

1989

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 19, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.,
1987**

**Faith Pub. House
Guthrie, OK
73044**

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

(USPS054-680)

Volume 19

Oct., Nov., Dec.

No. 4

Table of Contents

Oct. 4	The Church of God in Prophecy.....	1
11	Built On a Sure Foundation.....	5
18	The City of Our Solemnities.....	9
25	Beautiful for Situation, Established Forever.....	13
Nov. 1	The Blessedness of Living in Zion.....	16
8	Promises of Comfort to Zion.....	20
15	The Glory of the Church Foretold.....	27
22	Christ's Care for the Church.....	31
29	The Church as a Mother With Her Children.....	34
Dec. 6	The Church of God As the Flock of God.....	47
13	Mary Chosen As the Mother of Christ.....	51
20	Unto Us a Saviour is Born.....	55
27	Wise Men Still Seek the King of Glory.....	59

Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church
Edited by Leslie C. Busbee and Wayne Murphey

Subscription Price-50¢ a copy for quarter of year, or
\$2.00 per year, issued quarterly.

Second class postage paid at Guthrie, Oklahoma

Published Quarterly By

FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE
920 W. Mansur Ave.
Guthrie, Oklahoma 73044

Theme for Fourth Quarter, 1987

Our lessons for this series of studies will be on the subject of God's plan for the establishment and function of His Church as foreseen in prophecy and in its fulfillment in the New Testament. We will begin with prophecies of the Church as was given through the prophet Isaiah. We need to bear in mind that many of the Scriptures we will use in our lessons are applied by much of the church world to a future age of the Church. We want to show by the Scriptures how these prophecies were fulfilled and applied in the New Testament, and that how these Scriptures are referring to this present Gospel day. The glorious things that are spoken of Zion, the Church of God, are to be fulfilled in this present Church age. Many souls today who seek and find Christ as their Saviour are in the dark as to what Christ's plan and blueprint for His Church really is. This is a very important study and we set it forth, trusting God to make it a blessing to everyone.

Sincerely in Christ,

The Publishers

—o—

October 4, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

"The Mountain of God's Holiness"

Isa. 2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Isa. 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our

own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

2 In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

3 And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

5 And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Memory Verse: Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Psa. 48:1.

Central Thought: Despite the fact that many people profess godliness, use the name Church of God, and do not live up to the Bible's holy standard, the plan and purpose for His Church remains the same. The Church of God is to be lifted up in holiness and righteousness above the confusion and evil of the world, in peace and purity from all sin. Her name is written in heaven, and she is a place of refuge from all the troubles of this life.

Word Definitions: *"In the top of the mountains:"* In the heights of perfect love and holiness of heart and life. *"Above the hills:"* Above all the creeds and organizations that are void of spiritual life who are operated by men. *"Swords into plowshares, and spears into pruninghooks:"* Instead of fighting against each other with the Word of God, we apply the Word of God to our lives, upturning our souls to prepare us to let the truth grow and prosper in our hearts, and pruning off from our lives every unfruitful branch. *"Seven women shall take hold of one man:"* This is definitely spiritual language and refers to the numerous organizations of men who recognize the right name of the Church, but are in darkness as to what it means to be worthy of that name.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Scriptures in our lesson today are referring to God's Church in this present Gospel age. The prophet's keen vision was transpiercing the ages with spiritual understanding of the people of God united under Christ, lifted up in His grace and holiness, taught of Him, being judged and redeemed by the Word and blood of Christ, and covered and protected by His blessedness. This is what the Christian Church under Christ is to be like. It is purely spiritual language that we have speaking to us in our lesson today. It is not to be taken in a literal sense that the house of God is to be set in the literal mountains somewhere. Why, that would put it in Nepal-China among the Himalaya mountains where the common people would have no access! No, it is not to be carried out literally. It is a truly spiritual experience to have this high and holy way carried out in our lives in this world. Let us picture Zion, which is the spiritual name for the Church (meaning clear, bright, sunny) in the light of our lesson as being lifted up above this old world of sin and sorrow, triumphant in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it possible for us to attain unto the holiness and righteous heights of Zion in our human understanding and strength?
2. What is the attraction that causes men and women to flow unto the city of God?
3. What is the attitude of the worldly and carnal mind when confronted with the standard of holiness that God has for His Church?
4. What will a sincere and humble soul who is thirsting for righteousness say when he sees the high and holy standard of the Church of God?
5. What are we to do with the holy weapons of plowshares and pruninghooks?
6. What is the invitation to souls today that is found in our lesson?
7. In what way do people go in the name and wear their own apparel at the same time?
8. What will be the status of everyone who remains in Jerusalem?
9. How is the filth and blood purged from Jerusalem?
10. What do the terms "Zion" and "Jerusalem" refer to?

ADULT'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Many times, when the standard of holiness that God wills and designs for people today is preached and expounded, the reaction in the heart of man is, "Oh, I could never live like that!" or, "That is too high a plain for me to get up to!" or, "There is no way that man can live up to that kind of teaching!" Many accept these ideas and never seek to attain unto the holiness of the Lord. There was a story I heard once, of an old, army captain back in the morning time. He had heard of the Christians, and was curious to know who and what kind of people they really were. He crept up in the shadows near the Christians' assembly and, from his unseen position, listened to what the preacher said. He was so struck by the high plane of living that was preached and brought out, that he came away and told his associates that there was no possible way for any man live to what that preacher had said. He went as far as to say that there would be only one way that it could be done, and he could not see how that would be, of course. The only way to live that way would be if a man could be changed from the ordinary and be given a new heart and mind. He recognized that man in his natural condition could not live like that, but what he did not realize was that God had a way to do just that; that is, give a man a new heart, soul, and mind. The enemy turns many people away from the truth on account of this. People need to realize that we can only successfully live a Christian life by being raised up by the power of the resurrection of Christ to His holy life of faith and love. This lifts us up in Him and we can bear the name "Church of God" unashamed, wearing the garments of holiness, and feasting on His heavenly manna. Praise the Lord!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The prophet Isaiah foretold in the next to the last verse of our lesson that "the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, it was the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that guided them. Isaiah's prophecy lets us know that as the Church operates according to His divine plan that every heart will be led by Him. This is accomplished by God's Holy Spirit which is also symbolized as fire. (Acts 2:3). Not only will individuals be led by God, but God's leadings will be manifested in the assemblies or congregations. The result of this is that there will be a glory

connected with the Church of God. The definition of glory is, "Praise, honor, or distinction, accorded by common consent." This glory shall be a defense. People will recognize God in our lives and respect us for it. We will not have to carnally defend our stance or beliefs for our lives and God's blessings upon us will defend them.

It is when people start following something other than God's will that troubles and controversy arise. This dims the light of the congregation and the members find that they are constantly having to defend their stand. The children of Israel experienced this very thing. As long as they followed God they were victorious and God's glory was manifested to all the nations round about them. When they would begin following a leader instead of God, their glory would depart and they would end up in bondage.

God has designed a beautiful institution that will work as long as we follow the blue prints. —Wayne Murphey



October 11, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

"Built On A Sure Foundation"

Isa. 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Psa. 118:22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Matt. 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

1 Cor. 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Memory Verse: Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 2 Tim. 2:19.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ was a solid Rock, a living stone of truth, holiness, faithfulness, obedience, humility, love, and steadfastness for God. He is the Son of the living God, and the revelation of Himself to man brings a steadfastness to the soul as we build our faith and hope upon Him.

Word Definitions: *"Shall not make haste."* Haste means excitement or hurry. This indicates fear, doubtfulness, or shame. The rendering of this verse in 1 Peter says "confounded" and in the Septuagint it says, "shall by no means be ashamed."

LESSON BACKGROUND

From Isaiah and the Psalms come two important prophecies concerning the foundation of the Church of God. Jesus Himself did not shy away from the responsibility that was on Him of being the Rock upon which the Church of God was to be built. He was a precious corner stone, a sure foundation, yet He was also the refused, the disallowed, the rejected stone, who was set at naught by the builders, or the professed people of God. These people were going about to establish their own righteousness, and were not submissive to the righteousness of God. How clearly Peter brings out and applies these Scriptures! Isaiah's expression of the future foundation for the Church came in the midst of his denouncing the scornful men of his day whose life-language spoke of making an agreement

with hell and a covenant with death, making lies their refuge and hiding themselves under falsehood. People were doing so in Christ's time, and they are doing so today. Isaiah went on to say that their hiding places would be swept away. Jesus quoted from the 118th Psalm about Himself being as the rejected stone, and becoming the head of the corner. It is true that to some He is a precious and solid Rock upon which to build, while to others He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. (Isa. 8:14). It is our decision as to what He will be to us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does every person in this life need to build his faith and hope upon?
2. In what way is Christ a solid Rock?
3. What all does Christ have that qualifies Him to be the foundation of the Church?
4. What does Christ have that causes many to refuse Him?
5. What kind of disposition causes people to reject Him?
6. A building is positioned upon and fastened to its foundation. What is our application to Christ in our building upon Him?
7. Is there any other real foundation for us to build upon besides Christ?
8. To whom is Christ precious?
9. What is Christ to the disobedient? What do they stumble at?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a blessing to have a solid foundation upon which to build our experience of faith, love, and hope in God! Without this foundation of Jesus Christ in His blessed revelation to our hearts, all would be in vain and hopeless. Jesus was a tried stone. He was put to the test and tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin. The devil was turned loose upon Him, but he never yielded to the enticements and pressures of Satan. He triumphed openly over him. He endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself and overcame their antagonizing arguments and accusations. The hardships and privations of this mortal life He endured gracefully. He was not hardened to the needs of humanity by their relentless coming unto Him. He wearied not of their errors and ignorance. He was strong, and as a servant He bowed beneath the yoke of suffering that His Father put upon Him. He never

flinched under that dark prospect of being despised and rejected of men. Oh, how we love and admire Him! He was so strong, steadfast, and faithful! When we survey His life of service and humility, our hearts are warmed with love and devotion. We gladly turn from the paths of sin and worldly pleasure, and press closer to Him! All in this world is uncertain, vain, perishable, changeable, and unsatisfying to the heart of man, but in Christ we find a solid Rock upon which we lean, cling to, and for which we gladly give our life, our love, and our all. Oh, the great mistake that so many make who reject Him for the vain pursuits of this fleeting world! Many do reject Him. They did it back then, and they are doing it today. He is the same; so precious to those who love and obey Him. What a great reward will be given to those who cleave to Christ all of earth's little while and find themselves triumphant when all of this earth passes away forever!

