

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People
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Volume 35

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No. 2

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Jesus Christ and His Church**
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THEME FOR SECOND QUARTER, 2003

We are inspired to examine through the Scriptures the lives of various persons who refused to submit to the Word of the Lord and allowed sin and transgression to rule their lives. Beginning with Cain, the first-born son of Adam and Eve, we will study the sad lives of these unwise souls and see if there can be vivid clues as to what caused them to go in the way of perdition. It surely will pay us to take warning lest we fall of the grace of God. We pray the Lord will bless these lessons to the spiritual good of every one.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



APRIL 6, 2003

THE WICKED WAY OF CAIN

Genesis 4:2b And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

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

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

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

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

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

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

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

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

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

I John 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

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

Jude 11a Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Cain failed to receive the blessings of God because of his unholy attitude of pride and disobedience. Instead of amending his ways to please God he was determined to go the way of his own corrupt nature.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Gen. 4:2), *"keeper of sheep"*: The Hebrew puts it "shepherd of flocks." Josephus describes Abel as being "a lover of righteousness and believing that God was present at all his actions, he excelled in virtue." *"tiller of the ground"*: One who worked the soil to get produce and gain. Josephus described Cain thus: "He was not only wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting, and he first contrived to plough the ground."

(Gen. 4:3), *"an offering of the fruit of the ground"*: As Adam Clarke explains, "This was a gratitude offering to God and a testimony of his belief in God as the Lord of the universe and the Giver of all natural blessings."

(Gen. 4:4) *"Abel also brought"*: This indicates that Abel brought the gratitude offering but he also brought something else. *"firstlings of his flock"*: This was the first-born of the lambs that his ewes brought forth. This was a blood offering and by offering it Abel acknowledged that he was in need of forgiveness of sins and expressed faith in the Lamb of God, the Messiah that was to come. Cain made no attempt to procure such an offering as he was doubtless not aware of his sinful state before God. For this cause Cain's offering did not avail with God, and it is evident that God made it known of His pleasure or displeasure. *"of the fat"*: The richest and choicest part.

(Gen. 4:7), The Hebrew renders this: "If you do well, is there not acceptance? And if you do not well, sin is crouching at the

door and toward you is its desire, but you should rule over it." God sought to show Cain that he had no real reason to be angry and downcast because it was all of his own doings. It was not Abel's fault, nor was the LORD himself to blame for Cain's failure. He failed to do the right thing, and there was room to make amends and correct his failure.

(Gen. 4:8), *"And Cain talked with Abel":* We can imagine what bitter words of hatred and wrath poured forth from the jealous heart of Cain! And instead of taking counsel from God to correct his error, he took it out on his innocent brother. How often since then has this scene been repeated! What a sinful and shameful attitude possessed Cain. When God questioned him about it he tried to weasel out of any responsibility, saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain's sorry and sinful attitude was his downfall, just as it still is with so many today.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson we have the triumph of the right and the downfall of the wrong. And let us remember that we are the makers of our own destiny. Our outcome in life depends on the kind of attitude we allow to form in our hearts. Cain had all the opportunity to be blessed of God that Abel had. But Cain allowed sin to take hold of him. Sin is yet today crouching at the door of our hearts. We must recognize this threat and danger and take the appropriate action to stem off its advance.

Josephus farther speaks of Cain thus: "He did not accept of his punishment in order to amendment, but to increase his wickedness; for he only aimed to procure every thing that was for his own bodily pleasure, thought it obliged him to be injurious to his neighbors. He increased his household substance with much wealth, by force and violence, and became a great leader of men into wicked courses. He also introduced a change in that way of simplicity wherein men lived before; and was the author of measures and weights. Whereas they lived innocently and generously while they knew nothing of such arts, he changed the world into cunning craftiness. He set boundaries about lands, and built a city, fortified it with walls, and compelled his family to come together to it."

In God's judgments against Cain for killing his brother, he felt that he was not being treated fairly, saying, "My punishment

is greater than I can bear." God modified things by putting a mark on Cain to keep people from killing him. And yet, despite all of God's mercy and goodness, he still held on to his sinful ways. His descendants were just as bad or worse. He left his mark in history and what could have been an example and pattern for good, proved to be a name to rot in infamy and disgrace.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it possible for all of us to be tempted to jealousy as Cain was?
2. What must we do to avoid this terrible sin?
3. Why does one's attitude play such a critical part?
4. Would it have been possible for Cain to have amended his doings?
5. What was meant by the expression: "Sin lieth at the door?"

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Sin is crouching at the door of every heart. Satan like a roaring lion is going about seeking whom he may devour. No matter how far we go in the Christian life and how holy and close to God we might be, there is always the potential for sin to work its way into our hearts and lives. History proves it to be so. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. To be triumphant and successful in the Christian life we must be constantly on our guard against the inroads of Satan. Just as God has great desire for our souls to be united with Him, so the devil seeks an entrance to every heart.

