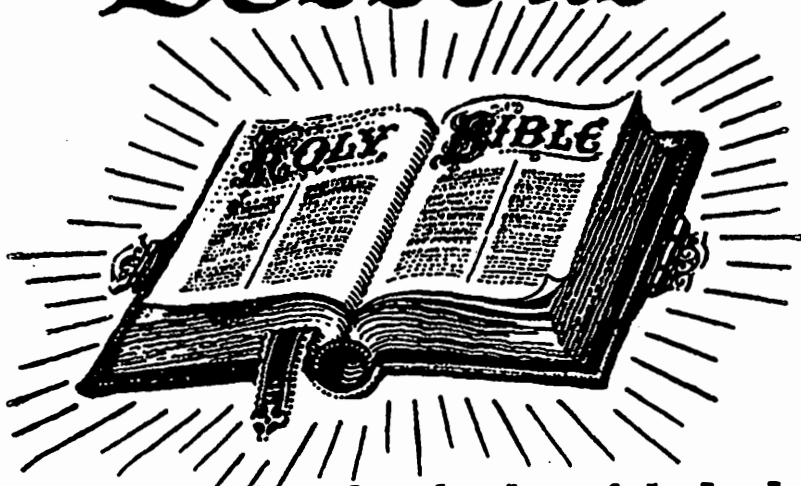


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 31, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.
1999**

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

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People
(USPS054-680)

Volume 31

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No. 4

Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Oct. 3	The More Excellent Sacrifice of Abel	1
10	The Sacrifice of Noah, Part One	6
17	The Sacrifice of Noah, Part Two	11
24	The Sacrifice of Abraham	16
31	The Sacrifice of Ruth	21
Nov. 7	Hannah's Sacrifice and Song of Victory	26
14	Christ's Sacrifice of Himself, Part One	30
21	Christ's Sacrifice of Himself, Part Two	36
28	The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving	41
Dec. 5	Our Sacrifice to God	45
12	The Christian's Personal Sacrifices	50
19	Christ's Birth Foretold to Mary	55
26	A Child is Born, a Son is Given	59

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

**Subscription Price-\$1.00 a copy for quarter of year, or
\$4.00 per year, issued quarterly.
Periodical postage paid at Guthrie, Oklahoma.**

**Published Quarterly By:
FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE
920 W. Mansur Ave.
Guthrie, Oklahoma 73044
Postmaster: Please send address corrections
to above address.**

THEME FOR FOURTH QUARTER, 1999

For our lessons this quarter we feel inspired to study the subject of sacrifice and offerings to God. We are aware that our God and Creator requires sacrifice from us to express and prove our love and faith in Him. We have been so greatly inspired with this thought and we trust it will be an inspiration to all who study with us. We will consider the various sacrifices that were offered by various Old Testament saints, and the one great sacrifice that was made by our Saviour for us on Calvary. Then we will consider the living sacrifice that God is requiring of us and the personal sacrifices that we must make daily if we are to succeed with Him. Our final two lessons will be seasonal studies about the birth of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray God to bless these lessons to the spiritual good of all.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



OCTOBER 3, 1999

THE MORE EXCELLENT SACRIFICE OF ABEL

Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to

pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

I John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife. Proverbs 17:1.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Abel offered as a sacrifice to God the best that he had, the richest and choice of the first-born of his flock; and he offered it with the right attitude of faith, submission and obedience to God, repentance for sin and sincere desire for God's favor and blessings. Cain's attitude was sinful and vain, void of the spirit of true sacrifice and worship to God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 4:2), "*Tiller of the ground*": One who labors in working in the soil to bring out produce and increase. The Jewish historian Josephus had this to say about Abel and Cain: "Now the two brethren were pleased with different

courses of life: for Abel, the younger, was a lover of righteousness; and believing that God was present at all of his actions, he excelled in virtue; and his employment was that of a shepherd. But Cain was not only very wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground."

(Genesis 4:3), "*An offering unto the Lord*": This was something given or bestowed or donated in tribute and respect and honour to God. It was an expression of gratitude and appreciation for the goodness of God. Probably the sacrifices and offerings were given at the instruction of Adam and Eve in their counsel to their sons concerning their sin against God and their sorrow for it. This was the best way of showing their desire for God's favour and fellowship by giving up and rendering something valuable and special up to God by putting it on the altar and burning it.

(Genesis 4:4), "*Firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof*": The first of the offspring, the first lamb or lambs born to his sheep, and the richest and choice thereof. Josephus says further: "Abel brought milk and the first-fruits of his flocks. God was more delighted with the latter oblation, when He was honoured with what grew naturally of its own accord, than he was with what was the invention of a covetous man, and gotten by forcing the ground." And we are persuaded that, in the light of the types and shadows of the real Lamb and the Lamb of God Himself, the sacrifice was a blood sacrifice, the price for the atonement of sin.

(Genesis 4:5), "*Wroth*": The Hebrew says, "glowed angrily." "*Countenance fell*": This means that he was greatly grieved and disappointed at his rejection.

(Genesis 4:7), "*And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him*": The Hebrew says, (speaking of sin) "Toward you is its desire, but you should rule over it." Cain had no one to blame for his rejection but himself. That is what God is telling him here, and the message is for us today. If we really want to please God and have His favor we can.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We will consider in our lesson today the sacrifice of Abel

and how he found favor with God while his brother Cain missed the mark. As we have already seen, Abel was a virtuous man and sought earnestly to gain the favor of God. Cain was not that type of man. He was covetous, proud and very intemperate. His sacrifice was not from the heart, but was a mere form. He had no life to back it up. He had a terrible, sinful attitude. There is much to gain for our admonition from the study of these two young men. As our lesson reveals, Cain took out his feelings of resentment and anger toward Abel and he talked with his brother. You can imagine the tone and content of that conversation. That is what talking does. It increases the fury and builds up the fire of hatred and malice. It climaxed with Cain rising up and murdering Abel in cold blood. God dealt fairly and frankly with Cain, even putting a mark on him to keep people from killing him.

Let us notice what Josephus had to say about Cain: "He did not accept his punishment in order to amend, but to increase his wickedness; for he only aimed to obtain every thing that was for his own bodily pleasure, though it obliged him to be injurious to others. He increased his household substance with much wealth by plunder, theft and violence, and became a great leader of men into wicked courses. He was the author of measures and weights. Whereas people lived simply and innocently and generously, he changed the world into cunning craftiness. He set boundaries about lands."

Cain never did straighten up. Abel became the figure of the persecuted and victims of the ungodly. Jesus mentioned Abel in Matthew 23:35, saying that, from Abel's blood unto the blood of Zacharias, the Jewish nation would bear the blame, doubtless because they were to become the murderers of the Son of God Himself. But with Abel it was faith, fervent love and worship to God, sacrifice of his own pleasures with preference to God, and faithful obedience to what God required. Somehow Abel obtained witness that he was righteous and accepted of God. Even today God still can and will witness to the earnest and obedient heart of His favor and acceptance. By Abel's faith and because of his loving obedience to God, "he being dead yet speaketh." His blood cried out from the ground. So do the faithful in Christ speak after they are taken from this life. Their

lives echo and live again in the memory of those they ministered unto.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were Cain and Abel so different?
2. What was there about Abel and his sacrifice that pleased God?
3. What caused God to reject Cain and his sacrifice?
4. What was Cain's reaction to being rejected?
5. Whose fault was it that Cain was rejected?
6. What should Cain have done instead of becoming wroth?
7. What did Cain's anger lead to?
8. What was Cain's reaction to God's dealings?
9. How was Cain's attitude so bad?
10. How does Abel's faithfulness to God influence us today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It was by his believing in the truth of God that Abel chose to seek and to serve God as he did. This is true with anyone who becomes fully persuaded in their heart that God is a real and loving God who has their best interests at heart. With respect to his Creator and mindful of his great need of His favor and blessings, Abel brought the best thing he had to offer to the Lord God. He was earnest and sincere and greatly desirous of God's approval. God looked right into the heart of Abel and beheld this fervent spirit of worship and devotion to Him. He made it plain that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable. It may have been that God sent fire down to consume the sacrifice. We do not know of a certainty that He did. But God testified of His gifts and Abel was greatly blessed and rewarded for his sacrifice. With Cain it was different. It was all just a shell to him. His heart was not toward God, but it was toward the work of his hands and what he was to get from it. It means much to have our hearts right with God and be accepted of Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It was a bold, audacious act when the devil entered the garden of Eden to come between Adam and Eve and their relationship with God. It was presumptuous and discourteous. But the devil holds nothing sacred.

Our lesson today illustrates that even the sanctity of the home is not beyond his wiles. The bold and brazen act in which he turned Cain against his very own brother, Abel, is second only in intrusiveness to what he did in the garden of Eden.

The bond of family is ordained of God and is a place where peace and harmony was designed to exist. But if this tranquility is to last, it has to be pursued and protected, for the devil will use the slightest misunderstanding to cause irreparable rifts between brothers and sisters.

The story is told of a small boy and his sister who had quarreled most of the day. Finally, the little girl, wishing to stop the squabbling, said, "Now let's act like we are brother and sister."

Though Cain and Abel were already grown men making a life for themselves, still the devil was not content to let them peacefully coexist. He preferred that they act like enemies rather than brothers.