—Leslie C. Busbee

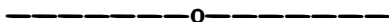
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"But whom say ye that I am?" Before this question Jesus asked the disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" The former question is much more important than the latter. It brings things down to a personal level. When we answer before God on the day of judgment it really won't matter what the world thinks about Him, but what we think about Him. We may be able to state all the doctrines of the protestant faith, but the question remains, "Who do you say that I am?" There are people who can talk "religion" at length, but fail to ever mention a personal Christ. The question could be asked, "Is Christ in your thoughts only as the mighty Saviour of all mankind, or is he something to you personally?" Opinions about Christ may be ever so true, but only a living faith in Him saves.

"Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." When we have an active faith in Christ, He becomes our most cherished possession. Our time, thoughts and affections center around Him. One saying states, "The needle that hath been touched with the loadstone may be shaken and agitated, but it never rests until it turns towards the pole." Likewise, when once our affections have been magnetized by the love of Christ, they find no rest except they are turned towards Him. The cares and labours of this life may demand the attention of our mind, but no sooner is the pressure removed then they automatically align with our affections and point toward Christ.

The important aspect of the north pole lies in the fact that it does not change. Sea captains rely on this as they take directions and chart their course. Neither does Christ change. We can put our affections on this sure foundation with assurance that He will not disappoint us. We can chart our soul's course by His unchanging Word and His undeniable life.

—Wayne Murphey



October 18, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

"The City Of Our Solemnities"

Isa. 33:2 O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of

broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

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

Memory Verse: Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Psalms 48:2, 3.

Central Thought: The Church of God is a safe dwelling place, the home of the soul, where the solemn and sacred worship of God in spirit and truth is ever carried on, where the Lord himself reigns, supplies, blesses, and preserves His people in eternal joy.

Word Definition: *Sinners in Zion:* This refers to professors of religion who are void of the true grace of God, and yet seek to be among the saints. *Hypocrites* are those who profess to be saved without a real experience of salvation. *Receiver:* a trader or weigher of money. *Solemnities:* this word refers to the assemblies, the meetings, the sacred ceremonies and observances of the Church in her worship to God. *Galley, gallant ship:* these terms refer to a large and flashy display and show of worship or religion that is so prominent in man-ruled organizations.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the midst of hypocrisy and deceit and the low state of sinful man, God has placed His Church. For those who will humble themselves to walk with God, the Lord will be their shield and stay, but for the proud and deceitful and hypocritical there will be fear and consternation. Isaiah is giving us a foretaste or a preview of the blessing and comfort that will be found in being born again and dwelling in the New Jerusalem, the Church of God. The judgment and righteousness of the grace of God fills the heart of the redeemed soul. It brings stability and strength to endure the pressures and tribulations that the saints are exposed to. Verse 18 in our lesson is referred to by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 1:20 when he said, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The spirits of strife and covetousness are not in the Church of God. It is a quiet habitation that will never be removed. We love one another, and are not out for financial

gain. The Lord is our all in all. What a blessing to be in the Church of God and enjoy the peace and harmony that prevails among the saved and sanctified!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you make a list of the many benefits that can be enjoyed in the Church of God?
2. What is Zion filled with?
3. What is wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord to us in Zion?
4. Why are the sinners in Zion and the hypocrites afraid?
5. What does the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings refer to?
6. Who is it that will dwell with the everlasting burnings?
7. What do our eyes behold in the Church of God?
8. What kind of people dwell in Zion?
9. What do you see when you look upon Zion?
10. What is the Lord to His people in Zion?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, what a beautiful picture of Zion, the Church of God, that we have before us in our lesson today. To be in Zion, one must be born again by the Spirit of God, and walking in the light of His precious Word every day. The Lord will lead us in the paths of righteousness if we are really His sheep and His own. The Lord Jesus, being at the right hand of God exalted, rules and reigns from heaven above. He fills the habitation of His people in the spiritual heavens with judgment and righteousness. He stabilizes us with His wisdom and spiritual knowledge of Himself because the fear of the Lord is our treasure. This brings a division between those who serve God sincerely and those who serve Him not. Satan blinds the minds of the proud and unbelieving so that they cannot behold the things that God has provided in His Church. We will be lifted up into the heavenly places with Christ, and will be able to resist the devil and overcome all of his devices. Our souls will feast on that bread of life that comes down from heaven and we will drink freely of the water of life that flows out from the throne of God, clear as crystal. The saints are not a fierce people, hard to entreat and get along with. They use great plainness of speech, declaring in a knowledgeable tongue the wonderful works of God. There is quietness and assurance forever in the habitation of the righteous. Her

stakes, the promises of God, shall never be removed. The Lord is our judge, and His judgment is unto truth and victory. He is our lawgiver, writing His laws down in the tender tables of our hearts by the Spirit of God. He is our King and Saviour. What a safe and happy place to be in: the Church of God upon the solid Rock, Jesus Christ! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson today tells us a little bit more about the beauty of the Church of God. It gives us insight into what we can expect among God's people. Isa. 33:2 is very plain concerning these things. "Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand." The people of God are a humble people. They are easily entreated. They are meek in every aspect of their lives. You do not have to worry about them getting riled even if their doctrinal convictions are questioned. The doctrines that they promulgate are not so complicated that an honest seeking heart cannot grasp them and find them logical to their spiritual understanding. They do not say one thing one time and something else another in order to please the people. The doctrines are simple and sure.

How different this is to the religion of the proud Pharisee. Smith's Bible Dictionary says that the Pharisees "treated men like children, formalizing and defining the minutest particulars of ritual observances. The expressions of 'bondage' and of 'burdens too heavy for men to bear', faithfully represent the impression produced by their multiplicity." The doctrine of the Pharisees not only included the written law, but they also had a law of explanation for the written law. These things were bound upon the people. Much of the church world today has a written creed to be followed in order to be a member of their particular denomination. You can be a member of God's Church by simply accepting the Bible. There are no confusing guidelines and interpretations to go with it.

Because there are no private interpretations the Church will always stand. None of its stakes shall ever be moved, neither shall any of its cords be broken. The precepts taught by the Bible will always be the same. This is the reason that the new Jerusalem is a quiet habitation. Confusion and jangling are outside its walls and there is rest and security for the souls on the inside. I realize that the devil would like nothing better than to cause confusion within the Church, but when you see carnality rear its ugly head, remember it is not led of God nor does it have any place in His Church. The

Church of God is beautiful for situation and is where God dwells, imparting judgment, righteousness, wisdom, knowledge and strength to its members. —Wayne Murphey

October 25, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

“Beautiful for Situation, Established Forever”

Psa. 48:1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

Psa. 87:1 His foundation is in the holy mountains.

2 The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

6 The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

Memory Verse: There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. Psa. 46:4.

Central Thought: The Church of God is beautifully situated on the bright hills of glory and perfect holiness, founded on the Word of God, inhabited by those who are born again and enrolled in the Lamb's book of life.

Word Definitions: *"On the sides of the north:"* This evidently refers to the position of the site of the temple, which was situated in the north section of Jerusalem.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The things that are spoken in the Psalms of Zion and Jerusalem are fulfilled now in the Church of God which Jesus purchased with His own blood, and which is built upon Himself, the solid Rock. Zion, the city of David, and Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, are types of the New Testament Church. In speaking of what we are come to in Christ, Paul said in Hebrews 12:22: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. . . ." In Rev. 14:1, John saw a lamb (Christ) standing upon the mount Sion. So whatever is spoken in the Psalms concerning Zion, finds its ultimate fulfillment in the spiritual experience that we have in Christ today as His Church. And it is all so true, clearly discerned by the spiritually enlightened men and women who are born from above. The two Psalms that we quote from in our lesson go together in their description of the beautiful situation of the city of God. She is the city of the great King, Jesus Christ. *Psa. 87:5*, in the Septuagint, reads: "A man shall say, Sion is my mother; and such a man was born in her." This points to the new birth that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus in John 3. Paul called the Jerusalem which is above "the mother of us all" in *Gal. 4:26*. The love of the children of Israel who wholly worshipped God for the city of Zion and Jerusalem is very strongly expressed and evident in the sacred writings, and this same love should fill the heart of the child of God today. And it does, as we hear the Saviour's voice in the holy Church of God. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the things about the Church of God that are so beautiful?
2. What is God known in her palaces for?
3. Why should we seek to have a clear understanding of the Church of God?
4. Is it possible for us to live in Zion and not know about her "towers, palaces, and bulwarks"?
5. What is the mountain of God's holiness to us today?
6. Can you think of some of the glorious things that are spoken of the Church of God?

7. How can a person enter the Church of God?
8. Who established the Church?
9. What will decide a man's status in Zion when the Lord comes and counts up the people?
10. What kind of birth is the Psalmist really talking about?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Many hundreds of years before Christ came and the Church was built, the Spirit of God inspired the writers of the Psalms to vividly portray the glorious aspects of the Church. Peter said that it was not unto themselves, but unto us that the writers of old did minister the things that are now reported by them who preach the gospel. (1 Pet. 1:12) The Church of God is the most beautiful structure and organized body of people in all of time and eternity. To be saved and a part of the holy Church of God is the highest honour and privilege that can be given to a man. We not only are saved in Christ, but we are saved in His Church. The word "church" means a congregation, assembly, or a gathering together unto Christ. When we repent of our sinful ways of life and come to Jesus to believe in and follow Him, we find a transforming experience of the new birth. It is a resurrection from the dead state of sins and our empty ways of life to a new life of joy, victory, and hope in Him. This is what puts us into the Church of God. The truths and the realities of this special relationship with the Lord are the towers, the palaces, and the bulwarks of Zion. How we need to explore and know these blessings so that we can continually testify of their blessedness to the generation that is coming on. Many times people get misinformed and are in the dark concerning the real happiness that is found in living for the Lord. The devil points out to them the hard places and the difficulties, but hides the spiritual blessings and values found therein. Let us know and see as we have heard, so that we can vividly portray these blessings to the generation following.

