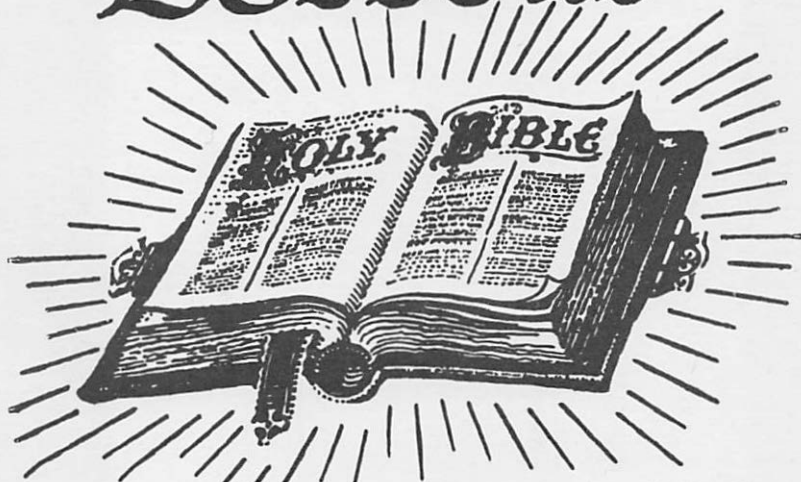


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Volume 32

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No. 2

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Jesus Christ and His Church
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THEME FOR SECOND QUARTER, 2000

In the first five of our Bible Lessons for this quarter we will study the consecration, suffering and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ followed by His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Then for the remaining eight lessons we will study the wonderful subject of the Kingdom of God. We can use the lessons about Christ and what He accomplished for us as preparation for the studies about the glorious majesty and riches of His kingdom. The Kingdom that God established in Christ was and is the greatest dominion and realm of power that ever visited this earth. It is the most important matter that we as mortals are called to encounter and deal with in this life. It is our earnest and sincere desire and prayer that these lessons will serve the purpose of enlightening and inspiring the hearts of everyone who partakes of the study of them. May Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Friend, the King of kings and Lord of lords, attend to make the truth of His everlasting kingdom clear and precious to us all.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



APRIL 2, 2000

JESUS THE CHRIST FORETELLS HIS DEATH

Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

John 16:20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

MEMORY VERSE: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus knew that He had come into the world to suffer death for the sins of mankind and He warned His disciples that He was to be crucified by sinful men, but He also promised them that He would be raised again the third day.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 16:23), *"Get thee behind me, Satan"*: Jesus

called Peter Satan here because in his human reasoning Peter was opposing and being an adversary to the will of God and the fulfilling of Christ's mission on earth. He was putting his thoughts and feelings ahead of the Spirit of Christ, therefore the reproof of the Lord was, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Be no longer an aversary withstanding the will of God, but humble yourself and submit to God and be a follower of Me instead of trying to counsel Me with vain human reasoning."

(Luke 12:50), "*How am I straitened*": The word "straitened" here means to be compressed, held together, or compelled. The Saviour is saying, "I have a baptism of death to be accomplished. I will be overwhelmed by death and will be buried in the tomb. And how I am pressed in heart and mind in prayer and determination to get it done!"

(John 12:31), "*Now shall the prince of this world be cast out*": The prince of this world is Satan, the accuser of the brethren, our adversary the devil, and the archenemy of God. By Jesus paying the ransom for our salvation, He dethroned the devil and cast him out of that lofty place he held as the master of men's souls. Satan is a defeated foe and by Christ dying for the ungodly He draws us to Him with almighty love that we might embrace Him and be united with Him as His holy Bride for all eternity! Praises be to God for this wonderful plan of redemption!

(John 16:20), "*Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice*": Jesus spoke these words just before His arrest and crucifixion. The world, that is, the wicked Jewish rulers and evil men who thirsted for His blood, would rejoice in their apparent triumph over Jesus. It would bring sorrow to His disciples and they would weep. But all of this would be short-lived. Just a little while and they would not see Him. He would be taken from them in death, but yet a little while and they *would* see Him. He was going to come back to life again and fill them with joy unspeakable and great glory. And then later He would be taken from them again out of their mortal sight up to the right hand of God. But He would return in the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit to dwell in each heart as the living Christ and Bridegroom of the soul. There are times, when in our lives for Jesus, that we will experience this same humili-

ation and sorrow as we obey Him at the expense of the world's pleasure. But let us hold fast and be faithful. Our sorrow will be turned into joy if we will wait on the Lord and be faithful to Him.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God manifested His Son Jesus Christ in human flesh for a great cause. Christ came into the world with a great mission and work to accomplish. It was His purpose to bring about the fulfillment of the great plan of salvation for the human race. And part of that great work was to submit to the horrible death of the cross. Jesus was fully aware of this as He went about doing good to humanity and instructing His disciples. He began to forewarn them of what was coming. For our lesson today we have chosen several texts of scripture concerning what Jesus said to His disciples about His death that He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Jesus had drawn from His disciples, and especially from Peter, the confession of their faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Several days later He took Peter, James and John with Him up into a high mountain apart to pray. There, while He was praying, His raiment became white and glistening and His face did shine as the sun. The three disciples beheld Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about this death that He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. And, according to Luke's gospel, soon after His transfiguration Jesus steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. He spoke of His death as a baptism. He was to be submerged in death and encompassed by the tomb. He compared Himself to the corn of wheat that must needs be planted in the earth and die if it would bring forth much fruit. If it be so with Him, then we must need die and, in like manner, bring forth much fruit. His fruit and increase would be in the souls of men who would be benefited by His sacrifice. He knew His death would bring frustration and sorrow for His disciples, but He sought to prepare them for that great sorrow. He compared His suffering passion to that of a woman in the pangs of childbirth having sorrow. But He pointed them to the joy that was set before Him and them. It was the joy of resurrected life and victory over sin and death that they all would share.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Peter rebuke the Lord for foretelling His death?
2. Why did Jesus call Peter Satan?
3. Why did Jesus call His death a baptism?
4. How is Christ's death likened unto a corn of wheat?
5. What does it mean to "hate" one's life in this world?
6. What will happen to us if we love life more than God?
7. Why was Jesus under such a press concerning His death?
8. How did His death bring judgment to the world and the casting out of the prince of this world?
9. Why did the disciples weep and lament, and why did the world rejoice when Jesus was crucified?
10. What did Christ endeavor to point His disciples to?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Let us not be shallow in mind and comprehension of the depth of the suffering and humiliation that Christ as a human was facing. It was no little matter. There was pain and anguish of heart that went along with it. He felt the bruising blows of being rejected and despised by the world. He overcame it all, but He, as a human, felt it deeply. His was a heart of love, and love is always grieved when the object of that love rejects it. In this He was a splendid example for us who follow in His stead. We are going to suffer as He suffered. We are going to stand where He stood. Death is to come to all of us, just as sure as it came to Jesus. Jesus foresaw not only the cross, but He visualized something beyond the cross. There was a joy set before Him. And what was that joy? It was the fruit that would be brought forth in the hearts and lives of men and women. The transforming power of His risen life would reach myriads of souls across the span of earth's years. This mighty host of the redeemed and born again of all ages, tongues and peoples would be His Bride that He would love and enjoy forever. Although He would have to leave His disciples and be crucified, and then leave them again to ascend up on high, He foresaw that golden day when He would come again to receive His own and take them to that home He has prepared for them. The time is drawing near. The ages have waxed old. The earth

and its inhabitants are ripening for destruction. Soon Christ will come and bring to pass the fulfillment of the plan of the ages. Oh, what a wonderful hope and consolation we have in Him through these fleeting scenes of sorrow and temptation! Let us be strong and courageous like Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Have you ever tried to speak comfort to someone who has lost a loved one? If so, you know how futile words seem at a time like that. This is the situation Christ was in. He informed His disciples He was going away from them, and then tried to offer words of consolation.

There is little about death which brings comfort. It is a grim monster which in itself offers no solace. Christ knew this, and thus did not dwell too long upon His death. I can think of no greater comfort, however, than that which He spoke to His disciples in John 16:22. "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

What hope those words contained! Often comfort for the Christian in hard times is found by looking down the road into the future.

The prediction that "your joy no man taketh from you," was remarkably fulfilled. It is evident that after Christ's ascension, not one of the apostles doubted Jesus had risen from the dead. No persecution or trial was able to shake their faith, and thus they had a steady source of joy. They possessed in the depths of their hearts a belief of which the world could not deprive them.