Satan still works the same today. He will break up relationships between natural brothers and between spiritual brothers. If we are to maintain relationships, we must guard against jealousy, hatred, gossip and every other evil work.

—Wayne Murphey



OCTOBER 10, 1999

THE SACRIFICE OF NOAH, PART ONE

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Genesis 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

9 ...Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Genesis 7:1 And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. I Corinthians 10:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God made a way for Noah and his family to escape the destruction of the ungodly. It was difficult and a great sacrifice to obey the voice of God and build the ark.

But Noah obeyed because He believed that what God had promised He would do. This faith and obedience was the essence of the sacrifice that Noah made to God, and God was well pleased.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 11:7), "*He condemned the world*": By Noah finding favor in the sight of the Lord and being obedient to Him he brought condemnation and the execution of destruction upon the ungodly. So it has been with all the righteous who by faith in God prevailed over their enemies and triumphed in bringing about their salvation while the wicked perished before the face of the Lord.

(Genesis 6:8), "*Grace*": Graciousness, help, favor and kindness.

(Genesis 6:13), "*The end of all flesh is come before me*": This was the Lord's way of saying, "I have decided that I have tolerated this wicked creation of man long enough. I am at the end of my forbearance and patience. It is in My heart to bring their wicked existence to an end."

(Genesis 6:14), "*Gopher wood*": This is generally believed to have been cypress wood. "*Pitch*": Tar.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are presenting the lesson of the sacrifice of Noah in two parts. Today we will consider the call of Noah and the great task that God enjoined upon him to save him and his household from the destruction that was to come upon the ungodly. Noah's response in obeying faithfully the direction of the Lord was a fearfully great undertaking. It was no little matter to do what he did. With the help of his three sons, Noah had to gather material together for the construction of this giant sea craft. He had the dimensions and basic instructions from God. But he had to design and engineer this project carefully. Lumber had to be cut out of the forest to the exact size. Tar must be procured to waterproof it inside and out. It had to be built to accomodate the birds and beasts. And beside all of this, Noah and his family were to have their residence in

the ark, as it turned out to be, for over a year. Food had to be raised, harvested and stored in the ark. It was a great task, but Noah moved with fear and obedience to God. The obedience of faith is a greater sacrifice than all the animals in the world to God. Noah obeyed God. God was well-pleased with Noah's faithful performance of what God had commanded him. Finally the ark was finished. The door was open allowing the birds and animals to be brought in. Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, all came into the ark. Food was stored with every other provision that would be needed. The time had come. The world had rejected Noah's warnings. The Lord shut him in and soon the rain began to fall. For forty days it poured down rain upon the earth. All the fountains in the ocean were turned loose and the windows of heaven were opened and the flood was upon the earth. Up, up, up it rose until the highest mountains of the earth were covered with fifteen cubits of water. Accounting a cubit to be one and a half feet, we could say that the waters were twenty-two and one half feet deep over the highest peaks. This would insure the destruction of all flesh who were not in the safety of the ark. And for 150 days, or 5 months, this depth of water remained. But Noah and his family and all the birds and animals on board were safe, safe under the protective care of the great Almighty God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the real sacrifice that Noah offered to the Lord?
2. How did Noah find favor and good will in the eyes of the Lord?
3. Why did Noah move "with fear?"
4. Why did God purpose to destroy the world?
5. How did Noah condemn the world?
6. How was he made an heir of the righteousness by faith?
7. How was the earth flooded so greatly?
8. How high did the flood waters rise?
9. How long did the flood waters prevail upon the earth?
10. How is Noah's deliverance a type of our deliverance?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The story of Noah and the great flood is a fascinating account of the faithfulness of a man and the deliverance God rewarded him with. First, let us consider the terrible state of wickedness the world was in. It was full of violence. Many terrible things went on. It was very much like it is in our time. Jesus said it would be. But there was one man and his family who obtained the favor of God to be given a chance to escape the destruction that God was planning on bringing forth.

How blessed of God that He revealed to Noah what He was about to do! He gave him specific directions as to what to do to escape the flood that He purposed to bring upon the world. It was a gigantic project. Josephus said this about the ark: "This ark had firm walls, and a roof, and was braced with cross beams, so that it could not be any way drowned or overborne by the violence of the water." Just think of the many different sized rooms that had to be designed and built! Calculating a cubit to be 18 inches (some say it was 21 inches) the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It had three stories in it. It was a gigantic project, and took a good while to be completed. Some say it took 120 years, but we are not certain about that. One thing we know, however, that Noah did finish it to God's approval. Think about how long they were in that ark! Genesis 7:11 said that the flood broke loose in the second month and seventeenth day of the month of the six hundredth year of Noah's life. Genesis 8:14 says that in the second month of the six hundredth and first year of Noah's life and the twenty seventh day of the month the earth was dried. That adds up to one year and ten days. It was a sacrifice to obey God, but it payed off for Noah, and it will pay off for us if we will obey the gospel of Christ, give up the sins of the world and follow Jesus all the way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Great Escapes is the title of a book which tells the stories of people who have broken out of prisons and other places of confinement. The man Houdini is one you can read about who

was recognized as a great escape artist. Shackles could not hold him, and steel boxes failed to keep him in.

However, no story equals the ingenuity of the escape Noah and his family made from drowning in the flood. Who would have thought to build an ark? There had never been rain before. But God was the Master Planner. When the sky darkened, the thunder rolled and the rain began to fall, Noah was safely protected. When the waves began to cover the land and every living being was gasping for breath, Noah and his family were dry and safe because of their obedience to God's plan.

God has a master plan for our lives as well. And in it is a way of escape for every temptation which the devil brings.

"But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape." I Cor. 10:13.

The devil may have designs upon our spiritual life, and may think he has a fool-proof plot to ensnare us, but by the wisdom and strength of our God, we can be victorious. We can enjoy a life of freedom in Christ. —Wayne Murphey



OCTOBER 17, 1999

THE SACRIFICE OF NOAH, PART TWO

Genesis 8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

II Peter 3:5 ...By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. II Peter 2:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God accepted the animal sacrifice Noah made to the Lord because He smelled the sweet smell of Noah's faithful obedience and perfect trust in Him. Because of Noah's acceptance with Him, God made a promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood. The world will be destroyed by fire in the day of the final judgment.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 8:1), "*Assuaged*": To be abated, to subside, or go down.

(Genesis 8:21), "*And the Lord smelled a sweet savour*": The Lord smelled a pleasant, delightful odour. Let us be aware that it was not the burning flesh of the animals that God smelled as much as it was the faithful spirit of Noah and his family who were thanking and praising Him for their deliverance.

(Genesis 9:1), "*Replenish*": To fill.

(Genesis 9:13), "*Bow*": The rainbow. As sunlight shines through the falling raindrops, its colors are separated and seen in the circular shape of a bow, the formation of a giant arch in the sky. It is really a spectacular and highly remarkable phenomenon that sunlight, which contains all the colors of the spectrum, can be variegated in such a wonderful manner. The raindrops together form a mighty prism through which the white sunlight, passing through, undergoes the separation beginning at red (produced by the longest wave visible) to violet (produced by the shortest light wave). The next time you are blessed to behold a clear rainbow, study it carefully, and remember what God put it in the cloud for. Behold the wisdom and ingenuity of the Almighty!

(II Peter 3:5), "*The earth standing out of the water and in the water*": This agrees with Psalm 24:1-2: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." This tells us that God created the earth in a situation that was perilous were it not for His Almighty Word that held everything in its rightful place and course. When God's wrath decreed it, and His Word was withheld, the waters began to overflow the land. This is what was meant in the expression in Genesis 7:11, "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up." The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we covered the first phase of Noah's faith and sacrifice to God in His obedience by building the ark

according to God's direction and his entrance into the ark and the coming of the great flood. Today we will consider Noah's coming out of the ark with his family and all the many other creatures, his sacrifice offered to God, and the covenant of God made with the earth. After being in the ark for over a year, there were probably a good many more animals to come out than there were that went in. Taking account that in a year's time most creatures will bring forth their offspring, we are confident that it was an ark that was (as the homey expression) "bulging at the seams." No doubt everyone was yearning for the hour when the door could be opened and they could exit the ark and get out into the open air and the sunshine again. It would have been quite a sight to behold, I am sure. No doubt, Noah's heart was full of joy and praise to God for all that He had worked in his life. As a tribute to God and an expression of his love and worship to His beneficent Creator, Noah took of the animals and offered up a great sacrifice upon the altar that he built unto the Lord. And the Lord accepted the sacrifice, smelling the good savour of Noah's faith and steadfast obedience to Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What conditions might have existed as very trying in the ark?
2. Why did Noah desire to make a sacrifice to the Lord?
3. What was the sweet savour that God smelled in Noah's sacrifice?
4. Why did God desire to make a covenant with Noah?
5. What was the covenant that God made with Noah and all the earth?
6. What was the token of the covenant God made with them?
7. Did God promise never to destroy the earth again?
8. In what way will God destroy the earth in the last great day?
9. What must we do to prepare to meet that last great destruction?
10. What is holding back the judgment fires of God now?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There are things that are exemplified in Noah that we should covet after diligently to have in our lives. What was it that caused God to single out Noah with favor in the first place? Was it not that Noah was a diligent seeker after God? Noah sought to please God and be on the good side of Him. No one can really make it with the Lord if they do not have this kind of mind. The careless and empty-minded person who has no purpose or desire for righteousness has no foundation for God to build on. Noah had convictions and scruples that he was very careful about. He kept himself from the evils of the society that he lived among. No man can cater to the world deliberately and make it with His Maker. Noah sought to walk and have fellowship with God. This desire and sincere purpose in his heart helped to attract God to him. God would love to have fellowship and communion with everyone, but with so many He cannot find any room or chance to get it started. In so many lives there is no conviction or awareness of sin. God is at a distance from such. And then when Noah received the revelation of God about what He was about to do, and what God was giving him as his responsibility to accomplish, he "moved with fear." "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Down to the minutest detail Noah was diligent to do all that was expected of him. Thank the Lord for Noah, that preacher of righteousness, for the example of faithfulness that He left us to be instructed by.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I know one brother who served in the army during World War II. Upon his arrival back in the states, he knelt down and kissed the ground. He had survived the dangers of war, and to him, this country represented life and freedom. He felt great gratitude and thankfulness to be home.

