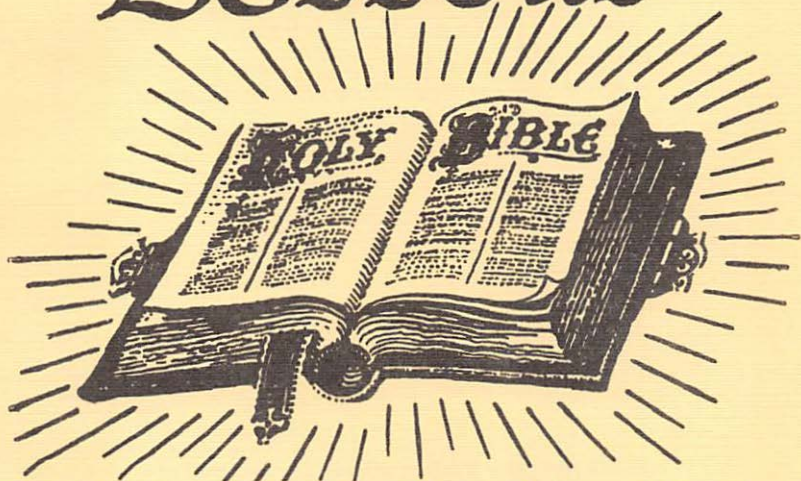


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Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 34, No. 2
April, May, June
2002

Faith Pub. House
Guthrie, OK
73044

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

Volume 34

April, May, June

No. 2

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

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

Published Quarterly By:
FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE
4318 S. Division
Guthrie, Oklahoma 73044
Postmaster: Please send address corrections
to above address.

THEME FOR SECOND QUARTER, 2002

We feel greatly inspired to bring forth a series of lessons concerning the true Israel of God. We will consider the beginnings of Israel in Father Abraham, the proving of his faithfulness and his seed. Our main burden is to establish from a Biblical standpoint what the true Israel today really is, and how the Old Testament Israel was really but a type and shadow of what has come in a spiritual way to us in Jesus Christ. We will study subjects such as the old law system, the Sabbath, the covenant of circumcision, the priesthood and other important aspects of the true Israel of God. We hope and pray that God will bless this series of lessons for the spiritual good of every one who joins with us in the study of this important subject.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



APRIL 7, 2002

THE BEGINNINGS OF ISRAEL, PART 1 THE CALL AND RISE OF FATHER ABRAHAM

Isaiah 51:1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

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

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

Abraham Faith

the heirs with him of the same promise:

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

Genesis 18:17 And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Hebrews 11:11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so *many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

MEMORY VERSE: Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. Isaiah 51:2.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The great nation of Israel, literal and spiritual, sprang from the obedient faith of one man, Abraham, who with Sarah, his wife, followed God's leadings and held fast to His promises, and was richly rewarded with a son born in their old age, Isaac, through whom the promised seed grew to an innumerable multitude.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isaiah 51:1), The Hebrew renders this: "Hear me, pursuers of righteousness, seekers of Jehovah: Look to the rock from which you were cut, and the hollow of the pit from which you were dug." Where did you come from and how came you about? God wants us to never forget our beginning which was entirely according to His power and grace.

(Genesis 12:3), "*Curse him that curseth thee*": The Hebrew meaning says, "The one despising and making light of you as

People make the city
People make the church

being trifling and vile I will abhor, detest and send evil upon."

(Hebrews 11:8), "*By faith*": This word "faith" means persuasion, believing, accepting as truth and conviction thereof. Because Abraham believed what God had spoken to him concerning future blessings that He would bestow, he obeyed the command to leave his native land and start out, not knowing where he was going. God chose to work in this manner to bring about His plan for a great nation who would faithfully serve Him.

(Hebrews 11:9), "*Sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country*": He lived in the land of Canaan that God had directed him to, and had promised to be his possession, but he lived in it as a foreigner. Stephen in Acts 7:5 expressed it like this: "He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." It is interesting to note that Abraham was never privileged to possess the land of Canaan in a literal way, but his seed possessed it, and in a spiritual sense this was especially true in the spiritual blessings of salvation and hope that Christ brought to us. "*Dwelling in tabernacles*": Living in tents and temporary dwellings, having nothing permanent materially.

(Hebrews 11:10), "*He looked for a city*": He anticipated, looked forward to and awaited an eternal city and possession that God would provide and bring to pass.

(Hebrews 11:12), "*Him as good as dead*": The Greek says, "and that of one having died." This was true with Abraham and Sarah, who both were past age for bearing children. Their bodies, as far as being able to reproduce was concerned, were dead. God worked thus to show that His will is not fulfilled according to the strength of mortal man, but rather by His power and grace.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God chose as father for the great nation of Israel a man who proved to excel and to be an example of faithfulness and obedience to Him. God wanted to bring out a people that would manifest His name to the world. He wanted to show forth His

goodness and power and might in the eyes of the nations. So He found a man who would believe and trust in Him through thick and thin, through adversity and prolonged delays and who would also obey Him explicitly, regardless. From His holy temple and throne in heaven His eyes beheld and His eyelids searched and tried the children of men. Down in Ur of the Chaldees He found the man He wanted.

Our lesson today is about His call to this man whose name at first was Abram, which means a high father. From the scriptures we have included, we see how God called Abram and first off gave him a charge to pull stakes and leave his native land. And we admire the faith of this man and how he obeyed and went out, even though he did not know just where he would be. It is possible to talk big and reverent about God, but when it comes to obeying Him, that is a different thing. Abram obeyed God. He was led to live in Canaan, and God promised Him that land as a possession. But he was not privileged to take it, but had to live as a nomad, moving here and there, never to really possess it. This was his start in the will of God on the basis of believing and obeying God, and this was the start of the great nation of Israel, both as a literal nation, and as a spiritual one.

The Lord worked in Abram's life, and Abram responded faithfully until God made an everlasting covenant with Abram and changed his name to Abraham, which means the father of a great multitude. He promised Abraham a son, and Isaac was the fulfillment of that promise, even though Abraham and Sarah were past childbearing time when he was born.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the first test of obedience that God gave to Abraham?
2. Of what importance did Abraham prove to be to the world?
3. What kind of respect does our lesson show that God had for him?
4. Why did God wait until Abraham was aged to give him a son?
5. How can we today be the true children of Abraham?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Because of his faithfulness and obedience to God's commands, Abraham was given the title of "the father of many nations." Not only to the Jews, those who descended from his own seed, is he a great father. But to all who will believe in God and in His Son whom He has sent is Abraham a father, a leader and example of the faith God wants everyone of us to have. It is obvious that the Jews laid great stress to the fact that they were the children of Abraham, and boasted themselves about it. But John the Baptist cautioned the Jews thus in Matthew 3:9, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Jesus, also Himself, when the Jews boasted that Abraham was their father, said, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." John 8:39.

So we see that the real seed of Abraham was more than just being in his lineage of descendants according to the natural. There was to be a likeness of the spirit that Abraham possessed in all who professed to be Abraham's seed. This was the great problem with literal Israel, even before the Lord Jesus. They were clinging to their ancestral ties with Abraham in the flesh, but were void of what he had in the spirit of faith and obedience to God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Abraham received a call from God. That had to be an exciting event. The Scriptures don't define exactly what manner the call came in, but Abraham knew God had spoken to him. With conviction he left Ur to go out into a strange land. He had faith in the calling as well as the One who called. It wasn't necessarily a faith that everything would be made clear to him, but a faith that God was in control.

The story is told of a little blind child brought by her father into a room in a strange house. Someone in the room stepped up quietly, unclasped the father's arms, and without saying a word or making a sign, lifted the child away.

"You don't seem to be frightened," said the father, "do you know who has you?"

"No," she said, "but I am not afraid, for I know you know who has me."

There will be times in life when we are not certain what the outcome will be of the circumstances in our lives, but by faith we rest, knowing we have received a call from God and that He will direct our path.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



APRIL 14, 2002

THE BEGINNINGS OF ISRAEL, PART 2

THE PROOF OF THE FAITH OF FATHER ABRAHAM

Hebrews 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

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

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

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

Romans 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

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

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

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

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

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

MEMORY VERSE: Be ye not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The faith of Abraham, the father of all the faithful, was put to the severe tests of delay, patience and sacrificial obedience to the will of God as a means of full proof to God's satisfaction.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 6:12), "*Slothful*": Sluggish, lazy, dull; the opposite of keen, earnest, fervent and diligently active. "*Patience*": Prolonged endurance of injury, hardship, abuse and adversity.

(Hebrews 6:15), "*After he had patiently endured*": The Greek says, "having waited long."

(Hebrews 11:17), "*Tried*": Put to the full test.

(Hebrews 11:19), "*Accounting*": Different words help to describe what Abraham was doing when he obeyed the command of God to sacrifice his son: to take inventory, estimate, impute, conclude, reckon, esteem and deem as all sufficiently probable. "*From whence also he received him in a figure*": The Greek says, "Whence him (Isaac) also in a similitude he recovered." This means that it was all such a drastic experience, going through the action of conveying his son to the scene and going as far as to bind Isaac and take the knife in readiness to slay him, that when God called to him and released him from it all, it was as if Abraham had literally recovered Isaac from the dead. Abraham went through all the agony and mental suffering that can be expected in such a time of trial. But he faltered not, and went right ahead and would have finished it had the Lord not stopped him. Now can we see why God had such respect and favor toward Abraham, and accounted him worthy of being the prime example and father of many nations?

(Romans 4:18), "*Against hope*": The Greek says, "Contrary to hope." This is one of the ways we activate faith, and that is by believing God's word and promise when all evidence and circumstances contradict it.