We must be on our guard. Never think the victory won, nor once at ease sit down. Thine arduous work will not be done till thou hast got the crown. God will help us but we must do our part. Sloth, ease and self-complacency will be our downfall if we don't watch out. Just when you think you are doing well there may be a deadly trap just waiting for you.

Sin is progressive. It goes from one step to another. Our failure to apply ourselves in certain areas of our experience can produce weaknesses that will trip us up in the next stage. Neglect, indifference and a careless approach will bring on a disobedient action. This can lead to other evils. I doubt if Cain at the start of the offering of his sacrifice would have guessed what

he would have done before the day was gone. Sin was lying at the door, ready to come in and take over. The right kind of decision and resistance would have made a world of difference. Our Saviour showed us how to resist the devil in the time of temptation. And in that He has suffered being tempted, He is able to help us when we are tempted. But we must do our part in self-discipline and resisting the devil or all of His help will fall short.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Uncontrolled anger is an emotion that has brought a curse on many people. When a person allows their emotions to exceed the bounds of reason and proper control they are subject to being swept away with the influence of the devil and do things that are far worse than they ever believed possible. It may all begin with a relatively small problem and if the wrong attitude is taken when dealing with the problem the enemy fans that spark of "hurt feelings" into a raging firestorm of fury.

The person may feel they have been wrongly treated and they are unwilling to humbly suffer the perceived injustice. Many times, as in the case of Cain, the "injustice" is a direct result of their own actions. The Lord was faithful to deal with Cain and told him, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" This scripture has been a help to me in times of adversity. It is a guiding light when offenses and misunderstandings appear in our pathway. The Lord says, "If you will do what is right, I will accept you." Why didn't Cain listen to what the Lord told him? It would have saved him and his family untold agony. God would have blessed him too. God is willing and able to bless everyone who will do what is right.

Satan succeeded in causing Cain to override the dealings of the Lord. The seeds of pride, love of self and jealousy grew in his heart culminating in the commission of horrible sin against his brother who had done what was right and had the blessing of the Lord on his life. The first soul of man was in the hands of God and his blood was on the hands of Cain his wicked brother.

Let us, as observers of this tragic scene of history, take heed that we listen and obey the monitor of mercy that speaks to our heart instructing us to "Do well."

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

APRIL 13, 2003

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED

II Peter 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The destruction of the world by the flood in Noah's time and the destruction by fire of Sodom and

Gomorrha in the time of Lot are two prime examples of God's wrath and destruction upon an ungodly society.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Pet. 2:4), "*angels that sinned*": The belief that angels once were on probation and were exposed to the temptations of sinful flesh is much held to in all countries and religions, but direct knowledge and revelation of such the holy Scriptures do not afford. Personally, I recoil in my mind against the thought of the heavenly beings generally termed as "angels" as having the potential to sin against God. I will let every man be responsible for what he believes on this subject but I am more inclined to see these "angels who sinned" as referring to the sons of Seth, that third son of Adam. It is so evident that Seth and his descendants (which included Enoch, the man who was translated that he should not see death) were of a godly strain and did hold to the fear of God for a time. But as time went on, and according to old accounts, this godly generation were tempted by the sons of Cain through their women and the lusts of the flesh and fell into sin and immorality. I do believe that this is what is referred to in Gen. 6:2 where it says that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." This giving over by the sons of Seth to the evil influence of the sons of Cain plunged the world into the wickedness that caused God to repent that He had ever made man. "*hell*": The Greek word here is "Tartarus" which is generally defined as "the lowest hell." "*chains of darkness*": This indicates confines and bonds to never be removed or broken, eternal pits of doom and damnation with no way of escape.

(Luke 17:31), "*let him not come down to take it away*" and "*let him not return back*": This is direct warning for us to live above our material possessions and ties with this present world. It is certain we will take nothing out of this world. (I Tim. 6:7.) Therefore for us to be accounted worthy to escape the destruction of this earthly realm we must have all on the altar of sacrifice and have our affections severed from its endearment. God knows where our hearts are, as Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Luke 12:34.

(Luke 17:32), "*Remember Lot's wife*": Lot's wife escaped from Sodom physically but her affections were not severed from its endearment. She was not able to obey the angels' instruction

"look not behind thee" and she became a pillar of salt for just one backward look. It is a warning that is for us to take heed to concerning the coming destruction of this present, evil world.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we want to consider two great catastrophes of the past that I fear too many of us mortals fail to take as seriously as we ought to. The destruction of the world by the flood in Noah's time should be a great monument of fear and dread. II Peter 3 warns us of a lax attitude concerning the coming of the Lord and the destruction of this present, evil world. In verses 5 and 6 Peter refers to the condition of the old world as standing out of the water and in the water, and how that the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. The ungodly, lustful society of Noah's time were ignorant of the peril that they were really in. They laughed at Noah's warning of a coming flood. But Noah, "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Heb. 11:7. In II Pet. 3:7 it asserts the fact that "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word (the same word that held the earth out of the water before) are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." God is still going to keep His promise of destroying this literal earth, as it is foretold in Isaiah 24:19-20.