These are probably some of the same emotions that Noah and his family experienced as they stepped off the ark and onto solid ground. How privileged they must have felt to be sole survivors of the flood. No wonder Noah set about building an

altar unto the Lord. This pleased God and so He made a covenant with Noah.

Today we are still profiting from that covenant. Don't ever let anyone persuade you that the saints have no effect upon the world. The children of God are the salt of the earth and the greatest pleasure which God derives from humanity. Saints are a preserving force and as they please God, He pours out a blessing that the world in general benefits from.

—Wayne Murphey



OCTOBER 24, 1999

THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

Acts 7:5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

Hebrews 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Romans 4:16 ...The faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. James 2:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Abraham's life was one of sacrifice to the Almighty God by believing His promises, obeying His voice, and patiently enduring the adversities and discouraging conditions that were around him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 11:10), "*He looked for a city*": Abraham was awaiting, and expecting to be a part of a society, a city, a people, which was founded on the Word of God. He was a sojourner in the land of Caanan, that is, he moved about, living in tents, and, though God had promised him the land for his own inheritance, he was not permitted to possess any of it at all. He was a stranger to the worldly society, although he contributed to its welfare and betterment, for he had a vision of better things to come. The writer describes us in Christ in like manner in Hebrews 13:14, "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." "*Builder and maker is God*": The Greek says, "of which God is the designer and the One who constructs it." That city has been revealed in a spiritual sense in the saints of the Church of God which is the New Jerusalem,

and will be completely fulfilled in the beautiful home of the saints of God in eternity.

(Romans 4:20), "*Staggered*": The Greek word means "hesitated."

(Romans 4:22), "*Imputed*": Counted or reckoned to be.

(Hebrews 11:19), "*From whence he received him in a figure*": The Greek says, "From where indeed in a similtude he recovered him." Abraham obeyed God's voice in offering up Isaac as a burnt offering, going as far as to take the knife to slay his son to spill his blood and burn up his body. He would have done it if God had not stopped him, according to the account in Genesis 22:11-12. Abraham did this in obedience to God, holding to his faith that Isaac was the son God had promised to carry on his seed to the generations to come. He counted God able to and would bring Isaac up from the dead. And in a figure he received Isaac back to his bosom as one who had been resurrected from the dead. When he loosed Isaac's bonds and took him down from the altar it was as if he had received him back from the dead. This act of obedience proved beyond all doubt and question the verity of Abraham's faith in God. The sacrifice of his dearest earthly treasure in preference to disobeying God was the seal that secured for Abraham the inheritance that he will enjoy and share forever with all who walk in that same kind of faith.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson on the sacrifice of Abraham we have drawn from the writings of the New Testament. I do not know of any one Old Testament character that is spoken of more in the New Testament than Abraham was. From Hebrews 11 we have the enumeration of the various Old Testament men and women who were given honourable mention as manifesting and bearing the fruits of believing and trusting in God. Quite a bit is spoken here of Abraham, which we have included in our lesson. We have first his call from Ur of the Chaldees and his dwelling in the land God promised to him and to his seed. Along with this we have inserted a part of the speech of Stephen, the first martyr, in his defense before the council who

sentenced him to be stoned to death. He gave a summary of the history of Israel, beginning with the call of Abraham. We also have from Romans a good explanation of the faith of Abraham in his adversity and patience in quest of laying hold of the promises God had given to him. Then we go back to Hebrews 11 to pick up the account of Abraham's offering up of his son, Isaac, and the faith that he had which enabled him to do that in obedience to the voice of God. From the epistle of James we have a further mention of this in the writer's thoughts on faith being required to be accompanied by works. He refers to Abraham that it was his actual offering of Isaac upon the altar that perfected his faith. And our verse for memory mentions how Abraham was called the Friend of God. This labeling of Abraham as God's friend comes from II Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8. Abraham's sacrifice of obedience and steadfast confidence in God's promises in the face of contrary conditions and circumstances was fully accepted of His God and part of his great reward is the mighty multitude of souls who walk in the steps of that faith that he so wonderfully manifested in his life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the first thing that God called Abraham to do?
2. Why did God not tell Abraham at first where he was going?
3. How is believing and obeying God a sacrifice?
4. Why was Abraham required to be a stranger in the promised land?
5. In what way was Abraham the "father of many nations?"
6. What are some of the things that will oppose faith in God?
7. What was imputed unto Abraham because of his faith?
8. What was the final severe test that Abraham had to endure?
9. What did Abraham's offering of Isaac as a sacrifice make proof of?
10. For what reason was Abraham called the Friend of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The sacrifices which God desires to receive from the souls of men are more than burnt offerings of animals. God speaks in Psalm 50:8 that He would not reprove Israel for their sacrifices and burnt offerings that were made continually before Him. He was not so much interested in those kind of sacrifices. In verse 14 He commanded them to "offer unto God thanksgiving." When Israel's first king disobeyed the Lord and brought back some cattle which he was supposed to destroy, he made the excuse that they were brought back to sacrifice unto the Lord. Samuel, the prophet, told him that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22. Psalm 51:17 says that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Obedience, humility, faith, submission and faithfulness are the sacrifices which God is interested in. When a soul comes to Christ to be saved, there is a sacrifice to be made. One must give up the world and be willing to part with the life of sin. Repentance is to change one's mind and heart from the old way of self, pride, worldliness, strife and vanity, and be willing to conform to the teachings of the holy Saviour. When a soul comes to be sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit there is a sacrifice to be made. "Self and possessions all must be truly given to God alone." "When thy soul the perfect price has paid God will send the holy fire!" We must consecrate to do the will of God regardless of the cost. And then there are sacrifices to be made all along the way of life if one is to keep up with the Lord and be triumphant in Him. We have to take up our cross daily and follow the Lord. May God help us to not come short of our responsibility of sacrifice.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The faith of Abraham and the other patriarchs mentioned in the 11th chapter of Hebrews is accented by the 15th verse. "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." When Abraham left Ur he launched out with

a promise as his vision. He lost sight and desire for what the land of Ur contained.

In our Christian pilgrimage we must break every line connected to the shore of carnality. What would you think of someone who got into a rowboat and started rowing without first untying from the dock? There would be little hope of reaching another destination.

In order to obtain the promises God has given us we must cut the lines which hold our souls captive and set out with faith that what God has promised is in fact an obtainable reality. Some people set out to serve God with the show of great effort, but make little progress before they are yanked around to again face sin. All lines need to be cut, and then it is possible to exercise a faith which takes in that heavenly city and leaves sin behind.

—Wayne Murphey



OCTOBER 31, 1999

THE SACRIFICE OF RUTH

Ruth 1:1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

6 Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

14 ...And Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Ruth 2:11 And Boaz said unto her (Ruth), It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

