cross and bear it for Jesus. They compelled him to do this, but I am sure that this man Simon was a changed man after that experience. Probably he began to ask people after he had finished his task about who that Man was and why He was being thus treated. It would be interesting to know the rest of the story, wouldn't it? Nevertheless, let us think. We are all on a journey, are we not? Somewhere on our journey we are going to run across Jesus on the road to Calvary. We are going to meet the Master face to face. There will be a cross for us to bear. If we want to serve Him we will be compelled to bear that cross. "Take up your cross, and follow me!" we hear the blessed Saviour call. Let us gaze upon this scene and that which is to follow and let us never be ashamed of the old rugged cross. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christ was treated with disrespect in His lifetime. He was misrepresented at His trial and disdained in His death. The crown of thorns, the scourging, the mocking, the smiting, the shame, disgrace and bearing of the cross, was just as difficult for Him as it would be for you or me. His back, His head and His cheeks were just as tender as ours. His sense of rejection was just as keen as ours. However, it was all a part of the plan of salvation. Isaiah 53:11 says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

God has always possessed a distinct dislike for sin. In His justice, He has decreed that all sin shall be punished. There will be many who will stand before the judgment seat of God and hear the sentence to eternal hell pronounced upon them for the sins that they have committed. There will also be many who will have had their sins transmitted to Christ by pleading His blood. God's anger will already have been assuaged towards these sins and the redeemed can enter into everlasting joy.

We understand by what Christ said in Luke 23:28-31 of our lesson, that He was not so taken up in His own sufferings that He could not sympathize with what others must suffer. We understand that in these Scriptures, He was foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had instructed the people that when they saw certain signs, they were to flee to the mountains to escape this destruction. Here He is emphasizing that it will be much better for those who are caught in this seige to have never had children. The daughters of Jerusalem were weeping for Jesus, but someday they would be weeping for their own children who would die in the destruction of Jerusalem. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" It is not too often that someone will cut down a beautiful green tree, but many times a dead tree will be done away with. If suffering and pain was to be inflicted upon the holy person of Jesus, imagine the type of destruction a corrupt city deserved.

—Wayne Murphey

Grandmother's Room

John Lyman was what his neighbors and townfolk called a "hard-fisted" man; and he had earned the name by dint of persevering stinginess from boyhood up. He and his good wife Phoebe had accumulated a snug little property, besides the many-acred farm which was to be his when "grandmother" should relinquish her claim to all earthly possessions. So he was really able to live in comfort; but, instead of that, the old red farmhouse, which was his father's before him, was a model of angularity, unadorned and unattractive, both inside and out, only preserving a decent aspect through Phoebe's thrift and neatness.

Six little ones made music in the old house, save when their father was there. His presence always seemed to send a chill to their little warm hearts; for he made them feel that they were "bills of expense", and whenever they clamored for pretty things he told them that they "cost money", and sent them away with a reproof for their desires.

Yet John Lyman claimed that he was *just*. "Don't I pay the minister two dollars every single year?" he would say when people inquired. Of course he did; and, if the gentleman was a smart preacher, he added a peck of beans to his annual subscription, although this came a little hard when the harvest was poor. Not being a regular church attendant, he didn't feel called to give to the "heathen", as he was wont to style all benevolent objects of whatever character; and it was generally understood that the two dollars were given on grandmother's account.

Dear Grandmother Lyman! Known and loved by everybody in Peltonville, she was peacemaker, adviser, and, in fact, condensed sunshine in John's household from January to December. She was a *Christian*, too; and John was glad of that, for he believed that she and the Bible were good in case of sickness or death; and, to tell the truth, he had a vague idea that she would see that he had a place in heaven sometime, after he had grown old and tired of this world. However, Grandmother Lyman knew better than this; and morning, noon, and night, her prayers ascended for him, her only remaining child, and his family.

One would suppose that such a mother would have every want supplied, even by a *penurious* son. But, Oh! the love of gain had so eaten into John's best affections that it sometimes seemed as if he had forgotten all claims upon him! So it was

very trying to ask a favor of him, and his mother denied herself many a necessity before doing it.

Something more than usually important troubled her mind. However, on one bright spring morning as she sat by the kitchen fire, all the funny little wrinkles in her dear old face, which were generally only telegraph lines for smiles to run over, were sobered by some weighty consideration. Her knitting-work lay idle in her lap; and she did not even notice that little Tillie had pulled two of the needles out, nor that mischievous Nick was sawing away on the back of her chair with his antiquated pocket-knife. Whatever the problem was, it troubled her all the forenoon; but after dinner she followed John to the door, and, said she, "I've been thinking, John, couldn't I have a little room somewhere all to myself? I'm going on seventy-eight now, you know, and the children get pretty noisy sometimes; and I thought, maybe, if it wouldn't be too much trouble—" "Hem! Well, really, grandma'm," taking off his hat and scratching his head dubiously, "the children do make a precious hubbub here, that's a fact. But I declare! Well, I'll see." And John went to the field.

As a result of the "seeing", on the next rainy day there was heard the noise of hammer and saw in a chamber over the kitchen. This chamber had never been finished or used save as a place in which to store old rubbish of all kinds, and was a gloomy, out-of-the-way room at best. Grandmother Lyman looked rather sober over the prospect; and Phoebe wanted to interfere, but as that was against the rules of the house, John worked on in his own way, until, at the end of two days, and after Phoebe had made several journeys up and down the back-stairs, grandmother was told that her room was ready. The dear old lady dragged herself up to the little chamber, while two little tots came scrambling after hearing her Bible, hymn-book, Wesley's Sermons, and knitting-work. But it was no "palace of beauty" which she found awaiting her. The room was low, slanting on one side, unpapered, uncarpeted, and only lighted by two little dormer-windows, which did their best to admit pure daylight in spite of the dark gingham curtains so trimly hung before them. A bed stood in one corner, before which was a braided rug, while a stove with two good legs occupied the center of the room.

Grandmother looked out at the windows, but the view was not pleasant; two barns, the watering trough, and the fashionable summer resort of the ducks and geese, that was all. She was not one to complain; but she sadly missed the grand

sweep of mountain and valley which had greeted her eyes from the "fore-door" ever since she was brought there a happy bride. Turning to arrange her books on the little table, she sang, in her wavering way,

"Thus far the Lord hath led me on;" and, before the verse was finished, her heart was at peace again. "Doin to stay up here all 'lone, g'anma?" said wee Tillie in pitying accents. "O no! I guess you and Nick will come up real often, won't you?" "I dess so; but 'taint very pitty," said the little one, as she trotted downstairs again.

Meanwhile, John, as he followed the plow, was thinking of the five dollars expended in repairing the room, and trying to persuade himself that he was indeed a worthy son. "Five dollars! It ain't every one that would do as much for his mother as I do for mine," he soliloquized. "Too old to go up-stairs! Oh well, when she once gets up she is more out of the way; and she wants quiet, you know."

Be it known that John sometimes found it necessary to reason with himself in order to assure his conscience that everything was as it should be in her domain; and sometimes, as on this occasion, she asked so many questions that he was obliged to talk the livelong afternoon.

He retired that night thinking, "Five dollars for grand-ma'm's room and the mare lame in both forefeet!" But while these dismal thoughts filled his mind, his body seemed to be very suddenly transported to the kitchen below. He was not alone, however, for a woman was there before him walking the floor with a child in her arms. Back and forth she paced, carefully holding the pale-faced boy in the same position while he slept.

