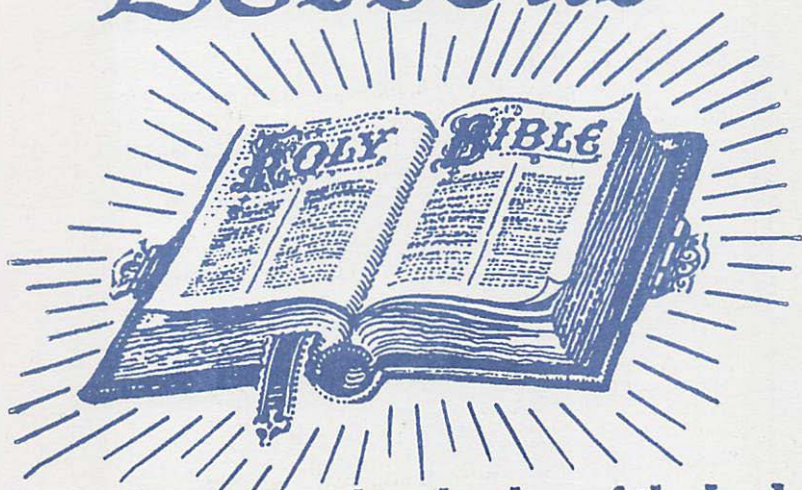


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Volume 30

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No. 3

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Jesus Christ and His Church
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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 1998

We are inspired to bring a series of lessons from the book of the prophet Jeremiah. There is much spiritual inspiration in the account of the life and labors of the "weeping prophet," as he has been rightly called. He lived in the dark days of the sad departure of the Israelites from the favor of God. He was born of the lineage of Aaron of the Levitical priesthood, and lived in the village of Anothoth which was situated not far from Jerusalem. As a young man, believed to have been about fourteen years of age, he was called and commissioned of God to be His prophet. He spent the rest of his years as God's spokesman, warning the rebellious nation of Israel concerning their sinful departure from God, prophesying of the destruction that was soon to overtake them, and suffering persecution and abuse from their evil hands. It is believed that he died in Egypt two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, being stoned to death, as tradition reports, by his own people.

In the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah are many wise sayings and solemn warnings that can be beneficial to us today if we will take an interest and open our hearts to them. Also we joyfully note the prophecies of the gospel day included, inspiring foretellings of what Christ was to bring to Israel and to the world. The sad falling away of the faithfulness of Israel to God is a warning to us today. God is long suffering but, as it was in the case of Israel, the time comes when He will no longer forbear, but will execute His wrath in a terrible manner. People need to take heed to these truths, for we see today so many who are following the same pattern as this foolish nation did. Let us take heed to the word of God. We pray the Lord will bless this series of lessons for the spiritual good of everyone.

—Brother Leslie C. Busbee



JULY 5, 1998

GOD'S CALL TO JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 1:1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

2 To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

4 Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

7 But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

9 Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

15 For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

16 And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof,

against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.

MEMORY VERSE: Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Jeremiah 1:8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God called Jeremiah as a young man and commissioned him to prophesy against a people who had forsaken the true worship of God. It was a perilous task but God promised His protection and blessing so that he did not have to be afraid of what the people might do.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It was a sad and disheartening time. Judah was being ruled by the last good king they ever had, and his reign was cut short by his foolish intervention with Necho, king of Egypt, who was on a campaign against another king. Before King Josiah had been two bad kings: Manasseh, who was the son of good king Hezekiah, and his son Amon. Manasseh had reigned for fifty-five years and Amon had reigned for only two years. Manasseh had done much evil but had humbled himself and repented. But Amon had refused to humble himself to repentance and was cut off. Josiah helped much in bringing reform and betterment to Israel, but brought his kingdom to an end by engaging in a needless battle in which he was cut down. II Chronicles 35:25 says that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah. The people made Josiah's son Jehoahaz king, but his evil reign was cut short by Necho, the king of Egypt, who put him down and took him to Egypt, making his brother, Eliakim, king, whose name he turned into Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim's evil reign lasted eleven years and he was carried away to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. His son Jehoiachin, after an evil reign of three months and ten days, was also carried away to Babylon and his brother, Zedekiah, was made king. "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord." II Chron. 36:12. So we see that Jeremiah began his ministry in a very difficult and

discouraging time. He surely needed the special protection and defence that God promised him. In all of his warnings and proclaiming the Word of the Lord, he was not able to stem the tide of the apostasy of Israel. But his courage and steadfastness for the Lord his God, in all the sufferings and persecutions that were heaped upon him, has been an encouragement for all who have learned of him. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. During what time of Israel's history did Jeremiah live?
2. When did God ordain Jeremiah to be His prophet?
3. What was Jeremiah's first response to God's call?
4. Why did God not accept Jeremiah's response?
5. What was coming that would require God's special help?
6. What needs to be rooted out and pulled down in people's lives?
7. What does the Lord want to build and to plant in us today?
8. What comfort can we draw from God's promise to Jeremiah?
9. What was God grieved about concerning Israel?
10. Who all was Jeremiah made as a defenced city against?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jeremiah was ordained and chosen to be a prophet of God before he was formed in the womb of his mother. This foreknowledge of God is truly a wonderful thing. The Psalmist said in Psalm 139:13, 15 and 16: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." I am persuaded to believe that every person is preordained of God. God has jurisdiction of the forming of us. We are truly created, everyone of us, personally by God. But, sad to say, very few people come to this knowledge. And, being ignorant of this

fact, they live their lives selfishly in the vain pursuit of the pleasures of the flesh and the world instead of the will of God. God had a special need for a consecrated man at this point in history. His people were headed for a great destruction and God needed a vessel to work through in an effort to warn the people of the woe that was ahead for them. Those who are used of God in His service feel the great responsibility of obeying the Lord. It is the earnest desire of the servants of God to be faithful to His service. We must be strong and of good courage. As in the case of Jeremiah, there are foes to face and many adversaries who will set themselves against anyone who seeks to turn them from their ways. They will fight the truth because they are not aware of the danger they are in and the awful cup of God's wrath that is soon to be poured out upon them. As it was in Jeremiah's time, we have people today who are living such shameful, displeasing lives in the sight of God but who do not feel that there is anything wrong with them. The word of God will show them their error if they are willing to listen. But the attitude of so many is, "I am all right. I do not need to be told anything."

Jeremiah had a commission from God, and he also loved the nation of Israel as God's inheritance. And he was devoted to seeking for her good. Many tears and sorrows were to flow from his heart before he finished his work. But he was faithful to God and, thank the Lord, we have the account of his life and labors to inspire and comfort us in the troubles and difficulties that we face in our day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God's divine call found Jeremiah with a proper attitude of heart. This is indicated by his response which was, "I am a child."

A child is not expected to be eloquent and authoritarian. In fact it is quite distasteful to find one attempting to assume such qualities. The attitude a child is expected to possess is one of obedience. And that was all God wanted out of Jeremiah. God would provide the words and inspiration, and when coupled with Jeremiah's humility, it was a combination for effectiveness.

One mistake preachers sometimes make, which might be likened to the presumptuousness of a child, is to preach things that are not in the Bible. No matter how forceful one's speech, such ministry is ineffectual because the weight of God's authority is not behind it.

Also, have you ever noticed that God asks, "Who will go?" (Isa. 6:8), but never, "Where do you want to go?" God's plans are so much beyond our understanding that it leaves no room for our own will to enter into the decision. Author George MacDonald once said, "Doing the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about His plans."

Curiosity is another presumptuous trait in a child, and most parents can testify to how trying it can be when wrongly used. For instance, when a child is instructed on how to do a job, his questions can be patiently met, but when he or she insists on asking "How come?" and "What for?" the curiosity becomes a bit more difficult to deal with. God views intrusiveness on our part the same way. When Peter's curiosity got out of hand, Christ, in effect, said, "Why do you want to know? You just do what I have told you to do." (John 21:22.) This is still practical admonition for our times. —Wayne Murphey



JULY 12, 1998

THE FOLLY OF DEPARTING FROM GOD

Jeremiah 2:1 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

3 Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.

5 Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

6 Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up

out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

8 The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee,...

21 ...I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

22 For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God.

25 ...Thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

28 ...Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble:...

30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction:...

31 ...Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?...

37 ...The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

MEMORY VERSE: For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and

hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is the height of folly and the depth of evil to turn away from the God who created us and gave us life with so many blessings and to follow this world and its pride and vanities.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 2:2), "*Love of thine espousals*": Israel's bridehood to God, the receiving of His law and pledging to follow and obey Him. "*when thou wentest after me*": This is referring to how Israel walked after and followed the pillar of fire and the cloud through the wilderness after they came out of Egypt. This was Israel in her infancy, newly redeemed from the bondage and abuse of Pharaoh by the uplifted Hand of God.

(Jeremiah 2:3), "*Holiness unto the Lord*": Israel was aflame with joy and enthusiasm and love for God and was consecrated in the heart to obey and follow God. "*all that devour him shall offend*": Whoever dared to seek to harm or do violence to Israel did so at their peril for they were touching the apple of His eye, and brought upon themselves God's wrath.

(Jeremiah 2:5), "*Vanity, vain*": That which is astray from God, being empty, useless, and of no profit.

(Jeremiah 2:13) "*Cisterns*": These were manmade reservoirs of water which were products of faulty craftsmanship and were not leakproof. But what God is speaking of here is the idol worship that Israel took up instead of remaining with the Lord and having a willing heart to be led by His Spirit.

(Jeremiah 2:21), "*A noble vine*": A choice vine of the richest variety. "*degenerate plant*": Deteriorated shoots of a foreign vine.

(Jeremiah 2:22), "*Nitre*": A strong chemical used for removing spots from clothes. This refers to man's strongest endeavors to remove and hide his sinful condition by mere reformation or changing his conduct. His sin yet shows up in the sight of God's all-seeing eye.