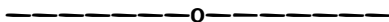
—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In considering the value of a piece of property there are many aspects of it to examine. One prime consideration is that the land is not in a low-lying area that would flood during much rain. This is never a worry concerning the Church of God, for she is located on top of a mountain where sin can never overflow her. Access to water and other needed utilities is of great importance. There is a river of peace that flows

right through the city of God and is easily accessible to all of its inhabitants. If the piece of property does not have a clean title then much caution should be exercised in the purchasing of it. Mount Zion has been fully purchased by Christ's blood, and no man can gainsay our occupancy when Christ opens the door to us. There are times that city and county ordinances greatly restrict what can be done with property within its boundaries. There is liberty in Christ and His commandments are not grievous. Bad neighbors can make any property undesirable. The Church of God is entirely made up of the redeemed of God who are endeavoring to live the very same quality of life which you are. Many neighborhoods have been known to become run down because of a high crime rate. This is of no concern in God's Church for there is a defense of bulwarks erected around it. Jesus said that the very gates of hell could not even prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18). After looking at her towers and strolling through her palaces, you too will have to acknowledge that it is beautiful for situation.

—Wayne Murphey



November 1, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD PORTRAYED IN THE PSALMS

"The Blessedness of Living in Zion"

Psa. 84:1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Memory Verse: When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. Psalms 102:16, 17.

Central Thought: A place in the Church of God is a most desirable and enjoyable dwelling. It is far better than all the thousand lures of sin and the world around us.

Word Definitions: *Amiable:* Loved, well beloved, enjoyable, pleasant. *"Valley of Baca:"* Valley of weeping. *"Be a doorkeeper."* To be in the vestibule or to wait at the threshold. The Septuagint words used here is "abject" which means the lowest place available.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Just who the author of this 84th Psalm is and the conditions that prevailed when it was written we don't really know, but we are persuaded that it is truly an inspiration of God and has great value to us in the Church of God today. A love for the worship of God and the fellowship of His saints is a very vital ingredient in successful Christian living. The presence of the Lord and the sweetness of His spiritual blessings is held so sacred and dear by the true children of God. Our appetites are keen for His life-giving manna from above. We greatly treasure our habitation in His courts of love. Just as a bird finds a place for her nest, even so we have found a habitation in the Lord. Verses 5 and 6 in our lesson are a little vague, but the Septuagint has a very good rendering which we want to share with you: "Blessed is the man whose help is of thee, O Lord; in his heart he has purposed to go up the valley of weeping, to the place which he has appointed, for there the law-giver will grant blessings." How true this is in the Christian life! When trials and hard places come our way, we know that there is good for us in it all, and we purpose to go and pray our way through the valley of weeping until we reach the place that God has in mind for us to attain to, and the Lord answers prayer and brings us forth

with joy abounding. Anyone who really tastes and sees that the Lord is good agrees with the Psalmist when he said that a day in the courts of the Lord far exceeds all that we spent in sin. What a blessing to be in the house of God, the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of the truth!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the things that we can truly enjoy in the Church of God?
2. What did the sparrow and the swallow finding a nest mean to the Psalmist?
3. What do people do who dwell in the Church of God?
4. What do we do in the valley of weeping?
5. Why are we not ashamed to ask God to look upon and behold us?
6. What is the comparison between living in sin and living for God?
7. Is the way of the saints better than the ways of the world? How much better? In what ways?
8. In what way is our God a sun and a shield?
9. What do we need grace and glory for?
10. What will He do for those who walk uprightly?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

When we compare the way of holiness and the blessings of God with the ways of the world and those things that are contrary to Him, we rejoice that we have, like Mary, made the wise choice! How sweet and pleasant it is to live for Jesus! How sweet His Word is to our hearts. It causes praise and righteousness to spring forth in our hearts. His presence accompanies us through the valley of weeping, turning it into a well of springing, living water abounding with blessings. How He guides and teaches us vital lessons for the good of our souls! How glad we are that we have escaped the sinful ways of the world and the people of this wicked age! How we yearn to see others who are captivated by the devil wake up to their wretchedness and come to Zion on this high and holy way! Just one day with the Lord reigning in our hearts is better than a thousand days spent in the vanities of this beggarly world. Much rather would we fill just the lowliest place in the Church of God that His beauty our eyes may behold! I recall a day when I attended a family get-together and how I was so vexed and grieved at the ungodly attire which some of those

present had on. But later that evening, during the service at the chapel, God visited my soul with this Psalm. Oh, how the words in verse 10 just vibrated in my soul! How much better is the meek and modest dress and deportment of the saints of God in Zion! How cheap and ignorant are the customs of the people of our time! Exposing their bodies in such lustful and shameful ways is just an index to the corruption of their hearts. We have found a much better way! With God giving us light and shielding us from all harm, we enjoy the best of life in every way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Psalmist was speaking of the Temple in that day because the presence of the Lord dwelt there. Today, we can apply these same thoughts to the House of God or the Church of God, where God's people dwell together in the Spirit. When the children of God are apart, they long to meet with the saints of God and worship the Lord together. There is something about the blending of the spirits and singing the songs of Zion together, that gives renewed strength and courage in this day, when there is so much opposition to God's Word, and so many deceptive spirits trying to draw one away from the truth. The Psalmist just wanted to be in God's presence with others. He said he would "rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." We are not wanting to be some great person among God's people, but we just want to be a humble servant of the Lord. There are many things we can do for the Lord. We can sweep the chapel, clean the campgrounds, pray with the weary, listen to the discouraged person and have words of comfort for them, pray for souls to be saved, listen attentively to the Word, and many other things we can do. It is much better to be a humble child of God than to dwell with the wicked. We can say with the Psalmist, "I love thy house." We do love God's people, which is the house of God.

We enjoy dwelling in the "courts of the Lord." We have a hedge around us, as the devil reminded God about Job. We are under great protection from the Lord and the devil can't touch us unless the Lord permits. God permitted Job to be touched by the devil but only let the devil go so far. It's precious to know that the eye of God is upon us in our problems, troubles, and perplexities that we face for Christ's sake.

—Marie Miles
(Written in 1977).

November 8, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

"Promises of Comfort to Zion"

Isa. 35:8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

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

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

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

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

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

10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

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

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

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

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

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

Memory Verse: Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Isa. 52:8.

Central Thought: By way of the highway of holiness have come many precious souls in this gospel day unto Zion, the Church of God, and although their numbers are few in comparison with the multitudes who throng the way to destruction, they are precious in the sight of God.

Word Definitions: *"The wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein."* The Septuagint Greek version renders this passage a little clearer: "But the dispersed shall walk on it [the highway of holiness] and shall not go astray. *"Children of the desolate:"* This refers to the converts and children of worldly churches and organizations not led by the Spirit of God, which children are not won by the true gospel, but by weakened and loose doctrines of men, that appeal to the flesh.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have drawn our Scriptures today from the 35th and 54th chapters of Isaiah. Chapter 35 is definitely full of New Testament predictions of peace, prosperity, and salvation through Christ. Through the grace of Jesus, the desert hearts of men will rejoice and blossom as the rose. Weak hands will be strengthened, and feeble knees will be confirmed. Life and health and praises break forth in the dry and parched wilderness. There is found that highway of holiness on which the ransomed of the Lord return with singing to Zion's blessed state. The life of Christ and the fulness of His grace restores mankind to the glorious city of God. Isaiah 54 follows the description of Christ's atonement and suffering in chapter 53. The last verse of that chapter closes with a note of victory for Christ; God dividing Him a portion with the great, and dividing the spoil (the triumph and victory) with the strong, making intercession for the transgressors. The first verse of chapter 54 is quoted in Gal. 4:27, after which Paul had declared that the Jerusalem which is above (the Church of God) is free, which is the mother of us all. Jesus also quoted from this chapter in John 6:45, when He said that all who come to Him are drawn of the Father, and are all taught of God. These quotations from this chapter and the way that the New Testament applies them, is ample proof that the main thing that is spoken of is the Church. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who will walk in the way of holiness?
2. What do people obtain when they come to Zion?
3. Why and how does sorrow and sighing flee away?
4. Which is better: to have a husband and be barren, or to not have a lawful husband and have many children?
5. Who is our husband?
6. What special blessing will the children of Zion, the Church of God have?
7. What is the heritage that God promises to the servants of the Lord?
8. Why does God allow His true Church to be barren, afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted?
9. Will He leave them thus always?
10. What does God promise to do about it?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

At the time of the prophecies of Isaiah to the Church, literal Jerusalem and the Israelite nation were in great distress. As he put it in chapter 64:10: "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation." The prophet is pointing forward to the Messiah, the Christ, who would bring about victory and deliverance for the people. The people who would be united to Christ would make up the great Church of God which would go forth in triumph and power to the end of time. Scattered among the hosts of apostate Israel were true hearts yearning and looking for a better day. God told Elijah in the time of his deepest despair that He had yet reserved unto Himself seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knees to the image of Baal. God knows where the faithful and upright in heart are. There is yet a remnant that God can work with. They will be accounted worthy to walk before the Lord in white and travel the highway of holiness. They will come to Zion with great rejoicing. They will not draw back from the responsibilities that are theirs as the true saints of God. God promises them His help and blessings. They will pass through the fires of persecution and distress, but God will bring them out triumphantly at the last. God's Church is a triumphant Church. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise against her in judgment shall be condemned. If God be for us, who can be against us? Christ is at the right hand of God, interceding for us. Let us sing and rejoice, for the Lord will

have mercy on His true people and deliver them from all of their troubles and trials.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We should be infinitely grateful for this highway of holiness which leads to heaven and wherein is found the comfort and gladness of God. The sad thing is that many people are so blinded by the devil that they have no desire to be on this highway. George MacDonald told men of his day, "You are little children sitting on the curbstone hunting in the gutter for things. Behind you is a King's palace, finer than Buckingham. In it your Father sits. But you won't listen. You won't even turn around to look. You just keep on hunting in the gutter for things and it doesn't matter whether its rotten vegetables or pennies or shillings you find there. They can't make you happy without your Father."

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Isa. 54:10. There is nothing to compare with the kindness of God. It is His kindness that wins us to Him in the first place. He will break the hardest heart of stone if He is just given the chance. One story tells about a German fighter pilot during World War II whose plane was shot down. Because of the courage that he showed when he was captured, he was invited to dinner in the English officer's mess hall. He shook hands with all his hosts. They toasted him, and he toasted them. Then he buried his face in his hands and sobbed aloud. After an embarrassing moment he said: "Please forgive me. Your kindness has overwhelmed me. For most of my life I have been taught to dislike the English. For these last five years I have been made to hate them. I was told that if the English captured me, they would starve and torture me. Instead, you have broken me with your kindness. Gentlemen, I salute you." This story is but a small comparison to the kindness that God shows to those who come to Him. Without His kindness we would be as Isaiah said, afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted.