12 The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Ruth made a sacrifice to God, leaving her homeland and all the prospects of love and happiness that were there for her, to go with Naomi, her mother-in-law, to serve her and her people and her God. God richly rewarded Ruth for what she sacrificed, and gave her love and happiness and a name far beyond what she could have had otherwise.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider the beautiful story of Ruth, the young woman of Moab who gave up her hopes and plans for the sake of one of God's people. It is a very moving account of the dealings and workings of God in His wise providence. We have endeavored to put into the text of our lesson sufficient material from the Biblical account to show the general run of the story. Yes, Ruth did go with Naomi to Bethlehem where they met a warm welcome from the people. Right away Ruth went out into the barley fields to glean of the grain so that they might have food. God caused her to light on a part of a field belonging to Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, a kinsman of Naomi of the family of Elimelech. When Boaz found out who she was and of her background, he spoke to her kindly and made her know that she was welcome, and that she need not go anywhere else. He commended her for her sacrifice of leaving her homeland and assured her that God saw it all and would surely grant her a full reward. Love budded and blossomed between Ruth and Boaz and he wanted to marry her, but, as there was another man closer in kinship than himself, he could not have her unless he could secure a release from the other party. This he did by legal means before the elders of the city, the other man willingly relinquishing his part. So Boaz and Ruth were happily married and soon parents of a son named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, the father of David. This wonderful story inspires the truth that

whatever we sacrifice or surrender up to God will not be lost, but will open the door for God to work His works in our lives. And God's workings are far greater and more blessed than what we could have by our own decree. What God, in His Providence, causes us to suffer or endure can and will be turned into great benefits if we will be submissive to His will and keep on believing and trusting in Him. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened to Naomi that brought bitter sorrow to her life?
2. Why were they down in Moab?
3. Why did she decide to go back to Israel?
4. Why did she try to get her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?
5. Why did Ruth insist that Naomi allow her to go with her?
6. What was the sacrifice that Ruth made to God at this point?
7. What did Boaz assure Ruth of because of her sacrifice?
8. What happiness came to Ruth?
9. How valuable did the women say Ruth was to Naomi?
10. What family and lineage did she get to be a part of?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is one of God's special ways of dealing with us creatures of earth to allow sorrow and disappointment to come into our lives to prepare us for His greater blessings. Some of the things we suffer are brought about beyond our power, that is, they come without us causing or seeking for them. Then there are things that we must bear in response to the leadings and instructions of the Lord, yes, even in obedience to His truth revealed in the holy Scriptures. The Lord wants us to have a part in His great plan for us. So He works to bring us to a place where we will be called upon to make a sacrifice. We come to a point where our decision for Him will be put to test. We can go either way. We can turn back to our own ideas and cultures, or we can firmly purpose to go the way that He is directing us

to go. In the case with Ruth, the Moabitess, we can visualize the magnitude of her decision and sacrifice. When she saw that her mother-in-law had decided to return to Israel, she purposed in her heart to go with her. Any prospects or hope of finding another husband among her own people was put aside. In that day a widow was a very helpless person. They had no welfare checks, Social Security or programs for the destitute like we have today. These people were the poorest of the poor! How did they make the journey from Moab to Bethlehem? It was by walking, of course. Looking on the map, the nearest distance from Bethlehem around the shore of the Dead Sea to Moab was in the neighborhood of 30 or 40 miles. Can you see now what Ruth's sacrifice took in? And then, when they finally arrived in Bethlehem, Naomi told the people to call her Mara (which means bitter) instead of Naomi (which means sweetness), for, as she said, "the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." Ruth 1:20 As the custom was in Israel, Ruth went out to glean grain from the barley harvest so they could have food. This was not easy. But this is where God began to open up the doors for her happiness. God works still in similar ways with us today. He causes things to happen that bring us great sorrow and grief. But, if we will make the sacrifice of determination to obey God and stay with Him no matter what comes or goes, we will eventually see the hand of God working for our good. If we be willing to be called according to His purpose (not our own selfish and lustful purposes), and will sacrifice to Him an obedient heart, then the Lord can and will work things for our good and eternal welfare.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

" 'Naomi had a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth.' Ruth 2:1. Then why did she go to Moab instead of her wealthy kinsman? Why do many in the time of trial forsake the Fountain of living water and go to broken cisterns? Boaz means "strength." What foolishness it is then in the hour of weakness to forget the Friend that is strong. Our kinsman Redeemer is a mighty man of wealth, and if I speak of strength, lo! He is strong.

"Perhaps the spirit of independence and self-will restrained Elimelech and his wife from asking help from Boaz. They would shift for themselves rather than bow to beg; but what disappointment it brought. What a sorrowful failure it proved. It is always so if we are too proud to let our requests be made known unto God. He may allow us to follow our own stubborn way until we have spent all the strength and energy we had. Then shall we be glad to come back in our emptiness, and be thankful for the gleanings from the fields of our rich kinsman."
—Taken from *Handfuls on Purpose*.



NOVEMBER 7, 1999

HANNAH'S SACRIFICE AND SONG OF VICTORY

1 Samuel 1:2 ...Hannah had no children,

6 ...Because the Lord had shut up her womb.

9 ...Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.

24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young.

25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.
26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord,
I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord.

27 For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

28 Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

I Samuel 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

5 They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

21 And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. I Samuel 2:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Hannah, a woman grieved in spirit because she was not able to have children, offered her faith and earnest prayers to God and consecrated her son Samuel to the Lord before he was born. In accordance with her vow, she presented Samuel to serve in the temple of God. And Hannah offered a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord and God rewarded her afterward with three sons and two daughters.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Samuel 1:24), "*Bullock*": A young ox or steer. "*Ephah of flour*": According to Webster's Dictionary an ephah was an ancient Hebrew measure of about 9 gallons.

(I Samuel 2:1), "*Horn*": Strength and power in the Lord.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are greatly inspired with the account in our lesson today of Hannah, the mother of the great Israelite leader, Samuel. She surely brought a worthy sacrifice to her God. We did not include all the details in her story, but mainly the highlights that relate to her seeking God and the reward that she received from her diligent and earnest outreach to Him. Her husband, Elkanah had two wives, one named Peninnah and the other was Hannah. Now we know that this two-wife situation was never meant of the Lord to be. Somehow God tolerated it to a certain extent, but it was never His design for it to be this way. Peninnah had children, while Hannah was barren. The account said that Hannah had an adversary who provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. It is very likely that this adversary was Peninnah, the other wife. Every year when Elkanah took them up to the house of the Lord, this adversary provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. But Hannah began to pray in the bitterness of her soul unto the Lord. Prayer, earnest and supplicating prayer, is a sacrifice that God takes delight in. Provoked by the taunts of her adversary, and feeling the emptiness that a woman feels in being barren, Hannah poured out her heart unto the Lord. She prayed in her heart, not uttering her voice, only her lips moving. At first Eli, the priest, thought she was drunk, but she assured him she was not drunken, but was pouring out her soul before the Lord. This is sacrifice, a sacrifice that many never make before the Lord. It means much to pour out our souls in earnest prayer and submission before God. To pray until we really pray is a sacrifice that God is well pleased with. God heard her prayer and the promise she made to give her child back to Him. This was a great sacrifice. When the child was weaned she fulfilled her promise and took him to Eli and left Samuel in his care to be trained to be a worker in the temple of God. Think of the temptation that may have arisen to change her mind! But she kept her vow and gave her first-born son up to the Lord. God was well-pleased with this sacrifice. Samuel turned out to be a wonderful blessing in his leadership to Israel: We have

included a few parts of the wonderful prayer-praise-prophecy that Hannah uttered. It is a wonderful expression of the value of relying upon the strength of the Almighty.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of why the Lord had kept Hannah from having a child?
2. What did Hannah do about her distress and need?
3. What does it mean to "pour out" one's soul to God?
4. How is earnest prayer and pouring out our souls a sacrifice?
5. What did Hannah promise God that she would do?
6. Why did she make such a promise?
7. How do we know that God was pleased with her prayer?
8. What blessing is there in being barren and in such great need?
9. What are some of the lessons that Hannah learned?
10. What are some of the truths that she uttered that are true today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The prayers of saints are as sweet incense coming up before the throne of God. (Revelation 5:8 and 8:4-5.) The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16.) Here is a sacrifice that Hannah made that we can all make. Bro. George Harmon tells about when he sought the Lord to be saved that he did not want to offer his prayer out loud. But God made him to know that he wanted his voice to be heard. And when he first started to voice out his prayer it startled and frightened him.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Psalm 116:12-13. It was in the anguish of her soul that Hannah did not sound her voice. God accepted her prayer and the pouring out of her soul to Him.

God has always had to be approached by means of a sacrifice, the right sacrifice. "Gather my saints together unto

me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Psalm 50:5. But it is not the sacrifice of animals that God is really desiring. He wants the rendering of our hearts to Him. Prayer and praise and thanksgiving are sacrifices that He delights in, that which comes from the very heart of us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sometimes we overlook the simplicity of answered prayer. It is possible to feel that our faith is not great because we can't speak of a spectacular answer to prayer such as Hannah's. But when was Hannah's prayer answered? Was it not when she went her way and ate, and her countenance was no more sad? The birth of Samuel was the outcropping of her faith, but her soul was at peace when she believed God had heard her. I believe it is possible that she could have been happy just to know that she touched God's heart, even if He hadn't given her Samuel.

To some extent, our prayers are answered if when we pray we arise from our knees a better person. This is faith at its pinnacle. When we follow Hannah's example of pouring out our hearts before God and feeling that He has heard us, we are blessed. Faith isn't born of phenomenal results, but of a confidence and trust in God which changes our lives.

—Wayne Murphey



NOVEMBER 14, 1999

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF, PART ONE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The prophet Isaiah foretold the Lord Jesus Christ as being the sacrifice and offering for the sins of mankind; to be bruised and afflicted, as the sacrificial lamb,

to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. His sufferings and travail of soul would satisfy the righteous demands of a just God for redemption, and God would reward Christ with great blessings and eternal riches.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isaiah 53:2), "*Comeliness*": "Magnificence or splendor." Hebrew.

(Isaiah 53:3), "*Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*": The Hebrew says, "man of pain, and known of sicknesses."

(Isaiah 53:4), "*Borne our griefs*": "Borne our sicknesses." Hebrew. "*We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God*": To the unenlightened spectator or witness of Christ's sufferings He would appear to be smitten by the wrath of God. But in truth He was suffering as the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.