(Jeremiah 2:25), "*Thou saidst, There is no hope: no*": What Israel is saying here, and, sad to say, this is what many yet say:

"There is no use trying to stop or correct me. No, I have loved these strange gods and religions, and after them I will go!"

(Jeremiah 2:31), "*We are lords*": We are our own masters, we will no longer seek the counsel and guidance of God's word.

(Jeremiah 2:36), "*Why gaddest thou about to change thy way?*": To gad means to roam about in an aimless or restless manner; to go about seeking excitement. God's language is the question, and it is still spoken to us today, "Why do you go your own way, changing from My ways to your own folly and vain trusts?"

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the essence of the first message that God gave to Jeremiah to proclaim to Jerusalem and the children of the Israelite nation. He brings a picture of Israel in their coming out of Egypt by the hand of God and how near and dear they were to Him. They were like a bride to the Lord and He was like a husband to them. But a change had taken place. The people had drifted far away from the worship of God and His blessed fellowship. They had taken up with idols and false gods. They had defiled the good land of Caanan that God had given to them. Oh, what a sad state they were in! Their taking up with false gods is likened unto hewing out cisterns to catch the rain water instead of having the Lord Jehovah their bountiful supply of living water from Heaven! They were suffering for it, too. They had trusted in Egypt and Assyria for refuge but they were to turn against them, and the armies of Babylon were soon to be coming after them. Verse 17 says, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?" Oh, the folly and harm in failing to really and wholly follow the Lord! People of today are making the same mistake that these people made. It is an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord for any cause or reason. Look around you. Mark those who are faithful to the truth and the standard and way of the saints. See how God blesses them with victory and spiritual blessings. Look at those who go the way of the world. See the difference? Oh, it is so noticeable and plain! Another sad thing was that Israel was seemingly very unconscious of their condition before God. Verse 23 says,

"How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim?" So it is with many who have, in our day, walked back of light and have gone into darkness. Jesus did warn us about this. He said in John 12:35, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." There are many who have rejected the light of the Lord, even as Israel is pictured doing, and have gone into a state of unawareness. They are lost and they do not realize it. Our lesson today is a lesson and a warning to us. Paul said in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types or instances for warning): and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Lord say that He remembered about Israel?
2. What all does our lesson say that God had done for Israel?
3. What has the Lord done for the souls of men in our day?
4. Is there any real danger in a soul drifting from God's way?
5. Why is it so hard for a person to be aware of their drifting?
6. Why does a man have such a tendency to drift away from God?
7. What steps should we take to safeguard us from such a drift?
8. What does it take to bring a man back to where he drifted from?
9. What is the only thing that will wash away iniquity from a man?
10. What two evils had God's people committed?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We see today the same condition prevailing in many people's lives that Jeremiah faced in backslidden Israel. I personally am acquainted with individuals who at one time

were devout and ardent followers of the holiness of the Lord. They gladly lined up with the old time truth of the Bible and the fellowship of the holy saints of God. They gave up the world and were willing to brave the ridicule and scorn of those with whom they were associated with in their sinful ways. They were strict, careful, and so conscientious. And it seemed that they hung on for a good long while. They attended the services of the saints, supported the work of the Lord, and were good examples of the modesty and godly life and dress. But after a time they began to drift away. Little by little they were moved from that holy and godly manner of life that had been so important to them before. Where once they sought to lay up treasures in Heaven and were content with the simple and plain way of living, now their minds and hearts are on the treasures of this world and all of its finery and wealth. Herein lies one of the main causes of apostasy and drifting away from God. It is prosperity and financial betterment. Very few people are able to handle riches properly and keep in a godly manner of life. It is like a family I heard about who were poor and had to work hard for the bare necessities of life. They often bemoaned the fact that they did not have much to give to the work of the Lord. They would say, "Oh, if we just had more, we could give more." Well, the Lord gave them a chance. Oil was found on their place and money began to roll in. But a change came with the money. Did they keep their mind to give more? No, they drifted away from the saints and from the truth. It has happened to so many.

Let us take warning from our lesson today. These scriptures are not put in the Bible just to take up space. They are admonitions to us today and, if we will take diligent heed, the Lord will help us to not drift but to be steadfast for Him all the way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

An old fable says there was once an Arab sitting comfortably in his tent on a cold night. Outside, his camel was shivering in the darkness.

Peering through the canvas flap, the camel pleaded, "Let me put my head inside."

Hesitantly the Arab consented.

How good the warmth of the tent felt. Said the camel, "My nose is quite warm, but my shoulders are so cold. Do please let me put my shoulders and forelegs inside."

Reluctantly the camel's master gave permission.

Little by little, the Arab yielded to the continued pleas of the camel, until the animal was completely inside the tent.

Looking at his master, the camel said, "This tent is too small for both of us. You had better get out."

That story reminds me of Isaiah's description of the progression of sin. He said of Israel, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it." Isaiah 1:5, 6.

The devil's method is to lure mankind a step at a time into sin until he is bound soul and body. —Wayne Murphey



JULY 19, 1998

GOD'S APPEAL TO THE BACKSLIDER

Jeremiah 3:12 ...Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.

13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

22 Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.

23 Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.

Jeremiah 4:1 If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

2 And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

3 ...Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

Jeremiah 5:25 Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

26 For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

29 Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

MEMORY VERSE: Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. Jeremiah 3:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God wants to heal those who slide back into sin. But they must acknowledge their iniquities and undone condition, cast away their vain thoughts, repent with a broken heart, and seek the way to Zion, the true Church of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 3:12), *"I will not keep anger forever"*: The Hebrew says, "I will not hold on to anger indefinitely". He is

telling us to return to Him and He will have mercy on us, and be willing to put away His anger and not hold it on us.

(Jeremiah 3:13), "*Only acknowledge thine iniquity*": This means to know or recognize and be aware of where you have transgressed the law of God, and that you have not obeyed His voice. To really know it in its depths of evil and terrible impending consequences will cause one to be willing to confess his or her true condition and come back to the Lord.

(Jeremiah 3:14), "*I will take you one of a city, and two of a family*": This shows how eager God is to redeem every individual soul. God will save whosoever wills to be saved, even if there be just one in a whole city or just two from a family. Every individual soul is priceless in His sight.

(Jeremiah 3:23), "*Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills*": The Hebrew says, "Truly, for delusion comes from the hills, and tumult on the mountains." The Septuagint Greek translation says, "Hills and the strength of the mountains are a lying refuge." Various applications can be seen here concerning hills and mountains. They can represent the elevated heights of human endeavor and wisdom, or the peaks of pride and the lifting up of self.

(Jeremiah 4:3), "*Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns*": Fallow ground is usually considered to be ground that has lain long uncultivated. Adam Clarke has a good comment here: "Ye have been long uncultivated in righteousness; let true repentance break up your fruitless and hardened hearts; and when the seed of the word of life is sown in them, take heed that worldly cares and concerns do not arise, and, like thorns, choke the good seed."

(Jeremiah 4:6), "*Set up the standard toward Zion*": The Hebrew says, "Lift up a banner toward Zion." Usually the thought of lifting up a banner means a determined effort or move with a display of one's purpose or intention. Get a vision of what God wants you to do or to be and let it be known what your decision for God is. "*Retire, stay not*": The Hebrew says, "Be strong, do not stand." The Septuagint says, "Hasten, do not stay." This means that in response to the call of God and the gospel of Christ, we must take immediate action, get in gear, and courageously make the move that God is calling you to make.

(Jeremiah 5:25), "*Your iniquities have turned away these things*": In the previous verse before this he had spoken about the former and latter rain and the appointed weeks of the harvest. Their transgressing against God had caused these vital blessings to be turned away from them.

(Jeremiah 5:29), "*Visit*": To punish.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson is a continuation of Jeremiah's message to backslidden apostate Israel. There are truths that are valuable and beneficial for souls of backsliders of our time. It has been expressed that the Lord is married to the backslider. This saying comes from Jer. 3:14 of our lesson. Yes, the great heart of God reaches out to the backslider, but we see certain things that He is requiring of us in owning up to our true lost condition and having the proper humble and repentant attitude of heart. He wants people to fully realize that salvation is only in the Lord our God and that we must come to Him with a broken and a contrite heart. He wants the hard and untilled ground of the sinful, wicked heart to be broken up in softness and submission to Him. The vain thoughts that are bound up in the stubborn mind must be cast out and one must be willing to listen and be instructed of the laws of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Many traps and snares are set by Satan and his agents to keep people from repenting and turning to God. Many deceptions and false religions prosper in the world to hide the real truth from souls. In His time, God will visit His wrath and destruction on these ungodly influences. In the meantime, if we are going to be saved, we are going to have to make a desperate and determined effort to be saved in the Lord and escape the snares of sin and death. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to really "return" unto the Lord?
2. What does God require of us in returning to Him?
3. In what way is God married to the backslider?
4. Why is God willing to receive one in a city or two in a family?
5. What are some of the "hills" people often vainly look to?