"Ruth," said a voice from an adjoining room, "that little chap will wear you all out. Can't I take him a little while?" "O no," was the reply. "He likes to have me carry him so, poor little fellow." "Ah," said John to himself, "that's the way mother carried me six nights, when I got scalded so terribly." The scene changed, and he saw himself again. A crushed foot this time, demanding his mother's untiring care. Again and again incidents of his life were re-enacted before him, but always with his mother there, comforting, working, watching, or praying. Whether sick in body or in mind, he saw how, all through his life, a mother's tender love had surrounded him. Then he stood once more beside his father's death-bed, and heard again the solemn charge: "Be kind to your mother, John, and make her old age pleasant. She is all you've got

now." With these words ringing in his ears John Lyman awoke to find the perspiration standing on his forehead, and a strange, weird sensation resting on him like a spell, which he tried in vain to throw aside. He tried to compose his mind, and again to sleep; but though nothing peculiarly frightful had troubled his slumber, he trembled from head to foot. In fact, Conscience so long soothed and stifled, had with a terrible effort freed herself, and determined to make one more effort for John's soul. She lashed him unmercifully. She showed him how his soul was growing smaller and meaner every day—how he was just a plague-spot on God's fair earth. He saw himself in a mirror that reflected the inmost recesses of his heart, and he was horrified at sight of the foulness so long concealed.

As the hours wore slowly on toward the day, John grew to hate himself more and more, until, almost stifled in-doors, he rose and went out. Everything wore that unreal look that the first faint twilight gives. Mysterious and still the mists lay along the foot of the mountain, while the stars twinkled in the sky that seemed very, very far away.

From force of habit John Lyman strode into the yard where the cattle were; but they only stared at him sleepily, as they lay tranquilly chewing the cud; so he wandered out and down the path that led into the little maple grove, which had been a playground for three generations. As he passed slowly along under the solemn trees, his boyhood days came back to him so fresh that the twoscore years of hard, grinding toil, flew away as by magic. Oh, that happy, careless boyhood! How had its golden promises been fulfilled! A blush of shame rose to the man's cheek as he thought how hard and cold his heart had grown. Hundreds of times he had stood beside the little stream which he had now reached, without noticing a trace of beauty; but now, as the sun lighted the distant mountain-top with a glow that crept over its sides, a gladdening, awakening glow, seen only in the spring, it seemed as though he had never looked upon the scene before. So new, so beautiful! A wonderful sense of God's nearness stole over him, such as he had not felt before for years, and, at the same time, a new love for his mother, who had so long been the only Bible he read, filled his heart, like a fresh revelation from the Father. The lowing of the cattle recalled him to himself, and he turned homeward, passed up the lane into the barn, and was soon throwing hay into the mangers below. Suddenly he stopped, thrust his pitchfork deep into the hay, and said: "My

mother *shall* have a better room than that if it costs *five hundred dollars!* Now that's so! Hurrah!" Good once more had triumphed over evil, as the experience of the morning culminated in this worthy resolution.

Soon the patter of childish feet was heard, and Tillie cried, "Pa, Pa, mother wants to know where you be, 'cause she's been worryin' about you, fear you's sick, and breakses is all gettin' cold this minute. Boiled eggs, too, ain't it, Ruth?"

"I'll be in directly," came the answer from the high mow; so happy, chattering, Tillie and quiet Ruth climbed down the high steps and started toward the house. Their father overtook them as they stopped to look at the ducks taking their morning bath, and catching Tillie up, he put her on his shoulder, then drew down the little face and kissed the fresh, sweet lips. "How natural!" one may say. No, not natural for John Lyman, whose children feared far more than they loved him.

Tillie was astonished and half frightened, and as she began to wriggle uneasily, her father set her gently down.

In a trice she was beside Ruth, and pulling her head down she whispered in her ear, "Pa just kissed me all his own self, Ruth." "Did he?" said Ruth, opening her eyes very wide. Then she hurried on and walked close by her father's side, while at her little heart fluttered the hope that she too might receive a kiss. However, she was not noticed; and very much grieved she shrank away wondering if he loved Tillie best.

(To Be Continued)

August 4, 1985

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

Part 1

Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

John 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Matt. 27:36 And sitting down they watched him there;

Mark 15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

Memory Verse: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:8.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God, willingly gave Himself to be crucified for the atonement of the sins of the world. They stripped Him of His garments and nailed Him to the cross between two thieves. There they mocked Him and watched Him suffer.

Word Definition: *Malefactor:* Wrongdoer or criminal.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is said that the crosses of ancient Rome were of two pieces: the main upright beam was always left on Golgotha, used many times, while the cross piece was carried to the hill by the condemned. When put together they formed the capital "T". There are other explanations that may be more or less accurate. However it was erected, the death of the cross was a most painful, torturous, humiliating, and horrible way to die. The idea that the place of the crucifixion was a mountain or a hill is really groundless. There is nothing said in the Scriptures of the four Gospels that give any indication of the place being a hill. There may have been a little elevation there, and the name, Golgotha, which meant "the place of a skull" might have indicated a rise of some sort. The Scriptures do not call it anything except "the place". They stripped Him of His garments. As part of His humiliation and disgrace He probably suffered the shame of being without clothes. The prophet in Psalms 22:18 prophesied that they would part or divide His garments and cast lots on His vesture, or cloak. Here the only things that He possessed were taken from Him. He died penniless, homeless, and rejected of men. Through weakness He was crucified. Note the loving attitude of His meek and lowly spirit: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" The princes of this world knew not the wisdom that Christ had. Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They were blinded by their own conceit and vanity. It was all done because mortal man had turned every one to his own way and had gone astray. The Lord was laying on Christ the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6).

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Christ crucified with?
2. What prayer did Jesus offer at the first?
3. Who wrote the title placed on the cross, what did it say and in what languages was it written?

4. Why did the Jews object to what was written?
5. What was Pilate's answer to their objection?
6. Why did the soldiers not rend His coat?
7. What did the people say who passed by?
8. Could Christ have saved others if He had saved Himself?
9. If Jesus would have descended from the cross, would those men have believed? Would there be any profit in that kind of faith?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is a hard, sad thing to suffer when one is cast out and rejected. Here was Jesus Christ, prophesied to be the foundation stone for the Church, rejected and cast out. It was even as the parable of the vineyard that He had given just a few days previous. The well-beloved son of the owner of the vineyard was slain and cast out of the vineyard. Christ has been rejected by the rulers of Israel, God's inheritance. Thus they turn out to be a false Israel, and a people who bear the name only. The Son of God, who had proven His Sonship with God, they have condemned to die like a criminal. He prayed for their forgiveness. He knew it was in ignorance that they were doing this, that they knew not what they were doing. It could be that some of them repented later, but there were hard hearts in that crowd, sitting there looking on, mocking, deriding, and scorning, as they watched Him. It was the third hour of the day; according to our reckoning of time being about 9:00 in the morning. The minutes slowly ticked by. The place being nigh to the city, Pontius Pilate might have been watching from the wall. He was available for the Jews' complaint about the title. Somehow I am persuaded to believe that Pilate was impressed with Jesus. Even in his vanity and pride he surely must have realized that this was no ordinary Man for he said, "What I have written, I have written." That Jesus was a real king he must have admitted in his heart, if not openly. No doubt he was disgusted with the haughty and envious Jews. He could see that they were not right. We will leave this scene now and continue our lesson on His crucifixion next week.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In the case of Christ, the Jews had acted as the judge, jury and executioner. They had finally accomplished their desire and in our lesson today we read that they had set down to

watch Him die. They mocked Him, cast lots for His clothes, and satisfied their hatred for Him, then set down to watch His miserable decease. No doubt they felt totally in control. How comfortable they must have felt as they wagged their heads and made fun of the lone figure on the cross, yet it was a display of cowardliness and weakness of character to taunt Him while dying. They did not know that the one who was in total control was the One on the cross. The true judge was the one being persecuted. There was much more truth in the sign, "Jesus of Nazareth The King Of The Jews", than they realized.

There are many today who have set down to watch. They make no move to claim Christ as their Saviour. They live a life of indifference to the plan of Salvation. If there is any expression made, it is more of ridicule than anything. If people could only perceive the enormity of the power and authority that Christ possesses, there would be a drastic change in attitudes and lives.

—Wayne Murphey

August 11, 1985

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

Part 2

Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Matt. 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

John 19:28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Matt. 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the son of God.

Memory Verse: For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. II Corinthians 13:4.