(Isaiah 53:5), "*Chastisement of our peace*": The price for our release from guilt and condemnation was the scourging and punishment heaped upon an innocent victim. Such was the decree of the Almighty, and such was the lot our Saviour had to bear for our release unto peace with God.

(Isaiah 53:8), "*He was taken from prison and from judgment*:" Jesus was destined to not be allowed a fair trial or a waiting period in the protection of prison for people's tempers and indignation to cool down. The Septuagint says, "In His humiliation His judgment was taken away." Jesus was arrested at night, tried and convicted and sentenced that night, and executed the next morning." This He bore in His sacrifice of Himself to God for our salvation.

(Isaiah 53:10), "*He shall see his seed*": God shall look upon His offspring, the myriad souls that He would redeem to Himself. "*He shall prolong his days*": God will give Him the resurrection from the dead and eternal life. "*The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*": The redemption of the souls of men from the power of Satan was to be fully accomplished by Christ's faithfulness to obey the Father to submit to the death of the cross.

(Isaiah 53:11), "*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and*

shall be satisfied": The anguish and sore pain and affliction of Christ, weighed down by the guilt and condemnation of a lost world, was sufficient in the mind of God to atone for the transgressions of every living soul in the history of the world.

(Isaiah 53:12), *"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great"*: This is the expression of God's reward to Christ for the sacrifice He offered of Himself without spot to God for the salvation of the world. He was given a name which is above every name, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. At His name every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11, Ephesians 1:21 and Acts 10:36.)

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider the first phase of a two part lesson on the offering of Christ Himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of the world. We will use the prophecy of Isaiah as our text, the 53rd chapter, which is a vivid prophecy of the sufferings and humiliation of the Son of God for our redemption. This prophecy is quoted from in various places in the New Testament. It is a true and accurate picture of the awful sufferings of Christ, written as the prophet was moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Christ not recognized and seen by everyone?
2. What did the unenlightened observing Jew think of Jesus in His sufferings?
3. What was the real purpose of Christ's sufferings?
4. Why did God require an innocent Man to suffer for the guilty?
5. How did all we like sheep go astray?
6. What animal was Christ likened unto in His sufferings?
7. How was Christ abused and denied a fair trial?
8. How was Christ with the rich in his death? Who had Him buried?
9. Why did it please the Lord God for Christ to be bruised?
10. Why was Christ so willing to bear all of His sufferings?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The inspired writings of the prophet foretell Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, and picture Him beneath a veil of sorrow and grief and affliction. None of the grandeur of the flesh and the outward adorning that usually attend royalty is attributed or given to the Son of God. In the flesh He was abused and put to death. He was oppressed and mistreated by the cruel blows administered to Him by heartless and vain persecutors. He was wounded, bruised and sorely chastened. His visage, or outward bearing, was marred more than any man. He was a Stone, but He was to the unbelieving, darkened Jews a rejected stone of stumbling and rock of offence. They did not want Him to reign over them. He was accounted as a lamb fit for the slaughter. He was denied protection and safe keeping in prison until a fit time for a fair trial after everyone's tempers had cooled down. He was cut off in the prime of time with no physical descendants to carry His name on. But all of this was on the account of the sinful condition of a world who had gone astray, every man turning to his own way. Yes, every man had turned to his own selfish, fleshly, lustful way. Someone had to pay the price for man's straying and roving nature. The price for man's redemption was blood, the blood of an innocent Person. Everyone else had sinned and come short of the glory of God. But there was one who was found worthy to shed His blood for the atonement of sin. It was Jesus, the son of Mary who had conceived and brought Him forth by the power of the Holy Spirit. His Father was God the Almighty. He came forth into the world with the intent to bear the blame and punishment for sinful man's straying away from God. He did not come to be served, but to serve our souls by giving His life as a ransom for our deliverance from the dominion of Satan. A great price was levied against us. A great mortgage was placed over our souls. Jesus was the only one worthy to pay it. Thus it pleased God to have His holy Son to be bruised by the wickedness of men. Jesus submitted to take the injury and harm that hardhearted and cruel men could pile upon Him. He took it meekly and did not fight back. He was as a lamb before the shearer or before the slaughter. I had an uncle years ago

who raised sheep. He said that when you went to butcher a sheep they would not try to fight against you. They would just lie down. He got so that he had to quit raising sheep, it would just break his heart to see their meekness. When shearing time came it was the same way. They would just lie quietly while the shearer worked on them and if the blade of the shears would cut or prick their flesh they would flinch slightly but not try to get away. This was the picture of Jesus in the sufferings that He bore when He offered Himself without spot to God. Without His sacrifice we would have all been lost forever. But because of His sufferings and death we are saved forever more!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Our lesson was written 712 years before Christ. Yet we read in it the prophecies of our blessed Saviour. We can go right down the line and find that it was fulfilled when Jesus lived here on earth, even to His being 'numbered with the transgressors,' as He was crucified between two thieves.

"No person who is free from prejudice can fail to see that in this chapter the Messiah—the suffering Messiah—is referred to. Neither can any open-minded man fail to see that in it the vicarious nature of Messiah's sufferings is declared. He is the sinless One who bears on His own heart and life the burden of the sins of others. He is the sent One who bears that burden as God, and for Him.

"The pathway of shame which the humbled Saviour trod comes into our view. We see the thick clouds gathering over Him. We hear men reviling the seemingly helpless Sufferer. We see into the stricken heart that for a moment, even fears the Divine forsaking. We catch the dying cry, 'It is finished!' and the last heartbreaking sigh. Through the blinding, sympathizing tears we read, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.' As we read our lesson we say, 'behold the Man!' and 'Oh, what a Saviour!'

—Marie Miles (Written in 1979.)



NOVEMBER 21, 1999

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF, PART TWO

Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

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

26 ...Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look

for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Hebrews 9:28.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The animal sacrifices offered under the law were not sufficient to pay for the penalty of man's sin. But Jesus Christ took upon Himself a mortal body which He offered up as a sacrifice to God for a ransom to redeem man from the dominion of sin. By this offering we are sanctified and made perfect before God for ever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 10:7), "*In the volume of the book*": "In the roll of the scriptures," so says the Hebrew. This is, of course, referring to the writings of the Holy Spirit-inspired prophets, who "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." I Peter 1:11.

(Hebrews 10:13), "*From henceforth expecting*": The Greek expression is: "From then on awaiting." After Jesus had offered Himself without spot to God and died for our sins, He was rewarded for His obedience by being raised from the dead to immortality, and then He was wafted up into the heavenly places to wait for the Father's time to bring His great plan to completion. He is eagerly anticipating the time when He will receive His chosen people to Himself in the likeness of His immortal glory. But His submission to the Father puts it all on hold until that blessed day of glory to come.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider further the thought of the sacrifice and offering of Jesus Christ to God for the atonement of the sinful condition of the souls of men. We draw our text from the book of Hebrews. The writer speaks of the failure of the sacrifices of law, the animal sacrifices, to meet the satisfaction of God. Then he quoted from the 40th Psalm and applies it directly to Christ. He refers to this expression as Christ coming into the world, saying to the Father, "Sacrifice and burnt offerings for sin Thou wast not satisfied with, but Thou hast prepared for me a mortal body to inhabit. I come to do Thy will

in offering this body You have given Me as a sacrifice to appease Thy wrath and sore displeasure for the state of sin and disobedience man is in. In the offering of My body I plead for the justification and sanctification of all who will come to Thee through Me from henceforth even forever." I would refer you to the 40th Psalm and verse 6. It reads thus: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." You will notice that instead of reading "a body hast thou prepared me" it says "mine ears hast thou opened." The writer in Hebrews is quoting from the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament. It was the accepted version used by the New Testament writers. There is supposition that the present Hebrew text and the word for "ears" was blurred or someway corrupted, and that the text used by the translators into Greek was clearer. This is supposition. Somehow the Septuagint translation expressed it that it was a body that God had prepared for Christ instead of ears being opened. I like to reconcile any disagreement by using both texts and uniting them like this: "Mine ears hast thou opened to the needs of sinful man by preparing me a physical body to inhabit and offer as the supreme sacrifice for sins." All in all it points to the sacrifice and offering of Jesus Christ on the altar of the cross of Calvary as being the sacrifice that God accepted as the means of reconciling a lost world of sinners to Himself. The animal sacrifices were not sufficient, but this sacrifice of His beloved Son was. Where would we be today if this one and only sacrifice for the sanctification of our souls had not been offered?

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the sacrifices offered under the law likened unto?
2. What did Jesus say to the Father in coming into the world?
3. What was the sacrifice that Christ offered to the Father for us?
4. What was the volume of the book Christ was written in?
5. What was the will of God that Christ came to do?

6. What did Jesus do after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever?
7. What is Jesus doing as He sits at the right Hand of God?
8. What is He waiting and looking forward to?
9. What will it all mean to Him to have His enemies be made His footstool?
10. What will this last great day mean to the faithful in Him?