6. How determined must one be in coming to be saved?
7. What does it mean to "break up the fallow ground" of the heart?
8. Can you think of any vain thoughts keeping souls from salvation?
9. What are some of the good things that sin keeps us from?
10. What are some of the snares and traps we can get caught in?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The same thing or things that caused Israel to backslide in Jeremiah's day still cause people to backslide in our day. To slip back into sin and the ways of the world has been a condition that has prevailed through the ages. Satan is always seeking to allure people, who have escaped from him, to come back and take up the sinful ways of life again. So many we have known, who once were seemingly so sincere, did not last in the Christian life. I remember a man in a campmeeting one night years ago when I was a young Christian who came to the altar to be saved. He had a sweet wife and was in a good congregation under a godly pastor. I vividly remember how that after he had prayed through and obtained forgiveness and peace to his soul he went around to everyone in the house. He shook hands with the sisters and greeted the brothers with a kiss. Oh, it was so impressive! But that man did not keep saved. In a few years he backslid and was taken suddenly out into eternity lost and without hope. Oh, how we need to take diligent heed to the Word of God! Satan will seek to discourage, tempt, push, pressure, lift up with pride, accuse, confuse, and fret the soul to give up the fight and go back on God. But we do not have to do that. I know when I was saved I knew that many people backslide and lose out with God. I did not want that to be the case with me. So when I gave my heart to the Lord I made a commitment to go all the way with the Lord and NEVER GIVE UP! I fought and pressed and earnestly followed every single day after the Lord and His good favor. It was not easy. Satan fought me on every side. He tempted me; he accused me; he

sought to confuse and discourage me. Thank God for the saints of God who often helped me. But I had to fight. Sometimes the devil would crowd in on my mind and make me think that I was going to backslide despite everything. But, thank the Lord, I kept going forward and never gave up the fight. I failed the Lord different times and had to really humble myself and repent and pray earnestly to get the victory. But in every case the Lord helped me to come out with a triumphant joy over the enemy of my soul. When you come to the Lord, mean to go with Him all the way, no turning back. Clean out your heart and life, and get rid of everything that would tend to pull you back to the world. If you do everything that God requires and obey His voice as light shines on your path from His word, you can overcome and be successful in the Christian life and never backslide again.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A minister was walking through the slum section of a large city with a barber who was an atheist. Poverty, filth, and sin were in evidence on every side. The barber said, "If there's a God of love, how can there be so much poverty, privation, and slavery to vile habits?"

The minister held his response until they passed a stumbling bum with unkempt hair and stubble on his face. Then he said, "You can't be a very good barber, or there wouldn't be men like that fellow we just passed."

The barber replied indignantly, "I can't help it if that man goes unshaven and lets his hair grow wild. He has never given me a chance to change his appearance."

"Ah," said the minister, "there is but one reason why people are slaves to sin. They won't come to Christ and trust Him to transform them."

God is yet faithful in His appeal to those who have gone away from Him, just as he was to Israel through Jeremiah. And though few are desirous of having their heart and soul healed, it doesn't take away from the richness of those who walk in close communion with Him.

—Wayne Murphey



JULY 26, 1998

**GOD'S PLEA FOR THE BACKSLIDER
TO RETURN TO HIM**

(Editor's note: This lesson is a departure from our study in Jeremiah. We will return to Jeremiah with the next lesson.)

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord.

11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

Hosea 5:4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord.

5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.

6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.

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

Hosea 5:15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

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

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

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Being separated from God because of sin and transgression causes woe, sorrow and destruction. God is calling the souls of men to return unto Him with godly sorrow and a willingness to please Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: (Hosea 4:1), "*Controversy*": quarrel, contest, contention. (4:2), "*They break out, and blood toucheth blood*": Sin and wickedness increases so that strife and bloodshed is abundant. (4:5), "*Fall in the day...in the night*": The heart of the souls of men make no effort to overcome sin whether they understand or understand not. (4:8), "*Eat up the sin of my people*": They commit sin greedily, justifying themselves in seeing that professed people of God commit the same, and it increases their love and pleasure in unrighteousness. (4:11), "*Take away the heart*": kills the desire for the eternal values of God. The Septuagint renders this: The heart of my people has gladly engaged in

fornication and wine and strong drink. (5:4), *"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God"*: The Hebrew says: Their deeds will not allow them to turn to their God. (5:5), *"Pride doth testify to his face"*: The Septuagint says, "The pride of Israel shall be brought low before his face." Pride, in due season, will show up its bitter fruit in plain view before a person. (5:15), *"Return to my place"*: God withdraws His workings and visible evidence and conceals Himself beyond the comprehension of man into the mysterious realm of the Spirit. (6:3), *"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord"*: The Hebrew says, Then let us know, let us pursue to know the Lord. We must seek God with all our hearts and keep pursuing after Him to learn of Him in His meekness and lowliness of heart.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have a closer and clearer view of the corruption and sin of the people of Israel. We see that the priesthood and the prophets were corrupt and evil. Spiritual and physical adultery and fornication abounded, taking away holy desire for the things of God and His blessings. Things were in a terrible shape in the eyes of God much like it is today. Things were in this very condition when Jesus Christ came on the scene. The priesthood and leadership in Israel was vile and corrupt. Jesus testified to them from Hosea 6:6 of our lesson in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7. They had lost sight of the spiritual aspect of the law and had merely the letter, along with their corrupted traditions. For this cause God withdrew His power and presence and blessings and left them to the troubles that follow a life of sin and wrong. Hosea pleads with the people to forsake their evil ways and return to the holiness of the Lord, assuring them that God was desirous of coming to them with His manifold blessings.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God have a controversy with Israel?
2. How did the corrupt priesthood and unfaithful prophets affect the people?
3. In what way do people "eat up" the sin of professed Christians?

4. Can we expect people to be inclined to rise above the example of their leaders?
5. What were the people leaving off to do?
6. Is God obligated to reveal Himself to people who will not earnestly seek His face?
7. Why is mercy and true knowledge of God more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices?
8. What has God done in order to cause men to want to seek Him?
9. What does it mean to follow on to know the Lord?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When we think about what sin has done to the human race, we are so thankful that God has made it possible for us to escape the yoke of the devil and live in righteousness and true holiness before Him! Sin has brought man low and robbed him of happiness and success. All the sorrow and misery that hangs like a mantle over the nations are on account of sin. It looks like people would wake up after awhile and see what the devil is doing to them. The error of their ways so often testifies right to their face. They reap the harvest of their ungodly deeds in sorrow and remorse. But it seems that man is very slow to face up to his wretched condition. He struggles on, thinking that somehow he is going to master the situation. And sin keeps giving him blow after blow of defeat and frustration. Satan allures them on, making them think that things will get better. But they don't get better. Young people really should face this matter of sin seriously. You cannot master sin on your own. It will throw you every time. We need to seek God early in life. Many times I have said, "Oh, I'm so glad I got saved when I was young!" God is still calling souls to repent and turn to Him. He patiently waits and holds out the lifeline for whosoever will. He is withdrawn from the sense of the flesh. One has to really get in full and determined earnestness to find God. Only when we seek Him with the whole heart can we find the knowledge of God. Then we must continue on, seeking Him every day to learn of His ways and to experience His holy presence in our lives.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A phrase in our lesson which audaciously stands out to me is, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:..." A person would wonder how that could be. After all God did for Israel in making them a nation, one would think that Israel would be very knowledgeable of God. Yet, it is seen today in our own nation that it only takes one or two generations to forget God. Israel had prophets proclaiming the Word of God, yet in practical life the people knew Him not. The lack of knowledge which they had was a willful ignorance, and willful ignorance is almost always self-centered. In Israel's case, it allowed them to continue on in their sinful gratification.

Willful ignorance is fatal. It is fatal to spiritual life and any true happiness. God said He would "...reward them their doings," or that their own doings would be their reward. When you commit sin, you are inflicting pain on someone, and that same kind of pain has a way of coming back around and facing you as your reward.

There is an Aesop fable which tells about a blind woman who made a deal with a physician. She told him that if he could cure her of her blindness she would handsomely reward him, but if not, she would pay him nothing. Seeing she was a woman of means, he accepted the offer, and began paying her regular visits to give treatments. However, his treatments were a sham, and with each visit he carried off some of her goods. After a time, what had been causing her blindness left, and she could once again see, but she refused to pay the quack doctor who took her to court. The woman stood before the judge and told him that she had made the alleged deal with the doctor, but that before her blindness she had many pieces of beautiful furniture in her house, and that though the doctor declared her cured, it could not be, because she was unable to see a single stick of furniture in her house.

We are told in the scriptures that God is not mocked. You don't play around with God through self-ignorance, for what you reap is what you sow. (Gal. 6:7.) —Wayne Murphey

AUGUST 2, 1998

GOD'S CALL TO THE GOOD WAY OF OBEDIENCE

Jeremiah 5:30 A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land:

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Jeremiah 6:13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

14 They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.

16 Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

17 Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

Jeremiah 7:21 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:

23 But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:

26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

27 Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

28 But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

MEMORY VERSE: Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.... Jeremiah 6:16.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God is calling us to depart from the ways of sin and the world and seek for the old paths of holiness and perfect obedience to Him. If we will obey His voice and faithfully follow His Holy Spirit we will find rest and peace for our souls.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 5:31), *"The priests bear rule by their means"*: The Hebrew says, "The priests rule according to their hands." The Septuagint says, "The priests clapped their hands." Instead of holding up the standard of holiness and obedience to God, false ministers rule according to their own fleshly ideas and desires. *"And my people love to have it so"*: Clarke comments: "They are perfectly satisfied with this state of things, because they are permitted to continue in their sins without reproof or restraint."