—Wayne Murphy



APRIL 9, 2000

CHRIST CONSECRATES TO THE DEATH OF THE CROSS

Hebrews 5:7 (Christ) in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

Matthew 26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Luke 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Matthew 26:43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

MEMORY VERSE: But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Hebrews 2:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It took earnest prayers, strong crying and tears for our Saviour to consecrate and submit to the Father's will and to victoriously face the horrible death that was awaiting Him at the hands of the wicked.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 5:7), "*Supplications*": Intreaties, earnest requests and petitions for favor and help. "*Strong crying*": Forcible and loud cries. "*Was heard in that he feared*": The Greek expression is: "He was heard for His piety." Piety is devotion and submission to God, true godliness. God heard Jesus and in the end ultimately saved Him from death, not by allowing Him to escape the cross, but by raising Him from the dead after suffering the death of the cross.

(Luke 22:44), "*As it were great drops of blood*": It is said that the human body can, in extreme agony, secrete blood from the skin. This is how great and violent was the Saviour's wrestling in prayer as He faced the awful suffering and death of the cross.

And then before His vision came
The crown of thorns, the cruel shame,
The scorn of those He sought to save,
The reeking cross, the silent grave.

"This bitter cup, O Lord, I pray,
Before I sup, take Thou away,"
Yet, answered still, as there He knelt:
"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." —Clara M. Brooks

(Matthew 26:45), "*Sleep on now, and take your rest*": It was as if Jesus said, "I have the victory now, and am ready to face the death of the cross that I may please my Father." Isaiah 63:3 says of Christ, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Christ fought the battle alone without human comfort or aid. But we can help Him now if we will share His cross and be yielded vessels for Him to freely use.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we considered Christ foretelling His sufferings and death. In our scriptures for today's lesson we see how that the Lord Jesus, through earnest prayer and resignation, was able to fully yield to drink the bitter cup His heavenly Father was giving Him. There was no other way. To draw back and be unwilling to suffer the death of the cross would disannul all the prophecies that went before on Him. Even later when He was being arrested He rebuked Peter for trying to defend Him when he drew a sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Matthew 26:53-54. For the sake of the holy scriptures and the faith of those in ages past who had died not having seen the promises, but saw them afar off, yes, for their sake, our Saviour emptied Himself of all glory and became obedient to the death of the cross. It was difficult and it took much pressing and determination on His part. He yielded all into the Father's will and said, "Thy will be done." We today will be called upon to do the same. We will all have our "Gethsemanes." It will come to the place where our highest ambitions and desires will have to be sacrificed to become subject to the will of God. God is weighing us closely. Let us not fail to pass the test to consecrate like Abraham did concerning his son Isaac and like the Saviour did in submitting to be crucified in obedience to the will of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What makes us know that submitting to the death of the cross was no little matter?
2. Why was it not possible for that bitter cup to pass from Him?
3. What was all the agony and sorrow in the garden about?
4. How did Jesus finally get the victory?
5. What service from the disciples did the Master need?

6. Why were the disciples unable to render aid to Jesus?
7. How many times did Jesus go apart and pray in the garden?
8. What did Jesus have to do to get the victory?
9. What did Jesus say to the sleeping disciples after He had finally gotten the victory?
10. How can we assist the Master today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It was through disobedience to the will of God that Adam and Eve plunged the world into sin and the dominion of Satan. For the world to be redeemed from this woeful bondage the spirit of rebellion and disobedience must be broken and replaced by an attitude of submission and obedience. As Paul declared in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The disposition to obey self and the flesh rather than God had to be broken down. This could only be done by One who would be put to the test and would succeed. So Jesus had to be submissive to the awful death of the cross to perfect obedience and make it possible through His love and grace for us to be obedient children of His Father. Obedience is an indispensable quality for the child of God to have and maintain. Through prayer and self-denial in following His wonderful example, being drawn by His beauty and love, we can bring ourselves into subjection to God in every thing. For this cause it was such a vital and important matter for Jesus to be submissive to the Father and consecrate to give Himself over to the howling mob who came for Him in Gethsemane that night. The weight of the whole world and their fate rested upon His Spirit that night as He bowed in Gethsemane to wrestle and pray for submission and victory. Oh, may His example and perfect obedience inspire us always to do the same!

"Gethsemane, O sacred place!
Once more I see my Saviour's face:
It shines anew with glory now
And angels smooth His pallid brow.

Oh, let me e'er this scene behold!
Oh, let me hear the story told
Of Him who there the vict'ry won,
Who said in pray'r, "Thy will be done!" —Clara M. Brooks
—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a lonely place the garden of Gethsemane must have been. In the darkest hour of the night, Jesus was realizing the full impact of what was to take place shortly. Perhaps human support would have been helpful, but the disciples, obviously unaware of what was to take place, went to sleep. We cannot really fault them too much, for many others have been just as negligent and at ease in their service to God. The truth of Christ's saying is often proven in these words—"the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

I am glad that the angel forms a part of this lonely scene. Though man failed, God didn't. He sent a messenger of comfort even as Christ drank the cup of sorrow. We will only sip the cup in comparison to the draught of pain Jesus drank, and yet God will be with us too. His angels will be near us. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation." Psalms 91:11-12, 15-16. —Wayne Murphey



APRIL 16, 2000

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS

Matthew 27:33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

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

Mark 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Luke 23:34...Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do....

John 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

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

Luke 23:35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

Matthew 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Luke 23:46 **John 19:30** And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, It is finished: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Matthew 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.

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

MEMORY VERSE: And being found in fashion as a man, [Jesus] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Philipians 2:8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in submission to His Father's will, allowed sinful men to crucify Him and shed His precious blood that we might be delivered from sin and death.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 27:33), "*Golgotha, a place of a skull*": The word "Golgotha" is the Hebrew word for "skull." In Luke 23:33 the place was called Calvary, which is the Latin word for "skull," translated from the Greek word "cranium." It is generally believed that the place where Jesus was crucified was so named "the place of a skull" because of the rounded shape of the knoll or hill situated there.

(Matthew 27:34), "*Vinegar mingled with gall*": This was sour wine mixed with a greenish colored bitter bile, generally believed to be a narcotic to dull the senses of the victim to help relieve suffering. Mark 15:23 called it "wine mingled with myrrh" which is the equivalent, being wine spiked with a bitter substance. Jesus refused to take this because He sought not relief from the pain He was called upon to bear.

(Mark 15:25), "*Third hour*": This was about 9:00 a.m.

(Luke 23:39), "*Malefactor*": A criminal or wrong-doer.

(Luke 23:46), "*Gave up the ghost*": Yielded up the spirit, the life of the body. Christ had just uttered these words in His dying moment: "Father, into thy hands I commend (entrust to Thy protection and safe-keeping) my spirit."

(Matthew 27:45), "*Sixth and ninth hour*": 12:00 noon and 3:00 p.m.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Using all four of the gospels we have put together the account of the suffering death of our blessed Jesus. He died for the ungodly. The derision that they hurled at Jesus as He hung there on the cross, "He saved others; himself he cannot save," (Mark 15:31) was a true statement, even though they were not aware of it. If Christ had saved Himself from the cross, He could not have saved the souls of men. He was dying on our eternal behalf. It was the heavenly Father's will for Christ to be thus bruised to make His soul an offering for sin, so that we might be justified and escape the penalty of transgression against God. Let us also take note of the various prophecies quoted in our lesson and how they were fulfilled. Jesus had been arrested in the garden the night before, hurried through a mock trial by the Jewish leaders, sent to Pilate who, under pressure from the crowd, finally consented to His execution, and taken out to Golgotha to suffer the horrible death of the cross. Although it seems to the human point of view a terrible tragedy, yet in the eyes of God it was the fulfillment of His plan framed in His great loving heart before the creation of the world.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus refuse the vinegar mixed with gall?
2. What was Christ's attitude toward His persecutors?
3. How long did Christ suffer on the cross?
4. What other suffering did He have besides in the flesh?
5. What did the mocking thief show was in his heart?
6. What all was shown in the other thief's confession?
7. How do we know that Christ accepted him?
8. Why did Jesus feel that God had forsaken Him?
9. What were Christ's final words before He died?
10. What was their reaction who saw the earthquake?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How we ought to rejoice and praise our blessed Saviour for His suffering death upon the cross for us! What great love He had for us, and what great love we ought to have for Him! He

carried His consecration through and was obedient to the Father's will. He was stripped of His clothes and nailed to the cross in shame and sorrow. Think of all He suffered. He had been crowned with thorns. He had been whipped with many stripes. He had been up all night. And now they nailed His hands and His feet to the cross and lifted it up for Him to hang there until He was dead. He suffered from the third hour until the ninth hour on the cross. That was six hours He suffered the terrible agony of the cross. Terrible thirst possessed Him, and His soul passed through the awful agony of feeling forsaken of God. Oh, when we feel that we have been terribly wronged and mistreated and we are tempted to be bitter and resentful, let us remember our Saviour's attitude as He was crucified, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Lord, give us a brand new vision of Calvary! Can we bear the little that remains of the cup of tribulation Jesus drank in dying pains? Can we take the humble attitude and position, and let others go before us? Can we let that mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus? Yes, we must suffer with Him if we are to reign with Him and share in His eternal glory. Let us not promote ourselves and defend ourselves. Let us follow the meek and lowly Jesus who suffered for others, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; who, when he suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. (I Peter 2:21-23.) We not only want to know the power of His resurrection, but we want to experience the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made like unto His death. (Philippians 3:10.) "Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me."