(Romans 4:19), "*His own body now dead*": The Greek says, "The body of himself already having been deadened." This is referring to the reproductive system of his body, that had been, as even Sarah's womb was, rendered inactive and incapable of its function. For all natural purposes it was dead.

(Romans 4:20), "*Staggered not at the promise of God*": The Greek says, "He disputed not the promise of God." He did not allow the circumstances and conditions to cause him to doubt the verity of God's promises. This is the faith that God wants us to have, and faith that will rise above conditions and how things seem into the realm of believing what God has promised. It is to be noted in the account of Abraham that there were times when he was tempted to doubt and the circumstances tried to undermine his faith, but he went forward and overcame it all to believe acceptably to God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson will be concerning the difficult passage of Abraham through the years of waiting on God for the fulfillment of His promise, and the final critical test of God's command to offer Isaac up to Him as a burnt offering. God's promise was to make Abraham a father of many nations, and to be accounted worthy of its fulfillment he was to be put to the test and endure the long period of delay. Our scriptures are wholly from the writings of the New Testament in the epistles of the apostle Paul. The great position of being the father of the faithful required a great adverse and difficult ordeal to go through with. Abraham was seventy-five years old when God called him, and he was one hundred years old when Isaac was finally born. By that time Abraham had had the deadness of his reproductive system and that also of Sarah's to reckon with. But he held on and kept believing until Isaac was born. Then when Isaac was about twenty-five years old (according to the Jewish historian Josephus) the Lord gave Abraham one final test. He gave to Abraham the command to take Isaac and offer

him up for a burnt offering. It is not hard to picture the enormous magnitude of this great test of his faith. But, once again, we see Abraham's love for God triumphantly bearing him on. The exhortation for us is that we follow in that same spirit of triumphant faith. We can do it. But, firmly and unfalteringly believing in Jesus Christ and being faithful to obey the leadings of His Holy Spirit, we will have these same kind of experiences in our Christian life. Abraham's example of faith and sacrificial obedience to the will of God is a great encouragement to us in our times of trial and adversity. May it help us to keep believing even in the most difficult and contrary times that we face.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of people are we to be followers of?
2. What did Abraham have to do to obtain the promise?
3. Why is long delay and waiting such a difficult thing for us?
4. What was the final test that God put Abraham to?
5. Are we willing to endure like trials of our faith?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To be a son or daughter of Abraham and a part of the great spiritual nation of Israel today we must take hold of the great faith that Abraham had. In our lives we must begin a process of having, developing, maintaining and progressing in an experience of trusting in and waiting on God for the fulfillment of His promises to us as His children.

It takes faith to turn from sin and receive forgiveness and become a new creature in Christ Jesus. One cannot obtain this great salvation without real living faith and confidence in God and His Word. To so many this is just about the extent of their vision of faith. But there is much more ground of faith to be gained and possessed. There is a second work of grace that we must obtain by our faith. We must be sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. This is gained by perfect consecration and perfect faith. We must seek for it, consecrate for it, die out for it and steadfastly believe for it.

Then there are many other areas of faith that we need to

possess. We need to have faith for God's guidance and His will to be done. To really have faith we must follow the splendid example of Abraham on the line of obedience. We must obey by an act of our own will. Many times our faith will be perfected by our obedience. In the obtaining of a husband or wife there must be faith, patience and obedience. We must live prayerful and devoted lives unto God, seeking His counsel and guidance in every thing that we meet: where we are to live, what work we are to do, who we are to marry and many other matters that we will have to reckon with on our mortal journey.

It is not an easy road to live by faith, but it is a blessed way filled with the greatest rewards you can ever imagine. It is the challenge to every child of God to seek earnestly to live the life of faith. The tide of society and the world is against us, but if we want to be the children of Abraham and share his eternal glory, the way of living by faith is the path we must unerringly take.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I really like Rom. 4:20 in our lesson. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;..." Abraham endured the difficulties of traveling and living in a tent, when he could have been at home in Ur, in the comforts of city living. Not only did he endure difficulties, he gave glory to God! If you want to know who is strong in faith, look for the person content and happy in spite of circumstances.

Dwight Moody once said, "A little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul." The way of the Christian is joyful because God is in the heart. Faith isn't something which gets you into hard spots and makes you unhappy, but it brings you into a close relationship with God that causes your heart to sing praises.

It was said of Francis Xavier, "Sometimes it happened that if any of the brothers were sad, the way they took to become happy was to go and look at him." I think Abraham, because of his faith, must have been a person one would be happy to be around. May God inspire each of us to have enough faith that we will be a blessing to others.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey

Agar
Old Co.
Old Jerusalem

Sarah
New Co.

APRIL 21, 2002

THE TWO SONS OF ABRAHAM

Romans 9:6 ...For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Galatians 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, *thou* that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

MEMORY VERSE: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Galatians 3:16.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is not the fleshly descendants of Abraham that are blessed of God, but those who are followers

of his faith, the faith that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The true Israel is a nation of people from all nations who believe and obey God and the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Galatians 4:23)), "*Born after the flesh*": There was no promise of God nor faith employed to bring about the conception and birth of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through his bondmaid, Hagar.

(Galatians 4:24), "*Allegory*": This means that the things he is speaking of are adapted to another meaning. The two wives of Abraham, (Sarah and Hagar), and the two sons of Abraham, (Isaac and Ishmael), are compared to the two covenants, which are the old law of Sinai, and the new covenant in Christ. They are also compared to the two Jerusalems: the old literal Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem which is a spiritual city comprised of all who follow the faith of Christ and are led by His Holy Spirit. Praise the Lord for ever! "*Agar*": This is Hagar, the bondmaid of Sarah and Abraham. She was a servant girl that they had probably acquired during their stay in Egypt.

(Galatians 4:25), "*This Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia*": He is putting the bondwoman, Hagar, on the same level as the old law covenant that was given by God on mount Sinai, which was located in Arabia. Likewise he placed the present Jerusalem on that same level.

(Galatians 4:26), "*Jerusalem which is above*": It is to be noted that the word "above" here is from the same root word as the word "again" in John 3:3 where Jesus said one must be born again. The real meaning is to be born from above. It is a heavenly, spiritual birth, just as the real Jerusalem is a heavenly and spiritual city. The people who live in her are her children who have been set free from the bondage of sin and the law, through Christ and the heavenly birth. Praise the Lord for this wonderful truth!

(Galatians 4:29), "*Persecuted*": In Genesis 21:9 it tells how that on the day of the feast, when Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, mocking. This means he was belittling, laughing outright in merriment and scorn, and making sport of Isaac. This is compared to the ridicule and

contempt that the worldly and fleshly-minded people heap upon those who seek to be of faith and to be led by the Holy Spirit.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we want to consider the difference between being of the seed of Abraham merely according to the flesh, and being the seed of Abraham according to the faith he had, and the workings of the Holy Spirit. There is a vast difference in these two. There are many people who, like the Jews in Jesus' day, pride themselves in being the offspring of Abraham. They believe that they are children of Abraham and that Abraham is their father because they are Israelites or Jordanians or some other branch of the natural descendants of that great patriarch. I wonder sometimes if that is not some of the trouble of the various branches of the Israelians. Each is convinced that they are the real Israel, and is furious against the others. Oh, how they need to be able to see the truth of the matter! But, as it was in the time of our Saviour's controversy with the darkened minds of His day, so it is now. It takes spiritual understanding to discern who the real Israel is.

The apostle Paul was endued with great wisdom and understanding to see the real status of things with regard to the real seed of Abraham. In our lesson he brings out the truth that the real seed of Abraham is not that which is in the flesh, but it is that in the Spirit and being a follower of the faithfulness of which Abraham was such a wonderful example. Taking the illustration of the difference in Ishmael and Isaac, he helps us to see what it means to really be children of Abraham. Ishmael was a son of Abraham, but he was not of faith. It took faith on both Sarah's and Abraham's part to bring forth Isaac. With Hagar and Ishmael there was no faith. To be a son of Abraham according to the flesh takes no faith. But to be a true son of the father of many nations takes believing God and being faithful to obey Him in everything. —Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the two different kinds of Israel we have in our lesson?

2. Why is it not enough to be merely of the fleshly seed of Abraham?
3. What must we have to be a real, true descendant to Abraham?
4. What two things are Hagar and Ishmael on the level with?
5. What two things are Sarah and Isaac on the level with?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In our lesson today we have manifested the conflict between Hagar and Sarah. This conflict also existed in their two sons. It carries over into the conflict that exists between the two covenants. It was this very thing that caused our Saviour the trouble He experienced with the Jews of His day. They hated Him because He was bringing in things that contradicted the law as they saw it. Things like healing on the Sabbath filled them with anger. And then, when the followers of Jesus declared that the law was fulfilled in Christ and there was no more need for the old worship system of temple services and sacrifices of animals, it enraged them even farther. They resisted and vexed the Holy Spirit and were blind to the wisdom that Christ brought to them.

Today we have the same conflict. So many are so influenced by the fleshly desires and ideas. When holiness of heart and life and real deliverance and freedom from sin is suggested, so many want to cling to the fleshly doctrines that condone and allow sin. When modesty without the outward adornments is taught, there are those who resist the Spirit of the Lord and cling to vain customs. When trusting in God for the healing that Christ provided for us in His atonement is brought out, there are those who contend that the days of miracles are past. The list goes on and on. Faith is replaced by reasonings of the flesh and obedience to the holiness of the Lord is eliminated. It is so easy to slip into the rut of living to the natural and be void of the most important part of life, the spiritual life of faith and obedience to God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“The apostle is viewing Isaac as in the manner of his being

brought into being, the type, to which the children of the mystic freewoman were in after ages to be assimilated.