Central Thought: In those hours while Jesus was hanging on the cross He personally tended to two great needs at hand. One of them was the salvation of the dying thief by His side, and the other was the committing of the care of His mother to His beloved disciple. Then, feeling the weight of the punishment for our sins, He entered the realms of death knowing that the plan of salvation was finished and complete.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are thankful for Luke's account of the salvation of the dying thief and John's account of Christ committing the care of His mother to that disciple whom He loved, which was,

undoubtedly, John, the writer. The other two Gospels say nothing about these incidents. Little is known of these two thieves (Matthew and Mark both called them thieves). According to what they both said, they must have had some knowledge of Christ and what He stood for. The one knew about Jesus' claim to be Christ, and the other's vision went a lot farther, seeming to be aware of Christ's kingdom beyond the grave. The thief on the cross has stood out many times through the centuries as a great example of the mercy and goodness of God. According to his own testimony here, he was receiving just what he deserved. He had no doubt lived a wicked life. However, he looked to Jesus and was saved. The fear of God, which the other thief rejected, had filled his heart. His faith was inspired to ask the only thing left: mercy and remembrance. His prayer was heard, and the salvation of his soul was complete and settled for all eternity. It has been expressed like this: Three men died on crosses that day; one died for sin, one died to sin, and one died in sin. Christ's care for His mother is a touching scene, but it also is a stern rebuke to the erroneous teaching today that Mary, the mother of Jesus, has any saving power. She was not to be the mother of Jesus any more. John took her into his own home. He accepted that God-given responsibility. It is interesting also to note that the 22nd Psalm is well represented here at the cross. Besides the other things already mentioned, we hear Jesus quote the first verse almost word for word: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The last verse of the 22nd Psalm ends with the words: "he hath done *this*." The word "this" is an added word by the translators and can be omitted. The word "done" corresponds with the word "finished". Therefore we have the first and last verses of the 22nd Psalm here brought out at the cross. The words "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" are from the Chaldean language, a language similar and close to Hebrew. The veil, rent in twain from top to bottom at the moment of Christ's death, has great significance. This ought to have been a great testimony to the Jews. Also, think about those saints appearing who had been long since dead and buried. This is really a turn of events, is it not?

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened at the sixth hour?
2. What was the attitude of the first thief?
Weigh it carefully and see if you can see his problem.

3. What was the condition of the heart of the second thief? Name the qualities expressed that were in his favor.
4. What godly element did Jesus manifest in providing for the care of His Mother?
5. What caused Jesus to cry out that forsaken cry?
6. What happened at the moment of Christ's death?
7. What three things were recorded that He said about that time?
8. At what hour did He die?
9. What caused the veil of the temple in Jerusalem to be rent?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, how tenderly Jesus cared for His mother! He knew this was hard on her. She probably remembered the words of Simon, the aged, spoken when Jesus was but an infant: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Jesus took care of this important matter in great suffering and pain. He had a clear mind. From one side of Him came the scornful voice of one of the thieves. I have pondered over the attitude that that man manifested. It was a sorry attitude, forsaking and casting away all fear of God and sense of one's own personal need. How sad that one should forfeit the chance for eternal life just because of foolish pride and vanity! Then from the other side comes the rebuke of the penitent soul. "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" I have pondered over this statement very much. We are all in the same condemnation today. What condemnation is that, you ask? We are all condemned to die and go to the judgment. We should sense the seriousness of this every day. We must keep our attitudes right toward God and toward our fellow man. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Eph. 5:21. "Be not high minded, but fear." Romans 11:20. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and should be our treasure. (Isaiah 33:6) Do we really fear God like we should? The fear of God could have meant this other thief being saved. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." This comes from Psalm 31:5. How wonderful when a child of God dies, to know that his or her spirit is in the hands of a wise and wonderful God. He will do what is right and just with that precious spirit. The future was bright for Jesus as His life-stream ebbed away. He knew that God was going to bring Him forth, just as He had promised to do.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

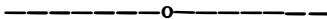
"It is finished." People have grasped these three words with great zeal and fervor and have spread them abroad throughout the earth. Yet we see the world plunging deeper and deeper into the degradation of sin. By this we know that it was not the abolishment of sin that was effected. The accomplishment was the ability for mankind to once again enter into the most holy place. There was nothing more of a divine nature that needed to be done. The plan of salvation was firmly established in heaven and in the earth. It was finished. Echoing down through the ages we read the words of the apostle Paul, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Phil. 2:12. Not even Christ can do anything greater to help us reach heaven. He can give grace and strength, but as far as providing an easier route than the plan that has been provided, He cannot do so. Christ worked, agonized and suffered to complete His part of the plan. What are we doing to complete our part?

People need to make a firm resolve to enter into that most holy place, and then dedicate their life to it. Others would like to tell you how to live, outline creeds and doctrines to abide by, but Christ has already completed the plan of salvation and we must, on our own, enter into a relationship with God that will lead us in the paths of righteousness.

It is our choice to actually complete the plan of salvation in our life. No wonder, in foresight, the prophet exclaimed, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!"

We too will be able to say, "It is finished", only when we pass out of this life and gather around the great white throne. We will also be able to say, "It has just begun!"

—Wayne Murphey



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August 18, 1985

THE BURIAL OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

Matt. 27:55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Luke 23:50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:

51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

John 19:39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Matt. 27:59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Luke 23:55 And the women also, which came with him

from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

Memory Verse: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16.

Central Thought: Two prominent men among the Jews oversaw the operation of taking the body of Jesus down from the cross and placing Him in a borrowed tomb. After the spear had pierced His side, God did not allow His legs to be broken in fulfillment of Scripture.

LESSON BACKGROUND

All four Gospels are unanimous in their account of the man who took charge of the burial of Jesus. Matthew called him a rich man, Mark called him an honourable counsellor, Luke called him a counsellor, "a good man, and a just", while John said that he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. Matthew tells us that the hewn out tomb was what Joseph had prepared, and it was his own. John has a more descriptive account of what went on at the cross after Christ had died. Not wanting to leave the bodies of the crucified on the cross (some had been known to hang there several days) the Jews requested that their legs be broken. This would effect a quicker death, making it almost impossible for the malefactors to continue breathing, but Jesus had died already. Mark tells us that when Joseph asked for the body of Jesus, Pilate wondered that He was dead already, and did inquire of the centurion if He was already dead. Being assured that death had come, he released the body of Jesus to the custody of Joseph. It is a very interesting note that Nicodemus, the man who had sought Jesus earlier by night, assisted Joseph in this operation. Let us hope that Nicodemus became a real Christian and a follower of Christ after this. Both of these men were wealthy men, Nicodemus having purchased and brought a hundred pounds of spices with which to bury Jesus. Another Scripture was fulfilled as Isaiah 53:9 had said that He "made His grave . . . with the rich in His death." I have always had the feeling that when Christ's side was pierced and blood and water flowed out, it meant that Christ spilled all of His blood for us. There was now no life in that body. He was dead. He was now to be buried out of sight just like everyone else. This was part of the plan, a preparation for the glorious resurrection that was soon to take place.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Jews want the bodies to have been taken down by the sabbath day? Could there have been another reason?
2. Why were Jesus' legs not broken?
3. What did one of the soldiers do with the spear?
4. Who was watching from afar off?
5. What kind of man was Joseph of Arimathea?
6. Who helped Joseph take Jesus down and bury Him?
7. What kind of a tomb was Jesus buried in?
8. Who took notice of His burial sight?
9. Could there have been any chance of Jesus not being dead?
10. How important is it to us that He was really dead?
11. Was it really needful that He be put into a tomb as He was?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus was dead. There can be no doubt about that. All life was gone from His body. The blood had all been spilt. His body was no doubt a bloody spectacle as they loosened it from the nails and lowered it down. I would think that they would have had to wash and cleanse it from the blood stains. They did wrap Him in clean, white linen. How sad the disciples were. Compare this scene with the burial of someone you have loved and been close to. How dark everything seems. One man on the way to the cemetery noticed the world around going on with its activities while he was carrying his father to the grave. He said that he just felt like everyone should stop their work. Death is a serious time. The disciples were heart-broken. There was their beloved Lord, in whom they had trusted, laid away in the tomb. The shadows of night have fallen around their day. I can see those devoted women marking the place where they laid Him. Women, who so oftentimes put men in the dark when it comes to loving service of the Master, were so strikingly among His most devout followers. I believe their love for Him was pure. I do not believe that Christ excited any passion or love that was not pure. They appreciated what He had done for them. Now that He was gone, they marked His grave, so that they could return just as soon as the sabbath was past to annoint His body again. See them slowly pass to their homes as the sun sinks in the western sky. However, they know where He lies. Oh, what a surprise is in store for them!