(Jeremiah 6:16), *"The old paths"*: The word "old" in the Hebrew means from the beginning and eternity. This means that we are to seek for the ways that God mapped out for us before time began. Paul said in Ephesians 1:4 that He has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." These everlasting ways are the ways of faith, humility, obedience, holiness, purity, righteousness and honesty.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have more of Jeremiah's message of reproof to the people. God was calling them to amend their ways and cease from trusting in lying words. It can be applied to our day and time also. When men and women depart from the standards of true holiness, as upheld in the sacred scriptures, they do it to their own hurt. But there is always someone who will dare to solace people and keep them from sensing what the real problem is. The prophets and priests were consoling the people. They lightly healed their hurts with smooth words of "Peace, peace!", but there was not any real peace. It may be peace of having everything you want, or being free from trouble and disturbance, but this is not real peace. True peace comes from God and works within the heart of man. Many ideas and devices are thought up to help in the troubles that are upon our society today. More money is provided, more education is offered, but the real cause is not attended to. The true cause for the troubles of a society is a sick and a rebellious heart. Disobedience to God's holy precepts and a following after of the flesh and the carnal desires brings the woes upon a society. And as long as people are unaware of this things will never get better, but rather grow worse. May God open our eyes to see the real solution to the curse that rests upon humanity and the world. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the evil conditions today which people love to have?
2. How much does covetousness have to do with moral corruption?
3. What are some of the shameful things going on today?
4. Why do people not blush because of these things?
5. What is meant by "the old paths"?
6. What are some of the many "false ways"?
7. What can we find in following the "old paths"?
8. What does God really want from us?
9. What happens when people refuse to obey God's voice?
10. Why is the way of obedience so much better than disobedience?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The sins of Israel in the days of Jeremiah are basically the same as the sins of this present day. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life prove to be the same snare for every generation. (I John 2:16.) There is covetousness, the love of gain. This ensnares many a soul. Its binding influence drags people down by the millions. The main goal in many a life is to strike it rich by whatever means, fair or foul, one can do it. Paul said that the love of money is the root of all evil. (I Timothy 6:10.) And it goes to show that this is true if we would examine all the rotten ways of our society. We would see, in all this moral corruption, an undercurrent of covetousness. Someone is "padding their pocketbook." And then we have the terrible condition of uncontrolled passions of the physical body. Men and women are in the dark about pure holiness concerning their appetites and indulgence of the lusts of the body. The first four things in the catalog of the works of the flesh as recorded by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 have to do with the inordinate desires between men and women. They are: adulterly, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness. These sins have been prevalent in every age. People are not aware of God's demands concerning their sexual desires. They do not realize that He is against double marriage and physical male and female relations outside of holy matrimony. The whole world is caught up in loose relations between men and women. Any and everything goes. But God is calling people from this sinful way of life to a high standard of holiness and temperance. Instead of being motivated by the flesh, we should consecrate our bodies to God and allow His sweet Holy Spirit to direct us in everything we say or do. When a person really wants to find God in a saving way, he or she must leave off the sins of the flesh and the world and turn wholeheartedly to living to please God. We must glorify God in our body and our spirit, which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:20.) If everyone who professes to be a Christian would sincerely and with all the heart present his or her body as a living sacrifice to God, and be not conformed to this present evil world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that they might prove

what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, what a difference there would be! It does not pay to be stubborn and rebellious. So many young people follow that way. But the price for leaving God out of our lives is a high one. So much better it is to be humble and submissive to God and His word, and let Him lead us in that way that is everlasting! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The "old paths" are those trodden by Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah and all the prophets and apostles who believed God and accepted His Word as a lamp unto their feet.

Why should we walk in the "old paths"? Because there we find—

1. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST TO JUSTIFY. All pilgrims in the "old paths" are forgiven and justified through the blood of His cross; the new path wanderers know nothing of this.

2. THE WORD OF GOD TO SATISFY. These pilgrims have not followed cunningly-devised fables, but the true light that shineth in this dark place. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The plausible theories and philosophies of men may beguile for a time, but they cannot bring abiding satisfaction to the heart and conscience.

3. THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT TO SANCTIFY. The makers of the new paths have no place for the quickening, sanctifying, enduing power of the Holy Ghost. Along their new and tawdry way there is no missionary enthusiasm, no felt need of being filled with the Spirit, no joy in the Holy Ghost, no glorying in the cross of Christ, no conversions from sin and self to God.

The old paths are the paths of peace, pleasure and power, because they are the paths in which the Son of God still walks in company with His followers.

—Taken from *Handfuls on Purpose*



AUGUST 9, 1998

THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD OUR ONLY HOPE

Jeremiah 9:1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

23 Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah 10:2 Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

5 They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go....

10 But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

11 Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

12 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

13 When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

14 Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

15 They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

16 The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The Lord of hosts is his name.

MEMORY VERSE: ...The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Jeremiah 10:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: All rejoicing and prospering in the flesh and the strength, riches, and wisdom of man is vanity and soon to perish. Our only hope for happiness and real success is in knowing and pleasing the Lord, the true and living God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 9:23), "*Glory*": To glory here means to decorate one's self and bestow honour upon one's self and take credit for what he is or does.

(Jeremiah 9:24), "*Let him that glorieth glory in this*": The word "glory" here means to shine, make a show, boast, or to celebrate. We cannot do the first "glory," that is, to decorate ourselves and take credit for what we do. But the second glory we can do, only in the Lord. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." Psalm 34:2. "In God we boast all the day long." Psalm 44:8.

(Jeremiah 10:2), "*Learn not the way of the heathen*": The Hebrew says, "Do not be goaded (influenced or taught) by the way of the nations."

(Jeremiah 10:5), "*Must needs be borne, because they cannot go*": The Hebrew says, "They must be lifted and carried for they cannot walk." The gods of the flesh and men have to be worked by the flesh and men, for there is no real life in them to cause them to move. "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Psalm 115:8.

(Jeremiah 10:13), "*He maketh lightnings with rain*": The electricity of the lightning works upon the hydrogen and oxygen in the air and unites them to form the water or rain.

(Jeremiah 10:14), "*Every man is brutish in his knowledge*":

Man is like a dumb beast to lower himself to worship any other god than the true God. Any other god is not the true God, for these give no life or communication with the heart. A man who worships money and wealth is like the brute beasts in ignorance to be devoted to such a swift changing and uncertain thing. Many people worship their belly and their bodily passions. This puts them on the brute beast level. Their whole mind is taken up with the flesh and its lusts. Little or no thought or consideration is given to the reality and importance of the Spirit.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we go farther in our studies from the sayings of the prophet Jeremiah. We have first the expression that helps to label him as the "weeping prophet." The awful sorrow and turmoil that he saw in Israel, because of their sins against God, brought much grief in his soul. It was his agony to pour message after message of the warning of doom and the vengeance of God. He brought out that no man should be lifted up in pride concerning his wealth, wisdom or riches. People are so prone to do this. The apostle Paul quotes from this part of our lesson in I Corinthians 1:31. He brought out how God has chosen the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of the world to confound the mighty and wise of this world. "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." In the 10th chapter what the prophet is mainly dealing with is the idolatry of Israel who had gone out for decorating and setting up images that were costly and pretty to the eyes and worshipping them instead of the true God. Anything that gets between us and the true worship of God from the heart truly can be labeled as idolatry. He said that the gods, that have not made the heaven and the earth, shall perish. We want to worship the God who created these wonderful things, who gives us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. (Acts 14:17.) Oh, He is worthy of all our love and worship! Everything else is going to fail and come short of His pleasure. Let us love and worship the eternal Father in the heavens and let His blessings be our portion in life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused Jeremiah to weep so?

2. What were the three things that God warned man not to glory in?
3. Why is it not wise to glory or boast in these things?
4. What should we glory in, instead of these things?
5. What did the prophet call the customs of the heathen?
6. In what ways is the worship of the true God different from other forms of worship?
7. What are people really worshipping when they have to have fancy images decked with gold, silver and costly array?
8. What kind of God is the true God?
9. What has He done to show His power?
10. What is going to happen to every other man-made system of worship?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The error of Israel in departing from the spiritual worship of God from the inner man is the same identical error in which man falls into today. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24.) We must worship the Spirit God in the realm of the spirit, that is, the realm outside of and without the outward appearance of the flesh and the natural. There is a spirit in man and it is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives him understanding and the reality of Himself. (Job 32:8.) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16.) Paul, in II Corinthians 5:12, spoke of "them which glory in appearance, and not in heart." Man has a weakness for things that have a conspicuous outward show. The lust of the eyes is one of his play things. Things seen, felt, heard, and tasted by the natural senses mean more to him than all the testimony of the ages concerning spiritual, unseen and eternal things. Here was the appeal of the temptation of idolatry to the people of Israel. They were not enough aware of the reality of the spiritual worship of God to discern the value of His ways. They could have been if they had been earnest and diligent in their seeking Him. There were those who were sensitive to the Spirit of God. Jeremiah was one of them. Isaiah was another, and so were all the prophets, that is, the true prophets of God. The world around Israel was steeped in ignorance, blindness and dark-

ness. They knew not the things of the Spirit of God. They were given over to the indulgence of the passions of the flesh and the human body. They worshipped and served the creature, and they lavishly adorned their systems of worship with grand temples and images that attracted the natural eye. Thus they were allured to the flesh and let go of the Spirit of God. Money and earthly gain was much attached to the idolatry worship system. Even immoral and terrible sins had their place in the worship. Today we have a similar situation in our world. Our society is wholly given over to the lusts of the flesh. The things of the Spirit are not attractive nor real to the men and women of our world. That is why we have the many problems and terrible conditions prevailing. People are living to the flesh and are reaping corruption. Adultery, fornication and excessive, fleshly indulgence are abounding everywhere. Let us turn toward the true God. Though unseen, His sweet presence can be clearly felt and experienced by the humble heart.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

People have given their life because of the confession that God is the only true God. This is illustrated in the following story about a believer in the city of Antioch, during the first ages of the church, who was carried forth to die as a martyr.

"Ask any little child," he said, "whether it were better to worship one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and one Saviour, who is able to save us, or to worship the many false gods whom the heathen serve."

At the gathering was a Christian mother holding the hand of her young son who was about nine or ten years-old, named Cyril. The heathen judge no sooner heard the martyr's words than his eyes fell upon the child, and he asked the question to be put to him. The question was asked, and to the surprise of those who heard it, the boy replied, "God is one, and Jesus Christ is one with the Father."

The judge was filled with rage. "O base Christian," he shouted at the one who was to be martyred, "thou hast taught that child to answer thus."

Turning to the boy he said more mildly, "Tell me, child, how did you learn this faith?"

The boy looked lovingly into his mother's face, and said, "It was God's grace that taught it to my mother, and she taught it to me."

"Let us now see what the love of Christ can do for you," cried the cruel judge; and, at a sign from him, the officers, who stood ready with their wooden rods of the fashion of the Romans, instantly seized the boy. Gladly would the mother have saved her son, even at the cost of her own life, but she could not do so, yet she did whisper to him to trust in the love of Christ, and to speak the truth.

"What can the love of Christ do for him now?" asked the judge.

"It enables him to endure what his Master endured for him and for us all," was the mother's reply.

They smote the child and again asked, "What can the love of Christ do for him now?"

Tears fell even from the eyes of the heathen, as that mother, as much tortured as her son, answered, "It teaches him to forgive his persecutors."