We have the destruction of the world by a flood parallel with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone. We have the very words of Jesus describing the indifference of both societies in the face of their destruction. They were on the very brink of destruction but were so taken up with the activities and enjoyments of the flesh that they failed to take any serious thought or definite action about it. So it will be when the Lord Jesus "shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." II Thess. 1:7-9.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What do the stories of Noah and Lot prove God knows how to do?

2. What keeps the wicked from being serious about their condition?
3. What lesson should humanity learn from these destructions?
4. Is our society aware of the woeful destruction ahead?
5. What is keeping the wrath of God from being poured out today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus gave us the reason why the destruction of the world by the flood and that of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone took such a toll of humanity. The people were totally occupied in their pursuits and activities and it rendered them insensitive to their plight. Eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage absorbed their time and attention. They were indifferent and gave no heed to the threat of danger. "It just cannot happen to us!" was the attitude of their heart. It is still the same spirit that controls humanity today. We are all under the storm watch of destruction. God has made it plain in both the Old and the New Testament that He will one day bring this world to an end. People have talked about it and preachers have foretold it. But according to everyone's attitude it is not a real threat. Every one is so taken up with his or her affairs. There is a feeling of safety and peace in the air. But the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." I Thess. 5:3. Just as the great ship Titanic was plowing so safely through the seas with everyone so confident that there was no danger, so this world's society plows on. It will pay us to be serious, reflective and take warning. Destruction is ahead. This world is to be destroyed and it will soon come to pass.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As the man who was to lead his family in righteousness, Lot made a choice that plunged his wife and children into total ruin and woe, when he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Did he ever realize the implications of such a choice and the jeopardy into which he was placing those whom he loved the most?

We don't know—maybe it was Mrs. Lot who influenced him little by little. "Come on, honey, look how much better the shopping is in the city!" Maybe it was the girls. "But dad, I don't have any friends out here in the country!" Mrs. Lot never dreamed that what she loved most would destroy her. The girls never imagined their final end.

What about us? What steps are we taking now—financial decisions, where we choose to live, the entertainment we allow, the friends we choose—that will lead our families into spiritual ruin? Can we keep our affections from being fixed on our "stuff?" Are we as parents choosing godly influences for our children and being examples of servants of Christ, who look for our Lord's returning and keep our hearts centered on heavenly things?

"Do you love the world, is it dear to thee?

Can it help thy soul in eternity?

Is the pride of life more than heaven above?

Will you lose your soul for the sins you love?"

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



APRIL 20, 2003

THE MAN WHO DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT

Genesis 25:27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob *was* a plain man, dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint.

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

Isalah 22:12 And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

13 And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die.

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

I Corinthians 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

MEMORY VERSE: ...They are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Philipians 3:18-19.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We should remember how Esau sold his birthright blessings and benefits for the sake of gratifying the appetites of the flesh, and be diligent that we fall not in the same trap of living for the pleasures of this mortal body at the expense of our spiritual well-being.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Gen. 25:29), "*sod pottage*": boiled a soup. Ver. 34 called it "pottage of lentiles." Verse 30 said it was red. Lentiles are bean or pea-like food. So it was red beans boiled into a soup served with bread. To get to eat some of this was what Esau gave up his birthright for.

(Ver. 30), "*Edom*": Because of the red beans Esau got from Jacob, his name was called "Edom" which means "red." The name Edom is close kin to the name Adam which in the Hebrew means "ruddy" or "red like the earth." He was called "Esau" at birth because as a baby he was rough and hairy like a garment. Esau in the Hebrew means "rough."

(Ver. 31), "*birthright*": The special rights and privileges of being the first-born. Adam Clarke says that these include: 1. Being peculiarly consecrated to God. (Exod. 22:29.) 2. Being next in honour to their parents. (Gen. 49:3.) 3. Inheriting a double portion of their father's goods. (Deut. 21:17.) 4. Succeeding the father in the government of the family or kingdom. (II Chron. 21:3.) 5. Having the sole right of conducting the service of God in the priesthood. These are special blessings that point to even greater blessings of a spiritual nature. Such was counted so lightly by Esau when he gave them over to Jacob for a momentary gratifying of the fleshly appetites. They are a type of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places that we can share with Christ, the first born from the dead. There is another instance of one losing his birthright. Reuben, the first-born of Jacob, because he committed fornication with one of his father Jacob's wives, lost his birthright, dominion and priesthood. His birthright went to Joseph, his dominion went to Judah and the priesthood went to Levi. (See I Chron. 5:1-2 and Num. 8:14-18.)