"In both cases the children are born or begotten through a promise, which God of His own free grace hath given, and which, by an accepting faith, is appropriated and made effectual. Thus Isaac was born. The children of the supernal Jerusalem are begotten through the gospel, which in effect is a promise of adoption through Christ to be children of God held out to all whom will accept it. Obviously the cases differ in this—that in one it was the faith of the parents which made the promise effectual; in the other, the faith of those who in consequence of believing become children."

—Taken from, *The Pulpit Commentary*.



APRIL 28, 2002

THE TRUE TOKEN OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

10 ...Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

11 ...And it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is *that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God:

Galatians 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Colossians 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision

of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Romans 4:9 ...Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised;...

I Corinthians 7:18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

MEMORY VERSE: For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Galatians 5:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God gave to Abraham the sacred rite of fleshly circumcision as a token of the everlasting covenant He had made with him. But this was but a type and is fulfilled in Christ Jesus as a spiritual work in the heart by the Holy Spirit of the cutting away of the sins of the flesh. This is done through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man by being born again and sanctified wholly.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 17:2), "**Covenant**": A binding and solemn agreement between two or more parties or individuals to do or keep from doing a specified thing.

(Genesis 17:11), "**Token**": A signal, evidence or sign of approval.

(Galatians 6:16), "**The Israel of God**": Oh, blessed truth! These are the true Christians, the true Israel, distinguished from Israel in the flesh. These are the seed, the children of Abraham because of their being born again of the Holy Spirit, and being made a new creature in Christ Jesus, the "old" having passed away, and all things made new.

(Colossians 2:11), *"The body of the sins of the flesh"*: This is referring to the substance, the sound whole and life of that carnal disposition and nature that is the root of evil in the heart of man. This is what the true circumcision takes out and removes completely from the soul of man. This is the work of the Word of God, the blood of Jesus, and the refining fire of the Holy Spirit. This is salvation, victory and the kingdom of our God!

(Colossians 2:13), *"Dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh"*: This is the state of the unregenerated. Their flesh and self life is ungoverned, unrestrained and warped with inordinate lusts and desires.

(Romans 4:11), *"Circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith"*: Being circumcised was not the righteousness of Abraham, but rather a stamp of approval from God of the righteousness he had already attained to.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Abraham was 99 years old when God made the covenant of circumcision with him. It had been 14 years since Hagar, his handmaid, had born Ishmael to him. We know not what all had transpired during that time, but we are sure that Abraham had been faithfully serving God and waiting on Him to bring about the wonderful promises He had given him. In God's Word to Abraham He changed his name from Abram (a high father) to Abraham (a father of a great multitude). He also changed the name of his wife Sarai (one who rules her household) to Sarah (a princess ruling nations). Although God had already promised Abraham that in his seed all nations would be blessed, yet now He confirms with a special covenant to that effect. And as a sign of that special covenant God instituted the rite of circumcision.

In our lesson today we see from the apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the fleshly phase of circumcision is not the real thing. It is a type of the true circumcision of the heart, the cutting away of the flesh life and aspirations of self that are contrary to the will of God. This custom of circumcision was deeply rooted in Israel. The apostle Paul suffered much opposition from the Jews because of his

teachings concerning it ceasing to be required. In Acts 15 that question came up about the newly converted Christians among the Gentiles being required to be circumcised. One of the things Petersaid was, "Whytemptye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Circumcision in the flesh proved to be insufficient and inconsistent.

Stephen remonstrated against the Jews in Acts 7:51 thus: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." The hypocritical nation of Israel were diligent to take care of such carnal rites as circumcision, but they had no vision of what it meant to be spiritually circumcised. —Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of circumcision must we have today?
2. What does it take for us to be Jews inwardly?
3. What are the three things listed in our lesson that avail with God?
4. What are some of the things we must be circumcised from?
5. By what means can we be circumcised in heart?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Circumcision in the flesh was a part of the old covenant and law system that was phased out in the appearing of Jesus Christ and the bringing in of the New Testament. It is replaced by the real circumcision of the heart in the Spirit of the Lord. And this spiritual circumcision is by far more serious and important than what circumcision in the flesh ever was. It is a work that God does with our will and consent concerning our affections and our desires, and also concerning our activities and doings. There are elements in our nature, in our human functions and motions, that need the concise trimmings of the consuming fire of God.

II Corinthians 7:1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Our ears and our tongues, our minds and our eyes all need the circum-

cision of the heart. Oh, it really means a house cleaning of every part of our being! God can and will help us, but we must be willing and obedient if we would eat the good of the promised land of salvation and holiness.

How sad that so many in Israel stressed and gloried in being circumcised, as Paul once did, but were totally ignorant of what the true circumcision was! It is easy to glory in appearance and not in heart. As circumcision was a seal to the faith of Abraham, so circumcision of the heart and the cutting away of things in our lives that displease and dishonor God is a seal to the experience we have in being saved through the blood of Christ.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith...." Gal. 5:6.

There is absolutely no outward manifestation or deed we can do to bring us favor with God. That is a rather difficult concept to continually keep in mind, but it is true. What God is looking for is faith. Faith in God will avail much, and dictate how we live, but works alone will not earn us the favor of God.

One man, named James, received the impression from a traveling preacher that immersion was all that was needful to salvation, and that the water which cleansed the body would, if consecrated by a minister, purify the soul.

Upon relating this to a close friend, the friend labored hard to convince James of the error of the idea, but to no avail. After all the friend's array of reasons and proofs, James' face was still stolid and severe. The heresy remained untouched, and "immersion was regeneration." At length the friend changed tactics, and a homely illustration did what argument could not.

"James," he said, "if I take an ink bottle and cork it tight, and put a string around the neck, and drag it through the river, how long will it take to clean out the inside?" James' face brightened, and in a moment of clarity he said, "You will never get it clean that way."

Only faith will bring a person to the fountain of blood which can cleanse the soul. And only faith will keep a soul in contact with the One who keeps it clean.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey

Back injured at 14
Worshiped Chapel the
Lord healed Daddy's back 28 yrs later!

Years lived
175 Abraham
127 Sarah

MAY 5, 2002

FAITH OF ABRAHAM—FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Romans 4:20 He (Abraham) staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

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

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Hebrews 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

MEMORY VERSE: Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. Galatians 3:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: To be the true children of Abraham we

must walk in the steps of that same faith that he had, and that same faith is fulfilled in us when we truly believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Romans 4:20), "*Staggered not*": He did not dispute with, hesitate at, nor separate himself from the promises of God. He believed them in the face of all the contrary conditions that faced him. He truly walked by faith and not by sight.

(Galatians 3:8), "*Preached before the gospel*": God announced the glad tidings concerning us in advance. He had us who are saved in Christ in mind when He said to Abraham, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." What a great and mighty God!

(Hebrews 10:37), "*He that shall come will come, and will not tarry*": The Greek says, "The One coming will arrive, and not delay." This is one of the difficult places that those who endeavor to believe and trust in the promises of God will encounter. And these are the times of delay. Habakkuk 2:3 where this is quoted from adds, "Though it tarry, wait for it." It is even as our former scripture says in Hebrews 6:12, "Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Abraham waited for years for God to fulfill His promise to him of a son by Sarah. The fulfillment of the promise was delayed, but it finally came.

(Hebrews 10:38), This scripture is the Septuagint rendering of Habakkuk 2:4. "Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." This word "faith" here is from a Hebrew word which means established, trusty, trustworthy, firm. This is faith that rests solely upon the unfailing promises and Word of the Almighty. It is confidence and assurance in Him who cannot fail. The Hebrew word from which it stems from is "aman", from which the nearly universal word "Amen" comes from, which means, "So be it." It is also the base word for "truth." Combining the Hebrew and the Greek translations we see that the one who draws back is the soul who is puffed up in pride and the flesh. In such the Lord has no pleasure. But our spiritual life depends upon our stable and unwavering, unfaltering confidence in God. This will cause us to go forward in our faith, never becoming offended or drawing

back, but continuing to believe and hold fast to our confidence unto the end and the full recompense of the reward.

(Hebrews 10:39), "*Draw back unto perdition*": To cower and shrink back (in fear and unbelief) to eternal loss, ruin and destruction. How vitally important is our personal faith and integrity with God, keeping up with Him and His dealings, overcoming all adversity, delay and difficulties, believing steadfastly His promises, and keeping ourselves unspotted from this world of vanity and unbelief!

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today shows us that the faith of Abraham is fulfilled and brought to completeness in the faith and confidence we have in Jesus Christ as our all in all. This righteousness that Abraham had in believing and obeying God is the only righteousness that avails. This is what makes us to be the real children of Abraham. Christ is declared to be the seed of Abraham, and by us believing and lovingly following Him we are the true children of Abraham. Jesus told the Jews in His day when they professed to be the children of Abraham, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." He went on farther to say that, instead of Abraham being their father, their father was the devil. (John 8:39-44.) God is looking at the heart of man and what kind of fruit the works of his life is bearing.

We have the teachings of the apostle Paul who at one time clung to a vain hope and empty profession of being a son of Abraham. But God woke him up one day to the truth, and used him in a wonderful way to bring out how it really is. He knew that faith goes against the flesh and the worldly ways, and that living by faith means adversity and conflicts. He quotes from Habakkuk 2:3-4 in Hebrews 10:37-39. We must fight the good fight of faith and endure the pressures of the world against the Spirit-led life of faith.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the "seed of Abraham?"
2. For whom also was Abraham's faith imputed for righteousness?