The Heavenly Father always brings light out of darkness and life out of death. We must experience darkness and death before we can have the light of life. To live with Christ we must first die with Him. We are to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, so that we can be alive with Him unto righteousness.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This was probably one of the darkest hours in the life of Christ's disciples and those that followed Him. The last flicker of hope seemed to fade. The activity of the death scene is over and there is time to grieve over the loss and the horrors of what had just occurred. Christ did all that He could to prepare them for this time but still the loss was overwhelming.

We are told that it is darkest just before the break of day. This very aptly describes the time period that Christ's followers were in. In later lessons we perceive the great joy that they experienced. At that time they wouldn't have exchanged the sorrow that they went through for the joy that it ultimately brought. It takes the dark times to make us value the good times. Sorrow will often bring about wisdom and benefit many thereby.

"I walked a mile with Pleasure;
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

"I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But, oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me!"

—Robert Hamilton

Sometimes we marvel at the way God works. For the most part, Jesus had mingled with the poor of this world. In His death we see that God moved upon the hearts of some of the rich and influential. This all fits into the master plan of God. If Christ had been cast into a common grave with the other malefactors, there would have been no sealed tomb and the resurrection would not have had the impact that it did.

—Wayne Murphey



August 25, 1985

BEING DEAD WITH CHRIST

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Memory Verse: It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. II Timothy 2:11.

Central Thought: Christ died to this mortal and material realm to atone for sin. He also died that we might die to everything but the perfect will of God. If we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.

Word Definitions: *Mind:* Opinion, sentiment, disposition, attitude, or interest. "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God." A clearer rendering of this from the Greek text is: "Counted not equality with God to be held on to." To hold on to His position with God would have been keeping souls from

being saved. "*But made himself of no reputation*": The Greek text goes on with "but He emptied Himself." Christ's death on the cross was an expression of love to the souls of men in that He took upon Himself their punishment for sin, so that He could overcome it all and give us victory. The "*body of sin*", means the substance or principle of sin.

LESSON BACKGROUND

At this point in our studies of the life of Christ we see Him in the sealed and guarded tomb. The Jews requested that a watch of soldiers be put at the tomb to keep any of His disciples from coming and stealing away with His body and reporting that He was risen from the dead, like He had said that He would do. So the tomb is being watched around the clock. At this point, with Christ in the tomb, we were inspired with some truths concerning what His death should mean to us, and how we should apply this to our lives. From two of Paul's epistles we have gleaned some worthy expressions of what Christ's death is to us, and what it means to really be dead with Him. Christ could die a thousand deaths, but until we die with Him His death will be very meaningless. In other words, He died so that we could die. He died to sin so we could die to sin. The death we are to die is a severance from the love of earth and the ceasing from the works of sin and the flesh. The life line to fleshly living must be severed by dying to it of our own free-will determination. The old man Paul speaks about, is the carnal human element that dominates a soul and separates them from God and His favor. The old man is at the basis of the body, or substance of sin. We are to die to this.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. In the light of our Scriptures today, can you explain just what the purpose of Christ's death was?
2. What was the mind of Christ concerning His state with the Father and with respect to the lost state of mankind?
3. Can you see the two main condescensions of Christ, that is, the two main ways that He humbled Himself?
4. What are we to do with respect to Christ's death?
5. How are we to reckon ourselves concerning sin and God?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

With Christ in the tomb, the world outside rejoiced. They were relieved to have that One out of the way that withstood their little game of religion. Let us consider now the disciples

and those who had followed Him. No doubt they stayed behind closed doors in humiliation, grief, and fear. At any moment they might expect a knock at the door, entrance being demanded, and their arrest! As the hours slowly passed, their perplexity mounted and their despair increased. Their faith in Christ had brought them to this place. They had put their trust in Him, believing that He was the chosen Messiah, the King of Israel. Now He was dead, and all their hopes seemed shattered to pieces. However, the days were coming, as we shall see in our lesson, when they were to look back and reckon that the death of Jesus held more value and virtue than what they had ever dreamed. If we are to believe in Christ today and if we are to really account that this story of Christ's death and suffering is true, then we are called to share in that same death. We are to be baptized unto His death. We are to die with Him. We can die with Jesus and still be alive in the flesh. It is a spiritual death, a ceasing from the things of sin and the world, and a departure from the powers of darkness and sin. Because of His willingness to die and be brought down to such a depth, Christ was rewarded with a high throne in glory and a name which is above every name. Through the benefit of His death, one can turn away from sin and the things of this present evil world, and can find joy and contentment just leaning on His loving breast. Let us examine ourselves and be sure that we are truly dead with Christ. Remember, that if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The fact that every individual is born of an inherited sin-nature is clearly taught in the Bible. God intended, from the very beginning, that Adam and Eve were to love Him supremely above all else. After the fall, man loved himself first. He lost the image of God that he was created with, one trait of which is a generous nature. A purified nature will automatically seek the good of others before gratifying itself, but not so where self rules. Even a child wants the best for himself, and is willing to act ugly to gain that end. This nature develops right along with the physical bodies and in a few years a full-grown man is full of carnality. Man may learn how to keep it hidden and it may manifest itself in a different way, but it is still there and it rears its ugly head in many ways. This greed for selfish gain has caused such awful practices as one man subjecting another to forced slavery for

profit from unpaid labor. It is the root of robbery, murder, extortion, and a whole catalog of sins.

Our lesson says that Christ had to humble Himself to the death of the cross. Herein lies the secret of dying-humility. We cannot return to the supreme state that Adam and Eve were created in until we put to death self. Self is crucified by humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God. When self is crucified it is not to say that we will never be tempted again, but we will have the power to overcome temptation because we will be living and reigning with Him who has all power in heaven and in earth. —Wayne Murphey

Grandmother's Room

(Continued from page 22)

"I dreamed of your father last night, John," said grandmother while they were at breakfast, "and you can't think how good and natural he looked." John didn't say anything. During the forenoon John had a long conference with his wife which seemed to be satisfactory, for as he left her he said, "Well, then, you take the things out this afternoon, and Johnson shall come over to do the painting tomorrow." Before night the cheerful little spare room which adjoined the parlor was empty, and the old-fashioned paper, with its ever-recurring pictures of a shepherdess, a hunter, and Rebecca at the well, stripped from the walls.

Silence was imposed upon the children, for "grandma'm mustn't know," and the little things went round the house fairly aching with the importance of their secret, and holding on to themselves for fear they might tell. Mysterious trips were taken in the old market-wagon, and a suspicious smell of new things filled the air; but when grandmother inquired what was going on downstairs, Ruth clapped both hands over her mouth and Tillie screamed, "O nuffin, grandma, on'y—O Ruthie, come down, quick!"

One bright May afternoon, however, the work was finished, and John, jealous of the privilege, donned his Sunday coat and stumbled up to his mother's room in the most awkward manner to break the news. "Mother, can you come down below a few minutes now?" said he, trying to appear unconcerned.

"Why, la me!" smoothing her "front" and refolding her neckerchief, "has the minister come? I ain't fixed up one bit."

"No, no, mother, there's no occasion for fixin' up. It ain't

much of anything, only me—that is,—well, perhaps you'd better come now."

"John," said the old lady solemnly, laying her hand on his arm, "if it's bad news, just tell me right away. The Lord will give me strength to bear it, just as he has the dispensations all along."

Poor John! how to acquaint the old lady with this "dispensation" he didn't know; but Tillie came to the rescue.