—Wayne Murphey

-----O-----

THE BETTER CHURCH OF GOD UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are two great errors advanced in the ecclesiastical world in regard to the church question. One is that God had no organized church under the Old Testament, and the other is that Jesus Christ has not organized a new church under the New Testament, but has merely improved the church of Moses and extended it into the Gentile world.

I begin with Matt. 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus here represents himself as an organizer of a church; he plainly says, "I will build my church;" we would, therefore, be ignoring his words to say that he did not build a church.

We will turn next to the epistle unto the Hebrews: "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end." Heb. 3:5, 6. The two churches, that of the Old Testament and that of the New, are here spoken of in the figure of two houses. The Old Testament church is represented as the house of Moses, and that of the New Testament as the house of Christ. Moses is said to have been faithful as a servant of God in his house, and Christ is said to be faithful as a son of God in his house. Christ's house, or church, according to this text must be greater than Moses' church, inasmuch as the son is greater than the servant. That the term "house" in this text signifies a church is evident from Paul's first epistle to Timothy, in which he says the house of God is "the church of the living God." Ch. 3:15. He is speaking here of Christ's house, and if Christ's house is the church of the New Testament, Moses' house must have been the church of the Old Testament.

We will notice the nature of Christ's church in comparison with the church of Moses. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus

Christ." 1 Pet. 2:5. Christ's church is here denominated a spiritual house; Moses' church was not a spiritual house, but merely of a secular nature; it was constituted by a literal nation of flesh and blood, while Jesus' church is constituted by a spiritual nation who are saved by grace—the general body of true Christians. Paul defined the New Testament church as follows: "And have put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body." Again, in Col. 1:24 he says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." These texts make the body of Christ and the church identical. This is the only universal signification the word **church** has in the New Testament. The body of Christ is composed of all the true members of Christ; hence we have in these scriptures a proof of my assertion that the church is constituted by all those who are saved by grace.

We have seen that Moses' church was a secular arrangement and had therefore literal doors by which men entered into it, and a literal door through which men passed out of it. So likewise we shall now see that inasmuch as Christ's church is of a spiritual nature, it has a spiritual door of admission into it and a spiritual door of expulsion from it.

The door of admission into Christ's church is explained in 1 Cor. 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." The one body mentioned here is the one body of Christ, which I have before shown to be the church of the New Testament. The baptism of the Spirit which makes us members of the church of Christ, is the same experience that is elsewhere in the New Testament denominated the birth of the Spirit. This is the only door through which men may enter the New Testament church. Natural birth made men members of the Jewish church, but a spiritual birth is required to make us members of the Christian church.

Let us now compare the door of excommunication from the New Testament church with the door of excommunication from the Old Testament church. Since natural birth made the Jews members of the Old Testament church,

they were bound to retain their church membership as long as natural life continued, regardless of the multitude or heinousness of the sins they might commit; hence the only door through which a member of the Jewish church could have been expelled was that of natural death. Therefore none but those who committed capital sins could have been legally excommunicated, their excommunications having consisted of a stoning to death or execution by some other means. As spiritual birth is the door into the church of the New Testament, those who have been born of the Spirit retain their church membership as long as they retain their spiritual life. They can only retain their spiritual life so long as they refrain from committing sin, because we are told that "sin, when it is finished [committed], bringeth forth death." James 1:15.

As only natural death ended membership in the Old Testament church, and every member of the Jewish nation, no matter how wicked, continued in the church until death, the Jewish church was an unholy church. But not so with the church of the New Testament. Since spiritual death ends our membership in the church of Christ, and it is brought about by a single sin against God, no human being with the condemnation of sin upon his soul can ever possess a membership in the New Testament church; hence it must be a holy church.

As the church of the Old Testament was merely human, or secular, in its nature, it was but a union of the bodies of the people, and with the death of its members it ceased to exist: but the New Testament church being spiritual in its nature binds together the souls of men into a perfect unity in Christ; hence we read of the members of the New Testament church that they are "of one heart and one soul." Acts 4:32. Physical death does not affect our membership in Christ's church, but we continue in it the same after death. God's church upon earth in the new dispensation is the same in its nature as his church in heaven, or in other words it is the same church that has come down from heaven. Well could the apostle Paul speak of "the whole family in heaven and earth." Eph. 3:15.

The government of the New Testament church, like its organization, is spiritual and divine. The officers are all appointed by God through the Holy Spirit. See 1 Cor.

12:28; Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:1-3; 20-28. The discipline of Christ's church is the New Testament; it is the only book of government that has been given by the Founder of the church; hence it is to be granted that he has not intended that we should have another, and I feel safe in saying that none who possess a membership in Christ's church alone will ever need another.

(Taken from *Biblical Trace of the Church*)

-----O-----

November 15, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

The Glory of the Church Foretold

Isa. 59:20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

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

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

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

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

21 Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Memory Verse: They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Psa. 125:1.

Central Thought: Through the blood of the everlasting covenant in Christ our Redeemer, we can be cleansed from all sin and be made a glorious Church without spot before God unto which God can be glorified to bring precious souls to find refuge and salvation.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Chapter 59 of Isaiah is a description of the sinful and degraded state that mankind had sunk to. The need for an intercessor and means for salvation came up before God. There was no other one to fill this place but the "arm of the Lord," which was Jesus Christ. The last two verses of this chapter are the first part of our lesson today. It is a definite prophecy of the Saviour and His gracious covenant of His Word and Spirit to be administered in the New Testament plan for redemption. The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and then Zion is addressed in verse 21 and in all of chapter 60. This is all talking to Zion, and finds its perfect fulfillment in the New Testament Church. The Church is called to arise from fear, unbelief, and all other hindering causes to shine out the glory that is rising upon her through Christ, her Redeemer. With the world in such gross darkness, her light will be outstanding. Her gates are to open wide to receive the souls who are being brought to her through the workings of the Spirit. In Christ, the brass will be replaced with pure gold. Brass is inferior to gold, but can be polished and made to resemble gold. So human talent and wisdom can be polished to look like the real thing, but in the Church of God we will have gold instead of brass. Iron will be replaced with silver, a much more precious metal, although iron can also be polished or plated to look like silver. Brass will replace wood, and iron will replace stone. In the real Church of God, the values are

corrected and the rightful riches are restored. The leaders and officers of the Church are filled with peace and righteousness. The walls are salvation and the gates are praise. It is interesting to compare this chapter with the 21st chapter of Revelation in John's description of the New Jerusalem.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Where is the Redeemer to come to, and to whom will He come?
2. What is the covenant that the Lord promised to make, according to Isa. 59:21?
3. Why is Zion commanded to arise and shine?
4. What kind of condition is the earth in?
5. What will happen when the glory of the Lord is seen upon the Church?
6. What are her gates to open for?
7. What will they call her?
8. What will her walls be called?
9. How can we let the gates of praise be opened?
10. Why will we not need the light of the sun or the moon?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Several hundred years before the Church was put in working order, the prophet Isaiah was given a clear picture of her glory. Her gates of praise, her walls of salvation, the glory of God shining down on her from heaven, and all the other beautiful aspects of her glory is brought out in our lesson. All this is possible through Christ, our Redeemer, and the virtue of His wonderful, everlasting covenant. Let us remember that this is the married wife, and not the desolate woman, the harlot. We must not resort to human ways and means to bring in converts. Let us press close to our Husband and be filled with His glory and His precious Holy Spirit. Let us put on the Lord Jesus and receive the mind of Christ. The children will come. He will bring them to us. Unless we abide in Him we can do nothing. Oh, how beautiful for situation is the Church! How many generations has she been the joy of? When a soul is spiritually made alive in Christ and united with her Husband, then she lives in close communion with Him. Jesus works through the members of His body, the Church, to bring forth children and fruit. As we rejoice in Him and let our light shine through the opened gates of praise, people are going to see that there is something different about us. There is no violence, as the members of the Church love each other and

pray one for another. The light of God is continually shining upon us, and we are constantly walking in that light. The days of our mourning are ended. Our souls are happy, redeemed, and free. "Oh, blessed truth that broke our bands! in it we now rejoice, while in the holy Church of God we hear our Saviour's voice; And gladly to His blessed will submissive we shall be, And from the yokes of Babel's lords from henceforth we are free!"

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If God is to be the glory of the Church, then we must be as Paul and determine not to glory in anything save in the cross of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 6:14). When Paul wrote this to the Galatian church, there were some who were glorying in the flesh. Their prerequisite for salvation hinged upon the observance of things pertaining to the outer man. Paul told them that what counted was being made a new creature. In order for this to happen we must go back to the cross of Calvary.

To glory means, "To exult with joy or triumph; to be proud or boastful." Some people glory in their actions and dress. This can bring about as religious pride. Some people glory in their natural talents with which they serve God. This is a mistake as lifting up man will not draw people to Christ. We must lift up Christ.

There is much with which to glory in concerning the cross of Jesus Christ. Few religions of the world can claim that their founder laid down his life for all people. I am not aware of any death in which God's presense was so manifested as God's was in the darkness that covered the earth, the earthquake and the vail in the temple being rent. There is none that can boast of a resurrected Saviour.

As we glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, we will find that in turn, God will glory in us. The world will be able to look upon us and acknowledge that God's approval and blessings rest upon His church. This will be a light that will draw souls into God's kingdom.

—Wayne Murphey

-----o-----

NOTICE: If your subscription expired with this quarter, please send your renewal at once. It is necessary that your subscription for the first quarter of 1988 be in this office by Dec. 1, 1987. For your convenience there is an order blank at the end of this book.

November 22, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

"Christ's Care for the Church"

Isa. 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Memory Verse: Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. Isa. 12:6.

Central Thought: Not only did Jesus shed His blood for the Church of God, but He continually guards and keeps her as His beloved bride and is, from His place at the right hand of God, sending strength and help through His ministers to edify and build her up.

Word Definitions: *Hephzibah:* From a Hebrew word which means, "My delight is in her." *Beulah:* From a Hebrew word meaning "married."