(Ver. 34), "*despised*": counted of no value and did not esteem it as he should have.

(Heb. 12:15), "*fail*": to fall short or be deficient of.

(Ver. 16), "*profane*": The Greek meaning is "one who crosses the threshold into wickedness."

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider the great and costly error of Esau. We have the account in Genesis of this foolish act and also the warning given in the New Testament concerning any of us being guilty of the same folly. We have also in our text two places where eating and drinking are associated with error and what displeases God. In Isa. 22:12-13 we have a dire warning directly from Jehovah. His call was for people to weep and mourn in sackcloth and humiliation, that is, in true godly sorrow and repentance for sin and an ungodly state of life. But, instead of that, the people were indulging in feasting and celebrating, eating flesh and drinking wine. Their sentiment was: "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die." The apostle Paul alludes to this in I Cor. 15:32 in speaking of the truth of Christ's resurrection. His thought is: What profit is it for me to suffer for Christ if there will be no resurrection? We might as well indulge in eating and drinking to the full, for tomorrow we die.

This is the language of the carnal minded. Little or no consideration or care is in the heart for eternity and reckoning with God. The gratification of the appetites of the body are the prime concern and interest. We are warned to avoid this pitfall and snare of the devil. Jesus warned us: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (overeating), and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:34-36.

Our Memory Verse is from Paul's warning to the Philippians concerning the enemies of the cross of Christ. One of the chief traits of such is that of their God being their belly. Here it is again, the fleshly appetites labeled as their God, or that which is most worshipped and esteemed. We have the example of Esau and that of many more since him of the shame and loss incurred because of a warped sense of values, which causes one to put the fleshly appetites and pleasures as foremost in their hearts' desires.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is a person's sense of values of such critical importance?
2. Do you think that Esau was really about to die?
3. Why is eating and drinking so important in most people's lives?
4. How can we be sure to escape this destructive snare?
5. What is the birthright that we can partake of in Christ?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God made us creatures that have to take nourishment from food and things that must be eaten through the mouth and digestive system of the body. He made this physical function, as He did with other bodily functions, to be an enjoyable experience. But, in that it is an enjoyable experience, there is also great potential for abuse and corruption. Harm can come to the body and much more to the soul through overindulgence in eating and drinking. This is true with all bodily appetites and sensations.

The warning that we are hearing from our lesson today we would do well to seriously consider and take heed to. For one meal Esau sold the most precious thing he had in life. For the measly gratification of the craving of his belly he readily handed over to his conniving brother the swearing pledge of giving up his birthright and all of its privileges. For a few moments of sensual enjoyment many people have forfeited eternal blessings and the true riches. It has happened to many down through the ages of time.

It all boils down to our sense of values. From the beginning of creation this is where the devil prevails over people. He gets their sense of values all mixed up and off balance. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, met this in the temptations that Satan presented to Him. But He was our great Leader and, though He was tempted in all points like we are, yet He was without sin. Let us do our best to follow Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a surprise Esau must have experienced when he fully realized what he had done in selling his birthright to Jacob. His appetite was satisfied but his birthright had been sold!

The enemy is very much interested in striking a deal with us today. The appetites of the flesh can be filled but the soul can be lost forever. The selling of their birthright for a "bowl of soup," for a taste of sin, for a little white lie, for a small moment of revenge, for a morsel of bitterness, for a bit of pride.

"For the glitter of sin and the things it will win,

Have you counted, have you counted the cost?"

Each soul has been given a birthright purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ. Each soul will give an account for that birthright. It is through this birthright that we will gain or lose entrance into heaven to be with our Lord forever. Let us all handle this with great care and see to it that the enemy does not steal it through cunning devises.

Hold on to your birthright. Label it as "NOT FOR SALE."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



APRIL 27, 2003

THE HARDHEARTED PHARAOH

Exodus 5:1 Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go....

6:1 a Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go,...

7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

9:13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.

16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

12:30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead.

31 And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.

14:8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

9 But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea,...

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea

upon the dry *ground*: and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, *even* all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

MEMORY VERSE: What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? Romans 9:22.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Pharaoh hardened his heart and stubbornly refused to let God's people go free. Then God hardened his heart and worked through him to show His great power in the eyes of the nations. Pharaoh and his nation were stripped, by the plagues God sent upon them, of their crops and commerce, and Pharaoh himself, with his army, was destroyed finally in the waters of the Red Sea.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Exod. 9:16), The Hebrew text says, "And for this reason I have made you stand in order to cause you to see My power and in order to declare my name in all the land." God used Pharaoh, as our memory verse says, as a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. He worked in Pharaoh to show His great power to all the nations of the world. Even though Pharaoh resisted God and hardened His heart, God in turn hardened Pharaoh's heart at will and used His stubbornness as a means of showing His great power. So God often-times works with man. He has complete control of all men, even if they resist His ordinance and will not submit to His holy purpose. God will still have His way and will work for the good of those who really love Him.