"O g'anma," said she, seizing one of the wrinkled hands, "we can't wait another minute. It's all splendid; and Nick, and Ruth, and baby, and I have all got our clean aprons on, and Wesley, he's in, so come straight down." and timing her impatient hops to the tottering footsteps she guided, Tillie soon had grandmother in the midst of a smiling group, while the relieved father brought up the rear.

"Now g'anma," said Ruth, seizing the free hand, "shut up your eyes tight till we say open 'em," and then the delighted children, followed by the rest of the family, drew her into the old spare room. "Now, now, g'anma, open, open! and what do you see?" they cried, dancing and clapping their hands. Grandmother looked around her in perfect amazement. Truly a wondrous change had been wrought! Beautiful light paper covered the walls, and a bright, soft carpet the floor, while pretty shades hung before the four great windows, whose tassels swung back and forth in the sweet May air like bells, dumb for joy.

"John, John, what does this mean?"

"It's your room, g'anma," shouted a chorus of voices.

"Why, this is good enough for a queen! You can't mean it all for a poor old creature like me," and the darling old lady's eyes began to run over with happy tears, while John tried in vain to find voice to answer, and dear, patient Phoebe sobbed outright.

"Why, g'anma," shouted little Nick at the top of his voice, "I shouldn't think you'd cry, 'cause this is the cutest room in the house; and when me and Wes comes in, we've got to take off our boots and talk real soft. And Oh, just look at this tablecloth and this rug! It feels like velvet! and this stool—do you see?—it's got a cat's foot on every one of its legs."

"G'anma, I can almost smell the roses," said Ruth, patting the paper.

So with the help of the children the room was christened, everything examined and praised, and at last the noisy little troop withdrew. Then Grandmother Lyman, with a sense of

exquisite comfort, sank into the nice, new arm-chair close to the window.

"Like it pretty well, do you?" queried John, as he took another chair near her.

"Like it? It seems too good to be real. I've thought sometimes that perhaps in my mansion—heavenly, you know—I should find everything soft, and bright, and cozy like; but to have a room like this here on earth, why, John, I can't tell you how thankful I feel. 'Twas lonesome up garret there, and yesterday I dragged in the old cradle and the little wheel to make it seem more social like; but the cradle was empty and broken, and the wheel brought back the old days when I used to sit and spin, while your father husked corn; so they didn't cheer me up much. But I never mistrusted what you was doing down here for me. John, I believe nothing but the Spirit of God could have coaxed you into this. Don't you think I'll see you a Christian yet before I die? and the anxious mother laid her trembling hand on her son's big brown one.

"Well, mother, I don't know;" then came a long pause, for the farmer, almost as silent habitually as the fields he tilled, could find no words to express his feelings.

"I've been feelin' kind of queer lately, and seems as if everything has changed wonderfully, 'Twas a shabby trick, my putting you up in that old room, and it troubled me considerably one night, and then other things kept coming up, till—well—I believe I'm the worst man on earth. Speaking of being a Christian, I guess likely I might fly about as easy. I wish I was an out-and-out one; but I tell you what, mother, there ain't a man in town but that would think I pretended it all so's to make a dollar out of somebody;" and John drew his hand across his eyes, as though there were tears starting somewhere which must be warned to keep away from the windows.

Grandmother didn't care if the tears did come in her eyes, for they were joyful ones.

"Well, the Lord would know better," said she comfortingly, "and by and by others would. It'll be your works, as well as your words, that will tell if you're in earnest."

"That's so, mother, that's so; the minister said that very thing last Sunday. He's been preaching right at me this two months, and it made me mad at first. I thought I wouldn't give him a cent this year, but I guess he told the truth."

"Yes, of course he did. That's what he's made for. But now, John, you won't give up seeking until you get the bless-

ing, will you? Promise me this and one thing more. Don't let the love of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, tempt you to give way to Satan for one minute."

"Well, I'll see what I can do, but it looks like a great task before me." And John really felt as though he was preparing for a stern conflict. He went out to his work again, while Grandmother Lyman knelt down on the soft, bright carpet, the sunset light falling around her, and sent a prayer up to the Father's throne so full of thanksgiving and love that the answer was not delayed, but came, bringing peace and joy to her trusting heart.

Pretty soon Phoebe came stealing in with a look of apprehension resting upon her countenance.

"Mother," said she, sinking into the first chair she reached, "I'm afraid John's going to die."

"My child, what do you mean?" queried the old lady, pushing her spectacles to the top of her head.

"Because he's changed so lately. Fixing up this room, you know, and being so gentle like—what can it mean unless he's going to die?"

"Don't worry, Phoebe, John's just getting ready to live. I tell you, daughter, he's experiencing religion."

A flash of joy lighted up Phoebe's worn face as she spoke.

"Do you think so, mother? Oh, if it only could be true!"

A cry from the kitchen called her thither again, but her heart was light, and old hymns sprang unbidden to her lips, all tuned to the upgushing happiness within. The little ones caught the infection, and capered up and down the old kitchen, until wearied out they dropped off to sleep and to bed.

That day saw the beginning of true happiness in the old red farmhouse. Not but that John passed through many fierce struggles, for the world acquires a strong hold in forty-five years, but with God's help he gained the victory; and humble and happy, one week later he called his little family together, and told them of his new hopes and purposes. We can not describe that scene, but surely the angels saw and rejoiced over it. Then once more, before his friends and neighbors in prayer-meeting, with trembling voice he related his experience. Tears and "amens" greeted it, all testifying to the spirit of true brotherly love. Some, to be sure, there were who said, "Can the leopard change his spots?" But when, Sunday after Sunday, they saw that the head of the "Lyman pew" neither pretended to be asleep, nor to have forgotten his wallet when the much-abused green contribution bag swung along, but instead

deposited therein the freshest scrip, they said, "Truly, this is the Lord's doings, and is marvelous in our eyes."

Perhaps the story of the change at home is about as Tillie whispered it in the ear of a confidential friend. "You see pa asks a blessin' now 'fore we eats; and then we read the Bible; and he prays the Lord to keep us good all the day long; and so we grow gooder and gooder. Pa bought mother a new dress the other day, and oh, he's so much lovin'ger than he ever was before!" Yes, he was "lovin'ger," as Tillie called him, for truly he had passed from death unto life.

The old homestead, too, soon began to change visibly. The shades of ugliness that had so long hung over it vanished away. Its very angles seemed to grow less acute, and never, in its balmiest days, had it rejoiced in such bright coats of paint. But, with all the brightening up without and within, there was one most cozy place of all where the family was wont to assemble each Sunday evening. "Seem's though it's always full of rainbows," Nick said; but that must have been owing to the blessed influence of her who sat there, for this dearest of all nooks was "grandmother's room." —Selected

September 1, 1985

JESUS CHRIST ARISES FROM THE DEAD

Matt. 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sépulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Mark 16:1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

Luke 24:4 And it came to pass, as they were much per-

plexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

Mark 16:6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

Matt. 28:8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Memory Verse: For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. Romans 14:9.