3. What are some of the requirements to be part of Abraham's seed?
4. What are some of the causes for people casting away their faith?
5. Why is God so well pleased with us living by faith?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I like to study over the seven different steps that made up the stages of the development and progress of Abraham's faith experience. No. 1 was his obedient response to the call of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees. (Gen. 12:1-5.) No. 2 was the humble attitude taken toward Lot in giving him the first choice of the land. (Gen. 13:8-9.) No. 3 was his refusal to accept the earthly riches offered to him by the king of Sodom. (Gen. 14:22-23.) No. 4 was his believing God when He promised that Abraham's seed would be as the stars of heaven. It was then that his faith was accounted to him for righteousness. (Gen. 15:5, 6.) No. 5 was his accepting and receiving the covenant and token of circumcision in obedience to God. (Gen. 17:3-10.) No. 6 was the casting out of the bondwoman and her son in obedience to the Lord's direction, even though it was very grievous in his sight. (Gen. 21:11-12.) And No. 7, the final and greatest step, was the offering up of Isaac in obedience to the command of God. (Gen. 22:9-10.)

Romans 4:12 says that he is father to those who "walk in the steps of that faith." To walk in these steps will involve sacrifice and obedience of like nature on our part. We must obey the leadings of the Lord regardless of sight or circumstance. We must assume and maintain an humble attitude toward others, esteeming them better than ourselves. We must be faithful to be circumcised in heart, and be willing to cut off anything of the flesh that would intrude into the spiritual realm. We must not be entangled with the yoke of bondage, whether it be of the creeds of men or the lusts of the flesh. And, above all, we must prove to God in every case that we love Him above all else and not withhold even the dearest thing in life from Him. Thus we can be the true children of Abraham.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Abraham was justified by faith because he believed the promise. This was 430 years before the law was given. The promise of eternal life, given us in Christ, which the Scripture foresaw before Abraham, is an infinitely greater revelation of God than the law given by Moses. The law offers no promise, but is a command with a penalty for disobedience. Having no promise, then it cannot be by faith. The Gospel is a glorious God-honoring promise, therefore the appeal is to faith. "He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." (John 5:24.) As the Gospel is offered in promise, then salvation cannot be by works. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. (Rom. 3:27.)

—Taken from writings by James Smith and Robert Lee.



MAY 12, 2002

THE TRUE LAND OF PROMISE

Genesis 12:5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and all their substance that they had gathered, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

Genesis 13:14 And the Lord said unto Abram, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

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

Romans 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

34 Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Romans 8:31 ...If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Galatians 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

MEMORY VERSE: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. II Peter 1:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God promised Abraham the land of Canaan but it was not fulfilled in Abraham's earthly life. This promise was a spiritual prophecy of the salvation that Jesus Christ would bring to the souls of men, an experience of holiness by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the hope of glory in the everlasting world to come.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 37:3), "*Verily shalt thou be fed*": The Hebrew says, "Thou shalt feed on faithfulness." The whole concept of God's will being done in us can be contained in this scripture: "Trust in the Lord, and do good." This involves obedience and submission to God along with vision and zeal for what is holy and acceptable with Him.

(Psalm 37:34), *"Wait on the Lord, and keep his way"*: This is the requirement for all who would inherit God's blessings. Whether in Abraham's time or our time, it is all the same. To wait means to tarry, expect, trust, believe and withhold any effort and work of self. His way means His course or mode of action, the nature and principle of His workings. To keep His way means to observe and follow His Word and Spirit. This will enable us to live in the land, the spiritual land of holiness and victory, that He wills to us in Christ.

(Ephesians 1:3), *"All spiritual blessings in heavenly places"*: This means every benefit and bestowal of grace in the realm of the eternal Spirit of God that comes to us through Jesus Christ, His Son. These are things that benefit the inner man, the eternal substance of us.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today covers a very important and critical thought that so many in our religious world overlook and fail to understand. We have put together our lesson text from various sources, and some may question just how they all relate, but I believe that they all do relate perfectly, and that what we sum up here is the real truth.

First, we have the Genesis account of God promising Abraham the land of Canaan to be for him and his seed forever. Abraham had moved into the Canaan land with his wife and his nephew Lot. The Lord had prospered both of these men with much cattle and herds. They became crowded and their herdsmen had been striving with each other. Abraham, in an effort to solve the problem, offered Lot the first choice of which land to move to. Lot chose the best looking part of the land, pitching his tent toward the prosperous cities of the plain. After he had departed God rewarded Abraham for his humility by pointing out that he would inherit ALL the land that he could see in every direction.

From Stephen's defense before the council in Acts 7:5 we take a statement about Abraham's Canaan inheritance. He said that God gave to Abraham no inheritance in the land, not even the breadth of a foot, yet He promised that He would give it to him and his seed for a possession; and this was before

Abraham had any children. And we know that, according to the Genesis account, Abraham never got to possess the literal land of Canaan in his earthly lifetime.

Paul's wording in Romans 4:13 of Abraham to "be the heir of the world" shows that the inheritance God was promising to him was not to be confined to the literal geographical land of Canaan, but was to include the whole world. This gives rise to something even farther than the literal earth or world. This means that the real inheritance of Abraham was a spiritual benefit, blessings and treasures for the spiritual part of man that would prove to be everlasting. For us now it is to be the salvation of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. For the future it is to be the resurrection of the dead unto eternal life.

Taking all of these things into account together, we are persuaded to believe that the real Canaan land in its fullest meaning and value is made up of the spiritual kingdom of peace that Christ came to bring us into, and the everlasting rewards that will be given to all who, like Abraham, walk in faithfulness and truth.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Was God's promise to Abraham limited to literal Canaan only?
2. How much of the literal Canaan land did Abraham get to possess?
3. What is the spiritual "land" that God had in mind for His people?
4. What must we do to really "inherit the land and dwell therein?"
5. What will be the final fulfillment of Abraham's inheritance?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

If God promised Abraham the land of Canaan and then did not permit him to take literal possession of it in his earthly life, then it is very evident that He had something much greater in mind than just an earthly possession. We can be assured that God was foretelling and pointing him to greater things beyond this life. As we have already seen, according to the scripture in

Hebrews 11:9-10, Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in temporary tents, for he had visions of a greater inheritance, a city with eternal foundations, built and made by God. No, it was not the literal Canaan land that God was pointing Abraham to. Jesus said in John 8:56, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham was looking beyond the Canaan land. He foresaw the city of God, the spiritual home of the saints forever. He had a vision of eternal dwellings in the world to come. The bosom of Abraham that the poor beggar Lazarus was taken to after his life of suffering is an emblem of the hope and earnest expectation of all the saints of all the ages. (Luke 16:22.) The true land of promise to us is the fullness of the grace of God in Christ, and this will be fulfilled in the eternal habitations reserved for the faithful in Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And the Lord said unto Abram, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Gen. 13:14-15.

This invitation of God to Abraham to lift up his eyes came after the separation from Lot. If you will remember, when Abraham and Lot left Egypt, they came to an agreement that they should separate because their servants were quarreling. Lot "lifted up his eyes" and saw the plain of Jordan, that it was well-watered and inviting. Then God invited Abraham to lift up his eyes and behold the promised land.

There are many things in life which call to us to lift up our eyes and look. There are sensual pleasures and there are man-made religious beliefs, all of which provide a certain amount of self-gratification. But the greatest satisfaction is to have God invite us to look upon the promises of His Word, and not only look, but experience them.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." II Peter 1:4.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



MAY 19, 2002

**TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS NOT ATTAINED
BY THE LAW OF MOSES**

Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Galatians 1:13 ...I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 ...For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ.

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

MEMORY VERSE: For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. John 1:17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God's holy law, given through Moses alone, did not bring justification to man, but rather brought him into guilt and condemnation. But Jesus came to bring a new and better law, the law of the Spirit of life, through which, by means of faith in the risen life of Christ, we can conquer sin and live up to the holy standard of God's law.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Romans 7:5), "*Motions of sins*": The Greek says, "The passions of sin." These are the unrestrained and uncontrolled desires of the unregenerated man, who is ignorant and unaware of the sweet influences of the Spirit of God. This constitutes the moving currents of the sinful tide that sweeps men and women to eternal ruin. "*In our members*": These lusts and passions influence our bodily members of activity and expression, such as our hands, our feet, our tongue, our eyes, our ears, etc.

(Romans 7:6), "*Newness of spirit*": This means the refreshing and quickening power of the Holy Spirit, working in the yielded heart of man, to strengthen and enable him to overcome the temptations of the flesh and the carnal world around him. "*Oldness of the letter*": This means the weakness and frustration of the law without the quickening life of Christ. It becomes just words with no power to give to enable one to live up to them.

(Romans 8:2), "*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*": Oh, praise the Lord for this wonderful grace that rules in the life of all who partake of Christ's quickening Spirit! Christ not only shows us what is wrong, but His sweet and inspiring Spirit

warms and strengthens us to humble our hearts in meek submission to His will, and through that burning love that He sheds abroad in our hearts we are able to resist the devil and do the precious will of God.

(Romans 8:3), "*Condemned sin in the flesh*": Jesus took upon Him human flesh in all of its suffering and temptation. He was able to overcome every human weakness and defeated Satan in every conflict and temptation. Thus He conquered sin and laid judgment against its rulership, dethroning that evil power from its hold on the human spirit.

(Philippians 3:8), "*Dung*," The Greek says, "That which is to be thrown to the dogs." Everything outside of Jesus Christ and His perfect salvation is worthless refuse, garbage and trash.

(Romans 3:31), "*We establish the law*": In the Greek this means: "We set it up and make it stand." Man cannot live by the law in his own strength. He will fail every time he tries to live up to God's law. No one can really do it on their own. But by the grace of the Lord Jesus and the quickening power of His Spirit within us we can be more than conquerors and live up to the holy standard of the law of our precious heavenly Father. Praise God forever!