(Exod. 14:8), *"high hand"*: This means a hand raised up in victory and triumph. It was because God was on their side that they went thus forth.

(Exod. 14:28), *"remained not so much as one of them"*: The Hebrew text says, "And not even one among them was left." This includes stubborn Pharaoh himself.

(Rom. 9:22), *"endured with much longsuffering,"* God bears long with obstinate and foolish man but all the time He is working out His purpose for the souls of those who are poor and needy of His grace and mercy. People resist the ordinance of God and carry themselves highly but sooner or later the wrath of God will catch up with them.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Israel had come to sojourn in Egypt at the invitation of Joseph, who was ruling there under a friendly Pharaoh. This Egyptian monarch loved and highly respected Joseph for the salvation he had helped to bring to Egypt and to the world. But in time "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." (Exod. 1:8.) This brought a great bondage and adversity to Israel. As time went on things grew worse and worse. God prepared Moses to be their deliverer. In our lesson today we see the great conflict that Moses had with Pharaoh and how God ultimately caused Moses and Israel to triumph over him. God sent ten different plagues upon Egypt. The river was turned into blood, killing all the fish. Then came the aggravating, stinking frogs hopping everywhere. Then tormenting lice infested man and beast. After that came the swarms of flies. The land was corrupted and destroyed by reason of the flies. Then came the disease which killed all the cattle of Egypt. This was followed with sore boils and sores upon man and beast. Then came the thunder and hail mingled with fire, smiting both man and beast, also every herb and shattering every tree of the field. Then came the locusts, destroying whatever had escaped the other plagues. Think of what destruction this amounted to concerning the economy of Egypt! Then came the three days of darkness in which no one in Egypt could see another and all had to remain in one place. Then came the death of the first-born, and this was enough for Pharaoh and he gave command for Israel to depart.

But after Israel had departed Pharaoh decided to pursue them and met his end in the waters of the Red Sea. It is a lesson that people need to take heed to. As Job 9:4 says, "Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Man has played the fool many times down through the years, and, sad to say, we have a world of stiff-necked, hardhearted people before us today.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Did Pharaoh have a chance to submit to God's will?
2. Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart like He did?
3. Why did God want to make His power and name known in the earth?
4. Can and will God still harden people's hearts today?
5. How can we safeguard our souls from sharing Pharaoh's fate?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

As we think of Pharaoh and his woeful destruction we ponder and ask ourselves this question: What must I do to make sure I do not end up like he did? Can it be that God may harden our hearts as He did Pharaoh? Let us consider and observe that Pharaoh was the first to harden his heart and resist the command of God. He said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" This showed his position. He knew nothing about this God of the Hebrews. What one does not know is great cause for resisting and drawing back. This was a normal reaction. But there was stubbornness there that God was ready to deal with. He sent signs and wonders to persuade Pharaoh of His power. But Pharaoh had already begun hardening his heart. Once you assert your position, it takes much humility and honesty of heart to acknowledge that you are wrong. That is why people who harden their hearts to go against the light and knowledge of godly fear are so affected that they are scarcely able to get under conviction enough to do anything. They have hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes. And the Word of God is of such potential and wrath against perversity and hardness of hearts that its dealing has a way of frustrating the fleshly minded to turn

it off and keep the soul from receiving the counsel of the Lord. I have observed people through the years and have seen many poor souls destroyed because they hardened their hearts against the way of the Lord. Then we recall the warning of Psalm 95:7-8, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." This same Israel that came out from under Pharaoh's bondage fell prey to this same attitude in the years that followed. Let us take heed to this warning lest we, too, be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The third chapter of Hebrews states that we can be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." There are some that put off serving God, thinking they will at a later date. As they partake of sin and transgression there is a hardening effect that takes place gradually and subtly. The Holy Spirit was sent into the world to reprove sin. For one to continue in sin with any degree of pleasure one has to harden his heart against the pricks or conviction of the Holy Spirit.

I recall a like experience in my own life. In high school I was away from God and heavily involved in sports. Sports was the idol of my affections. I remember to this day; as we were waiting for the previous game to finish, Jesus stood at my heart's door knocking. Looking back I knew it was Him from the conviction I felt. In the midst of that crowded, noisy setting, with no one aware what was happening inside me, sadly recalling, I said, "Not now." The conviction quietly left as it came; my heart was now a little harder than it had been. How easy for us, as humans, to resist the still, small voice of God.

The Christian is not exempt from the temptation. The Holy Spirit's voice will be there for cautioning and chastening. The option is always ours, whether to humble ourselves and receive or to resist and harden. Jesus mentioned of Israel, "For this people's heart is waxed gross...." Waxed gross according to the Greek Dictionary means to thicken, stupefy or render callous. The calloused or hardened heart renders the ears deaf, the eyes blind and touch insensitive. Let us be encouraged to endeavor to be broken and soft before God and man.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

MAY 4, 2003

BALAAM AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS REWARD

Numbers 22:4b And Balak the son of Zippor *was* king of the Moabites at that time.