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It would appear that Christ died of a broken heart. Does that not lay the blame for His death a little closer to our doorstep than just thinking that the Jews had Him crucified? The cross tortured Him, but our sins brought the curtain of death down upon Him.

In commenting on the fact that blood and water came forth from His side after His death, this is what the Interna-

tional Standard Bible Encyclopedia has to say. "It is well attested that usually the suffering on the cross was very prolonged. It often lasted two or three days, when death would supervene from exhaustion. There were no physical reasons why Christ should not have lived very much longer on the cross than He did. On the other hand, death caused by laceration of the heart in consequence of great mental suffering would be almost instantaneous. In such a case the phrase 'of a broken heart,' becomes literally true. The life blood flowing through the aperture or laceration into the pericardium or caul of the heart, being extravasated, soon coagulates into the red clot (blood) and the limpid serum (water). This accumulation in the heart sac was released by the spear thrust of the soldier (which here takes providentially the place of a postmortem without which it would have been impossible to determine the real cause of death), and from the gaping wound there flow the two component parts of blood distinctly visible."

The loving heart of Christ being broken on Calvary should humble ours. Let us worship Him today and make Him King of our lives.
—Wayne Murphey



APRIL 23, 2000

JESUS CHRIST ARISES FROM THE DEAD

Mark 16:1-2, John 20:1, Matthew 28:1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning, when it was yet dark as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre.

Luke 24:2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

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

Matthew 28:5 ...Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Mark 16:7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Revelation 1:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ burst the bars of death and the grave asunder when He came back to life, quickened by the mighty power of His Father, to live forevermore.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 28:9), "*All hail*": This is a salutation which means "Be well!" or "Be of good cheer!"

(John 20:17), "*Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father*": I had a precious thought come to me on this scripture that I would like to mention. Mary was seeking to find Jesus and she was so earnestly desiring to find Him that she was ready to lay hold on Him and take Him away. Earnest desires are sometimes blind to reality. She could not really take Him away. But she was ready to try. When she was made aware that it was Jesus speaking to her, and that He was alive, her impulse was to take hold of Him. But Jesus stopped her. It comes to me that this was what Jesus was saying, "Do not lay hold upon My body, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. I will soon ascend to My Father, and your Father. And when I am ascended I will return in the person of the Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart and to abide with you forever. Then you can touch Me and hold Me in the Spirit to all of your joy and delight."

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the four gospels we have put together the various incidents that surrounded the wonderful resurrection morning of our glorious Saviour. There are particular accounts that are separate and peculiar to the individual report. Matthew tells what Luke does not, and John tells things that the other three leave out, etc. This is why the Lord gave us four gospels, each telling from various aspects and knowledge possessed. Of all the different appearances that our Lord made after He had arisen, His appearance to Mary shows a special personal impact that is so touching and inspiring. There were also other

appearances such as to Thomas and to the two men on the road to Emmaus that were just as wonderful. Space could not permit us to include every one. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the greatest event in the history of mankind. Everything hinged on Jesus Christ conquering sin and death by coming forth triumphant from the grave. Had this failed to come to pass it would have spelled the eternal doom of everyone of us. How great the goodness of our God to bring it to pass like He did and to provide for us all a way to escape the destruction of this evil world and to share in this blessed resurrection with His Son on that glorious day yet to come!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the women coming to the sepulchre?
2. Why were they so perplexed to find the tomb empty?
3. What did the angels declare unto them?
4. What did the angels tell them to do?
5. Why was Mary weeping?
6. What was Mary desiring to do?
7. There are various tones and manners by which one calls another by name. With what tone or manner do you think that Jesus addressed Mary and spoke her name?
8. Why did Jesus tell Mary not to touch Him?
9. Why did Jesus call His disciples His brethren?
10. What all does the resurrection of Christ bring to us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus as a mortal man had died. Every trace of life was gone. They took His bloodstained body down from the cross and wrapped it in fine linen and put it in the tomb. They went away sorrowing. Their hopes and desires were blasted. Their future plans seemed frustrated. Fear and despair filled their hearts. It was a dark vale of tears. The world rejoiced that that Man from Galilee was now put down and out of the way. The disciples went into hiding for fear of the Jews. All seemed hopeless and in vain. And then, right in the midst of all the night of sorrow, came the glorious words, "HE IS RISEN!" For awhile it was pushed away, but it kept coming. The witnesses

who had seen Him increased. Soon He began to appear before the assembled group of disciples. They felt of Him, they gazed on Him, they worshipped Him. Yes, here He was back with them again, alive, and with great power and glory. Hope and confidence once more took hold in their hearts. If He really was alive after the horrible death they beheld Him die, it was the miraculous power of God. He is truly the Son of the living God. As time went on, and they listened to Him speak once again, it began to unfold and take shape in their minds. The plan of God and the great work of redemption became a reality to them. Jesus opened up the scriptures. It was all prophesied and foretold of old. Jesus fulfilled the writings of the Old Testament, that is, Moses, The Prophets and the Psalms. He who went through the vale of death and came out victorious to life and victory still lives today. Beyond our veil of mortal sight, in the heavenly places He lives and reigns for us. Let us believe, obey, worship, follow, extol, praise and love Him supremely now and forever!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"He is not here." These are probably the most significant words spoken in regard to the resurrection. Jesus did not appear after His death, as ghosts are said to appear, startling nervous people in haunted places. His tomb was empty. His body had disappeared.

It was important to the enemies of Christ that His body be preserved in order to refute any resurrection. So we know those who were in power did not remove the body.

Take one look at the disposition of the disciples and any person of insight will recognize that they hadn't stolen the body. Their despair had suddenly turned to joy upon learning of His reappearance, and that doesn't happen because you've stolen the body of a loved one. Having a lifeless body in one's presence would only make a person more morose.

Evidence says that Christ is risen, angels declared that Christ is risen, women at the tomb proclaimed that Christ is risen, the disciples witnessed Christ as risen, and our hearts confirm it also. Praise God!

—Wayne Murphey

APRIL 30, 2000

CHRIST ASCENDS TO THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

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

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

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

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

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

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

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

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

Luke 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, while they beheld, he was taken up and parted from them, and carried up into heaven; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Mark 16:19 ...He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Acts 1:10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

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

Luke 24:52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

MEMORY VERSE: This man (Jesus) after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Hebrews 10:12-13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Having finished the work on earth that His Father had given Him to do, and leaving final instructions to His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit to come, our blessed Lord and Saviour ascended up from His disciples' wondering view and disappeared into the heavens where, according to prophecy, He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 10:13), "*From henceforth expecting*": From the day Jesus ascended up on high to reign as King and to intercede for His saints on earth, He is eagerly anticipating and looking forward to that day when He will gather His saints to His presence in eternal fellowship and joy and bring an end to this wicked world of sin and evil.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles (which was also written by Luke) we have drawn the account of the final hours and moments of Christ's sojourn on earth. We have included one statement from Mark's gospel which more fully names the position that Jesus was to take in the heavens than what Luke did. Along with the prophecies that foretold the ascension of Christ and what is written by the apostles since Christ, and in reference to the prophecies, we clearly see that Christ was to go back to the Father and assume the eternal priesthood and reign as King and Sovereign Lord over His saints, and ultimately over the world as final Judge. It is a thrilling as well as a profound and sobering thought to

consider. Jesus had been obedient and faithful to His Father in His mission on earth. He had humbled Himself to the death of the cross. Now God was to highly exalt Him and give Him a position of power and glory at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:20-21.) From this exalted position He was to pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people and intercede and appear for them in heaven before the Father throughout all the ages of time. The story of Christ does not close with His resurrection. It goes on to His ascension, and covers all the many years that He has and will continue to intercede as High Priest for His saints. And then the day will come when He will leave that mediatorial throne and come in the glory of His Father to judge the world and to reward the faithful and true. Let us endeavor to picture in our minds this vivid scene on the Mount of Olives near Bethany of our Risen Lord being drawn up into the heavens, disappearing into the clouds from our human sight. And let us consider well and remember the promise given by the two angels of His appearance "the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9:28. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus open the apostles' understanding about?
2. Why did He tell them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem?
3. Why did Jesus have to leave His disciples?
4. What was He to do in the heavens?
5. What was the "promise of the Father" He spoke of?
6. What all was the Holy Spirit to give to the apostles?
7. Does Christ still pour out the Holy Spirit on souls today?
8. How would you describe Christ ascending as our lesson tells?
9. Why did the apostles keep looking up toward heaven?
10. What did the two angels tell them?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a