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we turn again to the writings of the apostle Paul. God used this precious soul, whom He had so wonderfully saved from the fallen law system, to bring out the real truth about it. He has made it so clear that the law could not and did not bring justification to man. Its main purpose was to make man aware of his sinful condition. This would help prepare him for the Saviour who would come and conquer sin in the flesh and give the victory and salvation that was needed.

Paul unveils the sly and cunning tactics of sin that found its strength in the law to bring a man into guilt and condemnation. This trap of woe had a blight of despair coupled with it that enslaved man with the idea that there was no hope. The answer to this awful dilemma was found in the work that Jesus accomplished when He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on account of what sin had wrought, and lived triumphant over sin. Thus this wonderful Saviour was able to offer an escape

and deliverance from the dominion of sin that had plagued and subdued the human race.

The law was given through Moses, but Jesus brought a better law, a better covenant established upon better promises. Through Him and His overcoming grace we can successfully live up to the laws of God unto all pleasing in His sight. Let us take advantage of this great opportunity given to us in Jesus and His perfect salvation!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the real purpose of God in giving the law of Moses?
2. What was the cause of the failure of the law to justify man?
3. How did sin so successfully overcome and dominate man?
4. What did Jesus accomplish that solved the problem of sin?
5. How is it that through faith in Christ we can "establish" the law?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Proverbs 14:9 says that "fools make a mock at sin," or at guilt. God gave man a conscience, an inner voice that reproves one for sin and wrong. This conscience needs enlightenment and counsel. The law of God has been given to make us aware of our trespasses and sins. A fool scorns conscientiousness and a tender sense of wrong. The law was given to help us to see where we are off base and are in error. The definition of the word sin is "to err or miss the mark." The law was given to help us to see where we are missing the mark.

Sin has a tendency to dominate and bring into bondage. Jesus said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." John 8:34. He went ahead in verse 36 to say, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Jesus offers not only forgiveness for sins, but also a deliverance and a loosing of the the bonds that sin has upon us. The world is stained with the doctrine of "sin you must, and sin you can't help it." But this is not really true when we take into consider-

ation that Christ has power and grace to help us to overcome the bondage and tendency to sin. He has a law of the Spirit of life, and this law will give us the power to resist temptation and the drawings of the flesh and choose to please God. Through faith in Christ and His risen life there is hope for the sin-sick soul. There is victory over sin, death and the grave. And this victory can be ours today and always.

We must seek the Lord with all of our heart. We must repent and be willing to obey His law, and we must believe in the One who has power to save us from sin. God will help us if we mean it with all of our heart. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Consider the manner in which God communicated from Mt. Sinai. Compare the lightening, thunder, dense black smoke and forceful trumpet blast there to His daily contact with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Do you think Mt. Sinai was His ideal way of communicating with mankind? I think not. It is wonderful to possess a quiet confidence and faith in God that enables us to communicate with Him in a restful, reassuring manner, as did Adam and Eve before they sinned.

However, after sin entered the world, God found it necessary to impress people in a way that would make believers of them. Because human hearts were not in a condition to believe, God had to manifest Himself in an external way in presenting the law, so that faith would grow in the heart of man.

This is the way the law spirit manifests itself today. It is not a serene faith and quiet confidence in God, but a spirit that strikes terror to the soul. The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and because the law dealt only with people's emotions and outward condition, there was no change of heart enabling them to live without sin. In our present dispensation, however, we can possess a firm belief and trust in God in which we have the privilege to be led through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is blessed communication indeed.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



MAY 26, 2002

THE TRUE SABBATH REST FOR THE SOUL

Hebrews 3:18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Mark 2:27 And he (Jesus) said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

MEMORY VERSE: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. Colossians 2:16-17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: From the beginning of the world God has wanted man to enjoy a special quietness and rest of soul in fellowship with Him. He instituted the seventh day rest and also called Israel's Canaan land experience as an entrance into His rest. But both of these were but a type and a shadow of the true rest of the soul which Jesus Christ, our Saviour, came to bring us to.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 3:18), "**Rest**": Repose and a ceasing of labour and turmoil. The Canaan land, of which the Lord is referring to here, was a land of rest for the weary Israelites who had been under Egyptian bondage. There were wells in the Canaan land that they did not dig, cities that they did not build, and vineyards they did not plant. It was all over there for them to go and lay claim to. It took faith and confidence in God's promises to go in and possess the land. This faith that they were to employ in obeying God was in God's sight an entrance into the rest that He wanted them to have. Seeing then that they drew back from going into the Canaan land, it sealed their fate in God's eyes as rejecting His word and falling into the pit of unbelief. Thus God sentenced them to go back to the wilderness and die. (Numbers 14:28-32.)

(Hebrews 4:3), "*For we which have believed do enter into rest*": This is the key to entering into rest with God. It is by believing His promises and acting on them. We cease from our own endeavors and simply take God at His word and believe. To believe means to count it so, deem it unfailingly true, and go forward in obedience to His command. This believing God is a spiritual rest, a quietness and confidence that is the strength of the child of God.

(Hebrews 4:6), "*It remaineth that some must enter in*": There is still the opportunity and open door for us to enter God's rest. Even though so many have drawn back in unbelief, it is still our privilege to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith to receive the completeness of His grace.

(Isaiah 11:10), "**Ensign**": A banner, flag or signal.

(Mark 2:27), "**Sabbath**": To repose and cease from the exertion of one's self.

(Mark 2:28), "*Lord of the Sabbath*": This means that Christ could use the Sabbath in every rightful way. He was the Giver of the Sabbath, and He was authorized by God to apply it as He deemed proper and beneficial to man, and even to change it and fulfill it into the true rest of the soul.

(Matthew 11:28), "*Labour*": Working hard and feeling fatigue and weariness. "*Heavy laden*": Overburdened.

(Matthew 11:29), "*Yoke*": Being coupled and joined with the servitude and obligation of another.

(Colossians 2:17), "*The body is of Christ*": The substance of the shadow and type of the literal sabbath day was of Christ; and the spiritual sabbath that He instituted in His plan of salvation was its fulfillment.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The writer in the epistle to the Hebrews employs a lengthy treatise on the subject of us entering into the rest that God has for us. This is a very serious and important matter. He started out concerning Christ being faithful to God even as Moses was faithful, but that Christ was worthy of more glory than Moses. He brought out that we are the house of Christ if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Then He quoted from Psalm 95:7-11, exhorting us to not allow our hearts to be hardened as Israel did in the day of provocation. This was speaking of when Israel drew back in fear and unbelief and did not go over to possess the promised land of Canaan as God wanted them to. He called their possessing the land of Canaan as entering into His rest.

In connection with this rest the writer includes the Seventh Day Sabbath rest enjoined by God from the foundation of the world. He includes these two rests to be types of the rest which we enter into in this New Testament age, a spiritual rest of ceasing from our own works and believing the promises of God.

We also include Isaiah's prophecy of Christ which speaks of His rest. Then we have what Jesus said concerning the sabbath when He drew criticism from the Jews concerning allowing His disciples to pick corn on the sabbath. Jesus declared that the sabbath was made for the benefit of man, and not that man was made for the sabbath, and that He was Lord,

that is, the Owner and Overseer of the sabbath and its application.

Then we have the beautiful outreach of Christ in His plea for all who are weary from toil and bondage to come unto Him and find the true Sabbath rest, the rest of the soul. And for our Memory Verse, we have Paul's declaration that the literal Sabbath was but a shadow of the real substance of the rest which was a spiritual one in Christ. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God refer to the Canaan land as His rest?
2. Why was the Sabbath rest relative to the Canaan rest?
3. What rest were these two other rests but types and shadows of?
4. Who is it that really do enter into the true rest?
5. How can we truly enter into the rest that Christ offers us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To enter into and be a true partaker of the spiritual rest that Christ has brought to us is far, far more serious and beneficial than the literal seventh day rest of the Old Testament. It involves stricter discipline and more careful obedience than just merely resisting from doing any kind of work one day a week. It is as Isaiah 58:13 says, to "honour him (the Lord God), not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." This is not a one day a week matter. It is to deny self and to take up one's own cross daily and follow the Lord Jesus in His example of humility and submission to the will of God. It is a daily ceasing from one's own works and wisdom and simple faith in the doctrines and promises of God's unfailing Word. This matter of entering into God's rest is something we should be very prayerful and careful about. But it truly is a glorious and wonderful experience for us to enter into. It is a ceasing from selfishness, greed, lust and the many vanities of the flesh life. It is a personal and inner monitor of every phase of our life. Many are the times when we will refrain from words and actions we might have engaged in had we not entered into this rest of ceasing from our own works. Pray about it, ponder and consider it wisely, for your eternal

well-being rests upon your success in entering into this rest of the soul.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Had the children of Israel entered, by faith, into the rest which the land of Canaan afforded, there still would have been difficulties to surmount. Entering the soul rest which God provides does not alleviate all our human sufferings, but it supplies peace in the midst of trials.

One who is physically asleep and resting will be oblivious to the events happening about him. He may have troubles, but when he is sleeping, they are forgotten in the peace which rest affords.

Rest renews strength. Should a person never rest, he would soon become worn and weak. The soul rest of God imparts strength and courage to those who live for Him.

Perhaps you know of some who, in the midst of tribulation, display a cheerful smile and conduct themselves as though they are free from care. Those individuals know the meaning of soul rest.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



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JUNE 2, 2002

**JESUS CHRIST, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST
OF OUR SALVATION**

Hebrews 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.