COMENTS AND APPLICATION

To an onlooker the death of Jesus upon the Roman cross would seem a terrible tragedy. But in the eyes of the Almighty God and in the light of the prophecies that went before on Him, the death of Christ was the supreme sacrifice that the Almighty God was requiring to bring about man's redemption from the captivity of the devil. As Jesus was submitting in the garden to the horrible suffering and death of the cross He was conquering the ancient foe who had prevailed over man at the beginning. By Him being submissive to the unjust and inhumane treatment of the world and allowing them to crucify Him, Jesus was offering Himself without spot to God as a sacrifice for sins once for all and once for ever. No other One was found worthy to make such a sacrifice. He alone met the qualifications to be as a Lamb without blemish and without spot to bear the iniquity of us all. In the offering of Himself as the sacrifice for our deliverance from sin and death Christ endears Himself to all who receive the virtue of His sacrifice. Dying for someone is the last full measure of devotion. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. As we who are so wrought upon by the sense of condemnation and conviction for sins look upon His dying passion and are made aware that it was for our justification, we are overwhelmed by the greatness of His love. As we who yearn and long for heart purity and perfect holiness are made aware that through His sacrifice we can be sanctified and made whiter than the snow, we are filled with rapturous and loving delight with Him. He made this sacrifice to win our love and devotion. "How can we behold the Saviour's death and yet

withhold a part? How can we draw one selfish breath and not give all our heart?"

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The story of Christ's sacrificial death is an event which speaks to the heart of man. Multitudes have heard the story and received a life change.

One story of this nature is told about two women who visited a murderer on death row. After they found him to be unresponsive to them, they laid a copy of the New Testament on the table and left. After the man had been executed, the following letter was found. "I was not sufficiently impressed to have any special belief in what I was reading. I put the New Testament on the shelf. A little later when I was tired of doing nothing, I took down the book and again began to read. This time I saw how Jesus was handed over to Pilate and tried unjustly and put to death by crucifixion. As I read this I began to think. I went on, and my attention was taken with these words, 'And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' I stopped. I was stabbed to the heart as if pierced by a five inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakable, grateful heart I believed."

One of the mysteries which holds such mystic is the unfathomable love Christ showed. Man can only imagine the pain and suffering He endured in bearing the sins of the world. We can only stand in awe before the cross. Sometimes we feel like the apostle in the famous masterpiece of Durer who is shown picking up the crown of thorns which had fallen from the bowed head of Christ, and is pressing his finger on a thorn in an effort to realize what it meant to wear it. We can only say, "Thank You, Lord" and show Him by our lives that we mean it.

—Wayne Murphey



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NOVEMBER 28, 1999

THE SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

Psalm 50:1 The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.

9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

10 Forevery beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Psalm 107:21 Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Psalm 116:17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.

Psalm 27:6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

Psalm 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. Hebrews 13:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord is more pleased with the offering of thanksgiving and praise from a heart full of love and gratitude to Him than all the sacrifices and burnt offerings of animals.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 50:5), "*A covenant with me by sacrifice*": It is an understood truth from the time men began to approach God and seek His favor that there were sacrifices to be made on their part. The sacrifice of animals was the general practice and God seems to have accepted this sort of offering when it was accompanied by true humility and faith in Him. But, as our studies reveal, God made it known that He is desiring much more from man than the mere sacrifice of an animal.

(Psalm 50:14), "*Thanksgiving*": Thanksgiving here is not confined to thanking God for His blessings. It also includes open and frank confession and acknowledgement. It is asserting our allegiance, declaring and affirming it openly without fear or shame. It is the outreach of our hearts to God in faith, confidence, and steadfast determination to honour and worship Him with our whole heart. "*Pay thy vows unto the most High*": Vows are defined as promises, promises that we owe to God to make sincerely and wholeheartedly. These are promises of submission and dedication to His cause and for His honour. This spirit of fervent love and devotion to God is the real sacrifice that God is yearning to see in us.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The 50th Psalm is noted to be written by Asaph, a man of high regard and reputation in the days of David. He was a musician and leader in singing and the worship of God. He was also called a *seer*, which means one who beholds and has vision, specifically that of spiritual understanding and inspiration. It is evident that the Spirit of God was upon Asaph and inspired him to write the Psalms attributed to him, which number twelve. We can be assured that what was spoken in this 50th Psalm is the direct message of God to us. The message of this Psalm blends with that attributed to David in

the next Psalm, Psalm 51:16-17: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." From various other Psalms we have included expressions that make us to know that God is greatly pleased with the offerings of thanksgiving and praise. Woe to the thankless heart who lavishes the blessings and benefits of a gracious God upon his own selfish gratification with no expression of gratitude! Such will have no consideration in the day of judgment when God who searches men's heart will render to every man according to his works. It is good to have times of thanksgiving and seasons when we especially call to mind the daily load of benefits from the Almighty. But let it not be just at seasons such as this. May we daily praise and offer God our praise and allegiance.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the things we should daily thank God for?
2. What is there about thanksgiving and praise that God delights in?
3. How did God feel about the many animals sacrificed to Him?
4. What are some of the promises that we need to make to God?
5. Can we expect God to hear us in the day of trouble if we have neglected to honour and offer thanks to Him?
6. Is it always convenient and easy to offer praise and thanksgiving?
7. How are we benefited by being thankful to God?
8. What benefit is it to God for us to sing His praise?
9. Why is it necessary for us to verbally express our praise to God?
10. Why is it necessary for us to please the Lord with our actions and ways as we offer praise to Him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the many various conditions that infest an ungodly

person is unthankfulness. Murmuring, complaining, bitterness, strife and many other attributes stain the life of a person who fails to be thankful to God. God gives the breath that is used to curse and take His name in vain. In God we live and move and have our being, but very few seem to be aware of this, and their spirit is that of wrenching and grabbing and never being content. Such are miserable and unhappy. Oh, that such would come to themselves and confess their sad and woeful condition! A child of God who has experienced the transforming power of Christ has a constant gratitude and appreciation in his heart for what he has found in the Lord. We can never get over how the Lord saved us from sin and the awful pit of hell. It helps to get everything else in proper focus, also. We see the Lord's blessings so much more clearly and it causes much thanksgiving to spring from the deep of our souls unto Him. We go from blessing to blessing and our hearts continue to praise and bless God. Before we partake of earthly food we like to offer a prayer of thanks to God for His providing it and ask His blessings upon it. Paul said that God has created meats to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." I Timothy 4:4-5. Let us purpose to praise the Lord more and offer thanks to Him on a regular basis. You will find that life will be sweeter and God will respond to your sacrifice of praise with great spiritual benefits you never knew before. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Great are God's blessings and many times great is our forgetfulness. There is much that it is easy to take for granted. Many have had a relatively comfortable home all of their lives, and not only accept it without thought but feel that God owes it to them. We must acknowledge that it is because of God's kindness and mercies that we have good shelter, food, family and friends. Physical and spiritual dangers lurk in every aspect of life and "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Lam. 3:22.

I recently heard someone express their inability to remember and how they wished they could do something about it. The cure to forgetting God is to stop and count our blessings. A good place to begin counting is at Calvary and come forward. This will give us plenty of blessings to occupy our mind for some time.

A little girl said to her father one evening, "Father, I am going to count the stars." Soon he heard her say, "One hundred, two hundred, five hundred, oh, I didn't realize there were so many!"
—Wayne Murphey

"Count your many blessings,
Name them one by one;
And it will surprise you,
What the Lord hath done.



DECEMBER 5, 1999

OUR SACRIFICE TO GOD

Psalm 110:1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31 And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 15:16 ...That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

CONCLUDING VERSE FOR MEMORY: Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me. Phillippians 2:17-18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is only right and reasonable to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to the will and pleasure of God and walk in the same love for God and others that Jesus manifested in the sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour of Himself.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 110:3), "*Willing*": The meaning here is "freewill offerings". We who have experienced the saving grace of God and the holy bond of love for Christ freely offer ourselves in complete consecration and the sacrifice of our lives without

any constraint or pressure or force. *"From the womb of the morning"*: This is an endearing expression. The womb here denotes the compassionate and loving sensation of an expectant mother for her unborn child, her cherished anticipations and dreams, and her preparations for the coming fruit of her body. The morning, or dawn, is the light of the gospel, the day star arising in the hearts of those who take heed to the more sure word of prophecy.

(Mark 12:30), *"Heart, soul, mind, and strength"*: These are four parts of a person. The heart is the seat of affections, desires, interests, and devotions. The soul is the spiritual, the life veins of our being. We must love God not from a fleshly standpoint, but with the spirit that is within us. The mind is the intellect, or the powers of comprehension and understanding. To love God with all the mind is to sacrifice the pursuit of worldly knowledge and be willing to learn of the spiritual things of God first and above all else. Then the strength includes our abilities, our skills, and our powers. It means much to really LOVE God with all of these parts of our being.