woman, to redeem the souls of mankind. Christ accomplished His mission as the Saviour of the world in every respect. He taught, He lived, He overcame, He humbled Himself, He obeyed the Father, and went resolutely to the death of the cross. God quickened Him from the grave and resurrected Him to an immortal body to live forever. He showed Himself alive after His suffering and death by many unfailing proofs, making it beyond doubt to His disciples that He was the same Jesus they had known before, but now risen from the grave as their triumphant, immortal King. He walked and talked among them for forty days. But God was not ready to bring an end to the Roman Empire and the world. He was not about to restore Israel as a great nation again, as some thought He might. No, God's ways are above the ideas and fancies of the natural man. God had foretold in the scriptures that He wanted Christ to sit at His right hand until the time when He would bring an end to this world and subdue His enemies. I am sure that Christ explained this to His disciples. And finally the moment came when His work on earth was completely fulfilled. He, in the presence of His disciples and followers, began His ascent to the skies. Slowly perhaps at first, and then gathering speed as He went up, the blessed Lover of our souls, our eternal Husband and dearest Friend, was taken up and they beheld Him disappear into a cloud. Up to the right hand of God to appear in heaven for us, our dear Lord went. Into the eternal realms of the Spirit and the unseen riches and blessings of the immediate presence of God, our King ascended. In that glorified body that had once been whipped and beaten and scarred with horrible wounds, Christ scaled the heights of the eternal hills. There He has tarried through these twenty centuries, waiting for the Father's decree to come and take His Bride, and interceding and appearing in our behalf before Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The disciples hardly had time to comprehend the resurrection of Christ when they beheld something that measured just as high on the scale of unbelievable things to happen. The

world had never known of a resurrection like Christ's. There had been those who were raised from the dead, but it had always been accompanied by a prophet demonstrating the power. Christ had the power, as given to Him from God, to come out of the tomb on His own accord. Previously, all others raised from the dead had again gone the way of all mankind. The world had never known of an ascension like Christ's. Elijah had ascended, but here too were some outstanding differences. Elijah was carried up; Christ ascended without any outward sign to accompany His upward movement. Elijah left his cloak which filled one man with his spirit. The Lord Jesus left a benediction and sent the Holy Spirit for all mankind. Elijah's work was done when he was carried up, but Christ relinquished none of His activity in our behalf. He holds a position of great power at the Father's right hand, and He is not slack in using that position for our benefit.

In a dialogue by John Masefield, English poet laureate, Pilate's wife says: "What do you think of his claims?" The centurion answers: "If a man believes something so much that he is ready to die for it, he is going to get others to believe it too." Pilate's wife asks: "Is He dead?" "No," replies the centurion, "He is not dead." "Where is He then?" again asks Pilate's wife. The centurion answers: "Let loose in the world, lady, where neither Roman nor Jew can stop His truth."

Wicked men seemed to triumph over Him once, but now Christ is in a position from which no man can bring Him down.

—Wayne Murphey



MAY 7, 2000

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN PROPHECY

Psalm 103:19 The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

Psalm 22:28 For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.

Psalm 145:5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Micah 4:6 In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and he that I have afflicted;

7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 9:6 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.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

MEMORY VERSE: He is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. Daniel 6:26.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has set up a kingdom in His Son Jesus Christ whom He gave to us, and this kingdom is everlasting and will never be destroyed. It is a kingdom of peace, righteousness and judgment and God has made it available for all who will come to Him and be saved.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 145:5, 12), "*Majesty*": Grandeur, magnificence, splendor, imposing form and beauty of appearance.

(Psalm 145:13), "*Domintion*": The realm of God's rule and power.

(Daniel 2:44), "*In the days of these kings*": Daniel had just revealed to King Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its interpretation of the four universal kingdoms of which he, Nebuchadnezzar, was the first. The four kingdoms were pictured as a great image, the head of which was gold, representing Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon. The Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians and they were the breast and arms of silver. The Greek empire followed, which was represented as the belly and thighs of brass. The Roman empire was the last universal kingdom represented as the legs of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay. Daniel showed how this fourth kingdom, the Roman empire, would have the strength of iron, but would be corrupted and weakened as like iron mixed with clay. It would be in the days of these kings, that is, in the days of the rulers of the Roman empire that Jesus would come into the world and by the power of God set up a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of His people which would never pass away.

(Micah 4:6), "*I will assemble her that halteth*": The Hebrew says, "I will gather the lame." This represents the souls of men bruised and broken by the guilt and condemnation of their sins, the poor and needy who realize their helplessness and need for forgiveness and salvation. It is unto this sort of humanity that the kingdom of God can really take effect.

(Micah 4:8), "*Thou, O tower of the flock*": This is the expression of the refuge of Christ, the power of the gospel of the Son of God who offers freedom and deliverance from sin, self and the world. Unto Him is given the kingdom to be shared with all who trust and obey Him. "*The first domintion*": This is the chief and most important rule and power that man needs and that which the power and grace of Christ provides. It is the rulership and dominion of one's self, the subjection of will and desire to the holiness of God and His perfect will. Christ brought it to us in His advent into this world and the victory

that He gained over Satan and sin. It is a stronghold to the children of God who are born again and led by the Holy Spirit.

(Isaiah 9:7), *"The zeal of the Lord of hosts"*: The eager interest, and the ardent endeavor and devotion of the great God Almighty concerning the souls of men and their desperate need of saving grace and deliverance from the dominion of sin, moved Him to bring to us the power and blessing of His kingdom of peace and righteousness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson is the first of our series of studies on the wonderful subject of the Kingdom of God. Today we will consider various scriptures concerning the Kingdom of God as was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in prophecy. We have several scriptures from the Psalms, and also from Daniel, Micah and Isaiah. All these are prophetic truths concerning the Kingdom of God that was fulfilled in the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is important that we view these prophetic utterances in the light of Christ and the power of His glorious work of redemption for the souls of men. This is what the scriptures ultimately point to. Jesus brought it to us when He fulfilled the will of the heavenly Father and was crucified and risen from the dead. He was the Son given and the Child born unto us for our benefit and blessing. The rule and dominion was given to Him and, thank God, we can share with Him this blessed kingdom and sit with Him in His throne. He was given the throne of David and this throne is the throne of love, grace and transforming power for the poor and needy who sense their dire need of His saving grace.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Name the various attributes of Christ's kingdom.
2. What are some of the beauties shown in His majesty?
3. What happens to the kingdoms of men before God's Kingdom?
4. Name some of the benefits of the Kingdom of God.
5. Why is God so concerned with the afflicted and lame?
6. What kind of affliction and lameness is He speaking of?

7. What is the "tower of the flock?"
8. What is the "first" and most important "dominion?"
9. Who is the "Son given" and "Child born" unto us?
10. How does the duration of God's Kingdom compare with the kingdoms of this world?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The real need of mankind is met and fulfilled only in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God that His Son Jesus brought down to this world is the most important thing in a man's life. If a person neglects and fails to really possess entrance and possession of the kingdom of God, he is certain to lose out in every other thing. Jesus said that the violent takes the kingdom of heaven by force, and that every man presseth into it. Matthew 11:12 and Luke 16:16. All man-made systems of rule and power crumble before the glory and majesty of the the Kingdom of God and Christ. Every earthly king or monarch that ever lives and reigns sooner or later comes to their end. Their kingdom is but for a moment and soon is lost. The history of the world discloses this sad but vital truth. Read about them in history, of their conquests and great power, overrunning other nations in great battles and conflicts, only to finally fall to another power greater than them. It has happened over and over again. It was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, that God rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will. This monarch was deranged in mind and made like an animal to live in the wild and eat grass for seven years. When this period of time was over he returned and reassumed his position on the throne. God did this to show him and everyone else that He rules supremely.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Psalmist said, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee." Psalms 145:10. Surely creation does praise the Lord. The moon, stars, sun, flowers, animals, etc. all testify of a King who has great power and intellect.

Although the works of God's hands praise Him, the saints

bless Him. This is a higher degree of homage. Though we praise that which excites our admiration, such as wisdom, riches and power, yet we only bless where our love is stirred. Admiration is good, but love is that in which God delights, and only His saints can render Him it. Admiration, that which excites our praise, may leave our hearts cold and uncheered; but love sparks an inward fire which illuminates and cheers the heart in which it burns. It is of a reciprocating value. Those who bless the Lord bless Him, as well as bless themselves.