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first part of Isaiah 61 refers to Christ in His ministry and salvation to the souls of men in captivity and sin. As a result of His sacrifice and gracious favor to men, He said that the old waste and former desolations would be built up (ver.4); that they would be named the priests of the Lord and ministers of our God (ver. 6); and that all that see them should acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed (ver. 9). For this cause, the Messiah (Jesus Christ) exults in His Father and pledges eternal care and service to His Church, to cause it to spring forth righteousness and praise before the nations. He wants the world to be able to see His Church functioning. He wants a visible Church, clearly witnessed by the peoples of the earth. Christ wants the righteousness to go forth as a lamp that burneth. Although Satan works hard to keep the true Church in obscurity and has been successful at times to dim its brightness, Christ is at the right hand of God to strengthen and help His saints to overcome the flood of the devil. The watchmen upon the walls of Zion are the ministers ever preaching the Word; warning, comforting, exhorting, reproofing, and directing. He wants every stone of hindrance and discouragement out of the way, and a highway cast up for souls to clearly follow, and a standard of holiness held up for the people. Jesus has come with His reward and has faithfully executed His work. The fruit of Christ's ministry and sacrifices is a holy people, sought out from this world, and brought into the marvellous light of the gospel.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is Christ rejoicing in the Lord about in our lesson?
2. Where will this righteousness and praise spring forth?

3. What does Christ want the righteousness of His saints to do?
4. Who does God want the truth to be seen by?
5. Instead of being forsaken and desolate, what will our name be called?
6. Bearing in mind that we have spiritual language to discern, can you explain how Zion's sons can marry her?
7. What do the watchmen do on the walls?
8. How can we prepare the way and lift up a standard for the people?
9. What will the saints of God be called?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Besides the blessedness of having the love and fellowship of His bride, the Church, the Lord Jesus has another purpose in maintaining His Church in this world. He wants her to shine out the light of life to the world around. He wants her brightness to go forth as a lamp that burneth. She is to be a crown of glory and a royal diadem of jewels in His hand. This can only be through our close relationship with Him, our beloved. The thought of the land being called Beulah has been an inspiring one to the saints. Several beautiful songs have been written on this subject. The delight and joy that we have found in Christ is truly an indispensable treasure that we cannot afford to lose. There are many burdening things and Satan comes hard against the Church, but it is for every one of us to keep the joy of the Lord always in our souls and on display in our lives. God wants Jerusalem to be a praise in the earth. We need to enter in and go through His gates of righteousness, and be partakers of the heavenly blessings. We should "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." Heb. 12:13. Let us remember the words of our Lord: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5:14-16. This is a great responsibility, but the key to its fulfillment lies in keeping our close communion with Christ, and letting Him work His will fully in our lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

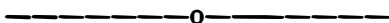
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Those who make up God's Church and are His children, can be sure that He will take care of them. Jesus said, "If ye

then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Matt. 7:11. God will give everything that is needed to make His Church prosper and grow. He will encourage and strengthen the saved and He will draw after the lost that new souls will be born into the kingdom. The Church of God is an active organization that is continually reaching out for new converts. When a church loses its burden for souls and becomes in-grown, it will dry up and cease to be.

God has ordained ministers in the Church to lead, guide and encourage His people. Great responsibility lies on a minister to be the voice of God to accomplish these things. There is a quote that is purported to have been taken from the journal of Robert Louis Stevenson. It says: "Went to church today and was not greatly depressed." It is a sad commentary on any church indeed, when a soul goes there for help and encouragement and comes away depressed. This is not the kind of church where you will find souls experiencing the new birth. God has designed His Church to operate in such a fashion that all honest souls will be able to say as David of old, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Psalms 122:1. The Church of God is a place where the weary can find rest to their souls and become established in righteousness. The Church functioning in this way will cause it to be a praise in the earth.

—Wayne Murphey



November 29, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN PROPHECY

"The Church as a Mother with her Children"

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

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

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

6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a

voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies.

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

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

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.

10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

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

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

14 And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

Memory Verse Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. *Psa. 149:2.*

Central Thought: The poor in spirit and those who truly fear God will be granted the blessing of being born into the Church of God to be nourished and fed with the glory and peace and comfort that God will extend abundantly.

Word Definitions: *Contrite spirit:* From a Hebrew word which means smitten, referring to a heart that is broken, submissive, and humble. *Tremble:* Fearful and reverential feeling and attitude.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is from the final chapter in the book of the prophet Isaiah. The vision of Zion, the Church of God, that Isaiah gives us ends up in this final chapter in a blaze of spiritual triumph. In the chapter previous to this one, the prophet spoke of new heavens and a new earth, and that God

would create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. (verses 17, 18). The first two verses of our lesson are quoted by the faithful Stephen to the Jews in his final testimony just before he was martyred. He had brought out the fact that Israel had worshipped other gods even while they had the tabernacle of witness that God had given through Moses. He also said that David desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob, but that Solomon built Him a house. He then quoted from Isaiah here, that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. He upbraided them for their stiffness and uncircumcised hearts and ears. They received the law, but did not keep it. Acts 7:42-53. This helps us to know that the real Zion and habitation of the Almighty God is not confined to a tent nor a temple of wood and stone. The true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man is a spiritual house. The voice of noise from the city and the voice from the temple is the voice of Christ, tearing down the alienating forces of the old law system, and pointing people to the spiritual life that makes up true Zion, His holy Church. Zion is then pictured as a woman great with child, ready to bring forth even before her pains come. The true Zion, the spiritual Church, was heavy laden with the seed of the gospel to be dispersed to the world. She was pregnant with souls who were seeking for the true way. The New Testament shows what joy was in the hearts of men who responded to the call of the Lord and found access into the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of the truth.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Lord say was His throne and footstool?
2. If heaven is His throne and earth His footstool, what possibility is there of puny men building God a house?
3. Where is the real place of God's rest?
4. What kind of man is God looking for?
5. What will happen to all who refuse to acknowledge the true saints of God?
6. What kind of voice did the prophet hear? Whose voice was it?
7. What does Zion bring forth in, and even before, her travail?
8. Who is it that will be glad for Jerusalem and rejoice with her?
9. What does God extend to the Church, and with what measure?
10. When we are comforted in Zion, what effect will it have on our hearts and lives?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What does it mean to be the children of Zion? We must hear, believe, and obey the gospel of Christ Jesus. We must turn from the flesh and the world, and anchor our souls in the unchanging Word of God. We must become men and women of faith, like to the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. When we do believe with all of our hearts and launch out on the sea of God's love, we will find the spiritual nourishment from Zion that is promised in our lesson. If we receive a love for the truth and are willing to amend our ways from the ways of sin and the world, we will fall in love with Zion, the city of our solemnities. We will see her triumphant over all the powers of Satan, and we will rejoice with her when her victories are fulfilled in our own souls. If our interests and concerns are toward the betterment of God's cause, then we will be able to partake of the consolations of Christ and His Church. Through the influence of the saints who are alive and yet in the world we can be comforted and blessed. Through the report of those who have long since laid their armor down and gone on to a brighter world above, we can be strengthened in the grace of God and inspired to hold on for victory. Through the sweet influence of the quiet lives of the saints we can learn the way of the Lord more perfectly. Their steady, unwavering faith will comfort and cheer us in our battles of life. We can really grow in the Lord and do things for Him. And the peace! Oh, it is a peace that passeth all understanding. Surely we are blessed with a great privilege to be born again and be given a place in the great Church of God. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." This is a prophecy of the coming of Christ. It is evident from this that the Church had nothing to do with the birth of Christ. It was done through the mercy and plan of God. In actuality, the Church was not in an operational existence so that it could bring forth children. "Who hath heard such a thing." It does not make sense to the natural mind for such a thing to happen.

"Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children." Just as soon as the Church was set in order on the day of Pentecost there were 3,000 souls born into the kingdom of God. There was not a long travail, for it only took one sermon by Peter to accomplish this. "Shall

I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord." We should not marvel that seemingly a whole nation was born at once, for it would be foolish for God to prepare everything for a spiritual birth through the sacrifice of His Son and then for Him not to send the Holy Spirit to draw souls unto Himself. Neither did it stop on the day of Pentecost. "Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God." Souls continued to experience the new birth. It brings it right up to our time. We can experience the same thing that they did at Pentecost. It will continue to be that way right up until the second coming of Christ. —Wayne Murphey

-----0-----

JERUSALEM WHICH IS ABOVE, OR THE NEW JERUSALEM.

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Gal. 4:26.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." Rev. 3:12.

It is evident that the Jerusalem mentioned in these texts is not that literal city which was the seat of government to the Jewish people of ancient times, but a spiritual city. In the former of these texts Paul uses the expression, "Jerusalem which is above" in contradistinction to literal Jerusalem. See verse 25. He has just been speaking in the preceding verses of the Old and New Testament as the antitypes of the two wives of Abraham. Abraham's bond wife he considers a type of the Old Testament and his free wife, of the New Testament. The two Jerusalems he associates very closely with the two testaments. The literal Jerusalem he shows to have a close connection with the Old Testament; and the "Jerusalem which is above," with the New Testament.

The New Jerusalem mentioned in the latter text is the same as the "Jerusalem which is above" in the former. The adjective "new" distinguishes it from the literal Jerusalem, and the fact that it came down out of heaven from God proves it to be a spiritual city. The same spir-

itual Jerusalem is mentioned in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, where it is again closely associated with the new covenant, as in the fourth chapter of Galatians. See verses 18-24.

But what is the spiritual Jerusalem that pertains to the new covenant? To successfully answer this question, I must first show the relation of literal Jerusalem to the old covenant. During the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness, God spoke to Moses saying: "When ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord." Deut. 12:10, 11.

God here promised the Israelites that he would choose a special place of worship in the promised land, after they should once become settled in it; his name was to dwell in the chosen place, and to that chosen place they were to bring their burnt offerings and sacrifices and tithes, and heave-offerings, and also their vows. In the year of release, which was every seventh year, they were commanded to assemble in that chosen place to hear the reading of the law of Moses. Deut. 31:9-11. In the chosen place judgment was to be rendered concerning all matters of importance. Deut. 17:8-12. Three times in a year feasts were to be kept in the chosen place, at which all males were required to be present; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. Deut. 16:16. In short, this chosen place was to be the scene and center of all Levitical worship.

God did not choose this place of worship until the time of David, when he made choice of the city of Jerusalem. Prior to this they had but temporarily selected a place to worship. "Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel; but I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name

might be there; and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel." 2 Chron. 6:5, 6.

From David to the time of Christ, Jerusalem was the chosen place for the Jewish people to worship, the house of God having been located there. But the prophets foretold that in the Christian dispensation there should be another house of God erected in another Jerusalem. I will quote from the LXX. "The word which came to Esaias the son of Amos concerning Judea, and concerning Jerusalem. For in the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be glorious, and the house of God shall be on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall come to it. And many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will tell us his way, and we will walk in it; for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem." —Isa. 2:1-3. This same prophecy also is found in Micah 4:1, 2.