(Romans 15:16), *"Offering up of the Gentiles"*: The sacrifice rendered and offered from the peoples and nations to whom the gospel was to be preached. It is God's desire for all men to come to Him and offer their whole being as an acceptable sacrifice unto Him, their Creator. Through the work of the Holy Spirit this can be accomplished in every heart and life.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We now will consider the responsibility we all have before God of making a complete and acceptable sacrifice of ourselves to Him and His perfect will. Soul and body and all that we have belongs to the gracious God who gave it all to us. But He takes it not from us by force, for He, as a God of love, only accepts freewill and loving service. The 110th Psalm is a vibrant and glowing prophecy of the mediatorial office of Jesus Christ which He is filling NOW. He has been set by the Father at His right hand in the heavenly places. From this exalted position He sends forth His Spirit and the soul quickening

Gospel of His great salvation. From Zion (His Church) He sends out the rod of His strength and is triumphant and ruling in this present age despite all of man's opposition. The third verse is the main point we are emphasizing. His people are freewill offerings, consecrated and fully dedicated to fulfilling the perfect will of God in their lives. This is done in the beauties of holiness and their light is as the morning that breaks forth upon hearts prepared by conviction for sin and longing desire for His precious truth. Christ is our great High Priest, interceding and appearing in the presence of God for us. We yield to His leading and answer His every call to service.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God set Christ at His right hand?
2. Why are the true people of God so willing and ready to obey Him?
3. Why does God not force people to serve Him?
4. What does presenting our bodies as living sacrifices involve?
5. Why is this termed a reasonable service?
6. What is God expecting from every person who partakes of His salvation?
7. Why is loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, no small matter?
8. Is it possible to experience the spiritual blessings of Christ without sacrifice on our part?
9. What are some of the ways that we can be offered upon the sacrifice and service of one another's faith?
10. What kind of love are we to walk in as dear children of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There is no richer or fuller and satisfying life than that of being consecrated and offered up as a sacrifice to please and serve the Lord. People who refuse to present their bodies as living sacrifices do so to their own sorrow and loss. A selfish and lustful person is a miserable and wretched and unhappy

person. One who demands and dominates others for his own fleshly gratification is pictured in Jeremiah 17:11, which says, "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". The world today is controlled by the spirit of strife, lust, greed, covetousness and self-will. It is an unholy society that we live among. Many people are ignorant of what it means to live sacrificial lives for their Maker. To please Him and obey the teachings of His Word and Holy Spirit is farthest from their plans and thoughts. That is why we have so much ungodly styles and fashions on display. Obedience is a sacrifice that many overlook. They seek to do big things that bring attention and praise of men, but the simple teachings of humility and meekness and modesty are overlooked. It is a wonderful experience when we make a sacrifice of our personal desires to obey the leadings of the Lord and receive the reward and benefit of such. It affords the greatest joy and happiness that one can possibly have. May the Lord stir our hearts to greater diligence for sacrifice and service to Him and to His cause.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Rom. 12:2. To be conformed suggests the gradual process by which we are squeezed into the world's mold. It is the manner in which the mind is brainwashed. Satan seeks to brainwash every child of God. Just through the contact of evil communications we can gradually begin to think as those who have no desire to live righteously.

In Rom. 12:2 Paul is describing how we should present our bodies a living sacrifice. Although we are not to conform to this world, Paul is not talking about nonconformity. We can be ever so different than the world in our dress, actions and talk, and still be offering to God a dead sacrifice. Rather than just not following the world, God is calling upon us to be transformed. This is not a gradual process as conforming is,

but it is an act of coming to the place where we say "I do" in offering our lives to God. This is where real joy is, as the apostle Paul attested in our Memory Verse. —Wayne Murphey



DECEMBER 12, 1999

THE CHRISTIAN'S PERSONAL SACRIFICES

I Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Philippians 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Luke 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but

whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Luke 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Matthew 19:29.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: All along the Christian way the child of God must make personal sacrifices of earthly things and give them up for the sake of Christ and others.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 13:16), "*Communicate*": To share. To the thief "yours is mine". To the selfish "mine is mine." To the child of God "mine is ours."

(Romans 8:13), "*Mortify the deeds of the body*": The child of God is called upon to sacrifice the desires of the flesh to be subject to the will of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must mortify, that is, put to death, the tendencies of the flesh to practice or participate in mannerisms that are not pleasing to God.

(Luke 9:24), "*Save his life, or lose his life*": There may very well come a time when to keep our faith and integrity with God we will have to sacrifice our very life. There will be a temptation to cling to life and draw back from the shame and reproach of the cross. This is where the sacrifice must be made. God help us to be prepared to face it triumphantly.

(Luke 12:33), "*Sell, and give*": We must be diligent to sacrifice and give of our earthly substance for the cause of Christ and for the welfare of our souls. The rich young ruler

was unwilling to make this sacrifice. He went away sorrowfully. He held on to his riches. Where is he now? It does mean much to give sacrificially and not hold on to the vain things of this fading life.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider the thought of sacrifice in the various aspects of things we must deny ourselves in for the sake of living holy to please God. In all these things we see the principle of obedience to the teachings of Christ and the leadings of the Holy Spirit. There is a cross that the child of God must take up daily in denying self and worldly mammon to really follow the way of sacrifice and the example set by our Lord. These are, as Peter put it, spiritual sacrifices, and they are acceptable to God because they are in conformity to Christ and the pattern of His life. One important manner of sacrifice is that of sharing what we have in temporal things for the sake of the work of God and in earthly benefits to others. We are including Paul's expression of gratitude and appreciation to the Philippian saints for their faithful support of him in his ministry. He commended them for their generosity and loving concern they had showed toward him. And he made it plain that it was not his desire for a gift or a covetous spirit that prompted his thanks, but he desired fruit to abound to their account. This means that, as these dear brethren sacrificed and shared with him their earthly means, it was going on record in heaven for their account and their reward would be great in eternity. And we have included also Jesus' own words about giving and providing for ourselves a treasure in the heavens that faileth not. It is wise to consider that each one of us has an account with God. He is keeping tab on our sacrifice and obedience to Him. Make no mistake, dear fellow traveler to the judgment. Some day the books will be opened and we will be judged out of those things written in the books, according to our works. (Revelation 20:12.) "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12. We also have Paul's instruction of mortifying the deeds of the body that we may live. He states the emphatic truth that only those who

are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. We also have Christ's own words concerning being ashamed of Him and His words. He spoke in Matthew 10:32 concerning confessing Him before men. This is a sacrifice that we must be ready to make as God gives us the opportunity. And we know that this sacrifice has cost many children of God their life down through history. These and many other ways are the means of daily personal sacrifice that are pleasing and acceptable to God and necessary for us to be accounted worthy to stand before Him in that last great day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of conversation must we give up to make room for praise?
2. How is the soul benefited in the sacrifice of doing good and giving?
3. What kind of account does each one of us have with God?
4. What does it take for our sacrifice of giving to be a sweet odour, acceptable, and well-pleasing unto God?
5. How important is doing good and sharing with others to the welfare of our souls?
6. How can we know that we will not lose in sacrificing and giving to others?
7. Can you think of the various ways that we have to mortify the flesh to keep well-pleasing unto God?
8. What are the various ways that we can sacrifice our life for Jesus?
9. Why does Christ count it so important for us to be faithful to confess His name and not be ashamed of Him?
10. Can you think of other ways that we can make personal sacrifices for our Saviour?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To live a spiritual life and be successful in holiness and godliness there are various kinds of sacrifices that must be made on our part on a daily basis. The flesh and the natural man caters to ease and worldly gain. A real saint of God must

burn up this attitude and inclination to the carnal side of life. To really experience the transforming power of Christ one must make a clean sweep of all the sinful ways and desires. Good old time conviction for sin brings about this willingness to give it all up. There is a cross that we must be willing to take up. We just have to bear the cross if we want to share in the Saviour's glory. One must be willing to be meek and lowly in heart like the Saviour. And, as we receive the Lord Jesus in the spirit of humility and faith, so must we walk in Him. Contentment and affections toward eternal treasures must be sown in the heart. John 12:42-43 speaks of those who believed on Jesus but did not confess Him for fear of the Pharisees "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They were willing rather to sacrifice the reward of God and to retain their standing in this world. We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated and ashamed of our profession in Christ Jesus. God help us to confess Him before the world, and manifest His holy way in all we say and do! The way to glory is the way of sacrifice and bearing the cross for Jesus. As Jesus sacrificed His earthly life for us, so must we live sacrificial lives for Him and His cause.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Samuel Rutherford had a wonderful testimony about bearing the cross of Christ. Listen to what he said and see if you have the same attitude about it. "Some have written to me that I am possibly too joyful of the cross. The cross of Christ is the sweetest burden ever I bear. It is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbor. Christ and His cross are sweet company, and a good blessed couple. He and His cross are two good guests and worth the lodging. Welcome, welcome, sweet, sweet and glorious cross of Christ; welcome, sweet Jesus with Thy light cross."

—Wayne Murphey



DECEMBER 19, 1999

CHRIST'S BIRTH FORETOLD TO MARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. Luke 1:45.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Mary was given the Word of God by the angel that she would bring forth the Son of God through the power of the Highest and the Holy Spirit coming upon her. She believed the message and rejoiced and glorified and magnified God for this wonderful blessing.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 1:27), "*Espoused*": To be betrothed, or to be promised to be given in marriage; to be engaged.

(Luke 1:46), "*Magnify*": To lift up and praise highly; to make or declare great.

(Luke 1:51), "*Imagination*": Thoughts, reasonings, and ideas. Man has the mental capacity to think, ponder, calculate, compute, figure, conclude and determine. God created man with these mental powers. However, this has proven to be man's downfall, for there is the tendency to miscalculate, figure wrong, and conclude in error. Here is where man needs a higher intelligence and power to instruct and enlighten him in the course that is wise and best. God can and will direct and establish our thoughts if we will listen and obey His voice.