6 As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

7 Who 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;

10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God made Jesus Christ, through His death, resurrection and ascension on high, a great High Priest to intercede for the souls of men at His right hand in the heavenly places.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 5:1), "*Priest*": One who intercedes between God and man. A priest must be holy to be acceptable with God and human to be in touch with mankind. A High Priest is the foremost and leader of the Priesthood.

(Hebrews 5:2), The Greek reads: "Being able to feel in due measure for those not knowing and being led astray, since he also is encompassed with frailty."

(Hebrews 5:4), "*Aaron*": Aaron, the brother of Moses, was ordained of God under the old law system to be the High Priest, and his sons as priests along with him.

(Hebrews 5:6), "*Order*": Regular arrangement or status; fixed succession of rank or character.

(Hebrews 5:7), "*Heard in that he feared*": The Greek says, "Heard from his godly fear." Christ's prayers and supplications were answered because of His reverence and godly fear toward His Father, being subject to do His will even to the death of the cross.

(Hebrews 4:14), "*Profession*": Acknowledgment, confession, persuasion and the testimony of what we believe.

(Hebrews 4:15), "*Be touched*": Sympathize.

(Hebrews 7:25), "*To the uttermost*": To perfection and completion.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we consider the priesthood of Israel. From the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews we have a good explanation of the Old Testament priesthood and how it was fulfilled in the eternal priesthood of Christ in the New Testament. We see that to be able to fill the place of a High Priest one must be called and chosen of God to be such. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was chosen of God to be the High Priest to officiate in the sacred ceremonies of God. His sons served with him and all who were born of his lineage were automatically in the priesthood.

But the prophet in Psalm 110:4 prophesied thus concerning Jesus, the Son of God: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek was a priest of Salem in the time of Abraham. To him Abraham gave tithes and honor as a worthy priest of God. He was not a priest because his father had been a priest, but was a priest chosen and blessed of God because of his venerable character and faithful life. It was this order of priesthood that Christ was called to instead of the priesthood of Aaron. The Levitical priesthood was terminated in God's sight and fulfilled in the eternal priesthood of Christ, which He entered into when He ascended up to the right hand of God.

We are blessed to have Christ in the role of an everlasting priesthood. He will never die, thus He will never have a successor. Thus we have great assurance and confidence to have such a High Priest. He has power to save us completely from all sin, and we can find grace and favor with God in Him, and the access to come to God in prayer and find grace to help in every time of need.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the office and function of a priest?
2. What kind of person can qualify to be a priest, and who makes him?
3. Of what order was the priesthood of Christ to be?
4. How was Christ made a High Priest?
5. What does it mean to us to have such a great High Priest as Christ?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the greatest phases of the ancient nation of Israel was their religious services to their God. After being in bondage under the yoke of the king of Egypt for about four hundred years, God brought the nation of Israel out with great power and wonders and a mighty deliverance. While they were on their way to the land of Canaan, promised to them by God, they were given the laws and statutes that God wanted them to follow, and an important part of these laws included a priesthood, with a High Priest and associate priests. These were of

the house of Aaron and His descendants. And so it went all down through the years and in the time of Christ there was still the priesthood in operation.

When Jesus had finished His ministry and work on earth and had passed into the heavens to sit at the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit revealed to His apostles that there was a change in the priesthood and its order. The real High Priest was Jesus Christ, and all of His people shared in His priesthood. This, of course, aroused the anger of the carnal Israelites, but it did not alter the triumphant course of the new and eternal Priesthood. And Jesus has remained at the right hand of the Father ever since, and has been interceding for His saints and the souls of men all these many years.

Jesus is a faithful High Priest. We have the privilege to go to Him in prayer at the throne of grace at any time of the night or day and find refuge and help in Him. Sinners who are repentant and desirous of His saving grace can come to Him and find salvation and deliverance from their sinful way of life. He sends the Holy Spirit to fill every believer who consecrates and gives all to Him. He was once in our mortal stead, so He knows how to sympathize with us and understands our sorrows. Thus He can carry on an intercession with God on our behalf. He has been on the job as our High Priest interceding to God for us unchangingly and without let up since He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will continue to do so until the end of the world. Thank God for our great High Priest!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a mediator we have in Christ Jesus! He is an experienced diplomat. Having been "...in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," He is more than qualified to render assistance to those who humbly submit to His guidance.

During the dispensation of the Mosaic Law, the High Priest filled an important role. He functioned as an intermediary between God and the people, and interceded for their sins. He was One in whom the children of God could place their hope. Sad to say, some of the chosen priesthood failed to merit the

respect and confidence of the people. Christ, however, is worthy of all the faith we can place in Him. He has never failed one of His trusting children, but has sought the will of the Father for our best interests.

Galatians 3:20 speaks of Christ, saying, "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one,..." A true mediator will see that the benefits of his mediation are not in favor of one party alone. He works for the equal good of all concerned. Christ is a high priest who represents all mankind and is a personal Savior, representing us justly before the throne of God.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



JUNE 9, 2002

THE NEW JERUSALEM

Hebrews 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

Isaiah 4:2 In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

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

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

Isaiah 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband: the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel: The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

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

Isaiah 62:4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

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

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

Revelation 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

MEMORY VERSE: Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. Galatians 4:26.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In Jesus Christ and His great salvation we come to a new Jerusalem, which is a spiritual city made up of all who are saved from the power of sin and are faithful to follow and obey the leadings of the Spirit of God. This new Jerusalem is the Church of God, and she is the holy bride of Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 12:18), "*Mount that might be touched*": This is speaking of Mt. Sinai where the Lord came down in visible brightness and sound and gave the people His law. In Christ we do not experience such outward grandeur, but rather witness the spiritual inward glory that never passes away.

(Hebrews 12:23), The Hebrew reads: "To an assembly and church of firstborn ones having been enrolled in heaven." Clarke comments on this: "The Jews gave the title *firstborn* to those who were very eminent and excellent, what we would term the head or top of his kin. The church of the firstborn is

the assembly of the most excellent, who are enrolled as citizens of the New Jerusalem, and are entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of the Church here and of heaven above." How wonderful this is!

(Isaiah 4:4), "*Purged the blood from the midst thereof*": I believe this refers to the wounds of sin and transgression that have been inflicted upon the souls of men, the inward root of iniquity that is ever bringing man into spiritual defeat and condemnation. This can be purged away by the *spirit of judgment*, (by His eternal Word), and by the *spirit of burning*, (the fires of God's Holy Spirit and His wrath against sin).

(Isaiah 54:5) "*Thy Redeemer*": The Hebrew reads "thy kinsman." The law of Moses had a provision for a widow whose husband had died. The next of kin was to take her and make her his wife and rescue her property from loss or fraud and take it over for her sake. Christ is our kinsman. Job prophesied of this in 19:25, "For I know that my redeemer (kinsman) liveth." The first Adam brought us sin and death, but Christ, as the second Adam, redeems our lost estate and marries us to Himself forever! Praise His precious Name!

(Isaiah 54:6), "*Forsaken and grieved in spirit*": This is a description of the soul of man bruised and crushed and disappointed by sin and this present evil world. Only those who experience the grievous yoke that sin really is can really appreciate the love and victory that Christ gives.

(Isaiah 62:5), "*Thy sons marry thee*": This is spiritual language here. All of those who are born of the Spirit and are the children of Zion, the Church of God, will, in turn, fondly attach their hearts to her in devoted love and allegiance.

(Revelation 3:12), "*Which cometh down out of heaven from my God*": The New Jerusalem is pictured as coming down from God out of heaven. This is spiritual language we have here. This means that her substance, her charter, her laws and her government are from above, and her people are all citizens made so by a heavenly birth. They are sustained by communion and holy fellowship with God in heaven. In that way, the new Jerusalem, the Church of God, did come down from God out of heaven.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The literal city of Jerusalem was the capital of Israel. It was the dwelling place of the kings and the site of the temple and its holy worship. It was the place where God placed His name. There was a pride about living in Jerusalem. But this very Jerusalem society that prided themselves so much as being God's chosen actually proved themselves unfit and unworthy of such when they rejected Jesus Christ and crucified Him. Jesus cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:37-38. Luke 19:41-44 tells how Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem and prophesied of its terrible fate which was to befall it in the future. But we rejoice in what the Word of God reveals concerning the New Jerusalem. We have gathered from prophecy and from the New Testament for our lesson today a vision of this spiritual city which is the Church of God, the Bride of Jesus Christ. The old literal city of Jerusalem, over in Palestine, is no longer precious in God's sight nor to be called the "Holy City." The true Jerusalem now is a new and better city whose builder and maker is God. This is the city that our father Abraham had a vision of.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is this new Jerusalem and who are its inhabitants?
2. What does it mean to come down from God out of heaven?
3. How can one truly enter into the new Jerusalem?
4. Why is the old Jerusalem no longer precious in God's sight?
5. How is Jesus married to this new Jerusalem?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What a wonderful blessing and privilege we have in being citizens of the new Jerusalem! For this Jesus suffered and died

on Calvary. I remember one evening years ago I was gazing at the picture of Jesus sitting on the hillside overlooking the city of Jerusalem at night. I thought of how sad He was that they were rejecting Him and the awful woe that they were to suffer on account of their spirit and attitude against Him. My mind was so carried away with the weight of sorrow that He felt. But as I meditated upon this I was suddenly drawn with the sweetest inspiration as I saw in the distance the rise of a New Jerusalem, a greater and far more glorious and beautiful city. It was a city that would not reject the Christ, but rather was to be His pure and holy Bride. It was the ransomed from sin and the redeemed from all the ages who were joined unto Him in the Spirit. Oh, that vision is still shining so brightly! It is wonderful to be saved and delivered from this present evil world and to be a citizen of the true Holy City! People probably wonder when they hear me say that I have no desire to visit and tour old Jerusalem and the so-called holy land. It is because I have found the New Jerusalem and through the Holy Spirit have gained access to that city that Abraham foresaw in his time. This is my home forever, and I am fully satisfied to be one of her children!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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

This prophecy captures the inspiration of the New Jerusalem. People will come to it because the beauty of God's riches are on display there. This motivates the hearts of its citizens to go out and invite others. The New Jerusalem is not a city in which the people simply sit around admiring antiquities. It is a center of activity, of lively Holy Spirit inspired work.