It is here predicted that in the Christian dispensation the house of God should be established on the top of the mountains, above the hills. It is a spiritual house of God that is here referred to, which was typified by the literal house of God in literal Jerusalem. As the literal house of God was located in literal Jerusalem, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the spiritual house of God would be located in spiritual Jerusalem; if therefore the spiritual house of God, of the Christian dispensation, stands on the top of the mountains, there must be a spiritual Jerusalem upon that exalted plane. This thought is corroborated by the Savior in Matt. 5:14, where he speaks as though his followers dwelt in "a city that is set on a hill." Observe also that the apostle John was carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain to view the spiritual Jerusalem. Rev. 21:9, 10. By this time we can see that when Paul spoke of "Jerusalem which is above" he referred to the spiritual Jerusalem that is located above the hills, in the Christian dispensation.

In the literal house of God, in literal Jerusalem, was the place to worship under the law of Moses; but in the spiritual house of God, in spiritual Jerusalem is the place to worship God under the gospel. The spiritual house of

God is the church of the living God. See 1 Tim. 3:15. Spiritual Jerusalem signifies a state rather than a locality. This we may perceive from the conversation of Christ with the woman of Samaria. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Women, Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—John 4:19-24. Jesus here shows that Jerusalem should no longer continue to be set apart as a special place of worship, but that in the Christian dispensation God is to be worshiped universally in spirit and in truth. This is a proof that the Jerusalem to which we go to worship is a spiritual condition and not a locality. This lofty state in which the house of God is established is the plane of God's holiness, and to ascend unto the house of God, in the gospel dispensation, is to obtain salvation.

The twenty-first chapter of Revelation gives us a beautiful description of the new Jerusalem, which many have supposed to represent heaven, while others have thought it represented a literal city to descend from heaven by and by; but after carefully examining the character of this city as described by the Revelator, I am confirmed in my belief that John saw in a heavenly metaphor our blessed New Testament church in which blood-washed saints worship the Father in the gospel age.

He calls the heavenly Jerusalem the bride, the Lamb's wife. Rev. 21:9. The Lamb is Christ. John 1:29. The heavenly Jerusalem is therefore the wife of Christ. This is a striking proof that it is a metaphoric description of the New Testament church because there is nothing else mentioned in the New Testament unto which Christ is said to be married. But is his marriage with the church already consummated? If we can prove that it is, that will unquestionably locate the holy Jerusalem in the present dispensation. I shall at once appeal to the testimony of

the New Testament. As early as the time of John the Baptist, Christ must have possessed a bride; because that prophet when speaking of him says, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." John 3:29. Jesus professed himself to be a bridegroom. "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Matt. 9:15. If Christ was already during the incarnation a bridegroom, he was even at that early date married.

But who was the bride? "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Eph. 5:23. "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Ver. 24. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Ver. 25. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Verses 28-30. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Verses 31, 32. In these verses Paul places the church in the same relation to Christ that the wife stands to the husband. As a true husband, Christ is the head of the church, his wife, and the church is subject to him. He loves her, even to give his life for her. He nourisheth and cherisheth her, and she is of one body, flesh, and bone with him. Herein is fulfilled perfectly the holy marriage relation as set forth by our Savior in the gospels. Lest we should misunderstand him, the apostle in verse 32 states directly that what he has been setting forth in regard to the relation that exists is no doubt that the marriage of the church unto Christ is already consummated, and she is now his bride, and must therefore be the heavenly Jerusalem that John describes in Revelation.

In Rom. 7:4 Paul again speaks of the church as having been married unto Christ. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye

also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." We shall not in the face of such plain scriptures question the fact that the marriage of the church unto Christ has already taken place. But let us again look at the Revelator's description of Christ's bride. He tells us that the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Rev. 21:14. Since the twelve apostles are the foundations in God's church, should we not consider this another striking proof that the church is the heavenly Jerusalem John saw?

The walls of this heavenly city described in verses 12, 16-18 must be the very walls Isaiah spoke of when he prophesied saying, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Isa. 26:1. "Thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise." Isa. 50:18. The prophet could not have had reference in these prophecies to the walls of literal Jerusalem. But since in the New Testament spiritual Jerusalem salvation from sin is obtained and men within her walls are kept pure in God's sight, her walls must be the very fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies.

The Revelator further tells us that the heavenly Jerusalem has gates on all sides: it has three gates on the east, and three on the west, three on the north, and three on the south side of the city. This signifies the abundant entrance into the church of God. As the city is a spiritual city, the walls are spiritual walls and the gates spiritual gates; and they signify that men from every condition in life can be redeemed and enter directly into the spiritual house of God in the new Jerusalem. These gates we are told shall not be shut at all by day, and we are told that there shall be no night in this city. Ver. 25. This signifies the continual opportunity for salvation that is offered unto the people in the Christian dispensation.

Verse 27 tells us that "there shall in no wise enter into this heavenly Jerusalem anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." This corresponds with Isaiah's prophecy of the New Testa-

ment church in Isa. 26:2—"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Only those who have their names recorded in the Lamb's book of life can dwell within the new Jerusalem, as this book is the record of the New Testament church. Heb. 12:23. We have in this another striking proof that the new Jerusalem is the church of God.

In verse 18 the Revelator tells us that the wall of the city was built of jasper, and the city itself of pure gold like unto clear glass. In this metaphor the purity of the New Testament church is beautifully represented.

The Lamb of God, we are told in verse 23, was the light of this city. The Lamb is the light in the church of God; therefore, we consider this another proof that the church is the heavenly Jerusalem.

In the twenty-second chapter the Revelator describes the pure river of water of life flowing through this heavenly Jerusalem, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. All spiritual people can readily see in this beautiful description of God's fountain of salvation unto which we have access by faith in Christ.

The tree of life is said to be growing in this river and on each of its banks. Ver. 2. In Rev. 2:7 all that overcome are promised access to this tree of life, which, it is there stated, stands in the midst of the paradise of God. This figure is derived from the fact that the tree of life stood in the original paradise in which Adam and Eve dwelt. They were prohibited from eating of the fruit of that tree after the fall. But now in Christ we again partake of that tree of life in a spiritual sense; for Christ is our tree of life. The leaves of this tree, we are told, are for the healing of the nations. Rev. 22:2. It would be ridiculous to say the healing that comes from the leaves of this tree of life is reserved until after the Savior's second advent, for the world will cease to be divided into nations at that time. In this we have a striking proof that we have access to the heavenly Jerusalem in the present dispensation, and we have healing not only for our souls from sin, but also for our bodies from disease and sickness.

The location of Christ's second advent at the close of John's description of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 22:7)

is another proof that we have access to this glorious city in this dispensation.

The wiping away of all tears from the eyes is understood by all those who possess the true joys of salvation.

The saying that there shall be no more death in this heavenly Jerusalem is fulfilled unto us in the present dispensation; because it is written that Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Tim. 1:10. It is spiritual death to which the Revelator referred when he said there should be no death in the heavenly Jerusalem, and it is spiritual death in sin that Christ has abolished. He has given us in its stead that glorious spiritual life within our souls that enables us to live a sublime and holy life in this world. Surely we can see by this time that the heavenly Jerusalem appeared at the beginning of the present dispensation, and is the habitation of all those who dwell in the church of God.

(Taken from *Biblical Trace of the Church*)

**A DIVINE
ORGANIZATION
BUILT AND
GOVERNED
BY CHRIST**

**FILLED WITH
LOVE
JOY
PEACE
LONGSUFFERING
GENTLENESS
GOODNESS
FAITH
MEEKNESS
TEMPERANCE**
GAL. 5:22-23
POWER
ACTS 1:8
VICTORY
1 COR. 15:57
and
GLORY
JOHN 17:23

FRAMED
GAL. 3:31
JOINED
EPH. 4:16
BUILDED
GAL. 2:23
TEMPERED
1 COR. 12:24
KNIT
COL. 3:3
QUICKENED
EPH. 3:5
RAISED UP
EPH. 3:6
TOGETHER

COMMANDMENTS

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Cor. 1:10

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace. 2 Cor. 13:11

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Ps. 133

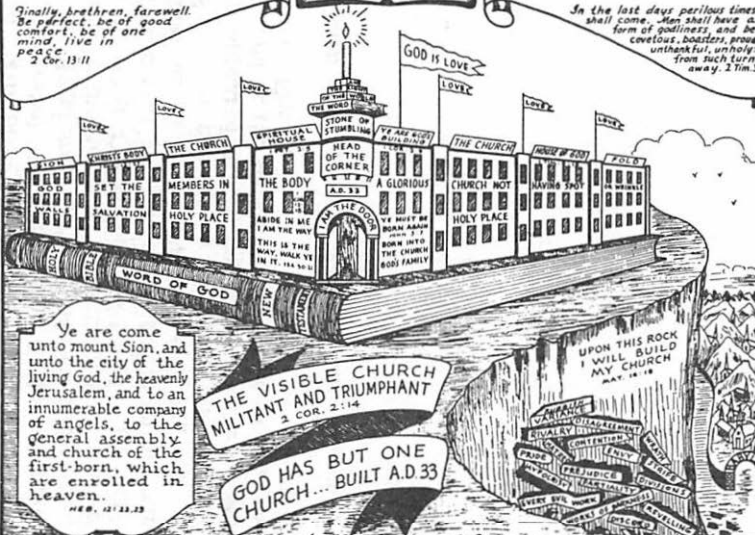
Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. Heb. 2:11

COMMANDMENTS

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them, which cause divisions and offence contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. Rom. 16:17

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. 2 Cor. 6:17

In the last days perilous times shall come. Men shall have a form of godliness, and be covetous, boasters, proud, unthankful, unholy; from such turn away. 2 Tim. 3



**CHRIST'S
BODY**

THE CHURCH

**HOUSE OF
GOD**

ONE CHURCH

**ONE
BODY**
1 COR. 12:13
HEAD
EPH. 4:15
LEADER
13 A. 28:4
GOVERNOR
13 A. 28:4
FOLD
JOHN 10:16
DOOR
JOHN 10:9
SHEPHERD
JOHN 10:16
FAITH
EPH. 4:5
DOCTRINE
1 TIM. 4:2
WAY
JER. 31:39
LAW
MAT. 23:40
BUILDER
FOUNDATION
1 COR. 3:11
MIND
2 COR. 12:11
SPIRIT
EPH. 4:4
JUDGMENT
1 COR. 6:2
BAPTISM
EPH. 4:5
HOPE
EPH. 4:4
HEART
EPH. 4:5
HUSBAND
2 COR. 11:2
BRIDE
2 COR. 11:2
MOTHER
GAL. 4:26
**ALL ONE
IN CHRIST**
GAL. 3:28
**ALL HAVE
SALVATION**

December 6, 1987

THE CHURCH OF GOD AS THE FLOCK OF GOD

Jer. 50:4 In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God.