5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor ...saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me.

6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they *are* too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, *that* we may smite them, and *that* I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them, but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

22a And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him....

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou

shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

23:5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, *saying*, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, *whom* the LORD hath not defied?

10b Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

II Peter 2:14b ...An heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son of Bosor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

MEMORY VERSE: And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. Exodus 23:8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Although Balaam could prophesy and God used him in a wonderful way to pronounce blessings upon Israel, he fell into error through coveting the riches of the reward of unrighteousness. And though he could not literally curse Israel, he counseled Balak to put temptation before God's people that allured them away from the pleasure of the LORD.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Numbers 22:5), "*against me*": The Hebrew says, "next to me."

(Ver. 6), "*I wot*": I know.

(Ver. 7), "*rewards of divination*": The fee or payment for service.

(Ver. 20), "*If the men come to call thee, rise up*": This was really the second time that the princes of Moab had come. This infers

that Balaam was not to make any move to go with the men unless they came and called to him.

(Ver. 21), "*Balaam rose up in the morning*": Balaam had told this second envoy from Balak to tarry for the night that he might know what "more" the Lord would say unto him. This indicates that he was hoping that God would change His original counsel, which was: "Thou shalt not go with them." This shows that he was looking with favor upon the rewards they were offering him. And it is very evident that Balaam did not wait for the men to call him as God had instructed him but he rose up himself and went with them.

(Ver. 27), "*fell down*": The Hebrew says the ass "lay down."

(Ver. 35), "*Gowth them*": God, seeing Balaam was inclining toward the reward of unrighteousness, gives him the freedom now to pursue it.

(II Pet. 2:15), "*the wages of unrighteousness*": The promised reward and carnal benefit for doing wrong.

(Exod. 23:8) (Memory Verse), "*gift*": bribe. A bribe is a gift or payment given to induce one to do wrong or commit evil.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today has a warning that is so serious about a most treacherous danger and snare that so many precious souls have been caught in down through the ages. Here we have this man, Balaam, with whom God seemed to be working. He communicated with Balaam and spoke through him wonderful things. We have gleaned an account of this man from Numbers 22, 23 and 24. We also include what is spoken of him from two places in the New Testament. His error is plainly seen and audibly spoken of by Peter and the Lord Jesus Himself.

For some reason, what Jesus spoke of Balaam in Rev. 2:14 is not rehearsed in the account from Numbers. Jesus said that Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. We do not read about this in the Old Testament account. But from the Jewish historian Josephus we find it vividly revealed just what did happen. Josephus clearly says that Balaam, just upon his journey to leave to go back to his place, sent for Balak and the princes of the Midianites. He told them

there was no way to prevail against Israel because God was with them. But he told them what to do to cause Israel to displease God and to incur His anger. He told them to set out the handsomest of the daughters of Moab, decked and trimmed to the highest degree and thereby to allure the sons of Israel to come and fall in with them. And this is just what Balak did. Numbers 25:1-2 takes up the story: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." Ver. 9 says that there died in the plague that followed twenty-four thousand.

In Joshua 13:22 it says that Balaam was slain with the sword by the children of Israel. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is there about material gain that is so enticing?
2. How could Balaam have rightly avoided this snare?
3. What did he do that showed he had love for the wages offered him?
4. When he saw that he could not curse Israel, what did he advise?
5. How many other like incidents in the Scriptures can you recall?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus said in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." I do not know of any one thing that the holy Scriptures warn us any more against than this peril of carnal wealth and security. It was the besetting sin of every generation. The leaders of Israel in Jeremiah's time were infested with it, and so were they in our Saviour's day. Regardless of how real God can be and how great is His manifestations of power and grace, let money and wealth assert their influence and just watch how many go down. In our world today the news headlines are so often plastered with financial corruption. It is one of man's greatest temptations, if not the greatest. Any kind of immorality or vice that people indulge in is connected in some manner with financial gain. People who bare their bodies for advertising and

pornography do it for the money they get for it. We live in a covetous world and blessed is the man who overcomes and keeps his garments pure from it.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Are there loopholes in the dealings of God with mankind? There have been some people that thought they found some. Perhaps you know some that think they are getting away with the evil that they do. In our lesson today the elders of Moab and Midian came to Balaam with "the rewards of divination in their hand." They entreated Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam told them. "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." That was a good answer but Balaam also wanted the reward that was offered him and he began looking for a way to collect it.

Balaam must have thought there was a way around speaking only what the Lord gave him because when he met the angel with the drawn sword in the way the angel warned him, "Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak." Even though the Lord dealt plainly with Balaam, he still wanted the reward and continued to search for a way to have it.

Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." In I Tim. 6:9 it says, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, ..." Balaam was in a snare because of what he wanted so badly. Today many people are also in the same snare with Balaam. They passionately desire something and they are looking for a way to get it, even though it is not the Lord's will. This state of mind leaves the door open for the enemy to deceive them and convince them that they have found the perfect loophole. They can get what they want and not actually do wrong themselves. Poor Balaam! Poor misled souls! God judges the heart. He is not fooled. Balaam was a traitor! He sold information to the enemy that caused the children of Israel to fall into temptation and sin, which in turn caused God to withdraw His blessing.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." That dear ones is the way to get out of this snare and also the way to avoid it. If you have your "treasure in heaven" then you are truly rich. "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Prov. 10:22. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey

MAY 11, 2003

MIGHTY SAMSON, STRONG BUT FOOLISH

Judges 13:3a And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not:...

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

25a And the spirit of the LORD began to move him at times...

14:2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

6a And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand:...

15:4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives.

14 When he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

18 And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said,

Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

19a But God clave an hollow place that *was* in the jaw. and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived:...

20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

16:1 Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

2 And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.

3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that *is* before Hebron.

4 And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

25b ...And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O LORD God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

MEMORY VERSE: For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Prov. 6:23-24.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We might be blessed with physical strength and ability but if we are unwise and do not listen to the counsel of God's Word to direct our ways, our end will be shame and destruction.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Judges 13:5), "*Nazarite*": A Nazarite means one who is separated unto God for a special purpose.

(Judges 15:5), "*shocks*": Stacks or heaps of sheaves of grain.

(Judges 15:19), "*hollow place in the jaw*": The Hebrew says that the hollow place was in Lehi. The Hebrew word for "jawbone" is practically the same word as that for "Lehi." So the place where the water sprang forth was a hollowed out place in the ground there at Lehi, and not in the jawbone.

(Judges 16:3), "*posts and bar*": The two posts were the sideposts to which the doors were fastened. The bar was the bolt with which they were locked or fastened together.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. Judges 13:1. God raised up Samson to use him in delivering Israel from the Philistines. We have brought a lengthy text to show the sad story of this Samson. An observation of

Calmet that Adam Clarke provides says, "The weakness (folly) of Samson's heart is yet more astonishing than the strength of his body." He was, as many we have seen in our day, very strong, talented, skilled and brilliant in mind but greatly lacking in wisdom and common sense.

After Samson had killed the lion he later found a swarm of bees in the carcass and a bunch of honey. He later at a gathering put forth a riddle about how "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The young men who heard it could not guess the solution. The deal was that the loser would provide thirty changes of garments for the young men. The young men threatened his wife to pry the answer from Samson and she did. When they gave Samson the answer he went down to another city, Askelon, and killed thirty men and gave their change of garments to them. In anger he went back to his father's house and his wife was given to one of his friends. When Samson found out about it, he was furious and in his rage he caught the foxes and took out his revenge on the Philistines in that terrible way.

We have in this lesson the vivid truth of the folly that can ruin the life of a person. Samson could have been a great blessing had he taken the counsel of his parents and sought for wisdom from God as he should have. His affairs with women proved to be his downfall, going in to a harlot and taking up with Delilah. He should have discerned that she did not really love him, trying as she did to wrest the secret of his strength from him. But he was gullible and paid dearly for his folly. And no doubt there have been many down through the years who have repeated this same sad tale.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was God's special purpose in Samson's birth and life?
2. What was his first error and wrong decision?
3. What was the secret of Samson's strength?
4. Which of his mighty feats were really beneficial to God's cause?
5. What, in your opinion, was the root of Samson's folly?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is a serious thing to have a child entrusted to our care. Each child is born with strengths—and weaknesses. It is our job as parents to train the child in such a way as to minimize his

weaknesses and maximize his strengths. Samson had an amazing gift of physical strength. As a Nazarite from birth, he was to be trained that he belonged to the Lord for a special purpose. His life was to have certain strict guidelines in matters of appetite and self-control. The Spirit was to have sway in his life to use him to the awesome potential promised to him. For these reasons, it is especially sad to see how his life really turned out. Have you ever wondered at his lack of self-control, at his wandering desires, at his exploding temper tantrums? What could have been done differently in bringing up this strong-willed young man? Those are questions we'll never know, but we can face our responsibilities with more sober thought and care when we look upon Samson's example.

As adults and young people, are there areas in our lives that are out of control? If this is the case, we can be quite sure of one thing, we will never be used to our fullest potential. The gifts that God intended to use in our lives to bless others will never be known. I know of nothing more sad than an individual whose strengths, gifts and talents were wasted by selfish, indulgent living.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



MAY 18, 2003

KING SAUL REJECTED BECAUSE OF HIS DISOBEDIENCE

I Samuel 10:24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

I Samuel 13:11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed,...

12c ...I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.

I Samuel 15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14 And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

17 And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

19a Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD?...