The story is told of an artist engaged to paint the picture of a dying church. Those who commissioned him anticipated that he would portray a ramshackle old structure with a neglected court overgrown with weeds, broken windows and a general air of decrepitude.

Instead, the artist painted a picture of a stately building with expensive stained glass windows, a considerable expanse of richly-carved wood, a high pulpit and comfortable pews. In the foyer, on a conspicuous corner of the wall, a box was fitted. Across the front of the box were the words, "For the Needy." Over the opening designed to receive the contributions, was a cobweb.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



JUNE 16, 2002

THE JEW AND THE GENTILE

Romans 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Colossians 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Romans 9:6 ...For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:29 *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.*

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

MEMORY VERSE: For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Romans 10:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God singled out the Jewish race to work His power and glory through in the eyes of the nations of the world. But in the fullness of time, when He sent forth His Son into human flesh, He made it clear that His salvation is not for the Jews only, but for all men of all nations in all parts of the world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Romans 15:8), "*Minister of the circumcision*": Christ came to minister first to the Jews, to whom pertained "the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Rom. 9:4. He was sent forth into the world as the Son of God, "made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law." Galatians 4:4-5. "*For the truth of God*": Christ ministered to literal Israel with respect to the truth of God that had been bestowed upon them in all of His gracious dealings shown in the law and the prophets. "*Confirm*": To establish, fulfill and ratify.

(Romans 15:9), "*Gentiles*": All other peoples who were not Jews. The same word is translated as "nations" and "heathen" in other places.

(Romans 15:11), "*Laud*": To loudly praise and glorify.

(Colossians 3:11), "*Barbarian*": A foreigner. "*Scythian*": Warlike and savage people.

(Romans 9:8), "*Children of the flesh*": The physical offspring of Abraham, born of his natural seed. Being thus born does not make one a true son of Abraham. One must be a partaker of Abraham's spirit and faith to be his true child.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees and singled him out from the world around. He brought from him, through the miracle of faith, a son, Isaac, from which came Jacob, from which came twelve sons, from which sprang twelve tribes and a great nation. Through the process of time this nation of Israel became ensnared in Egyptian bondage. There they grew in number and were miraculously delivered from Egypt through the leadership of Moses. God worked with this nation, giving them His laws and also giving them the land of Canaan as their inheritance. It is very evident, in surveying the history of Israel, that God designed Israel as a vessel for Him to work His mighty power in before the eyes of the world. They were an exclusive and blessed people.

As our lesson shows, there were indications made by God through His servants, the prophets, down through the ages, that the other nations of the world were to one day be a partaker of His favor also. The scriptures we have selected, along with many others that we had not room to include, show that Jesus came to bring salvation to all men, not just to the Jews only.

The accounts of the early Church in the book of Acts show the process that God worked to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. Simon Peter had a special visitation from God to prepare him to visit and minister to a group of Gentiles in Caesarea. Peter met opposition from the believing Jews about this, but he explained it all carefully how God worked and led him. He was able to convince the saints who glorified God that He had "also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18.) Later, when more and more Gentiles heard the gospel of Christ and became converted to Him, the Church became more persuaded about it, and various adjustments to their attitude toward other nations had to be made. The issue of requiring the Gentile converts to be circumcised was dealt with (as recorded in Acts 15) and their decision was to not put on the neck of these new disciples this yoke that neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear. (Acts 15:10.)

In his epistle to the Romans, who were largely Gentiles, Paul had much to say concerning this matter of the Jew and the Gentile. Chapters 9-11 deal with this extensively. He made it

plain in all of his discourse that the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile was no more, and that the Gentiles were to be fellow heirs of the kingdom of God and the fellowship of His beloved Son Jesus. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus come to minister to the Jews first?
2. For what reason did God work His mighty works through Israel?
3. What was His plan all along concerning the Gentiles?
4. Why is the Jew outwardly not sufficient to be a real Jew?
5. What is there about Christ that makes all nations to be truly one?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The all-wise, Almighty God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all mankind, works in wonderful ways beyond the power of human thought. Viewing the scope of His wonderful works from the beginning, we are filled with wonder at how He designed and accomplished His plan for the ages. The apostle Paul, as he finished his treatise on God's working with the Jew and the Gentile, said in Romans 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And, as we survey the great and wonderful way He worked and brought about His purpose, we are filled with admiration of His righteous and unerring wisdom. All His ways are right, and He has a good reason for every course He takes.

He called a man from his position and status of life to love and obey Him. There were doubtless various things that prepared Abraham for the role he was to play in the plan of God, but we have very little knowledge of that. But God worked with Abraham in a manner that spells wise counsels and purposes. God knew what His goal was and He found a man whom He could work with. He could trust Abraham to obey any and everything he was told to do, even to the sacrificing of his beloved son. It was this faithfulness that Abraham rendered to God that laid the foundation for what came in the ages later.

All of His workings with Israel down through history were

to exhibit His power and goodness. Other nations knew and experienced the workings of the God of Israel. Woe to any nation who locked horns with Israel in battle when the Almighty was on their side! Even though Israel proved to be an ungodly nation and had to suffer God's judgments time after time, He still was magnified in the eyes of many nations. And when at last the fullness of time came for God to send His precious Son into the world, His power had been so manifest that there were enough hungry souls among the Gentiles waiting for the chance to receive the favor of God. Today we can look in the sacred Scriptures and behold the greatness of God and be influenced to believe and follow His Son and receive the fullness of His great salvation. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Generally, when there is a substantial barrier between differing parties, it takes a mediator to assist in dissolving it.

A mediator is one who establishes fair rules which apply to both sides in settling a dispute. A biased mediator cannot be effective. Christ became the mediator for both Jews and Gentiles. His gospel was independent of Jewish rituals of the law and also the multi-religious background of the Gentiles.

The understanding that a Jew had to arrive at was that God was no longer a ". . . respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Acts 10:34b—35. How many times have you seen barriers erected because someone, perhaps unconsciously, felt there was something special about himself? This was not an uncommon trait of the Jewish culture in Christ's time.

On the other hand, it was ingrained in the Gentiles that Jehovah was not their god. This was a barrier for them to overcome. They were treated with contempt by the Jews. This led to feelings of inferiority which bred contempt and hatred, causing division.

Similar animosities can exist between people today. But thank God, Christ's atonement places all people on the same level. We can identify with the fairness of Christ by considering our country's constitution. It was drafted to uphold the bill of rights which recognizes all men as created equal. While this

document has contributed greatly to establishing an impressive earthly government, it does not come near the perfection of salvation.

When an American visiting in Scotland stated smugly that he came from God's own country, the Scotsman retorted, "Then you must have lost your accent." If we claim we have been made nigh by the blood of Christ, then let us act like it so others can tell. And as we take on His characteristics and humility, the most difficult barriers can be dissolved.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



JUNE 23, 2002

CHANGED FROM GLORY TO GLORY

II Corinthians 3:3 *Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, *so* that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

11 For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And *not* as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded, for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: Our sufficiency is of God, Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. II Corinthians 3:5b-6

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The brightness and glory that shone on Moses, as he came down from Mount Sinai with the law written on the tables of stone, was a glory that could be seen with the fleshly eyes, and it has passed away. But in the Holy Spirit that now writes the laws of God on the tender, receptive tables of the heart of man, there is a glory also, an inward glory. It is a spiritual brightness of living joy and gladness, experienced by the spirit of man, enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God. This is what we have in Christ, an eternal glory which will never pass away.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Corinthians 3:3), "*Epistle*": A communication in writing. "*Fleshy tables of the heart*": This means the soft, tender and easily impressionable heart and mind of the meek and lowly in spirit child of God.

(II Corinthians 3:6), "*Able*": This means to be competent in season, ample in amount, and fit in character. It is from the same root word in the Greek as the word *sufficient* in verse 5. "*The letter killeth*": The law itself without the warming, inspiring and quickening influence of the Spirit of God will wound, injure and bring condemnation and death. The New Testament of Jesus Christ not only shows a man where he is in error, but it enlightens and encourages faith and love, which will give life to the soul and strength to overcome one's sin. This is why the

giving of the law through Moses is called the ministration of death.

(II Corinthians 3:7), "*Glorious*": Very apparent, bright, conspicuous, easily seen.

(II Corinthians 3:8), "*Rather*": More and in a greater degree.

(II Corinthians 3:12), "*Such hope*": This kind of confidence. "*Great plainness of speech*": All outspokenness, frankness, bluntness and publicity.

(II Corinthians 3:14), "*Minds were blinded*": Thoughts were hardened. This means that there was no openness of mind and willingness of heart to be taught or changed.

(II Corinthians 3:16), "*When it shall turn to the Lord*": In Exodus 34:29-35 we have the account of Moses coming down from the mount with the two tables of testimony in his hand with his face aglow and shining. The people were afraid to come near him. Moses had to put a veil on his face while he talked with the people. "But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out." Paul is stating the sad fact that the real veil was upon the people's hearts, as it still is today. And, as it was when Moses turned and went in unto the Lord to speak with Him and took off the veil, so when we turn to the Lord in our hearts and seek Him diligently, the veil will be taken away from us.