5 They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

Ezek. 34:11 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

John 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

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

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Memory Verse: He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Isa. 40:11.

Central Thought: The Church of God is likened unto a flock of sheep, loved, cherished, and cared for by Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the welfare and salvation of all who follow Him, and who preserves and sustains them all along the journey of life.

Word Definition: "*Perpetual covenant*:" Everlasting and unfailing promise of allegiance and faithfulness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From Isaiah and Ezekiel come beautiful prophecies concerning the Church of God as the flock of God, to be sought out and redeemed from their lost condition. Isaiah also said in 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. . . ." However, we can turn with a weeping and repentant heart to God, seeking the way to Zion, and joining ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. We do not join the Church, but we join ourselves to the Lord by way of being born again by the Word and Spirit of God. God sends forth the Holy Spirit and seeks us out, drawing us unto Himself. Though we have been scattered and driven away from His blessings upon the mountains of sin in the cloudy and dark day of deception and confusion, He wants to bring us to our own land (the land of full salvation) so that we can go in through the door (Christ) and out into the spacious and rich pasture of His love. We can lie down and not be afraid, resting in the bosom of love divine! Jesus proclaimed Himself as the good Shepherd, the door of the sheep to enter the fold of God. He has abundant spiritual life and victory for everyone. It is His blessed will and purpose to gather every soul who will believe, obey, and follow Him into the one, true Church of God. His sheep will hear His voice, and He knows them, and they will follow Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Does anyone find God without truly seeking Him with all their heart?
2. What should be the desire of the soul who seeks the Lord?
3. In what way have we all been lost sheep?
4. Who seeks out the lost sheep?

5. What in a cloudy and dark day causes the sheep to be scattered?
6. What kind of pasture does the Lord have for His sheep?
7. Who is the good Shepherd of the sheep?
8. In what way is Christ the door?
9. What did Christ come to give us?
10. Does Christ want His sheep to remain divided and scattered? How can they all be gathered into one?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, how the devil has devised and worked to draw away the souls of men from the fold of God! By way of worldly attraction he deceives them; by way of pressure he drives them; and by way of confusion he discourages them. The result is a lost sheep wandering around in a cloudy and dark day. They are lost and do not know where they are or where they are going. In the history of the Church age, there was a cloudy and dark day of about 350 years from the time of the Protestant Reformation up to the latter part of the 1800's, when many sects and movements arose in the name of Christianity. Man rule and human machinery infiltrated the ranks of the people, and the saints were scattered on the hills of spiritual Babylon and sectism. But, thank God, He did not leave His people in that condition! God is calling His people away from Babel confusion, back to the fold of God on mount Zion. There the Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd and He uses men and women who are called of God to serve as under-shepherds (or pastors) to feed His flock. In the true Church of God, pastors are not big bosses and over-lords who love pre-eminence and the praise of men. The true ministers of God are servants of God and to the people. They seek to service their Christian lives through the ministry of the Word and prayer. Over all is Christ Jesus, the chief Shepherd. The flock is His. How sweet to be one of His own! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The shepherd takes care that his sheep are well fed. Christ also feeds his people, and leads them out to find pasture. The Bible is his pasture-land, and the pasturage there is always good. Every chapter is a field of rich grass. Some of these fields seem at first to be bare and sterile; but even in the barest there is enough pasture to feed a hungry soul.

"Then there are the pasture-fields of prayer. These lie very close to the border of heaven. They are always up in the quiet

valleys among the mountains. The Good Shepherd leads us to these rich fields through the gates of prayer. We bow down in lowly humility, and enter with him into the green pastures, and feed our souls until their hunger is satisfied.

"The Church is another of our Shepherd's pasture-fields. We enter the gates of the sanctuary, and at once we find spiritual food. We find it in the services and in the ordinances.

"In our common life in this world, if we are faithfully following Christ, we are continually in fields of rich pasture. Christ never leads us into any places in which there is nothing to feed us. Even in the hot plains of trial and sorrow there is food. We sometimes think there is only barrenness in our toilsome life, filled with temptations, cares, and sacrifices; but the Good Shepherd is ever with us, and there is always pasture.

"Thus the whole world is a rich field when Jesus leads his flock. If any Christians are not well fed it is because they will not feed. The trouble must be that they do not hunger for spiritual food. The saddest thing in this world is, not a passionate cry for bread, but a soul that has no hunger. Many souls die in the midst of the provision made by the Good Shepherd, not for want of food, but for want of appetite."

(Taken from, "Come Ye Apart")

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

We'll follow the Lord all the way,
And close to our Shepherd we'll stay;
How blessed to know as we journey below,
He's with us by night and by day!

The sheep of His pasture are one,
Yea, one as the Father and Son;
They're all of one mind, as their Shepherd designed,
They follow and serve Him alone.

There's joy in the fold of the Lord,
We walk in the light of His Word;
We love to obey all the Saviour doth say,
Thus living in holy accord.

By rivers of peace we are led,
In pastures of love we are fed;
We ever rejoice at the sound of His voice,
Redeemed by the blood He has shed.

—D. S. Warner

December 13, 1987

MARY CHOSEN AS THE MOTHER OF CHRIST

Luke 1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kindgom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

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

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

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

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

Memory Verse: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us. **Matt. 1:23.**

Central Thought: God Almighty chose a lowly maiden of Nazareth in Galilee, who was a pure virgin, to be the mother who would bring forth the Saviour into the world to save us from our sins.

Word Definitions: *Spoused:* Promised, pledged, betrothed, engaged. It was a sacred and solemn time prior to marriage. *"Make her a publick example:"* To expose to infamy or disgrace; put to open shame. *Privily:* Secretly.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson is the first of a three-part series concerning the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, the founder of the Church of God. In the preceding account of Luke, we find that the angel Gabriel had announced to Zacharias that he and his wife, Elisabeth, despite their advanced ages, were to be the parents of a son whose name was to be called John. Elisabeth was a cousin to Mary. Mary paid a visit to her cousin very soon after she was informed by the angel Gabriel that she was to be the mother of Jesus. Elisabeth was already six months with child, and when Mary greeted Elisabeth upon her arrival at her house, the baby in Elisabeth's womb leaped for joy! How the two mothers-to-be rejoiced together! Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, and they had not begun living together as man and wife. How sad that our society has lost sight of the sanctity of marriage! There is very little "waiting" until the marriage is completed. God is very highly grieved at the loose morals and the offence that mankind heaps upon His gracious plan. As our lesson reveals, the truth of Mary being with child was a serious scandal in their society. That is why Joseph wanted to dissolve his engagement with Mary secretly. He did not want her to suffer the insults of the public. Think of the emotional strain that was upon both Mary and Joseph. After he was enlightened by God as to what was really going on, Joseph went ahead and married Mary, no doubt rejoicing in what the Lord was bringing to pass.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of person was Mary?
2. What kind of man was Joseph?
3. Why did Mary's being with child present a problem?
4. What was Mary's first response to the salutation of the angel Gabriel?
5. What did the angel tell her was going to happen?

6. How did he say that this was to come to pass?
7. What was Joseph's first impulse to do when he heard about Mary being with child?
8. What did the Lord show him to do?
9. What was to be the name of Mary's son?
10. What was He to do for His people?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Just a lowly young girl was Mary of Nazareth whom God chose to be the vessel to bring forth the Saviour into the world. There were probably many young women in Galilee, but Mary was highly favoured. The Lord was with her. This means that she was serving God and God was accepting her. We do not know the background of Mary, but we are sure that she was devoted to the worship of God. God waited until after she was engaged to be married before He sent the angel to announce His wonderful intentions to Mary. It had to be clear to Mary and Joseph that the child she was carrying was a divine miracle from God. The truth of the virgin birth of Christ is one of the corner stones of our faith. If Christ was not born of a virgin, then our faith is vain. The prophet Isaiah had prophesied, as quoted in our memory verse, that a virgin, an unmarried woman, would conceive and bring forth a son. Isa. 7:14. For a brief period of time, Mary was in danger of being branded a fornicator and a wicked person. Oh, it was a disgrace to be with child and at the same time unmarried! Joseph was, no doubt, greatly disappointed and grieved about this matter when he was informed that Mary was with child. He loved Mary and had looked forward to taking her to himself for a wife, but now it looked as if the whole thing was to be called off, and Mary would be disgraced. He did not want to have any part with the affair. As he was contemplating a secret annulment of the engagement, the Lord stepped in and made known what His plan was. The Scripture says that Joseph did as the angel had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born son.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Although we do not worship Mary, the mother of Jesus, perhaps we do not appreciate enough the trials that she went through in order to be His mother. Mary was blessed above all other women, and yet we must realize that many times along with blessings come hard things.

The whole concept of what Mary stood for and the declaration that she was the mother of the Son of the Highest brought reprisals upon her.

In the "Archko Volume", there is a letter from Jonathan, son of Heziel, to the Sanhedrin concerning an interview that he had with the Bethlehem shepherds. Jonathan's observation of the situation was that since there had been so many imposters in the world, so many babes born under pretended miracles, and all of them had proven to be false, that this one too was false. He concluded that Mary might have only been wishing to hide her shame or court the favor of the Jews. Jonathan further stated that he had been informed that Mary would be tried by the Jewish law. If she could give no better evidence of her virtue than she had given to Melker, priest of the synagogue at Bethlehem, she would be stoned according to their law. These would be heavy burdens and fears that Mary had to bear in being a vessel of the Lord.

Also of interest in the "Archko Volume" is related an interview of Mary by Gamaliel. It records, "I asked her if Jesus was the son of Joseph. She said he was not. I asked her to relate the circumstances of the child's history. She said that one day while she was grinding some meal there appeared at the door a stranger in shining raiment, which showed as bright as the light. She was very much alarmed at his presence, and trembled like a leaf; for he said, 'Mary, thou shalt have a child; that this child shall be great and rule all nations of the earth.' She continued: 'I immediately thought of my engagement to Joseph, and supposed that was the way the child was to come . . . I asked the messenger if Joseph knew anything of the matter. He said that he told Joseph that I was to have a child by command of the Holy Ghost, and he was to redeem his people from their sins, and was to reign over the whole world; that every man should confess to him and he should rule over all the kings of the earth.'