—Wayne Murphey



MAY 14, 2000

CHRIST, THE KING, IN PROPHECY

II Samuel 23:1 David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

2 The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

4 And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

I Chronicles 17:11 ...And I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son:...

14 I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

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.

Psalm 45:1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

3 Gird thy Sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

MEMORY VERSE: So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. Psalm 45:11.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, the King of glory, rules in the fear of God, and He shines as the light of the morning into the lives of men who submit themselves to Him. His kingdom of righteousness and peace in the hearts of His people shall endure for ever and ever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 45:1), "*Is inditing*": Is overflowing with. "*Ready*": Rapid.

(Psalm 45:2), "*Fairer than the children of men*:" The Hebrew says, "fairest of the sons of man."

(Psalm 45:4), "*Ride prosperously*": The Hebrew meaning is: go forth, advance, and be effectual. "*Truth*": Stability, certainty and trustworthiness. "*Meekness*": Royal mildness and gentleness of a king of love. "*Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things*": A person's right hand signifies what things he resorts to, listens to, takes heed to, and decisively follows. Christ set His Father's will always before Him, and because He was at His right hand, He was not to be moved. See Psalm 16:8. Thus because He made His Father's good will His right hand, God Almighty set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

(Psalm 45:5), "*Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies*": The arrows of truth and the preaching of the

gospel of Christ pierce the heart and mind, prick the conscience, and bring conviction upon the soul. *"The people fall under thee"*: Pierced by the arrows of truth and persuaded that Christ is King supreme, the heart of man is won to submission and eternal allegiance to the Son of God and His righteous cause.

(Psalm 45:6), *"Sceptre"*: A rod for ruling and punishing, denoting power and authority. In the case of Christ, His sceptre is His Word backed by the Holy Spirit by which He lovingly rules His beloved saints, and with which He will break in pieces a stubborn and rebellious world.

(Psalm 45:7), *"Above thy fellows"*: More than thy associates. This means above the angels, and all of humankind.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the Old Testament scriptures we have gathered some precious prophecies of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. The first are the words of David spoken in the latter days of his reign as king. These are prophetic words of Christ, who was to sit on David's throne in an eternal spiritual sense. He *would* rule in the fear of God and would shine forth into the hearts of men as the light of the morning. Unto all who would take heed to the confirmed prophecies of Him the day would dawn and the day star would arise in their hearts. (II Peter 1:19.) Then we have a portion of the prophet Nathan's message to David. David had confided in the prophet Nathan concerning his desire to have a house built for the Lord God. But the word of the Lord came to Nathan for David, telling him that he was not to build the house of God, but rather this responsibility would be given to his son. And it is very evident that God spoke this not only concerning his son, Solomon, but it was also pointing to Christ. The writer in Hebrews 1:5, speaking of things not said to angels but to Christ, quoted this passage, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Then we have the prophecy and oath of God to David in Psalm 132:11 concerning the fruit of his body, (which was Christ) being set upon his throne. Peter quoted this in his message to the people on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:30.)

Then we have the blessed 45th Psalm which explodes with vivid prophecies of the Saviour in His love and romance toward His people. The title of this Psalm calls it a "Song of loves." This means a Song for the beloved Bride, which is, in that which concerns Christ, His Church. Hebrews 1:8 and 9 quotes from this Psalm rich with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and so full of warm and fragrant truths of the glory and majesty of the reign of Christ. Our memory verse is preceded with this direction: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." We are to leave the world and its ways and adhere our hearts in fervent love and devotion to Christ. Thus He will greatly desire the beauty of holiness and meekness and righteousness that He possesses in Himself and He sees in us. Oh, these scriptures are so rich to our souls! I trust that everyone will be able to see the glory that they reveal!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God say concerning him who rules over men?
2. How is a king likened unto the light of the morning?
3. What was the House that Christ would build?
4. What is the throne of David Christ would sit upon?
5. Why is the subject of the King such a good matter?
6. How is Christ the fairest of all men?
7. How is grace poured into His lips?
8. Why was Christ able to ride prosperously?
9. What kind of sceptre does Christ's Kingdom have?
10. Why was Christ anointed with the oil of gladness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We see in the scriptures a vision of what the King of God's people was to be like. He is just and He rules in the fear of God. The pages of history are stained with the atrocities and folly of those who ruled in their own lust and self-will. But the King that would be crowned by the Lord God as the eternal Potentate and Lord of all would rule according to the Spirit of true holiness and godliness. This kind of reign would be filled with goodness and the blessings of heaven. The power and

grace that such a wonderful Monarch would wield would be as the light of a bright and fresh morning, shining clear and beautiful like a day after the rain has washed the air and the landscape and the clouds have been driven away. The tender grass and herbs shining their beauty in the light of the morning sun expresses the beauty of the life of Christ in the light of His Word. The King of saints was the eternal Son of God, begotten in the virgin's womb, brought forth to be a Man, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. See Romans 1:3-4. In being raised from the dead, no more to return to corruption, Christ inherited the eternal Sonship that He willingly and joyfully shares with all who are willing to follow Him and bear His suffering and reproach. Because of His truth and meekness and righteousness He has ridden prosperously through the ages, going forth in the lives of His saints through the Holy Spirit which He has poured out from His Father. His Kingdom is a triumphant Kingdom to break in pieces all the dominions of this world. His arrows of truth have pierced many souls causing them to prostrate themselves before Him, and say, "What wilt thou have me to do?" as Saul of Tarsus did.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In *God the Invisible King*, H. G. Wells wrote, "Religion is the first thing and the last thing, and until a man has found God, he begins at no beginning; he works to no end. Life falls into place only with God, who fights through man against blind force and might and nonexistence; who fights with man against the confusion and evil within us and without and against death in any form; who loves us as a great captain loves his men and stands ready to use us in his immortal adventure against waste, disorder, cruelty and vice; who is the end, who is the only King."

"You sweat too much blood for the world," Leo Tolstoy told an enthusiastic young reformer. "Sweat some for yourself first. If you want to make the world better, you have to be the

best you can. You cannot bring the Kingdom of God into the world until you bring it into your own heart first."

—Wayne Murphey



MAY 21, 2000

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 1:30 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.

Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Matthew 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Matthew 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seekye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

MEMORY VERSE: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The angel announced to Mary that her child, Jesus, would sit on David's throne and reign forever. Both John the Baptist and Jesus Himself declared that the Kingdom of God was at hand. And Jesus began His ministry preaching the gospel of the kingdom. This all goes to show to us that the Kingdom of God was being introduced and extended to mankind in Christ's day.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 3:2), "*Repent*": Reform and change your way of living. *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*": This could be said this way: "The royal majesty of the heavens has approached!"

(Matthew 4:23), "*Gospel*": Good news and glad tidings.

(Matthew 5:3), "*Poor in spirit*": One who senses their poverty and desperate need of help from God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider the introduction of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament. In the message that the angel Gabriel gave to Mary concerning the birth of Jesus he declared that Jesus would be given the throne of David, which, of course, we know is a spiritual term referring to Christ being the King over His people as David was over Israel. The true Israel includes all who are of the faith of Christ. The angel also declared that of His kingdom there would be no end. Then we have both John and Jesus announcing that the Kingdom of God is at hand and for people to repent and believe the good news. Jesus began His ministry going about teaching and preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. In His sermon on the Mount Jesus made it plain who the Kingdom

of God was to be possessed by. He stressed the need of not being anxious about the needs of life, but urgently pressed the most important need, which was to have the Kingdom of God and His righteousness fully abiding in the heart. These are all great truths that we need to take very seriously. The Kingdom of God is eternal. We must repent and reform our lives, that is, change our ways and thoughts and conform to God's ways and thoughts. We must recognize our poor lost condition before the Lord. No one will be very desirous and diligent to seek for the Kingdom of God who is not aware of their spiritual poverty and lost condition. And we must seek for the Kingdom of God earnestly, making it the number one priority, making it more important than our food and clothes. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it so great a thing for the Kingdom to be eternal?
2. What is the spiritual meaning of the throne of David?
3. What did both John and Jesus declare that we must do?
4. What is there about the message of the Kingdom that is such good news?
5. Why is it so important for us to recognize our poverty?
6. How can possessing the Kingdom of God help us when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake?
7. How can the daily cares of life keep us from really getting ahold of the Kingdom of God?
8. What if we fail to seek and find the Kingdom of God?
9. What is promised to us if we seek first the Kingdom of God?
10. How important is it to have a knowledge of the Kingdom of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

If only people could be made to be aware of how valuable and serious the Kingdom of God is to us! The Royal Majesty of the heavens has come near! Do we know what this means? How seriously do we take this matter? Is there a God, a true and living God who created all of these things? Does He not have power and control and order? What are we doing about

it? Are we just living a careless life of ease, catering to our fleshly desires instead of seeking to know God's will and to experience the power and glory of His majesty? These are questions that every soul needs to get concerned about. So many of us pitiful human beings live no higher than the level of the animal kingdom. We need to be aware that there is something more to life than just the gratification of the fleshly desires. God brought the Kingdom of God down within the reach of man. Its power and glory and blessing can be ours. But we must seek earnestly for it and make it our number one priority. Nothing is as important as the Kingdom of God being prosperous in our souls.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2.