The boy watched his mother's eyes as they rose up to heaven for him; and when his tormentors asked whether he would not now acknowledge the gods they served, and deny Christ, he still said, "No, there is no other God but one; and Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world. He loved me, and I love Him for His love."

The poor boy now fainted beneath the repeated strokes, and they cast the bruised body into the mother's arms, crying, "See what the love of your Christ can do for him now."

As the mother pressed the child gently to her own crushed heart, she answered, "That love will take him from the wrath of man to the rest of heaven."

"Mother," cried the dying boy, "give me a drop of water from our cool well upon my tongue."

The mother said, "Already, dearest, hast thou tasted of the well that springeth up to everlasting life—the grace which Christ gives to His little ones. Thou hast spoken the truth in love. Arise now, for thy Saviour calleth for thee. May He grant thy poor mother grace to follow in the bright path."

The little martyr faintly raised his eyes, and said again, "There is but one God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." So saying he gave up his life.

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 16, 1998

CHOOSING BETWEEN THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE

Jeremiah 12:1 Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

Jeremiah 13:22 And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

Jeremiah 15:15 O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

Jeremiah 17:5 Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, and her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

11 As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

12 A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

13 O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.

MEMORY VERSE: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: They that trust in the flesh and the power and wisdom of men will heap sorrow and a terrible curse upon their lives, while they that trust in the Lord God will reap blessings of peace, abundant life, and the fruits of righteousness and holiness.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 12:1), "*When I plead with thee*": The Hebrew renders this sentence: "You are righteous, O Jehovah, that I might complain to You, indeed about Your judgments I would speak with You." The sorrows and persecution that Jeremiah suffered in beholding the judgments of God seemed so great that He desired to entreat the Lord and gain better understanding of what He had in mind. "*Deal very treacherously*": Deceitful ways and manners.

(Jeremiah 12:2), "*Reins*": The center or the heart, the inside of a man.

(Jeremiah 17:6), "*Heath*": A juniper tree, or a small withery shrub.

(Jeremiah 17:9), "*Desperately wicked*": The Hebrew word here means "frail, sick, feeble, wretched, distressed beyond all things and incurable."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we continue with more of the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah for the fallen people of Israel. We have chosen especially the scriptures that can easily and readily be applied to the welfare of our souls in our day. All these things were written for our admonition down here in these last days of time. It is not a nation or commonwealth of society that is at stake now; it is the preservation of our precious souls. And if we will be wise we can avoid the calamities that God has warned us about. This nation of Israel paid dearly for their transgressions against a gracious God. It will be no less an awful price that we will pay if we draw back from pleasing the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God allow the wicked to prosper in the world?
2. What will we face in the future that will be far more adverse than what we are facing now?
3. What causes the judgments of God to fall upon men?
4. Why is it so hard for a person to change from their evil ways?
5. What is the only way that a person can really be changed?
6. What can be to us a rejoicing of the heart in the midst of sorrow?
7. What will we be likened unto if we will trust in the Lord and make Him our hope?
8. What is the central cause for all sorrow and trouble of mankind?
9. What is a man who getteth riches unjustly likened unto?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We know that God is righteous, but we have the privilege to plead with him, and speak to Him about His judgments. If we will be submissive to Him and seek an understanding about His ways, He is faithful to enlighten our souls and make plain what His dealings are about. God so many times will take a different course than what we would normally suppose should be. Many times it seems that God lets wicked people go on and on in their

folly, but it will catch up with them soon enough. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." Psalm 92:7.

If we think that the calamities of this present world are bad, remember that there is coming a greater one. People weary with the toils and adversities of this mortal life and lose faith, but how much more terrible will be the last great day when all things melt away to be no more! We need to be courageous and patient in the trials of life and pray always that we will be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man. Luke 21:36.

It is because of people's sinful ways and habits that the judgments of God are pronounced upon them. I am fully persuaded that the immorality and looseness of people's life styles are the cause of the many calamities that are befalling our society. And yet people wonder, "Wherefore come these things upon me?" It does not seem to occur to them that their sinful lives are coming up before God. It seems that they give no thought that there is an All-seeing Eye everywhere beholding the evil and the good. (Proverbs 15:3.) And then when people are made aware of their sinful condition it proves to be a very difficult thing to change. They are accustomed to do evil. They have been so goaded and influenced and programmed by an evil society that it is like washing spots off of the leopard to change. But if a person really wants to purify their souls because of godly sorrow and conviction from the fear of God, there is a way that it can be done. Christ shed His blood as a fountain of cleansing for sin and for uncleanness. And if a person truly repents and turns away from their sinful ways and pleads the blood of Jesus, he can find deliverance and victory over sin, the flesh and the devil.

The Lord knows our hearts. He has His eye upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their prayers. He will make a way for them. He will give grace as long as He permits the trial to continue, and in His wise time He will rescue them. And, praise the Lord, in the midst of the trials of life He will reveal Himself to us through His precious Word. We can find His words and eat them, absorbing their wonderful essence into our innermost being. Oh, what joy and rejoicing we find in the Word

of God! It helps to lift our souls above every storm of life we meet. Let us keep prayerful and live close to God and He will commune with us from above, giving us consolation and gladness to help offset the troubles that we might suffer. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, and her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

What an inspiring picture this is of the Christian. And we know it can be attained, for we have seen it fulfilled in those who have walked with the Lord, met adversity, and yet kept sweet in spirit and continued producing fruits of peace and humility.

I have read of a lower dungeon in the Mamertine Prison where it is believed that at one time the apostle Paul was imprisoned. This lower dungeon is a huge cellar beneath a cellar and very dark and depressing. It is in all ways unsuitable for human beings, except for one feature—out of the solid rock, and flowing across the floor, is a spring of clear water. One person's description of it was, "The water reflects the torch light, and looks like a beam from heaven lingering amid the gloom of death."

What a privilege it is to have a heavenly well of water that springs up into everlasting life flowing within. It comes straight from heaven and can be wherever we are and in whatever situation we find ourselves. It provides refreshment and comfort from the assault of the enemy and will keep our spiritual life green and flourishing, even during the drought of trial.

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 23, 1998

OUR STEPS DIRECTED AS CLAY IN THE POTTER'S HANDS

Jeremiah 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

Jeremiah 10:23 O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

24 O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

Psalms 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Psalms 119:133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

Proverbs 19:21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

MEMORY VERSE: O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Jeremiah 10:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God wants to mold and shape each one of us into a vessel unto honour and praise to Him and for good to others. We are not wise enough or capable of directing

our paths in this world. So we would best become completely submissive and pliable in the hands of God so that He can make of us the vessel He would have us to be.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 18:4), "*Marred*": Ruined.

(Jeremiah 10:23), The Septuagint renders this: "I know, O Lord, that man's way is not his own; neither shall a man go, and direct his steps." Oh, how direly important for us to realize that we are not capable of knowing the right ways of the Lord without His counsel!

(Psalm 37:23), "*He delighteth in his way*": A man who allows God to lead him will find great delight and pleasure in the way God leads him. And God will be delighted in the way this man yields to Him and walks in His way.

(Psalm 37:31), "*Slide*": To waver, slip, or fall.

(Psalm 119:133), "*Order*": Set up or establish.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we have the wonderful object lesson that God gave to Israel through Jeremiah of the potter and the clay. This was a warm expression of God's loving heart toward Israel. And it is still the same for us. There in that lowly potter's house Jeremiah beheld a lesson that gives hope for all who fail of the grace of God and are marred in their lives. The wonderful truth is revealed here that God can "make us again". If we will be but yielded into His hand and get rid of all stiffness and self-will, God can yet make something out of our lives that will be pleasing in His sight. This is a big "IF." If we will become humble, submissive, and willing to obey all the Word of God, God can still work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. This means seeking earnestly to know and to obey the leadings of the Lord in every step we take in life. So many times people are governed by their own ideas and desires, and not the will of God. It is a dangerous place in our human realm of life and thought. There are many ideas and plans that formulate in our hearts. We ponder, study, calculate, imagine, dream and think that we see what is desirable and profitable for us. And, sad to say, many times these self-devised plans bring us sorrow, frustration and

disappointment, and too often, eternal ruin. It is a fool who never gets serious enough to really give God a chance to direct his life. This woeful thing goes on all around us every day, and often with God's counsel at hand. We are the clay, and He is the Master Potter. We are the traveler, and He is the Master Guide. It is for our good and happiness that we afford God a consecrated and willing heart in which He can work His sovereign will!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the potter able to make the vessel again?
2. What causes people to become marred in the hands of God?
3. What must one do for God to be able to "make him again"?
4. What kind of vessel does God want to make out of us?
5. How can we prevent the Lord from accomplishing His will in us?
6. Why does God have to have our wills submitted to Him?
7. What is the result of a person failing to be subject to God and taking his own way?
8. What influences must we overcome in the world to be able to understand and to take God's way?
9. How will we be able to keep our steps from sliding into ruin?
10. What can we find out about God if we faithfully follow His way?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I remember hearing Brother Darius Gibson telling about a visit he made to a potter's house. He wondered as he beheld the many beautiful vessels that the potter had been able to produce from the clay. He got to thinking about the lesson here in Jeremiah about the potter and the clay. He asked the potter if he would make a certain vessel. The potter turned to his wheel and rolled out the clay and made the vessel. Then Brother Gibson asked him, "Could you now take the clay and make another vessel just like the one that you just made?" The potter immediately answered that he could and turned to his wheel again and made another vessel just like that one he had just

made. He set it out beside the other vessel and they looked just alike with no difference or variation. Brother Gibson said that he had something in his mind while he was talking to him. So he spoke to the potter like this: "Now you were able to do this because the clay was so pliable in your hands." "Yes," said the potter, "that is right." Brother Gibson continued: "The Lord said in Jeremiah 18:6 that as clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand. Don't you think that God is able to take two people and make them one in Him; cause them to agree together, work together, and flow together in love and harmony?" The potter said, "Well, I don't know about that." Brother Gibson was bringing a message on unity and the oneness of God's people. And he brought out that if God can get people yielded and submissive to Him, He can bring them into perfect unity and harmony in His Holy Spirit. He said that the potter had said that he got clay sometimes that he couldn't work very well with. When asked what he did with such clay, the potter said that he had a heavy paddle that he would pound and beat the clay to work out all the lumps and stiffness. Praise the Lord, God has a way to get all the stiffness and lumps out of our lives if we will let Him. He will help us. Too many people have stuff in their lives that God cannot work with. There is too much self, pride, lust, greed and vain desires. God cannot work with such clay. But if a person will see the value of being consecrated and submitted to the Lord and will pray earnestly for His divine help, God will help and work to bring about His good pleasure. Sometimes the Lord has to send adversity and sorrow to mellow us down and cause us to be more pliable to Him. But if the Lord sees that such will have the right effect, He will send it. On the other hand, we can save ourselves many a stripe and many a trial if we will be willingly and diligently subject to Him, constantly working on ourselves and earnestly endeavoring to take His way. Here is where so many go wrong. Worldly influence and pride in the heart deceives the soul and causes one to go against the will of God for their life. Let us take heed to the lesson of God's word. Submit to God. Resist the devil and his avenues of sin. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. James 4:7-8.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Think of what great possibilities there are when God, the Potter, places His hands on us. Although we are from the dust of the earth, He is able to make of us something useful and beautiful. Consider all the Bible characters who accomplished great things because they allowed God to mold their lives.