Central Thought: Very early on the morning of the first day of the week those who visited the tomb of Jesus were met with a message from angels that Jesus had risen from the dead.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We see no point in discussing just how long Jesus was in the grave at length as some have done. Some have had problems reconciling Christ's apparent conflict with the time element in His saying that the Son of man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt. 12:40) God can run His own timetable. Jesus was relating His death and burial to the subaqueous ride Jonah took in the belly of the whale. It did not necessarily mean that He would have to stay in the grave that long. The Scriptures are plain in this account. Christ was crucified on the day before the sabbath; He was in the tomb during the sabbath, which was the

seventh (or last) day of the week; and He was resurrected on the first day of the week at the "end of the sabbath." The glorious truth is that Jesus DID ARISE FROM THE GRAVE! Matthew tells us about the watch, or guard of soldiers, that was set at the tomb to guard the body of Jesus from any who would steal away with it. None of the other Gospels make any reference to that. It was only Matthew who told of the angel coming down from Heaven and rolling away the stone, scaring the keepers so that they were like dead men! We thank God, again, at this point, for the varied witnesses and their stories. Matthew said that the women came "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." Mark said that they came very early in the morning at the rising of the sun. John said that Mary Magdalene came very early, "while it was yet dark." Uniting all of these testimonies, we have a pretty good idea that this visit to the tomb was a very early one. We are also persuaded that Christ arose from the dead before any of the women or disciples arrived. The angel did not roll back the stone to let Jesus out, but rather so that the women could look into the sepulchre and see that the Lord was gone. Jesus arose with power from on high, glorified and triumphant over death, Satan, and sin.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was the one person that all the Gospels agree was at the tomb on that glorious morning?
2. For what did they come to the tomb?
3. What surprise awaited them?
4. What were they seeking among the dead?
5. What happened to the keepers?
6. Why did the angel name out Peter who was to be told along with the other disciples about Christ being risen?
7. Where did Jesus want to meet with the disciples?
8. Why did He want to go to Galilee?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is so wonderful to meditate on this truth of Christ being risen from the tomb! We find it hard to take it all in. A heaven-born witness fills our hearts that it is all true. If it is true, (and we know it is) fear and darkness can be banished from the soul forever. With this power that was generated and produced when Christ arose from the grave, the souls of men can be called from their tomb of sin and ungodliness and can come forth to a life of holiness with Him. We love to muse on

what it would have been like to have been one of those who went so early to the tomb. Think about their thoughts and conversation. I believe that they were taken wholly by surprise when they saw the angels and heard their glorious message. It is so precious to think of Christ coming out of the grave on that third-day morning! I am persuaded that He was quickened by the power of God before daylight and arose from the dead, coming forth out of that tomb through the stone and everything that bound Him. As we shall see in our next lesson, He came right out of the grave clothes. God had better garments for Him to wear! Think of Him walking to and fro, waiting for some of His dearly beloved sheep to come looking for Him! How He must have yearned for the moment to show them that He was alive! It is so wonderful to know that Christ lives today. We do not serve something cold, lifeless, and formal. We serve a risen Saviour! He is alive, and at the right hand of God, making intercession for us! Oh, how we do love Him, and hope to see His blessed face some day! Tarry here, O loving heart, and behold your risen Lord. Let your souls be saturated with the goodness of His risen life, and go forth and tell the message with all of your heart!—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is nothing known to the human understanding that conveys the idea of complete finality as does that of death. It is a condition in which all voluntary vital functions cease and from which there is normally no reprieve. No one had even been known to arise from the dead before this Christ came along. He came proclaiming Himself to be the resurrection and the life, and even raised some from the dead before their very eyes, and then declared that all those who would believe in Him would never die. How disappointed His followers must have been when they saw this one who had led them to believe that through Him they could inherit eternal life—Himself expiring on the tree! How could He give life to someone else if He could not retain His own? So real was it all, undeniable evidence that they had seen with their own eyes, and could not deny, until they completely forgot that He had also taught them that though He would indeed give His life a sacrifice for many, yet on the third day He would rise again to live forevermore. Without this event of resurrection, His life and sacrifice were meaningless. This was the crowning feature of the entire affair, for if no life were available to Him, then He had none to offer anyone else. Yet with life restored to

Him, thus proving that He came from the Father of life who was able to break the power of death, He could then proclaim to those at hand, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and unto my God, and your God." He knew His Father would not have glorified Him with life if His sacrifice had not been satisfactory and accepted. Since life was restored to Him, He knew His efforts were acceptable with His Father and consequently the plan of salvation for all mankind was effected. It is through this plan that we are born again and become the offspring of His and our heavenly Father. Praise His name!

—C. W. Wilson
(Written in 1971)

—————o—————
September 8, 1985

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE AND DOUBTING THOMAS

John 20:11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were

assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Memory Verse: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John 20:31.

Central Thought: The Revelation of the risen Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, will wipe away all tears and dispel all doubts.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Each one of the four Gospels mentions that Mary Magdalene was among the first group of women who came to the sepulchre that first Lord's day morning. John singles her out as the first one to behold the risen Lord. John mentions nothing about the other women, who were there according to the account given by the other writers. Probably, since Mary was the first one who brought them the news of the empty tomb, John was not aware of the other women involved at the time, and therefore, he did not include that part in his narrative. Peter and John had hastened to the tomb at the news. John outran Peter, but did not go in at first. Peter went right on in and beheld the linen clothes lying and the napkin, which had been about Christ's head, "wrapped together in a place by itself." After the brethren had gone back home, we see Mary tarrying there, weeping. She was supposing that

they had moved the body of Jesus somewhere else. Even when she saw the angels, the truth did not dawn on her. No, it did not get through to her heart and mind until she heard Jesus speak her name. That is a beautiful thought. Christ knows His own children personally. With Thomas there is an entirely different setting. Such a thing of Christ being alive again after seeing what Christ had gone through with and suffered was too much for his mind to comprehend. He felt that he had to have some tangible evidence before he could grasp it. It is true that he did need that, and the Lord knew it. Notice the Lord's reproof, for Thomas' unbelief, was administered lovingly and gently. It is doubtful whether Thomas actually did what he said he would have to do, that is, put his finger in the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side. When he heard that voice call his name and there was Christ before him, that was plenty of proof. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Mary weeping?
2. What did she see when she looked into the sepulchre?
3. Why did she not know Jesus when she saw Him standing there?
4. In what manner do you think Jesus spoke her name?
5. Unto whose God was Jesus to ascend?
6. What requirement did Thomas have for him to believe?
7. Where was Jesus when Thomas stated the condition of his faith?
8. What was Christ's admonition and reproof to Thomas?
9. How can we be blessed today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There are so many lessons applicable to our lives in these two stories of those who saw their risen Lord. Mary, tarrying and weeping at the tomb, can show us the need for not being hasty. Let us linger and wait on God. Let us not be in such a hurry to get back home, so to speak. Look what she would have missed had she left with the apostles. Think how she did not recognize Jesus. Oh, how our mortal vision will fail us! How the human way of looking at things will mislead us! What was it in Christ speaking her name that brought recognition? It is one of the mysteries of the Gospel how Christ communicates with His own. If we will have the desire and the faith that Mary had we can have a precious revelation of

Christ, also. There are various ways of looking at what Jesus said to Mary here in verse 17. Different ones have expressed themselves in different ways. Some think that Jesus was to go up to the Father before He showed Himself to the brethren in order to accomplish the finishing of His resurrection power. This might be true, although we see nothing in the Gospels that would suggest this. I am more disposed to believe like Adam Clarke has expressed it, and I quote from him: "Our Lord seems to have spoken to Mary to this effect: Spend no longer time with me now: I am not going immediately to heaven---you will have several opportunities of seeing me again: but go and tell my disciples, that I am, by and by, to ascend to my Father and God, who is your Father and God also. Therefore, let them take courage." A loving rebuke and a most wonderful truth comes to us through Christ's dealings with Thomas. "Be not faithless, but believing." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Faith is really stronger than sight. Mortal eyes can misjudge and err so easily, but faith that is anchored in the Word and promises of God cannot fail.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Note the chosen bearer of Christ's message, Mary Magdalene. It seems very appropriate that a woman first obtained this great message. It was a woman who plunged the human race into sin. God created mankind to fulfill a high estate, only a little lower than the angels. It was not long until woman fell and exerted influence upon the man to do likewise. Now we note that a woman was the first to hear of the completion of a plan whereby all may once again obtain their high estate. She was the first to carry this good news to those laboring under the yoke of sin.

Why was it that Mary was the first to receive the good news? Peter and John were also at the tomb that morning, but did not remain. Mary could have departed also, but love held her there. Christ had done much for her. He had cast seven devils out of her, (Mark 16:9), and what affection she must have felt toward Him.

Jesus said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." The Septuagint renders this as "Cling not to me." In Matthew 28:9, we understand that Mary had taken hold of His feet. This is understandable, for she was so heartbroken at finding Him missing that when she did find

Him she wanted to make sure that He would never elude her again. Yet Christ instructed her not to cleave unto Him, for He had a message for her to deliver.