"I asked her how she knew that he was an angel, and she said he told her so, and then she knew he was an angel from the way he came and went. I asked her to describe how he went away from her, and she said that he seemed to melt away from her, and she said he seem to melt away like an extinguishing light.

"I asked her if at the time this angel, as she called him, visited her, she was 'alma' (that is, virgin). She said she was; she had not been known by man." —Wayne Murphey

December 20, 1987

UNTO US A SAVIOUR IS BORN

Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

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

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

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

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

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

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

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

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Memory Verse: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and

his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isa. 9:6.

Central Thought: Amid the hardship and poverty of this earth the Saviour of mankind was born a tiny infant, causing rejoicing in heaven, bringing glory to God, and offering peace and good will toward men.

Word Definitions: *Swaddling clothes:* Strips of cloth. *Ponder:* To weigh, consider, study, or meditate upon. *Taxed:* Enrolled, something like an assessment or census.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Joseph had taken Mary to be his wife. Mary was with child, and they both knew that this child was conceived of the Holy Spirit. There at Nazareth Joseph and Mary carried on the routine of life day by day. No doubt Mary pondered much over the recent events that had so changed their lives. She was not just a woman expecting her first-born child, but she was fully aware that this child was a special child. Had not the angel said that He was to sit upon the throne of David, rule over the house of Jacob forever, and that His name was to be Jesus, and of His kingdom there would be no end? What did all of this mean? She remembered vividly the angel's visit and what was told her. Joseph was also filled with weighty and serious thoughts as he remembered the angel of the Lord speaking to him concerning the child, quoting the prophetic Scripture about a virgin bringing forth a son. Toward the final weeks of her time, there came a great announcement of a decree from the ruler of the world, Augustus Caesar. Everyone in the Roman Empire was to be registered, and to do this, everyone must go to his native city. The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem was probably approximately 70 miles. That was a long, dangerous, and hard trip to make for an expectant mother. There were no fine cars or buses in those days. On foot or on a beast of burden the journey had to be made. There were no fine hotel suites awaiting the weary travelers, either. Because of the many others who had to come to the city of Bethlehem, there was no room in the inn. No doubt they felt themselves fortunate to be afforded shelter in the stable. There our blessed Redeemer was born.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Joseph and Mary have to go to Bethlehem?
2. Why did God permit the hardship of the stable and the swaddling clothes?

3. Why did the birth of Jesus bring such rejoicing among the angels?
4. What does "peace, good will toward men" mean to you?
5. What joy was brought to us when Christ was born?
6. Where does Christ want to be born today?
7. Why do so many not have room for Christ in their hearts?
8. What kind of souls give Christ welcome?
9. What kind of effect does the birth of Christ have upon a redeemed soul?
10. What did Mary do with all of these things that had happened?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Christ must be given room. He will not force or push His way into any heart. He knocks, but in order to enter, the door must be opened of one's own free will. Christ could be born a thousand times as He was in Bethlehem, but if He is not born in your heart, He does not profit you. He wants to live in our hearts. He wants to have His way in us, but we must offer it to Him willingly. Christ will not enter and be born in the proud and scornful heart. The proud and scornful are empty and void of the grace of God. Jesus is hidden from their comprehension. God passed over the high and lofty hearts and made known the coming of His Son to the lowly shepherds out on the hillside at night. Christ was not to be distinguished by special marks of worldly favor or prosperity. God chose to have Him born in a stable and laid in a manger, wrapped in the poverty rags of swaddling clothes. This was to identify Him. What is the identification of the children of God today? It is not the worldly marks of covetousness and pride. It is the poverty of spirit, and the manner of conduct, dress, and conversation that marks a true Christian. If you were sent to pick up one of the children of God whom you had never seen or met before who was coming in on the bus or plane, would it be very hard to pick them out? What would you look for? You would look for a plain and modestly dressed individual, would you not? In the midst of the worldly crowd they would not be hard to distinguish. The manger and the swaddling clothes were the identification marks of the infant Jesus. Because of that, the Saviour was found of the shepherds. Let us open our hearts to the Lord Jesus and make room for Him, being willing to bear His marks of identification.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy." A life began that night which has brought inexpressible joy to thousands of souls. Christ's life was the inspiration of the Bible. The Bible bears out the good news and all of its words are encouraging. The Word will convict but not discourage. It has brought to us the message of God's "good will toward men."

A legend which originated in mediaeval times illustrates God's good will toward men. An infidel knight, in the wildness of his mad, Heaven-defying infidelity, determined to test, by the method to which as a knight he was accustomed, the reality and power of the God whose existence he denied. So, going out into the field, armed as if for combat, he cast his glove down upon the ground, after the manner of the ancient challengers, and cried out to the heavens: "God! — if there be a God, — I defy thee here and now to mortal combat! If thou indeed art, put forth thy might of which thy pretended priests make boasts." As he spoke, his eye was caught by a piece of parchment fluttering in the air just above his head. It fell at his feet. He stooped and picked it up, and found inscribed upon it these words, "God is love!" Overcome by this unexpected response, he broke his sword in token of his surrender, and kneeling upon the fragments, consecrated his life henceforth to the service of that God whom he had just defied.

Christ was born into a world of gross spiritual darkness. God's own people had pride and rebellion in their hearts. To these people came the message, "good will toward men." God's "good will" was all wrapped up and delivered in that package of the baby Jesus. The divine, inspired message has gained more evidence of God's love by Christ laying down His life. The message is still going forth to a rebellious world today.

—Wayne Murphey

December 27, 1987

WISE MEN STILL SEEK THE KING OF GLORY

Matt. 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Memory Verse: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isa. 55:7.

Central Thought: In seeking to find God, we must beware of hindrances and misleadings of people and the devices of Satan, which are intent upon keeping us from finding Him.

Word Definitions: Wise men: Men who were astrologers, who studied the heavens and the stars and their influence upon the earthly realm. Frankincense: Pure incense, which is very sweet. Myrrh: A bitter oil used in perfume and medicine.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There was probably a lapse of time between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the wise men from the east. In that period of time, according to Luke's account, they had taken the infant Jesus to Jerusalem to be consecrated to the Lord, as all first-born males were. They had returned to Bethlehem, and, for some reason, had tarried there longer than probably they had expected. In the mean time, far to the east (probably in the land of Persia) some astrologers, while studying the heavens, were excited to behold a new and wondrous star. There are many fanciful and exciting tales that could be imagined about these men. It is generally supposed that there were three; however, the Scripture does not give a number. It does not say that the star led them to Jerusalem. It was revealed to them by the appearance of the star that the King of the Jews had been born, so they no doubt supposed that in Jerusalem they would find Him since Jerusalem was the capital of Israel. Great was their surprise when they saw that their tidings were troubling the city and the ruler, King Herod. They were probably very unaware of Herod's inner feelings which were full of anger and resentment at the thought of another King. Innocently they took the king's advice and turned their way toward Bethlehem to continue their search for the infant. It was then that they saw the star again, this time going before them and guiding them to the very spot where the young child was. They fell down and worshipped Him, giving Him gifts from their treasures. So ought we to recognize the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and bow down before Him in worship and homage today! Let us open the treasures of our hearts: our love, affection, devotion, servitude, and honour.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the wise men come to Jerusalem?
2. What was their real purpose on their journey?
3. Why should we worship and serve the King of kings, and Lord of lords?
4. What treasures of our hearts would this great King be interested in?
5. Why was the small city of Bethlehem not the least among the princes of Judah?
6. Why did Herod want to locate the child?
7. How did the wise men feel when they saw the star going before them to Bethlehem?
8. What power would seek to destroy Jesus out of our lives today?
9. How can we keep this from happening?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The men from the east came a long way to pay homage and worship to Him who was to be the King of glory. The queen of Sheba came a long distance to behold the wisdom of Solomon. "... Behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Luke 11:31. People today need to be enlightened to the great importance, value, and worth of Jesus Christ who came from glory to the manger. When they hear the gospel and the story of Jesus, men and women need to go to seeking to find this One who is so wonderful and great! But, sad to say, there are so many indifferent and disinterested people in the world. Jesus spoke about the men of His generation being like children sitting in the market place, not responding to any kind of suggestion for sport that their fellows offered. It did not matter what was suggested; they did not want to go along with it. People are that way so much. It is like a small child when he or she is cross and irritable. Nothing appeases or satisfies them. God knows that people are prone to be that way. He has brought forth His Son in such a way that will appeal to the open-minded and honest of heart, but there will always be those who will have closed hearts and minds to the message from heaven. Wise people still seek the King of kings and Lord of lords. They come from afar—from the deep and dark pits of sin and ignorance. They recognize the great power and benefit that Christ affords. How thankful we are that we responded to the gospel call and began to pray and seek the Lord! Surely we have found Him precious and dear to our souls and He is becoming more dear every day. We give Him

our all, opening our hearts to His love and giving our best to the Master. The light of the gospel is that star divine today, guiding us away from the vanities of this present world, to the blessed reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and His wonderful grace.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Those who follow the light will surely be led at last to the Christ. There is always joy, too, in the heart when one has found the Saviour. The first act is to adore and worship him. These men saw only the little Babe lying in the young mother's arms. There was no crown on his head. No glory gleamed from his face. His surroundings were most unkingly, without pomp or pageant. The child did nothing in their presence to show his royalty — spoke no word, wrought no kingly act of power. Yet the wise men believed and worshipped him.

"Think how much more we know about the Christ than they did. We see him in all the glory of his life and death and resurrection and ascension; we see him sitting at the right hand of God, King of Kings, wearing many crowns. It is not hard for us to see the regal marks in him. Shall we be behind the wise men in our adoration? They were not content merely to worship the King, showing him homage in word or posture; but they also laid their gifts at his feet. It is not enough for us to sing our songs of praise to Christ, to look up adoringly into his face, to bow before him in reverent worship and to speak our heart's homage in words. We should bring our gifts, too, to lay at his feet. There is a great deal of mere sentiment in the consecration of many people; when there is call for gifts or sacrifice, or for real service, it instantly vanishes. These men not only brought presents, but they brought those that were costly! We should bring our best, our gold and frankincense and myrrh, the alabaster box of our heart's deepest love, and the best of all our life and service."

(Taken from, "Come Ye Apart")

Subscription Order

Please send _____ copies of the *Bible Lessons* quarterly to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Subscription rate: 50¢ per copy per quarter; or
\$2.00 per copy for one year (issued quarterly).

Please find enclosed payment in the amount of \$_____

Mail to:
FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE
P. O. Box 518
Guthrie, Okla. 73044