God's great hands are strong hands. Sometimes He finds traits in our lives that hinder us from being totally pliable to His will, so with strong fingers He softens those areas.

His hands and fingers are also very sensitive. He does not needlessly overwork or bend us unmercifully, but does only that which is necessary to form something beautiful of our lives.

Vessels made by God are not set up on a shelf as simply ornaments to be admired. They are fashioned to be filled with the Holy Spirit, which is sealed within, and made useful for service. (II Cor. 1:22.)
—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 30, 1998

GATHERED UNTO JESUS, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jeremiah 23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord.

2 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.

3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.

5 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

23 Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?
24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.

29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

MEMORY VERSE: Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. Jeremiah 23:23-14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In Christ Jesus who is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS God's people are gathered together into one body and are safe forever from the powers of darkness and evil. The word of God is preached by pastors anointed of the Holy Spirit, and He will enable us to reign over all the false churches and doctrines of this present evil world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 23:2), "*Have not visited them*": They did not oversee, take charge of or care for them.

(Jeremiah 23:5), "*Branch*": This refers to Christ Jesus who would be a prout of righteousness and true holiness that would blossom and fill the earth with fruit acceptable and well pleasing unto God.

(Jeremiah 23:28), "*What is the chaff to the wheat?*": The Lord had just spoken about some who had a dream and said, "Let him tell a dream." But then He said, "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." We have two things that were put forth. The false prophets were deceiving the people with their

dreams. Sometimes the Lord deals in dreams, but if the dreams are not backed up by the Word of God they are in comparison to the Word of God as chaff to the wheat. Any doctrine not backed by the sound truth of the Word of God is vain and dangerous.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have a clear and direct prophecy of Jesus Christ in our lesson today. The pastors and leaders of the people of Israel had led them astray from the heavenly way. The Lord allowed His people to be scattered. In the course of time the Jews were scattered among the nations. And in the Christian era false doctrines and false shepherds scattered them more and more. But here we have the prophecy that a righteous Branch and King would be raised up to bring righteousness and judgment in the hearts of men. Mankind was to be brought to salvation and deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ, who is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. The Lord Jesus, through His obedience to the will of God and going to the cross to atone for our sins, brought everlasting righteousness for us. His righteousness is the only kind of righteousness that will avail with God.

The false shepherds were deceiving the people with their dreams. So it is today. Foolish and erring dreams are preached and promoted. Worldwide peace, the millennial reign, speaking in unknown tongues, emotionalism, great miracles and healing campaigns, and great gatherings of promotion and worldly honour are among the dreams that people go after today. But they are not according to the true gospel, the pure and holy Word of God. They are the chaff which the wind will drive away. The Spirit of God is not in them, and all their efforts and enthusiasm will fade away and perish. It means much for us to base our hopes on the Word of God and not the vain dreams of the flesh.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are pastors supposed to do for God's people?
2. Of what value is a dream that is not backed by the Word of God?
3. In what way was Jesus to be a righteous Branch?
4. What kind of reign was Jesus prophesied to have?
5. In what way is Jesus The Lord Our Righteousness?

6. How can God be a God at hand to us?
7. To whom is He a God afar off?
8. Why should we fear and reverence this great God?
9. What three things is the Word of God likened unto?
10. What are false doctrine and vain dreams likened unto?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The greatest woe that has ever come upon the earth is that which is brought by the influence of false religion and false teachers. Paul spoke of such in II Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Jesus Himself warned us, saying, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits...." Matthew 7:15-16. Much is said in the New Testament about false teachers. The apostle Paul was continually withstood by false brethren who were blind leaders of the blind, as Jesus put it. (Matthew 15:14.) But God's judgment is upon those who profess to be teachers of God and who have a false spirit. The ministers are to be vessels that the Spirit of God works through. For them to be thus, they must be clean and holy. The Spirit of God is not in anything that is defiled with the sins of this world. No matter how well they speak and how much they do in programs and big campaigns to draw the people, if they are not according to the truth of Christ, they are chaff which the wrath of God will drive away. It means much to be a holymouthpiece for the Lord, a vessel that God can pour His messages into and use to convey the truth to others. Dreams are of no value unless they contain the truth of God portrayed. God has dealt often with His children in dreams. Jacob had a dream of the ladder reaching up to heaven. Joseph had dreams that came true later in life. If a dream has merit or value it will be because it lines up with the Word and the Spirit of the Lord. The main thing we want to uphold and set forth in our lives is the Word of the Lord which liveth and abideth forever. People are dreaming today. One man wrote me that he believed that the time was coming when God would do something terrible

and get people stirred up to live for God and do right. I wrote him back and said we had better not look for such a time, but we had better stir our hearts right now to seek the Lord and get right with him. I never got any reply from him. Another man asked prayer that he would get right with God some way before he dies. But he is at the present making no move to get right with God. The five foolish virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom without the extra supply of oil they should have had. They did not anticipate a delay. When a person gets lifted up with pride, refuses to listen to counsel, and is a know-it-all, then he has become too old and is just dreaming that he is on the road to heaven. Now remember, the dreamers are the chaff, and the chaff will be burned up with unquenchable fire. May the Lord stir our hearts and help us to have a vision of what it will really mean to be accounted worthy to escape the destruction of this present evil world and to stand in that day before the Son of man. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

An evangelist by the name of Leonard Ravenhill once stated, "A sermon born in the head reaches only the head; a sermon born in the emotions reaches only the emotions; a sermon full of imagination reaches only the imagination. But a sermon born of the Spirit of God captivates the heart of listening ones."

What truth is expressed in that statement. A preacher who has done much thinking, imagining and dreaming may hold the attention of the audience, and the preacher who has submerged himself in deep theological debates may impress his hearers, and the preacher who is up and down in his experience may get on an emotional high and have it spill over onto the congregation. But what God is looking for is the man or woman of God who can live a stable life and whose heart is touched by His spirit. The preaching of that person will cause the Word of God to be enlivened. It will educate and edify the listeners, causing them to rejoice and endeavor to be better people. —Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 6, 1998

SEEKING GOD WITH ALL THE HEART

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

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

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

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

Psalms 9:9 The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Psalms 34:10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

Psalms 40:16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.

Psalms 105:3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.

4 Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore.

Psalms 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

Proverbs 28:5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.

Zephaniah 2:3 Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

MEMORY VERSE: ...Without faith it is impossible to please

him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God cannot be savingly known to us unless He reveals Himself to us in the Holy Spirit, and He will make himself thus known only to those who reach out to Him and seek diligently for him with all the heart.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 29:11), Let us read this from the Hebrew Interlinear: "For I know the purposes which I am planning for you, says Jehovah; purposes of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

(Hosea 10:12), "*Break up your fallow ground*": The term "fallow ground" refers to ground that has not been cultivated or in use for a long time. This is typical of the heart so accustomed to sin and worldly desires and hardened by pride and sinful lusts. God is calling people to break off their sinful habits and get in earnest about the welfare of their souls.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our subject today we draw from the words that God spoke to the children of Israel through Jeremiah. These were words that God spoke to the elders, priests, prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. All who had tried to escape to other places of refuge came to naught. But to those who allowed themselves to be taken captive by the King of Babylon were promised safety and a future return to Jerusalem. It was God's judgment upon them to be taken captive to Babylon and, if they submitted to this, the mercy of God would be upon them. God told them in Jeremiah 29:5-7, "Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." He said further in verse 10, "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you,

and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

This was God's mercy toward this people in giving them a chance to seek the Lord and feel after Him. This is what He wanted these people to do. They had listened and given heed to the words of Jeremiah, and now He wanted them to seek Him with the whole heart so that He could be glorified in revealing Himself to them.

The appeal from the various other scriptures we have included in our lesson agrees with the words of Jeremiah. It has been and always will be a desire of the Almighty God for us to seek and search diligently for Him. Paul said in his message on Mars Hill in Acts 17:26-27 that God "...hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,...that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." People do not find God unless they are seeking after Him with all their hearts. The devil has plenty of things in the world to take up people's hearts and desires to keep them from seeking after God. Too many people nourish a vain hope that someday God is going to deal with them in a special way and get them to be saved, and they go on in their selfish pursuits. Many people get deceived in a religious experience that comes upon them "out of the blue" without really seeking God with a penitent heart and becoming truly a new creature in Christ. If we are to really find God and obtain a true relationship with Him, we are going to have to seek for it with all of our hearts and affections. It must become the number one thing in our life. But God has made so many promises of blessings for those who diligently seek Him that it ought to inspire and stir the heart to do so without delay.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of thoughts does the Lord God think toward us?
2. What must one do to really find God?
3. Why is it so hard for a person to really get down to business about seeking God?
4. Why should we seek the Lord now while He is near?
5. Why does God not let us find Him until we seek Him with all the heart?
6. What does it mean to seek the Lord with the whole heart?