When we find Christ dear to our hearts, it is a joyful union that we revel in. His presence, doctrines, and Church are very precious. However, if we are not careful, as time passes, we can become self-oriented and forget that God has a message for us to deliver to others. Our vision continues to include the Church, but we must not become so involved that it fails to include the lost.

—Wayne Murphey

September 15, 1985

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

Memory Verse: Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. Mal. 3:16.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ draws near to hearts that converse together about Him to reveal Himself and break the bread of life to them. We should ever keep our hearts open to Christ and make Him a welcome Guest.

Word Definitions: *Threescore furlongs:* About 7½ miles.
Expound: To explain thoroughly.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Matthew and John said nothing about the incident in our lesson, but Mark refers very briefly to it in chapter 16 verse 12 of his Gospel: "After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." John 19:25 tells us that Cleopas had a wife named Mary, one of the women standing by the cross. Adam Clarke has good support for the idea that this Cleopas was the same as Alphaeus, whose son, James, was one of the twelve. (Matthew 10:3) Many

authoritative Bible searchers have agreed that the other one of the two walking to Emmaus that day was Luke, the author of this narrative. It is evident that one or both of these men lived in Emmaus. Seeing how things were developing so strangely and feeling such a let down of sorrow and perplexity, they probably felt that they needed to break away from it all for a while. Although they were leaving Jerusalem with its difficulties behind, their minds were still on the events of the past few days. They discussed these things as they walked along. A man can usually walk in a good stride about 3 miles an hour, so we could probably figure that this little trip would ordinarily have taken about two and one half hours. With Jesus walking along with them and their minds engrossed in the glorious message that He was giving to them, I am sure that the time passed very swiftly. The shadows of evening were beginning to fall as they reached the outskirts of Emmaus. They made their way to the dwelling where they were to abide. I can picture Jesus bidding them farewell and starting to walk on down the street. However, there was something burning in the hearts of these disciples that caused them to give Him a warm welcome to come in and stay with them for the night. This invitation has inspired our hearts and many others. The song "Abide With Me, 'Tis Eventide", was inspired from this Scripture, as well as other songs. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were the things that these two brethren were talking over as they walked along?
2. What had happened that very morning that had really caused things to be puzzling?
3. Why did they not know or recognize Jesus when He drew near and began to walk with them?
4. How did Jesus react to their words?
5. What did He say about Himself and His sufferings?
6. Could you begin at Moses and all the prophets and bring out Scriptures that refer to Christ?
7. Why did Jesus make as though He would go farther?
8. Why did He tarry?
9. What would you have done at this point when you realized that it was Christ you had been with?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus loves the unity of His saints. When He saw these two brethren walking along the road and heard them discuss-

ing Him and the things that had taken place, His great loving heart drew near to them. What do we have in our hearts and conversations today that would cause Christ to draw near to us? I remember on one occasion when several of the saints were conversing about heaven and what it might be like. We became engrossed in the subject, just carried away with it! All at once it seemed that something within my heart gave me such an awareness of the presence of Christ. It was as real as if He had come through the front door and was standing quietly in our midst. Many people's conversation is so earthbound and full of things that are not commutative with Christ that He has no desire to enter into the realm of their conversation. The main thing that these men could not understand was why Christ had to suffer those things, and about the vision of angels saying that He was alive. The realities of the cross are hard for the human mind to master. However, the way of the cross is the way to glory. To enter into His glory, Christ had to suffer. Oh, just think of the Scriptures that Christ probably brought out that day. It is really a wonderful study. The many Old Testament Scriptures that point to Christ are the basis of the plan of salvation. It all had its roots in prophecy. What Christ accomplished and performed was predicted and foretold by the prophets long before Him. Our hearts will burn within us, too, as we have the Scriptures opened up to our hearts! Christ was in His glorified state. He could appear and disappear. He could go right through walls and doors with no trouble. He can come to us now, just as He came to those men. Let us be sure that we give Him an open door and a full welcome.

—Leslie C. Busbee

Abide With Me, 'Tis Eventide

Abide with me, 'tis eventide,
The day is past and gone;
The shadows of the ev'ning fall
And night is coming on.
Within my heart, O welcome Guest,
Within my home abide!
O Saviour, stay this night with me,
Behold, 'tis eventide.

Abide with me, 'tis eventide,
Thy walk this day with me
Has made my heart within me burn
As I communed with Thee.

Thine earnest pray'rs have filled my soul
And kept me near Thy side;
O Saviour, stay this night with me,
Behold, 'tis eventide.

Abide with me, 'tis eventide,
And cold will be the night
If I cannot commune with Thee
Nor find in Thee my light!
The darkness of the world I fear
Would in my home abide,
O Saviour, stay this night with me,
Behold, 'tis eventide!

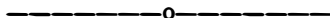
—Anon.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scriptures?” This was not the first time such a thing had taken place. The prophet Jeremiah had an experience in which he said, “I will not make mention of him, [God] nor speak anymore in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” Jer. 20:9. The Psalmist David said, “While I was musing the fire burned.” Psa. 39:3. I am glad that we can still experience that same feeling today. We should always have the love of God burning in our souls, but on special occasions, God can give us a personal visit. Such times of refreshing a child of God will greatly value.

Many times, these special visits occur when we are longing earnestly for the presence of God. Perhaps it is similar to David's experience, when we are “musing” upon God. Undoubtedly, as Jeremiah mused upon the word, he found it so rich that he felt the urgency to share it. The two on the road to Emmaus said, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” There is much solace and comfort found in the Word of God. There is no book like the Bible. The Word and the Spirit agree. As we meditate on the Word and our hearts long for God, the Spirit will burn within us.

—Wayne Murphey



September 22, 1985

JESUS APPEARS BY THE SEA OF GALILEE

John 21:1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Memory Verse: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28.

Central Thought: The main concern of Jesus Christ today is the salvation of souls and the feeding of His flock on the Bread of Life.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There were seven disciples who were gathered together at the sea of Tiberias, which is the same as the sea of Galilee. As we have already learned, it is believed that this Nathanael is the same person as is named Bartholomew, being one of the twelve. Where the others were is not recorded, but Matthew does record that they also (the eleven) met Jesus in Galilee on a mountain. There were perhaps many other occasions that Jesus met with the disciples and in various places, for Acts 1:3 tells us that He was seen of them forty days, and spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The focus of this account seems to be on the relationship of Peter with Jesus. Three times Peter had denied that he knew Jesus, and, even though it was through weakness that he had done this, Christ still seems to have a special dealing with Peter. We notice the kind and yet firm way that Christ dealt with this apostle, not shaming or condemning him for what he had done, but rather pointing Him to the service that true love for the Master calls for. "Lovest thou me more than these?" What did Jesus mean by this? He could have meant, "Do you love me more than these other disciples", seeing that Peter was foremost in expression, even saying on one occasion, "Though all be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Matt. 26:33. Or He could have been referring to the fish and the occupation of fishing that Peter had been engaged in before he was called of the Master. Either one of these thoughts could strike home to us. We notice that Peter did not vaunt himself here. He loved the Lord, but he expressed himself: "Thou knowest that I love thee." It is one thing to testify that we love Christ, but it is another thing to know that He knows we love Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused Peter to decide to go a-fishing?
2. How did his decision affect the others that were with him?
3. Who was seen on the shore when the morning came?
4. Why did they not recognize the Lord at first?
5. What did they find when they got to land?
6. Did Jesus scold them for going fishing?
7. What did Jesus ask Peter three times?
8. What did Jesus tell Peter to do about that other disciple?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Peter had denied His Lord three times. It could have been that Jesus wanted three expressions of love from Peter because of his three-fold denial. However, I believe that there was something else that Jesus had in mind. The first time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, Peter's answer was earnest, but not with so much thought. When Jesus asked him the second time, probably Peter's answer was a little more full of meaning and soberness. Then when he was asked the third time, it grieved Peter. Perhaps he wondered if the Lord was foreseeing another fall or failure. However he was relying on the Lord's knowledge of his love for Him, and not on his own ability. This is a very important thought. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." II Timothy 2:19. Many will say in that day, "Lord, Lord." It is a serious matter to profess to love the Lord. It must be more than just a show of love. It must be from our hearts. God searches the heart and knows if we really love Him, but He also wants us to know that we love Him. The greatest proof we can have, that we love God, is if we are willing to obey His teachings and love one another. The entreaty, "Feed my lambs and feed my sheep" shows Christ's great concern for the welfare of those who would believe on Him. They need nourishment, guidance, supervision, comfort, counsel, admonition, correction, and every other aspect of the gospel continually set before them. If we really love Christ, then we will be concerned with the welfare of His people. Yet we will not allow our thoughts and concern to hinder our own personal relationship with the Lord Himself. "What shall this man do?" is too often the concern of our hearts rather than, "What am I going to do about following Christ?" We are too easily affected by the decisions and feelings of others. Our business is to be sure that we follow Christ, and then we will be able to help others, also.