(Luke 1:54), "*Holpen*": To help, succor, and support.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We will conclude our Bible Lessons for this Fourth Quarter of 1999 with a two part study of the subject for this season of the year of the birth of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Today we will consider the call of Mary, whom God chose to be

the mother of the Son of God and her expression of joy and praise to God for Him regarding her, the low estate of his womankind, to be so richly blessed. We want to especially take note of the precious and special truths contained in this lesson. Mary counted herself to be the low estate, which means depressed and humiliated in rank and feeling. Paul admonishes us in Romans 12:16, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate". Mary's son was to be the Son of the Most High God, and to Him was to be given the throne of his father David. Listen to the prophecy in Psalm 132:11, "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." Peter quoted this in his message to the people at Pentecost in Acts 2:30 and applies it to Christ seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Note what else the angel said: "Of his kingdom there shall be no end." These are important truths for us today to help us to understand the nature of Christ's kingdom. Mary's positive response of faith and submission to the Word of the Lord is so commendable and a good example for us to follow. It was Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, who spoke the words, "Blessed is she that believed," when she was made aware of this wonderful blessing, the babe she was expecting leaping in her womb for joy. Can we not see the joy and gladness that filled Mary's heart as she knew that she was really to be the Mother of the Saviour? What a beautiful testimony and expression of praise flowed from her heart! Contained in this we find the blessed truth that it is to the lowly and to those who are hungry that God gives good things. To the rich and the full and proud and those who are mighty and high degree God withholds and puts down. We must be humble if we desire the Lord to lift us up.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of person was Mary according to what our lesson says?
2. What did the angel Gabriel say was going to happen to Mary?
3. What did the angel have to say about this Son to be born to her?

4. How was this to be as Mary was not yet married?
5. What was Mary's response to the message of the angel of God?
6. Why did Mary magnify the Lord and rejoice in God her Saviour?
7. In what ways can we rejoice in the Lord as Mary did?
8. What are some of the great things the Almighty has done for us?
9. Why does God have to put down the mighty and send the rich away empty?
10. What must there be in us before there will be a performance of the promised blessings?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." Psalm 138:6. Mary was a lowly maiden. She worshipped and revered the Lord God. She was mindful of God's promise and covenant to Abraham and the saints of old. God made choice of her to be the vessel to bring forth into human form the Word of life. She was engaged to be married to Joseph but the wedding had not yet taken place. So, naturally, she wondered at first about the message of the angel as to how this could be. But the angel told her that it would be the power of the Highest and the Holy Spirit who would effect this great event in her young life. Mary's faith took hold at the word of God by the angel. She did not doubt as did her cousin Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, when this same angel told him of Elizabeth bringing forth her son. Mary accepted it and received it with joy. That is the way we should be to the Word of God and His promised blessings. What if Mary had doubted and not made mention of it to anyone? Well, we do not have to wonder about that because we know that she believed. That is why she went with haste to the hill country to visit her beloved cousin. The angel had told Mary that Elizabeth was expecting a child and was in the sixth month of her time. Oh, what joy and glory comes when God visits us with His goodness! It surely pays to serve the Lord and seek earnestly to please Him in every thing. Keep humble

and lowly down at His feet, believing and trusting, never doubting, but keeping positive and bright in our confidence in Him. The Lord will reward such sacrifices of the heart toward Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." Jesus is the Greek form of the Old Testament name Joshua, which means "The Lord saves" or "The Lord is Salvation."

There were two notable Joshuas in the Old Testament. The one most well known led Israel into the Promised Land. Jesus, the child of Mary, the Son of God, is the Leader, Ruler and the Captain of our salvation. (Heb. 2:10.) Today He continues to lead souls into the spiritual land of Canaan.

The other Joshua was high priest under Zerubbabel at the time of the deliverance from exile, the return to the Promised Land and the rebuilding of the Temple. Likewise, this greater Joshua, Jesus, is our High Priest who intercedes for us.

His was a divinely given name. Mary didn't have to look through a baby book or confer with Joseph. God gave her the perfect name, a name which has thrilled countless souls, as well as terrorized Satan and the demonic world. Jesus, yet today, lives up to His name of "The Lord is Salvation."

—Wayne Murphey



DECEMBER 26, 1999

A CHILD IS BORN, A SON IS GIVEN

Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem,

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

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

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped

him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

CONCLUDING SCRIPTURE FOR MEMORY: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ was born unto us and given to us to be our Saviour from sin and death. He came down

from Heaven and took upon Himself our humanity, being born of woman, to suffer and bear our sins and sorrows, so that He could be our faithful Saviour and High Priest unto God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 2:5), "*Taxed*": To be enrolled like a census for assessment of taxes.

(Luke 2:7), "*Swaddling clothes*": Strips of cloth.

(Luke 2:19), "*Pondered*": Thought about, weighed it all together, studied, meditated, and reflected concerning this wonderful blessing of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we rehearse the old, old story (yet it is still fresh and new) of the birth of our blessed Saviour, Christ, the Lord. The decree had been sent out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. In obedience to this decree everyone had to go to the city of his birth to be counted and assessed. Joseph took Mary who was near the time of the birth of her firstborn son and journeyed to Bethlehem, the city of David, because he was of the house and lineage of David. It was in no fine car or bus that the trip was made. Perhaps walking and riding on a donkey was the mode of their travel. Being as there was no room for them in the inn we are sure that the city of Bethlehem was very crowded and thronging with people. It was God's Providence that the Son of God was to be born in poverty and hardship. He was laid in a manger. We can imagine the surroundings in a stable with cattle and donkeys around. But God wanted something to identify him with. It was the key to the shepherds to know who the Saviour was and how he was to be found. The lowly shepherds were given the message and news of the birth of Jesus. They responded with haste to go and see what had been told them. And with the help of the words of the angel and the sign given them they were able to find him. Think what wonderment filled Joseph and Mary when these shepherds appeared! Mary pondered with joy all these things, these overwhelming things. So we today can ponder and reflect on the blessed Gift that God gave to us in sending Christ, His Son, to us in human form.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Mary and Joseph have to journey to Bethlehem?
2. What was Mary's physical condition at this time?
3. What took place while they were there?
4. Where did Mary have to lay the baby Jesus and why?
5. Who was informed that night of this wonderful birth?
6. Why were these tidings to be of great joy to all people?
7. Why were the angels rejoicing so much about the birth of Jesus?
8. How did the shepherds react to the message?
9. How did they know when they found the Christ child?
10. How did Mary react to what the shepherds told them?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Isaiah the prophet said in 7: 14 that a virgin would conceive and bear a son. The prophet Micah said in 5:2 that out of Bethlehem would he come who was to be ruler in Israel. The prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. Joseph and Mary were constrained to make the difficult journey to Bethlehem by law and it was at this time that Mary brought forth our Saviour into the world. It was the working of the Almighty God and His wonderful Providence. We today are serving that same wonder working God. He still moves and accomplishes His purposes. He has strange ways of bringing them to pass, but He still is able to work as we wait on Him and trust Him. Think what this all meant for this wonderful Child to make His appearance into the realm of mankind! He came to bring life and salvation to us. He had to take upon Him human flesh so that He could suffer what we have to suffer. He had to feel and experience from our perspective so that He could sympathize and understand. He was born in the midst of privation and adversity. Poverty and reproach were His lot from the start. Very soon Joseph and Mary had to make a long journey into Egypt to get away from the threat of danger. Christ was conditioned to meet obstacles and difficulty. Thank God for sending Him down here in our mortal stead! He grew up to assume the greatest challenge and work that any man ever faced. He came to show us the Father and His blessed holiness. He came to offer Himself without spot to God as a sacrifice for our sins. He came to swallow up death in

victory and conquer sin and Satan. He came to bring us life, more abundant life. He went on from childhood to grow up and accomplish all of these things. He rose up from the dead by the power of God and ascended up on high to be our High Priest forever. As the world prepares for transition from the 20th century to the 21st century He is unchanged and unaffected by all the upheavals of man. He can still save the lost and heal the sick and give His saints victory and peace. Let us rejoice and hold fast our faith in this Christ, our Saviour and Friend. Soon He will come to destroy this sinful earth and take His chosen people to a better world. May we all live so that we can be accounted worthy to be forever with Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." One writer has said, "The highest grace of heaven and the lowest depth of earth are brought together in this angelic hymn."

It was through this wonderful gift from heaven that peace was brought to mankind on earth. The first lesson in this quarter was about Cain and Abel and the unrest caused by sin. Here is the answer to the problem. Christ will bring peace into the hearts of all those in whom God's good will and pleasure is being worked out.

This angelic announcement was made approximately 2,000 years ago, and it is Y2K (Year 2,000) compatible. There are some computers which will not work when the year 2,000 rolls around. This may cause some disruption in the flow of food, money and utility services, but it won't make any difference in the peace which flows from heaven. The economy of grace in the Kingdom of God is still current and easily available! It can all be attributed to a little baby who was born to a virgin and laid in a manger in the tiny town of Bethlehem. —Wayne Murphey



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