7. What are the various benefits promised to those who seek the Lord?

8. Why is it vain to neglect to seek the Lord, hoping for something drastic to happen to get us stirred up to be saved?

9. What attitude should we have toward God's law as we seek Him?

10. What benefit is there in seeking the Lord, His righteousness and His meekness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

No one really finds God as he should unless he seeks for God with all of his inward affections and desires. God is so hidden from the feelings of the flesh that He cannot be savingly known unless He reveals Himself. And God will not reveal Himself to anyone who does not seek diligently for His help and grace. Many, many mortals make the costly mistake of neglecting this dire and important matter. It is the worst error one can make in life to allow any other influence to hinder him from seeking the Lord and feeling after Him. To seek the Lord one must pray and call upon Him. One must be departing from his sinful ways and practices. Everything must be turned toward this one objective, and that is to seek the Lord until you find Him precious to your soul. To allow anything to come in and hinder your pursuit of Him will bar Him from your life. One man, seeking the Lord as he drove to have a minister pray with him to be saved, was tempted to take one more cigarette. He said the Lord spoke to him and said, "If you take that cigarette the whole thing is off!" He threw that pack of cigarettes out the window and went on to seek the Lord and found him precious to his soul. Oh, it has to be with all the heart or there is no finding God. Sad to say, many make an effort but do not go all the way and pay the full price to really be born again and be delivered from the power of Satan and sin. Many just get under conviction and make a profession and never seek the Lord until He rains righteousness upon them. It means a lot to seek the Lord until you break up the fallow ground of your heart and become melted and submissive to God and His ways. In this wicked world, the lifestyle of the general run of people is so adverse to the Lord and His ways that the heart and mind becomes hardened and not responsive to God and His Word. You have to work on yourself to bring your heart and mind into a repentant attitude

of truly being sorry for your sins. It is a critical point. One must go all the way and pay the full price of repentance and obedience and believing the Word of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"True repentance consists in the heart being broken for sin and broken from sin. Some often repent, yet never reform; they resemble a man traveling in a dangerous path, who frequently starts and stops, but never turns back." —Bonnell Thornton

"There are two kinds of repentance: one is that of Judas, the other that of Peter; the one is ice broken, the other ice melted. Repentance unto life will be repentance in the life."

—William Nevins

"It is one thing to mourn for sin because it exposes us to hell, and another to mourn for it because it is an infinite evil; one thing to mourn for it because it is injurious to ourselves, and another to mourn for it because it is wrong and offensive to God. It is one thing to be terrified; another to be humbled." —Gardiner Spring

"Repentance is a hearty sorrow for our past misdeeds, and a sincere resolution and endeavor, to the utmost of our power, to conform all our actions to the law of God. It does not consist in one single act of sorrow, but in doing works meet for repentance; in a sincere obedience to the law of Christ for the remainder of our lives."

—John Locke

"When the heart has laid down its faults at the feet of God, it feels as though it has wings."

—Eugénie Guérin



SEPTEMBER 13, 1998

ISRAEL RESTORED IN CHRIST JESUS

Jeremiah 31:1 At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

3 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

4 Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

6 For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.

7 Forthussaith the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

10 Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

11 For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

14 And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In Christ Jesus and the New Testament plan of salvation we can be restored to the blessings of heaven and fellowship with our Creator. Our souls can find full contentment in the blessings of God's goodness, making us like a watered garden with joy and rejoicing in Zion, the Church of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 31:4), "*Tabrets*": This means a tambourine, which is an instrument of percussion like a hand drum with jingling metal disks around it, played by shaking it and hitting it with the knuckles. "*Dances*": The dances of old were one of the methods of expressing inward joy and celebrating the deliverance and blessings of God's Providence. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, led the women in dancing and playing the timbrel, which is the tambourine, the same as the tabret. (Exodus 15:20-21.) Just how they accomplished this exercise we do not know. But it was probably skipping or footing a light and jubilant movement with quick and springing steps in accord with the joy and gladness that swelled up in their hearts. The dance has lingered in practice through the history of the world. Even King David leaped and danced as they were bringing the ark home to Jerusalem. (II Samuel 6:14.) In modern times it has developed into avenues of pride, immorality and sinful vanity. As holy saints, we do not participate in worldly dancing, but the joy of the Lord in our hearts sometimes makes us feel like leaping or lifting up our feet quickly or walking with springing steps.

(Jeremiah 31:9), "*In a straight way*": This means an equal, right and even way the way of holiness and pleasing God.

(Jeremiah 31:12), "*For wheat, for wine, and for oil*": The saints of God in Zion, which is the true Church of God, flow together with joy over the goodness of the Lord because of the nourishment, the sweetness, and the richness of the spiritual life that we have found in Jesus.

(Jeremiah 31:14), "*Sattiate*": This means to fill completely and satisfy.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Lord used Jeremiah to warn the people of the coming judgment of God upon them for their transgressions against Him. He foretold the coming of the King of Babylon and how they were to be carried away captive. In our lesson today we find the Lord giving hope of a return to their native land. When the Lord's anger had fallen upon them in punishment for their sins, He promised to them deliverance and restoration. But the promise is not only given to Judah to whom Jeremiah spoke to, but also to the ten

tribes of Israel which were lost. It is very clear that the restoration and return that God promises was not really fulfilled in a literal deliverance, but it is rather a prophecy of the spiritual fulfillment to be found in Christ and His salvation. This is how we will apply the words of Jeremiah in our lesson today. All the love and goodness of God was fully manifested in the grace brought to the world in the appearing of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God. The Zion spoken of in our lesson is the Church of God, the body of Christ and His beloved bride. The height of Zion is the mountain of holiness, the elevated plane of being saved and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The instruments and dances are the joyous expressions of the glory of God in the soul of man. The redemption is the deliverance from the dominion of Satan and sin. The wheat is the Bread of life, the living doctrines of Jesus. The wine and the oil is the Holy Spirit living and abiding in the hearts of the saints. In these blessings the souls of the redeemed are satisfied completely with the richness and goodness of the Lord. These things have been brought to us in the salvation of Christ and are for us today to be possessed and enjoyed.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does God's love desire for every soul?
2. How does God attract or draw us to Him?
3. What does the term "Zion" signify?
4. What kind of condition of heart and life does God want us in?
5. What can we experience in the "height of Zion"?
6. What is the Lord gathering His people likened unto?
7. Who has the Lord redeemed us from who is stronger than us?
8. What does the blessing of the Lord cause His saints to do?
9. What kind of fatness does God satisfy His saints with?
10. What are the fruits grown in a watered garden of saints?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God loved us from old, from everlasting. Before the world was created He had a wonderful plan in mind for mankind. Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world, in the mind of God, to be slain as a sacrifice for our salvation. He covered us in

the shadow of His hand to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth that He might say unto us, the true Zion, that we are His people. He is not willing to leave us languishing in the clutches of sin and the devil without a chance to escape and be saved. He looked down from the height of His sanctuary and beheld the earth to hear the groaning of the prisoner in the prison house of sin and to loose us who were appointed or sentenced to death. He purposed to declare His holy name in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem when the people were gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve and worship Him. All of this He has done in His Son, Jesus Christ. We are won to Him as we behold His lovingkindness. Our hearts are melted with repentance and godly sorrow for the vileness of our sins and at the sight of His goodness and mercy. We come to Him in brokenness of heart with weeping and supplications. He leads us to the fount of cleansing and to the river of life. He causes us to walk in a pure and holy way wherein we shall not stumble or fall. We find the way of humility, faith, purity and holiness. In obtaining forgiveness of sins and going on to experience the second work of grace in sanctification and being filled with the Holy Spirit we gain access to the heights of Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven. He gives us victory over sin and cleanses us from the carnal nature, the old man. He gives us a new spirit and a new heart. He renews our mind to things of eternal worth and value. Oh, the blessings and joy of being restored to the image of God in righteousness and true holiness! This is what Jeremiah was prophesying about, and this is the inheritance of all who will come to the Lord and receive the abundance of His grace.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Have you ever thought of the fact that Christianity is the only religion which offers forgiveness of sin? The Muslim prays, fasts, gives alms and goes on hazardous pilgrimages, believing that in this way he can become righteous. He does not seek for forgiveness.

The Hindu assumes that goodness and unacknowledged sins are related to a future nothingness or to an existence in which he will be at death reincarnated into an insect or animal. He knows nothing of forgiveness.

The Confucian has a lofty concept of God as a Judge—stern, relentless, cold, capricious and merciless—existing only as a detached observer. But to the Christian, through the Holy Spirit, God comes down to those of a contrite heart, forgives their sins and casts them as far as the east is from the west. (Psa. 103:12.)

One lady confided in a minister that sometimes she worried about whether God had really forgiven her past. The minister replied, "God has put your sins behind His back. He has dropped them in the depth of the sea and put up the notice: 'No Fishing Allowed'." No wonder Jeremiah was able to prophecy, "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion,..." Jer. 31:12.

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 20, 1998

A NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST JESUS

Jeremiah 31:15 Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

16 Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

20 Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

21 Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

22 How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

23 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.

24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks.

25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

31 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

MEMORY VERSE: This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. Hebrews 10:16.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God promised to bring back from the power of Satan all who are willing and obedient to Christ. And the covenant that He makes with us in Christ is written in our hearts and minds.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 31:20), *"I will surely have mercy upon him"*: Clarke comments: "When a sinner turns to God, God ceases to be angry with him. God expresses his determination to save him: I will be affectionately merciful to him. He shall find that I treat him as a father does a returning prodigal son. So every penitent is sure to find mercy at the hand of God."