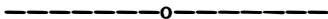
Leslië C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Before Christ's trial and crucifixion, He had sent the disciples forth to preach the gospel. Now, after His death we hear Peter saying, "I go a fishing". Not only did he go, but six other disciples followed along. It is no wonder that Christ appeared with His message to them of, "Feed my sheep." Do you notice how patient He was with Peter? Instead of immediately chastising him, He first provided for his temporal needs. He set forth bread and fish for them to eat. Perhaps you know of a wife who desires something of her husband. First she fixes him a nice meal and then waits until he is in the proper frame of mind to advance her request. There is wisdom in this. Christ did not come to condemn Peter, but to patiently challenge him. We would do well to take heed in our dealings with others.

After dining, Christ questioned Peter, "lovest thou me?" Christ patiently impressed this on Peter's mind by asking him the question three times.

After this episode we find Peter turning to another disciple and asking of Christ what that disciple was going to do. Can you imagine the consternation that Christ must have felt? He had spent three years trying to teach the disciples how to conduct themselves and now, just before His departure, and as He was leaving the work in their hands, a childish rivalry crops up. Sometimes I wonder how God feels when He sees the devil working on the humanity of those who are feeding His flock. Still, Christ dealt patiently with Peter. What a blessing it is that Christ sent His Spirit to patiently deal and guide us into all truths. —Wayne Murphey



September 29, 1985

THE GREAT COMMISSION AND CHRIST'S ASCENSION TO HEAVEN

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Luke 24:44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Memory Verse: For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Hebrews 9:24.

Central Thought: Jesus gave His disciples the command to tarry until they were endued with the Holy Spirit, and then to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all men. His work on earth was finished, and He was taken up from their mortal sight to the right hand of God where He lives today, interceding to God for us.

Word Definitions: *Observe:* Guard, keep, note, fulfill. *Preach:* Proclaim, publish, and announce.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have included in our lesson parts of the three Gospels that tell of the commission and Christ's ascension to Heaven. John does not mention these things as plainly and openly as do the other three. John did tell about Christ's charge to Peter to feed His sheep, and also spoke of the instance when Christ breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." John 20:21-23. He also said there that "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Christ wanted all the world to have a chance to know about His salvation and kingdom. Not everyone would receive it, He knew quite well. Nevertheless, it must go forth as a witness to the nations. Everyone must have a chance to enter the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of the Father was to be the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They were to receive this in Jerusalem. After the Holy Spirit came upon them, they were to go forth under His guidance, inspiration, and power. The ascension of Christ has been an inspiring as well as a curious event to ponder and study. This was in fulfillment of prophecy for in Psalm 68:18 it is written of Him: "Thou hast ascended on high." Psalm 110:1 said, "The Lord (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (Christ), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This Scripture is quoted several times in the New Testament. The apostles knew where the Lord was going. Mark plainly states that Christ was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Oh, what a glorious thought for us today! It is true that Christ lives forever and is even now at the right hand of God, interceding for us, and has left a promise that He will come again.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus tell His disciples to teach all nations to do?
2. In what name were they to baptize in?
3. What wonderful promise did He give them as recorded in Matthew?
4. Who were to be saved? What would happen to those who believe not?
5. Why did it behoove Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead?
6. What did Jesus tell them to do?
7. What was He sending upon them?

8. After that the Holy Ghost would come upon them, what would they receive?
9. What would they be able to do then?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The last words that Jesus spoke on earth are so precious to us today! He has all power in heaven and earth. This word "power" denotes ability, force, strength, authority, mastery, control, and full lordship. His kingdom rules over all. The elements of nature are at His command. Men need to know this. They need it told to them and its power manifest to them. When men are ignorant of this there will be no fear of God before their eyes. They will think they are in control. It is one thing to be told, and yet another thing to really believe and be persuaded of it in their own hearts and minds. Christ wants people to know that He can and will give them victory over all the powers of Satan and sin. The power of sin and evil has been conquered by Christ. When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive. He passed into the Heavenly element where He reigns today as King of kings and Lord of lords! He reigns from Heaven above in the lives of His saints. His kingdom is a dominion of love and faith. It works in the inner man and controls the outer man. Yes, it's a comforting and glorious knowledge that Christ has ascended on high, triumphant over sin and all its stain. Weary souls can come to Christ today and find love, joy, and victory. He ever lives to make intercession for us. He fought the battle through and gives to us the victory. Someday He is coming again. The world has waxed old in sin and iniquity. Soon the last trumpet will sound and Christ will be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, just as He said He would. Oh, how we want to be ready to meet, and be accepted of Him. May the grace of God be with each one of you and help you to be among the faithful on that day!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

People's last words are very weighty and not soon forgotten. The last words of Jesus are very weighty. Not only were they spoken to those present but they were spoken to all who are the disciples of Jesus, through redemption. First, we notice that Jesus affirms that He has "all power in heaven and earth." He has power over all evil spirits, over all opposing powers to His commands, and over all the conditions or

hindrances that might try to stop His purposes being carried out. Then we notice that He gives a specific command to be carried out. Notice that there are no qualifications to this command, but Jesus said, "Go . . . and teach all nations." Mark records His words as being, "Go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature . . . He that believeth . . . shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:15,16. Jesus did not say to stop preaching, teaching or living for Him if people would not believe. It's our duty to see that they hear. Jesus knew that some would believe and that some would not. It seems that we are in the time when very few will believe but we still must go and we still must tell them. That is the command of Jesus Christ. Those who will not believe will have to give an account to God. Oh, for more workers for the Lord. Are we doing all we can to obey Jesus' last command? Are there those in the world who are saying with the Psalmist, "no man cared for my soul"? Psalms 142:4. Are we failing? Are we asking for a greater vision of the value of a soul and a vision of the work of the Lord? "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Prov. 29:18. We each one have a place to fill. Can we do a little more?

Notice that Jesus didn't want them to go forth until they were "endued with power from on high," or filled with the Holy Spirit. They could not fill the place nor face the persecutions unless they had power from God. Notice how Peter faced persecutions after he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Before this time, he even let a little maid cause him to deny Christ. Jesus had previously taught them that the work of the Holy Spirit was to: "Bring all things to their remembrance," to "guide you into all truth," to "give them power over all the power of the enemy," to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 15:26; 16:7-13.

Notice that the disciples were very concerned about their nation being freed from the Roman government. Jesus did not answer their questions, but left it for the Holy Spirit to correct their mistaken notions.

The Scriptures leave unpainted anything unusual about the path of His upward flight. It is only stated that a cloud received Him out of their sight. He "maketh the clouds his chariot." Psa. 104:3. "He passed through the heavens," Heb. 4:14; 1 Peter 3:22, and He "took his seat at the right hand of God." Col 3:1. The angels helped the disciples to bring their thoughts back to their duty and reminded them that He would

come again in like manner, not to be their Saviour, but He will
be their Judge. 2 Tim. 4:1.

—Sis. M. Miles
(Written in 1976)

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