"Repentance is encouraged by the promise of the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom is near at hand; therefore the John the Baptist urges his hearers to lose no time in making themselves ready for it. The vision of the better life reveals the shame and horror of the life of sin. If there were no hope there would be no repentance; in such a state the awakened conscience could only plunge the soul into remorse. Therefore the message of the John the Baptist must be twofold. It is not right or wise to preach of sin by itself, nor to try to induce repentance chiefly by painting the guilt of the past in the blackest colors. The anticipation of Christ is the best inducement to repentance." —Taken from, *The Pulpit Commentary*



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MAY 28, 2000

ENTERING INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John 3:3 ...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

5 ...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Matthew 18:1 The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 11:11 Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force..

Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

Mark 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

MEMORY VERSE: Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth

the will of my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 7:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: A new birth and change from the flesh to the Spirit is required for a man to find entrance to the Kingdom of God. He also must humble himself like a little child and press his way against all the powers of unbelief, temptation, worldly pressures and of Satan himself if he would enter into the Kingdom of heaven. And the person who trusts in his money or earthly possessions will in no wise enter in.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 3:3), "*Born again*": It would be more properly rendered as "born from above."

(John 3:5), "*Born of water*": Water is a symbol of the cleansing of the Word of God. So the new birth has two agents that bring it about, namely, the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

(Matthew 11:12), "*Suffereth violence*": This means it is taken only by force, by crowding one's self into, and by deliberately seizing and laying hold of in spite of all opposition. As Luke 16:16 says, "Every man presseth (or crowds) into it." The term "suffereth violence" is from the same Greek word as "presseth."

(Mark 10:25), "*Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*": Let the comparison be just as it says here. A person who trusts in his vain earthly wealth and loves it and holds on to it in selfishness and vain pride absolutely cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. With God all things are possible and the rich man can humble himself and give up his riches, but unless he does this truly, God Himself will not accept him into His Kingdom.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider the subject of entering into the Kingdom of God. There is a door, an entrance into the heavenly Kingdom of Christ and God. First, we have Jesus' own words to Nicodemus who came to him by night. Nicodemus said that he knew that Jesus was come from God on account of the

many miracles that He did. Jesus turned the conversation and subject immediately to the new birth. "Ye must be born from above, changed from the flesh life to the life of the Spirit." The truth still faces us today. It means much for a person to turn away from the fleshly indulgences of pleasure, wealth, the praise of men and other vain delights. To really get born again we have to make a clean break with sin and ungodliness. We must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. People who fail to come clean from the world and yet make a profession of being saved deceive their own hearts. It takes great effort to go against the tide of worldliness and fleshly indulgence and take up the cross of Jesus and live to the Spirit. Very few are willing to pay the price to obtain such an experience. Then there is pride that has to be dealt with. We must humble ourselves, cast out our vain and foolish pride, our self-centeredness, and self-promotion. Very few are aware of the existence of pride, let alone coming clean from it. And then there is that love of money that fastens itself to the heart and nature of man so readily. It is hard to get rid of. Jesus had just encountered a young man who seemed eager to enter into the Kingdom of God. But when Christ told him that he would have to give up his riches, he went away sorrowfully. There are many other things that people allow to hinder and keep them from entering in. Is not the Kingdom of God worth giving up all and selling completely out for?

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why must a person be born again?
2. What all is involved in being born again?
3. Why is it such a difficult thing to enter the Kingdom?
4. What are some of the oppositions that withstand us?
5. How can a man humble himself as a little child?
6. Why are pride and love of money such hard foes?
7. What must a man have to violently seize the Kingdom?
8. Is it possible for a person to profess and not really be born again?
9. Who is responsible for a person to make this change?
10. Is it possible for a person to have riches and not trust in them?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One must press to get into the Kingdom of God. You must be determined to win this battle. You cannot be soft and undecided. It takes irrevocable and clean straight decisions to change from sin to righteousness, from the selfish flesh to the cross and the way of following the Holy Spirit. One has to have his or her mind elevated and enlightened by the Word of the Lord. This is why the preaching of the gospel is so important. The Word must be preached. How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? Watered down and soft, easy preaching will dim the vision. You cannot fight a battle if you do not know your foe. You have to know what you are fighting against and what you are fighting for. To be born from above is a wonderful experience. To be filled with the Spirit of God is even a greater experience. But they both take decisiveness and determination.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, a normal, natural human being, was not able to comprehend how a man, when he is old, can be born again. It was foolishness to him because he did not have the faculty with which to perceive it.

Have you ever looked through a microscope? It opens up a whole new world to a person's view. It is amazing what life a single drop of water can contain. How foolish it would be to say that these things don't exist because they cannot be seen by the unaided eye. Likewise, it is foolish to claim that there is no such thing as a new birth because the natural mind can't conceive it. The powerful lens of a living faith is necessary to comprehend spiritual and eternal truths. To those whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, a whole new world of life and beauty appears in even the simplest droplet of Christ's teachings.

—Wayne Murphey



JUNE 4, 2000

A SPIRITUAL REALM OF LOVE AND PEACE WITHIN

Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

MEMORY VERSE: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 14:17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Kingdom of God is not a dominion of outward fleshly show of material wealth and grandeur, but it is a Kingdom in the heart of man where love and peace reign triumphantly over the hatred and strife that rages in this present evil world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 17:20-21), "*Observation*": Outward show or that which is evident to literal sight. "*Within*": That which is contained or set up in the inner man, the spirit part of man that is part of God Himself.

(Romans 13:8), "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*": This means to not come short in the payment of the debt that we owe to every human being, and that is love, consideration, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, peace, honesty and just treatment.

LESSON BACKGROUND

People in the time of Christ were looking for a literal kingdom. They were desiring that Israel would be given the power to throw off the dominion of the Roman empire and become a great kingdom with earthly wealth and honor as it once was. They were inquisitive as to when this kingdom (which they thought the Messiah was to bring) would appear. But in the light of Christ's teachings and the teachings of His disciples we see that the real Kingdom of God is an inward Kingdom of the heart and soul of man. It is not a literal kingdom of a physical and political dominion of man over man. But it is a Kingdom in the very center of a man's being and nature, ruling man in all of his actions, attitudes, ways, affections and desires. It is plain that the way carnal man has ruled and sought to rule has brought untold misery and strife to mankind. But the Kingdom that Christ Jesus came to bring is a Kingdom of love and peace ruling in the center of one's

being, in the heart, soul and mind. You get a people who truly possess the Kingdom of peace in the soul and you will find order and happiness prevailing. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is a royal law. (James 2:8.) This means it is a law that is safe and sure to be ruled by. Although this Kingdom shows itself and makes itself to be seen in literal earthly things, yet its foundation and source is not literal but from above. All the woe and trouble that plagues humanity today arises because someone does not have the Kingdom of peace and love ruling in the heart.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of kingdom were the people looking for?
2. What has been the downfall of all earthly kingdoms?
3. What does the Kingdom of God have that endures forever?
4. What does it mean for the Kingdom to be "within" us?
5. How can love rule over a man as nothing else can?
6. What makes man want a kingdom of outward show?
7. How will righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit enable us to live?
8. What is the only way that we can really fulfill the law?
9. What does perfect love do for a man?
10. Why is it not possible to love God and at the same time hate one's brother?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the greatest snares and pitfalls that have stood in the way of man prospering with his Maker is the weakness of being influenced by things that have outward show and attraction to allure the mind. One of the drawing cards of temptation to Eve was the beauty of the forbidden fruit. Fine buildings, fine cars, fine clothes, fine furniture, fine art, fine music, all of these things attract and allure the heart to admiration and delight. Paul spoke of those who glory in appearance and not in heart. (II Corinthians 5:12.) Look at the world today and behold how the beauty of outward show and the attraction of grand appearance is such an important

feature of business and all other ways of humanity. This is a hindrance, because the Kingdom of God, the only real answer for man's real need, does not come with outward show. It is an inward Kingdom that works not with fleshly beauty and the fleeting charm of physical grandeur. It works on the attitudes, the dispositions, the affections, and the very principle of a man's whole being. It works within, yes, within the very center of a man's heart. Jesus declared that it was from "within, out of the heart of men" the things that defile a man proceed. (Mark 7:21.) He rebuked the scribes and hypocritical Pharisees who made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of robbery and without self-control. (Matthew 23:25.) Paul declared that one "is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit." (Romans 2:28-29.) Psalm 45:13 prophesies of the Church that she is "all glorious within." The Lord wants His kingdom to get on the inside of people. He is not interested in outward show and that which feeds the admiration of the flesh. He wants His Kingdom to be received in the heart and be given the dominion of a man's thoughts, affections and desires. Only then is the Lord pleased and satisfied. An earthly kingdom that subsists only in earthly riches and honor is an abomination to Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."
I John 4:18.