(II Corinthians 3:17), "*The Lord is that Spirit*": He is saying here that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour through the Holy Spirit, is our link and open door to the knowledge and wisdom of God. It all comes through us being enlightened and instructed by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. "*Liberty*": This is access and entrance into true knowledge and understanding, a liberation from fleshly ideas and thoughts, to be able to spiritually discern the truths of God.

(II Corinthians 3:18), "*Open face*": Unveiled face, with the veil over the heart removed and with an open mind and willingness to be moved and controlled by the knowledge of the Lord. "*Beholding as in a glass*": To see what is reflected of the image of the Lord in the gospel of Christ. "*Are changed*": As we look stedfastly and behold the image of the Lord in all of His holiness and spiritual beauties of humility, submission, faith, obedience and love, we are transformed to be in our hearts and

minds to the same likeness. *"From glory to glory"*: Changed from the old glory of the law to the new and eternal glory of the Spirit of Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. Where does God want to write His laws and how does He do it?
2. What is meant by being written of fleshy tables of the heart?
3. What does the law do for a man without the influence of the Spirit?
4. Instead of the veil being on Moses's face, where was the real veil?
5. What must we do to be changed from outward glory to the inward?

LESSON BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

For our lesson today we will consider the two glories. The first is the glory that was seen on Moses and his countenance as recorded in Exodus 34:29-35. The second glory is the inward spiritual glory that we experience in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by being saved and sanctified in Christ. The first glory was so bright because Moses had been in the presence of God for forty days and his face shone brightly when he came back to the people. They were afraid to come near him. So Moses put a veil over his face while he talked to the people and gave them the commandments that God had given to him. This outward glory that shone on Moses was to fade and pass away.

The apostle Paul brought out that the real veil in the matter was not that veil that Moses put over his face. The real veil was the hardness and blindness of the people's hearts. And he said that even today when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts still.

The other glory is not a glory that can be seen. It is a spiritual brightness that is within. Psalm 45:13 says, "The king's daughter (the Church) is all glorious within." It is the inward work of the Spirit of God, changing us from the outward and dim to the brightness and glory within. It is changing us from the form of rituals, animal sacrifices and carnal com-

mandments of the old law, to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and His humility and obedience to the law of holiness and truth.

As there was a veil that was put over the glory that was seen on Moses, so there is a veil that hides the glory of the Spirit. Paul says the veil was over their hearts back there, and that today the same veil is untaken away. Paul also said a few verses farther in II Cor. 4:4 that the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.

But when people turn with their whole heart to Christ in true repentance and faith and will get their hearts tuned to hear the Spirit's voice, that veil on their heart can be removed. Then with an unveiled heart we can stedfastly gaze upon the beautiful image of the Lord reflected in His everlasting gospel, and as we gaze and allow that image to shine in our hearts, we will be transformed to be like Him, leaving the glories of this vain world of pride and greed, and embrace the hidden glory of inner man so precious in God's sight. Have you truly been changed from the outward glory to the inward beauties of Christ?

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is so important to have the indwelling Spirit of God if we are to receive the blessings outlined in the New Testament. The law spirit of the Old Testament has blinded the eyes of many, and prevented them from partaking of the fullness of the riches of Christ.

Consider the following parable addressed to an assembly of Jews by a Mr. Moritz.

"A poor Jew wanted very much to be rich; he therefore put a bandage on his eyes that he might pray to Mazal (or Fortune), and went everywhere through the streets, looking up to heaven, and crying, 'O Mazal, Mazal, make me rich!' At length, Mazal threw down a great bag full of precious treasure, which fell right before him. The poor man did not take off the bandage, but ran on, and stumbled over the treasure. Neither did he turn back to see what it was, but went on still crying, 'O Mazal, Mazal, make me rich!' Mazal, seeing her gift neglected, took it up again

into heaven, and the Jew remained a beggar as before."

The Jews who were present and heard this parable requested an explanation of it, which Mr. Moritz gave them by referring to Isaiah 9:6 and Psalm 2, prophecies of the coming of Christ. A deep silence followed. At last some young men asked, "And will the bandage always be on our eyes?" Mr. Moritz told them to pray that the Spirit of God might take it away. Five of the young men received salvation that evening.

If we want to be able to enjoy the liberty that is in Christ Jesus, and the full benefit of the riches God has willed to all men through Him, we must lay aside our own efforts to achieve righteousness and partake freely of His Spirit.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



JUNE 30, 2002

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

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.

8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.

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.

I Timothy 6:13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.

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

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 Lord God wanted the nation of Israel to be a special people and kingdom to Himself. In the fullness of time and in fulfillment of His prophecies, God brought forth His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the everlasting King over His people, who included not only the Jews, but all nations on earth. The old literal kingdom of Israel has passed away, but this spiritual kingdom in Christ will endure forever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Exodus 19:6), "*Kingdom of priests*": God wants a people who will intercede for mankind and the lost souls of men. This holy nation must be a kingdom with power to reign over sin and this present evil world and be righteous and holy in God's sight. In Christ the Gentiles are granted to be a part of this as I Peter

2:9-10 says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;... Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."

(Isaiah 9:6), "*Shoulder*": The place where the burden is borne. This denotes seat of authority, leadership and responsibility.

(Isaiah 9:8), "*Lighted*": Fallen; bestowed or given.

(I Timothy 6:13), "*Witnessed a good confession*": Gave forth a worthy and true acknowledgment or testimony.

(I Timothy 6:15), "*Only Potentate*": The sole King or Ruler.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our final lesson in this series is concerning the kingdom, the true kingdom of Israel, as it is today in Christ's fulfilling of the prophecies.

God wanted His people Israel to be a real kingdom over which He, Himself, would be the absolute Ruler. It was never His design for them to have a man-king to reign over them. When they clamored for a king, God told Samuel: "Hearken unto the voice of the people:... for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them". I Samuel 8:7. God spoke years later through the prophet in Hosea 13:11, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."

As Bible history sadly reveals, old literal Israel, as a nation, failed to satisfy God's good pleasure as a kingdom and a people. So the prophets foretold of the day of Christ when He would reign over them according to the will of God. His kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom set up to rule the hearts and minds of men from within. Jesus said in Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you."

The kingdom of Israel was overrun and scattered by the other nations and kingdoms of the world. Babylon and Assyria played a prominent role in this. But in Babylon, one of the captives rose to great prominence in interpreting a dream the king of Babylon had concerning a kingdom God would set up that would reign over all the kingdoms of the world. This was Daniel, who was an excellent representative of the God of heaven, the King of kings.

It was a dream that many Israelites through the years cherished, that God would one day establish Israel as a great kingdom again. They pictured the Messiah as a great monarch who would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and reign over the earth. When Jesus did not come up to their expectations, they turned against Him and had Him crucified, which was in the plan of the Lord God of Israel. The spiritually enlightened saints were able to grasp the truth that the true kingdom of Israel would never be a carnal, earthly dominion again. Even Christ's disciples, after Jesus was resurrected, wondered if there was hope for Israel in an earthly way. They asked him in Acts 1:6, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But Jesus pointed them away from such expectation to the Holy Spirit and the work that awaited them as heralds of the truth for Him.

Thank God for a vision of the true kingdom of Israel, a kingdom that consists of all who are saved and led by the Holy Spirit!
—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was God's plan for His people Israel to be to Him?
2. Why did old Israel, as a people, fail to fulfill God's good pleasure?
3. What did the prophet Isaiah prophesy about the throne of David?
4. What kind of kingdom did Jesus bring to mankind?
5. What kind of King is Jesus and how long is He to reign?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is very important for us today to really see and understand the nature and kind of kingdom that God has set up and brought to pass for us in His Son Jesus Christ. A kingdom is a realm of power and rulership. Any system or operation in this world has to have order and discipline to be able to function properly and succeed. A nation, kingdom or body of people is the same. Someone has to have authority and control. God wanted to be the King in old literal Israel. For many years He had used men called "judges" to help in the leadership of His nation Israel. But there were problems that developed and the

people got to looking around and decided that they needed a king like the other nations around about them.

The Lord let them have their way and sought out a king for them. But this first king did not prove out very good, so He sought out another one. This was David. He was a good king in many ways, but God had serious problems with him. And then his son, Solomon, started out well, but ended up on the black list. Most of the kings were not good, and a few did very well after this. But there were still problems.

The prophets gave hope of a Messiah Who would come and take the kingdom. Jesus came and fulfilled these prophecies, but not like the carnal expectation of the people of Israel had conceived ideas of. He came not as a great ruler with outward show and display of power like the people expected of Him. He came in lowliness and love and service to mankind. He sought not for earthly rulership. The leaders of Israel overwhelmingly rejected Him and cast Him out. But the cross and the tomb Christ overcame by being raised from the dead. He ascended up to the right hand of God as the King of kings and Lord of lords to reign forever as the true King of glory. His throne is a throne of grace and mercy for the poor and needy of mankind. Some day He will come and take us to Himself and we will reign with Him for all eternity.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The King of kings" was a well-known title in the East, assumed by the Persian and Assyrian monarchs, as one of supreme power. Many kings were subject to them, but the power, glory and splendor of an earthly king dims before Christ, for He is ruler over all.

Christ's kingdom exceeds the earthly realm. He is the spiritual King. An earthly ruler has dominion over a specified territory, but Christ triumphed in that He conquered death, hell and the grave. He reigns over all. He also enables His children to become kings. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Rev. 5:9-10.

While we “reign on earth,” as the scripture indicates, it is not in a carnal manner, but spiritually. Through the power of the King of kings, we have control over our spirit and triumph over sin.

—Bro. Wayne Murphey



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