(Jeremiah 31:21), *"Waymarks, high heaps"*: Guiding pillars and signs of direction. *"set thine heart toward the highway"*: Set your desires and your interests toward the way that leads to God. No one finds God unless they turn their heart toward the paths

that will lead to Him. These paths are the ways of humility, confession, repentance, submission, obedience and faith.

(Jeremiah 31:22), "*A woman shall compass a man*": In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. (Gal. 3:28.) A woman filled with the Spirit of God can prevail with holy authority and power over a carnal man who is void of grace. Physically this may not be, but in spiritual things and in the realm of the life that is in Christ it can and will be.

(Jeremiah 31:23), "*They shall use this speech*": They shall speak this word.

(Jeremiah 31:24), "*Husbandmen*": Farmers or ploughmen.

(Jeremiah 31:25), "*Replenished every sorrowful soul*": The Hebrew says, "Every soul who languishes I fill." To languish means to pine or waste away through grief, pain, or hunger, and to have intense longing or desire.

(Jeremiah 31:26), "*I awaked*": Clarke says that the prophecy, commencing from chapter 32:2 and ending with verse 25 of this chapter, was delivered to Jeremiah in a dream.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We continue in our prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the future of the Church in Christ. He starts out with the weeping of Rachel for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they were taken away. Now we find that Matthew 2:17-18 applies this to the massacre of the infants in Bethlehem and its coats under the cruel decree of Herod in his mad desire to destroy the Christchild. This can be applied as a fulfillment of this prophecy, but the real meaning is that of souls returning to God from the power of Satan. Verse 16 of our lesson could not be applied to the slaying of the Bethlehem infants for they were not returned. It is all pointing to souls returning to God through Jesus Christ. Hearts and minds need to be turned toward the Lord. The scriptures make mention of this greatly. People need to turn their heart to the highways that will lead to God. In the *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan quotes this 21st verse in our lesson when Christian and Hopeful had gotten out of the way on their journey to the celestial city. The two pilgrims heard a voice speaking thus to them.

We have in our lesson the prophecy of the new covenant that God would establish in His Son, Jesus Christ. The writer in Hebrews 8:8-12 and 10:15-17 really picks up on this prophecy

and shows that the sacrifice and ministration of the Spirit in Christ supercedes and replaces the old law system. Instead of being written on tables of stone, the heart of man is renewed by the work of the Spirit of God and the laws of God are inscribed upon the heart and in the affections of man, thus enabling him to walk in the law of God successfully. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How does God feel about a soul who has gone away from Him?
2. How can we turn our hearts to the highways of Zion?
3. In Christ, how is a woman equal to or able to overcome a man?
4. How can we be husbandmen in the things of God?
5. What pleasure does God find in blessing and comforting the weary and sorrowful soul?
6. Why was God dissatisfied with the first covenant?
7. Upon what was the first covenant written?
8. Upon what is the new covenant written?
9. In what way does God want us to know Him?
10. What kind of life will one live if the law of God is in the heart?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Thank the Lord for the new covenant in Christ! Under the old law system the laws of God were written on stone or on a scroll. This did not reach the heart. A perfect sacrifice had not been made which would open up the way for the Holy Spirit to inhabit each individual heart. The laws were written and read regularly to the people, but there was another law, as Paul said in Romans 7:23, and this law was in their members, or their fleshly desires. This was the law of sin. They saw the beauty and good in the law of God and it sounded good to them and they promised to obey it when God gave it to them. But this other law that controlled their lusts and desires would rise up and assert itself in the face of the law of God. The law said, "Thou shalt not covet," but looking on another woman in her beauty would often overcome a man and cause him to go after her. The law said, "Thou shalt not steal", but many times it was broken when a man had an opportunity to take something to himself unlawfully. The law said, "Thou shalt not kill," but anger and bitterness often caused people to commit

murder upon their fellow man. What they needed was a work of divine love in the inner man. That lust, selfishness, greediness and strife must be purged out by the blood of a perfect sacrifice. This was accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all men. "The blood will work a perfect cure, will cleanse the heart and keep it pure: the precious blood of Jesus!" And with the heart made pure and clean and fit for the Holy Spirit to come within and take up His holy dwelling, God has the freedom to begin to write upon the heart and mind His sacred laws and commandments. And because it is written within the heart, it is much more apt to be true in the actions, ways and words that come forth from the person. Whatever is in the heart rules a person. What defiles a man comes from within, from the heart. Jesus taught us this in Matthew 15:18-20 and Mark 7:20-23. The Lord, through the grace brought to us in Christ, can transform the heart that once was proud, vain and deceitful and make it soft, pliable and receptive to the will of God. This kind of covenant will work and effect the kind of life and service that pleases God and satisfies the soul.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The religion of many people is similar to the ten commandments given by God to Moses—easily broken. Many purpose to turn over a new leaf and some make New Year's resolutions. Do you ever question why so few are kept? It is because frail human willpower and strength are pitted against a devil's wisdom. Satan has been at his business for over 6,000 years and possesses a great deal of experience; however, when the power of God is brought on the scene, we can be more than conquerors.

The tables of stone which Moses received on Mt. Sinai were kept in the Ark of the Covenant. The ark signified a protection. This is true with the new covenant of today. God's law written upon our hearts serves as a protection from all the devices of the enemy. The devil can no longer exercise power over us unless we willingly lower our defenses and surrender to him. With the law of God inscribed upon our hearts, we no longer face inward turmoil and strife as we endeavor to keep the commands of God.

—Wayne Murphey



SEPTEMBER 27, 1998

SUMMARY TEST ON JEREMIAH

This test can be taken quietly by each member of the class or can be directed by the teacher, reading each question one at a time. The time allowed for the class can be divided to give time for the teacher to go over the questions again and give opportunity for each student to score his answers. Pens or pencils should be prepared and on hand to offer to any who does not have one to use. We hope everyone makes 100%!

There are 35 questions, 3 points for each.
Multiple choice: Circle the letter of the one you believe is the right answer.

1. Jeremiah is called:
(a.) Radical priest (b.) Weeping prophet (c.) Holy one
2. God called Jeremiah when he was:
(a.) Elderly (b.) Well educated (c.) As a young boy
3. Israel in Jeremiah's time was:
(a.) Backslidden (b.) Reformed (c.) Close to God
4. Jeremiah's response to God's call was:
(a.) Eager to go (b.) "I am a child" (c.) A refusal
5. The Fountain of living waters Israel had:
(a.) Forsaken (b.) Held fast to (c.) Followed after
6. They had hewn themselves cisterns that were:
(a.) Dependable (b.) Broken (c.) Beneficial
7. God requires people who come to Him:
(a.) To acknowledge their sins and repent (b.) Make a big show of love (c.) Pay more money
8. One of the greatest sins in Israel was:
(a.) Idolatry (b.) Covetousness (c.) Pride
9. The Lord wants us to ask for:
(a.) New and better ways (b.) The old paths (c.) Modern and up to date methods
10. Jeremiah wanted his head and eyes to be:
(a.) Adorned with jewels (b.) Waters and a fountain of tears (c.) Very handsome

11. Three things we must NOT glory in:
(a.) Our riches (b.) Our own wisdom (c.) Our own strength (d.)
God's mercy (e.) God's strength

12. We should glory in:
(a.) Our education (b.) Our talents (c.) Knowing God

13. The Lord is the true God because:
(a.) He gives us wealth (b.) He created the heavens and the earth
(c.) He answers prayer

14. To trust in man is:
(a.) A blessing (b.) A curse (c.) Great opportunity

15. To trust in the Lord is:
(a.) A rigid law (b.) A wonderful blessing (c.) Woe

16. God wants us to be:
(a.) As clay in the potter's hands (b.) A machine for Him to use (c.)
Someone to counsel Him

17. When the vessel was marred the potter:
(a.) Threw it away (b.) Made it again (c.) Beat it

18. The steps of a good man are:
(a.) Ordered by God (b.) Messed up (c.) Confused

19. The Lord said He would raise unto David:
(a.) A Punisher (b.) A righteous Branch (c.) A Curse

20. His Name would be:
(a.) THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (b.) THE LORD OUR
JUDGE (c.) THE LORD OUR DOOM

21. The heart of man is:
(a.) Very good (b.) Pure and clean (c.) Deceitful and desperately
wicked

22. People are dreamers who:
(a.) Profess God and live contrary to Him. (b.) Are very conscien-
tious (c.) Pray much and trust Him.

23. Who was to be the "righteous Branch"?
(a.) Apostle Paul (b.) John the Baptist (c.) Jesus

24. God's thoughts toward us are thoughts:
(a.) Of anger (b.) Of peace (c.) Of condemnation

25. God wants to give to us:
(a.) An expected end (b.) Much trouble (c.) Pain
26. "Ye shall seek me and find me when":
(a.) You die (b.) Seek with all your heart (c.) Pay enough money
27. To seek God and return to Him we must:
(a.) Forsake our ways (b.) Try to start doing right (c.) Get all our debts paid
28. What benefit is there to seek the Lord, righteousness, and meekness?
(a.) Better standing with people (b.) More peace in the family (c.) Be hid in the day of the Lord's anger
29. How does the Lord draw us to Himself?
(a.) With wrath and terror (b.) With everlasting love (c.) With law and commandments
30. What is meant by "Zion"?
(a.) The mountain of God's holiness (b.) Modern present day Israel (c.) People who profess God
31. What will He make our souls to be:
(a.) A trapped animal (b.) Prisoners behind bars (c.) A watered garden
32. God's people are satisfied with:
(a.) Plenty of money (b.) Ease and prosperity (c.) His goodness
33. God planned to make a new and better covenant with mankind because:
(a.) It was time for a change (b.) The old covenant of the law system had failed (c.) Man was getting proud of his own goodness
34. Where are the laws of God to be written in the new covenant?
(a.) On fine velvet paper (b.) In a closely guarded book (c.) On the tender tables of the heart
35. How can a woman compass a man?
(a.) Take after him with a broom (b.) Be so spiritual and close to God so as to encourage and comfort him (c.) Take over things and be the boss.