A minister was once lying dangerously ill. Prayers were being offered up at his bedside by members of his congregation who were asking the Lord to raise him up. In doing so, they made mention, among other things, of his tender watchfulness in feeding the lambs of the flock, and used the expression, "Lord, Thou knowest how he loves You." The sick minister heard them, and said, "Ah, children, do not pray thus! When Mary and Martha went to Jesus, their message was not, 'Lord, he who loveth Thee is sick,' but 'he whom Thou lovest.' It is not my love to Him that gives me comfort, but His perfect love to me."

—Wayne Murphey

JUNE 11, 2000

A BOUNTEOUS TREASURE HID IN A FIELD

Matthew 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

II Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Colossians 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

II Corinthians 6:10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as

poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

MEMORY VERSE: There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches. Proverbs 13:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Kingdom of God is the richest kingdom ever, but its riches are not the material wealth of this world. It is rather a hidden treasure in the heart of man of love, righteousness, godliness, peace, patience, faith and every other precious blessing of the Lord. Blessed is the man who has found it, and given up all to possess it.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 13:44), "*A treasure hid in a field*": Jesus is likening the discovery of the Kingdom of God to a man who unearths a fabulous treasure in a field that does not belong to him. He discovers this vein of gold or treasure chest of far-out wealth, but knows that he cannot lawfully or honestly possess it. It is hidden, but he has discovered it. What must he do? With great joy, being conscious of its wealth surpassing everything, he covers it over so as to be hidden again, and goes and sells out every possession of his and employs whatever means possible to get the finances to be able to buy that field. Then when at last it is in his possession and control he can enjoy the treasure and be paid back many times over for what it cost him to buy it. How is this likened unto the Kingdom of God? As a person listens to the gospel and is awakened in his conscience of his lost condition and the golden opportunity of obtaining deliverance, he has found the treasure. He must not go and tell one of his sinful associates about it or they will talk him out of it or discourage him from seeking after it. He does not confer with flesh and blood, but rather gets down to business with God, prays and repents and turns away from sin, giving up the world and all of his idols. Then when he prays through and hits the rock and the joy of the grace of Christ makes him a new creature, the field is his. Now he can testify and confess his spiritual wealth fearlessly and with all assurance.

(II Corinthians 8:9), *"That ye through his poverty might be rich"*: It is by us partaking of the humiliation and poverty of Christ that we can know and enjoy the true riches that He possessed.

(Ephesians 1:18), *"The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"*: Christ inherited through His death and resurrection, the love and unity of all the holy men and women through the ages. Their love, devotion and fellowship with Him is His treasure, and it was the joy set before Him when He endured the cross and its shame and reproach.

(Colossians 2:2), *"All riches of the full assurance of understanding"*: There is a richness and fulness to be experienced when we are enlightened by the Word and the Holy Spirit and made to know deeper depths and higher heights of the splendors of the knowledge of God and His precious will.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus taught many parables of likenesses to the Kingdom of God in material things. We have included one of these parables in our lesson today concerning the riches of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a treasure deeply hidden from the vain thoughts of man. In the gospel it is brought out and can be discovered. Paul said that in the Father and in His Son are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. By being a partaker of the poverty of Christ and the reproach of His cross, we can partake of and enjoy His riches of spiritual blessings which He has to offer. These riches are unsearchable and overwhelming. Outward beauty and earthly riches do not have that kind of effect on a person. Their delight is superficial and but for a moment. But the spiritual blessings of the Kingdom of God are satisfying and completely delightful. It is because they appeal to the real part of us, the inner man. The riches of the grace of God are truly more real than the earthly riches are because they relate to and bless the most important part of us. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How is the Kingdom of God like a hidden treasure?
2. What are some of the values of the Kingdom of God?

3. In what way do we "hide" the Kingdom in our hearts?
4. What are some of the things we have to "sell" to be able to purchase the pearl of great price?
5. What riches are in the saints of God that are so valuable to Christ?
6. How does growing in understanding increase our assurance and joy in the Lord?
7. Who are the riches of the Kingdom of God hidden from and why are they thus hidden?
8. How is the Kingdom of God discovered by the soul of man?
9. How can we be poor and yet make others rich and have nothing and yet possess all things?
10. Why is it so important for us to be made aware of the real value of the Kingdom of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A person's sense of values is a most important part of his character. One's sense of values guides and dictates what he pursues and seeks after in life. People work and slave and scrape to have worldly riches because, in their estimation, that is what is the most valuable. People who are going after the vain things of pleasure and fleshly entertainment do so because that is of the greatest value to them. It is like the story of the rich lady who had her chauffeur take her for a ride out among the poor section of town. They came by a poor ragged man digging in a muddy ditch by his tumbledown shack. As they drove slowly by and she scrutinized him, the rich lady was taken back to hear the song the poor man was singing: "I'm the child of a King, the child of a King!" She had the driver stop and she got out and walked up to the man and began to talk to him. "How can you say you are the child of a King with those terrible clothes and old rough hands and that awful shack? You're not the child of a king! You're just an old dirty ditch digger digging away in that old muddy ditch!" But the old ditch digger just kept right on singing, "I'm the child of a King, the child of a King!" The rich lady went on her way, saying to her chauffeur, "I don't see how anyone can claim to have so much and have

so little!" And the old ditch digger looked at her as she drove away, and said, "I don't see how anyone can have so much and yet have nothing!" The difference in those two people was their sense of values. The poor man had Christ as His Saviour and Friend and all the rich lady had was her earthly riches. Oh, that people could but get their sense of values straight! The Kingdom of God and its riches of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit is by far the greatest treasure one can possess in life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." Prov. 13:7.

Many Bible commentators say this verse condemns the fallacious spirit of the spendthrift and the miser. There is inherent danger in being poor and coveting to be rich, as well as in being rich and miserly.

If a person is blessed with wealth, then those blessings should be dedicated to God. The rich ruler who came to Christ inquiring about eternal life went away sorrowful because Christ asked him to give his riches to the poor. Then Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Luke 18:24. The more a person has, the more they have to dedicate, and when the possessions become great the dedication becomes burdensome, especially if the wealth was accumulated from being miserly.

Joseph of Arimathea was one who seemed to have that exceptional quality of dedicating all his wealth to the cause of God. He was a disciple of Jesus. (Matt. 27:57; John 19:38.) Although he kept his discipleship secret for fear of the Jews (John 19:38), he was faithful to his allegiance in that he absented himself from the meeting which found Jesus guilty of death. (Luke 23:51; Mark 14:64.) But the condemnation of his Lord awakened the courage and revealed the true faith of Joseph. On the evening after the crucifixion he went boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. He openly took down the body from the cross. History records that in 63 AD, Joseph was sent by Philip from Gaul to Britain along with eleven other

disciples, and built an oratory at Glastonbury. He also took the Holy Grail to England.

The important thing is, no matter the quantity of our possessions, we must dedicate them all to God in order to possess the pearl of great price. —Wayne Murphey



JUNE 18, 2000

A KINGDOM TRIUMPHANT OVER SIN AND EVIL

Romans 5:17 If by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

22 Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I Corinthians 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

II Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,...

I Corinthians 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Revelations 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

MEMORYVERSE: For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. I John 5:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The grace and power in the Kingdom of God through Christ gives us deliverance from the dominion of sin and we are able to overcome the powers of temptation and pressures of this present evil world and live in holiness and righteousness before God all the days of our life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Romans 6:6), "*The body of sin*": The essence or substance of sin; that is, what sin is made up of.

(I Corinthians 6:9), "*Effeminate*" and "*Abusers of themselves with mankind*": Both of these are sodomites, which, in our time, are called homosexuals.

(I Corinthians 6:10), "*Extortioners*": This is referring to people who get gain by violence, threats, or misuse of authority.

(Revelations 12:10), "*Accuser of our brethren*": This is most surely referring to the devil, or Satan, the archenemy of God and all of His saints. Why is he called "the accuser?" Satan works against God's cause in the world by seeking to bring all who serve God into condemnation. See how the prince of this world came up against Christ and accused Him of sin, blasphemy and wrong. See how the saints of God

through the ages have been accused and misjudged and condemned time and time again. It is the devil's techniques to bring a railing accusation against the child of God. There have been many who have suffered untold agony and sorrow through the accusations of the devil. It is a hard thing to battle against and overcome, especially because one is not aware that the devil works that way. Any kind of good thing that the Lord is working in our lives can and will be opposed by Satan and so many times it is through an accusing spirit that he imposes upon a tender and earnest heart. I remember hearing Sis. Marie Miles tell about how in her younger days of the Christian life she had an awful time with accusations. It happens to so many tender-hearted and conscientious souls. But one day, in the midst of such agony and distress, she said that the Lord spoke to her heart and said, "The accuser of the brethren is cast down." This was a great help to her in getting victory over the accusing spirit of the devil.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have for our Bible Lesson today several scriptures from the New Testament that show the triumphant victory that the Kingdom of God affords to us over all the power of sin and evil. God's Kingdom is a triumphant Kingdom and will help us to reign over sin in this life. Just as Christ overcame the world and its tempting powers and is set down with His Father in His throne, so we can overcome and be granted to sit with Him in His throne. (Revelations 3:21.) Thank the Lord, the Kingdom of God within us will give us power to reign over Satan and sin. No matter what kind of evil has a hold on a person, if he will come with repentance and with godly sorrow and with unwavering faith in the Lord Jesus, he can be set free from that awful state. In our lesson text from I Corinthians 6:9-10 we see that some of these saints had been mixed up with the awful sins that Paul mentioned. Some were thieves, some were homosexuals, some were this thing and that thing that was sinful and displeasing in God's sight. But in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, they were washed, justified, sanctified, delivered and set free from that

sinful way of life. All down through the years of this gospel age people have experienced the transforming power of the Kingdom of God. We have the beautiful picture in Revelation 7 of the great multitude no man could number clothed in white robes before the throne of God. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "Thank God for a Church triumphant! all pure in this world below; For the kingdom that Jesus founded doth triumph o'er every foe!"

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the abundance of grace in Christ enable us to do?
2. What does Jesus help us to reign over in life?
3. Why do we henceforth no longer have to serve sin?
4. What are we to reckon ourselves to be?
5. What are some of the things mentioned in our lesson that people get involved in under the power of Satan and sin?
6. How can a person get deliverance from these things?
7. Can people yet today be delivered from these things?
8. What can the power of the kingdom of God accomplish?
9. Who is the accuser of the brethren?
10. What is come to us since the accuser of the brethren is cast down?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

No other kingdom that has risen among men has accomplished and provided what the Kingdom of God has. What Jesus brought in His great salvation has met man's real need, and that is victory over Satan and sin, the ancient foe that brought all the trouble and heartache that is in the world. Sin is to blame. Sin and rebellion against God is at the root of all the woes and sorrows we have here below. Jesus came as a King, a true Monarch and Ruler, with a mission to set free the captives in the prison house of sin. He is pictured in the 72nd Psalm as Saviour for the poor and needy from the oppressor, which is the devil, the accuser of the children of God. "He shall save the souls of the needy." (Psalm 72:13.) Man was enslaved

in ignorance and darkness. Jesus came to bring light for the soul and the true knowledge of God. Man was bound with selfishness and pride. Jesus came to set a pattern of self-denial and humility. Man was bound with lust and greed and filthy habits. Jesus came to purify the heart and bring righteousness and self-control back into the inner man. But in order for people to get the help they need there must be a deep sense of their poverty and need and a will to take hold of the grace of Christ. No man can receive the power of the Kingdom of God to be born again and made a new creature unless he is conscious of his lost and deplorable condition. Whosoever will can make his flight from sin and find a refuge in Christ. Praise the Lord for the triumphant Kingdom that enables us to overcome this present evil world!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23.

Many years ago after much seemingly fruitless dealings with an anxious inquirer who had been wearily toiling for months to make himself worthy of salvation, I at length said, "Friend, you entirely mistake the whole matter. You forget that salvation is a gift, and that so far from you having to press God to give it, He, on the contrary, is pressing you to take it."

"A gift!" he exclaimed, with surprise. "Is salvation really a gift?"

"Yes," I replied, "it is yours for the taking."

Without further hesitancy, and with a deeply grateful heart, he took what the Lord offered, and as He offered it; and all through his later years, when at any time temptation pressed, and faith was like to fail, the remembrance that salvation was a gift cheered and sustained him. His after life was holy and his end perfect peace.

—Author Unknown



JUNE 25, 2000

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM

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

Daniel 7: 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

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

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

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

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

II Peter 1: 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

MEMORY VERSE: The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Revelation 11:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Kingdom of God that He established in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord will never pass away. When this time world passes away, the power of the Lord will still be as strong and wonderful as it is today and will continue for ever and ever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Daniel 7:13), "*Ancient of days*": This is a descriptive term applied to the Almighty God, the Creator of the world, Who existed before the world, before time and the cycle of days, weeks, months and years began. He was before all things and by Him all things were brought into being.

(John 18:37), "*Bear witness unto the truth*": The Greek text simply says, "witness to the truth." This means not only speaking and making known what is the real truth, but it also is the communication of the truth to those who are of a truthful and honest heart who are free from pretense and hypocrisy, willing to face up to the truth about themselves and the true condition and need. It is just as Jesus further said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have selected scriptures for our lesson today that bear out the truth that this Kingdom of God, which we have been studying about, is an eternal and unending dominion. It will never pass away. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Kingdom of God shall abide throughout the Age of the ages, that is, eternity. All other kingdoms in the scroll of time will come to an end. If there are any kingdoms still in existence when God brings this world to a close, they will pass away in a moment and in a twinkling of an eye. But this spiritual realm

of light and power that Christ brought from heaven to earth will withstand the judgment shock and remain as the treasure and joy of the saints of the most High for ever and ever. Through the power of the kingdom of God, that can never be moved, the saints of the most High will be resurrected from their graves and will rise to meet their Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord. The righteous will go unto life eternal, but the wicked will go into everlasting punishment. As Peter said, an entrance will be granted abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Saviour if we will add to our souls faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. These are qualities of heart that are everlasting. By these things we live and by these things we will enter in at the last great day. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why should we be concerned about things everlasting?
2. How can we be of the truth to hear the voice of Christ?
3. Why do Christ's servants not want to fight?
4. If we have a Kingdom that shall not be moved, what should our manner of life be like?
5. How did Christ qualify to be given an everlasting reign?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In the beginning man was created with the potential to live forever. He had right to the tree of life, full access to the means that would assure him of an existence with no end. But man chose to disobey God and with that he was denied the right to the tree of life and was sentenced to die. Since that time man has had to meet the closing of his days in death. Job 14 dwells on this thought. "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Verse 14.) To live forever was the hope and dream of generation after generation. But always it was the same pattern. Man was born, lived a few years, and then was gone. Man earnestly and ardently longed for a hope of living again. When we speak about an everlasting kingdom we are speaking of the dream that mortal man cherished. Thank God for bringing it to us in Christ! God inhabits eternity and Christ is from eternity. Christ came into the world to bring us eternal life, but it is for

only those who are of the truth. To be of the truth we must be honest and open about our condition. One cannot value forgiveness unless he is aware of his guilt. Christ came to witness to the truth. Only those who have an honest and good heart can receive the precious seed of life. There must be reverence and godly fear in the heart. Most people are not willing to accept the fact that they are sinful and lost. They cannot bear to think of themselves in that way.

We must reach out and receive the things Christ wants us to add to our life. Peter tells us what they are: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Only by having these in us and abounding can we have hope of entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We will either go into life eternal or into everlasting punishment. The kingdoms of this world will be swallowed up and consumed by the power of the Kingdom of Christ, and He, as King of kings and Lord of lords will reign for ever and ever.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

Politicians running for public office go to great lengths, hoping to win. Many go deeply into debt for advertisement and other campaign expenses. They travel extensively, shake hands with multitudes of people, smile when they don't feel like it, and faithfully say what they think the populace wishes to hear—all in an attempt to win an election. And even then, a successful outcome is not certain. All candidates but one fail to achieve that for which they labored. It is not often that winning an election is guaranteed to a particular person.

However, a home in heaven is assured to each individual who will strive lawfully to obtain it. If on the judgment day you are proven diligent, Christ will favor you with a heavenly prize. Whomever Christ affirms, His Father will also. (Matt. 25:34.) When that happens, no one can turn the tide of that election.

For those who run well, Christ promises an abundant entrance into eternal glory.

—Wayne Murphey



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