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

MEMORY VERSE: ...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry....
I Samuel 15:22-23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: On two separate occasions Saul, who had been chosen of God to be the king of Israel, failed to obey the Word of the LORD. These acts of disobedience disqualified Saul from being king over God's people and started him downward on the road to destruction.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Samuel 15:17). The Hebrew expression, "Is it not true when you were little in your eyes you became head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed you for king over Israel?" "*little*": Lesser, of little importance, smaller than ordinary or average. When they were trying to search him out to give recognition to him as king, he "hid himself." I Samuel 10:22.

(I Samuel 15:22-23.) "*sin of witchcraft*": This means that it is deceptive. Oh, how Satan has worked the spirit of rebellion in the hearts of people all down through the ages! Beginning with Adam and Eve the spirit of disobedience has deceived the souls of men, turning them against the known will of God while making them feel justified in what they were doing. Here Saul is caught in the snare and seeking to defend his position as for the Lord. "*stubbornness*": Not being sensitive to the will of God; a lack of carefulness and attentiveness to the spoken Word of the Lord.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is the first of a two part series of the study of a man who, like many before and after him, had the potential for greatness and success but failed to bring himself into subjection to the will of God. The prophet Samuel was told by the Lord that He was going to send a man to him the next day whom he was to anoint as captain over His people. Samuel met Saul and anointed him. Later, when Samuel called the people together to introduce to them their new king, Saul, who was taller from his shoulders and upward than anyone else, felt his unworthiness and hid himself among the vessels and baggage.

He was finally brought forth and proclaimed king. We find that Saul did well for a time. He led in the campaign against Nahash the Amonite who had threatened to thrust out the right eyes of all the inhabitants of the city of Jabesh-gilead. He was successful and rescued the besieged city. But he committed his first trespass when being oppressed by the Philistines and while

waiting for Samuel the prophet to come and lead in the sacrificial offering to God for help. He decided to take matters in his own hands and offer the sacrifice himself instead of waiting on Samuel to come. In our lesson we see the severe reproof Samuel gave him and the sentence of his kingdom not to continue. This failure to wait on the Lord and giving over to the temptation to take things in one's own hands is a common ground where many fall the Lord, even today.

But the real showdown came, as our lesson reveals, when Saul did not follow the clearcut orders of the Lord to destroy the Amelakites. To make it worse, Saul tried to justify himself for sparing the best of the sheep and cattle. Samuel's reproof this time was so sharp and severe that he at first refused to consider pardon and fellowship. He finally conceded to the entreaty of Saul to turn again and worship with him. But this was the end of Samuel's association with Saul and I Samuel 15:35 says that he came no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Saul's first failure as king?
2. Will we be tempted also to take matters into our own hands?
3. What was the result of this, Saul's first disobedience?
4. What was Saul's excuse for sparing the best sheep and cattle?
5. What was the sad result of Saul's second disobedience?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Let us remember that God made us all free moral agents with the ever present power of choice. We are always confronted with influences and pressures that will more or less have a bearing upon the decisions we make. But we have and will continue to have the responsibility of the free exercise of our will and power of choice. We can succeed in living for the Lord and pleasing Him if we will to do so. God has all the grace and strength to give us to carry out our righteous desires but His promise of help is always according to our submission and determination to obey Him.

The Lord will permit us to be tempted. He will not tempt us Himself but will permit us to be tried and tempted to disobey His

will. We have a wily foe who has many devices and methods to employ to influence our minds. In our studies thus far we have seen how the devil works on people to ensnare them in wrongdoing. We must steadfastly be on our guard against the workings of the enemy of all righteousness. We prove our love for the Lord when we resist the temptations of the devil and submit to do the will of God regardless of the pressures against us.

It is for us to ever seek to live close to God and keep a submissive attitude toward His Word and the leadings of His Spirit. We will have to overcome peer pressure and the influence of people around us. Prayer and constant communion with the Lord and a loving adoration for His favor is very vital for our triumph in the hour of temptation. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God was with Saul. God had chosen Saul because of his humility. But this recording of Saul's disobedience clearly illustrates a pattern of spiritual failure. Each step led Saul down a path away from the Lord and into destruction.

Step #1 - Blatant Disobedience - Saul deliberately disobeyed the Lord's commandment to completely destroy the Amalekites.

Step #2 - Peer Pressure - Saul gave in to the opinions of the people around him rather than seeking God for counsel. Then he was too willing to trust in his own judgment.

Step #3 - Flattery - Saul greeted Samuel with flattery rather than with the respect due to a servant of the LORD.

Step #4 - Justifying his disobedience - Saul cleverly justified his disobedience by combining good works with the wrongdoing.

Step #5 - Blame - When confronted, Saul blamed the people for his own disobedience. (Ever notice this happening with a child who has disobeyed and is only too glad to lay the blame on someone else? Adults aren't much different.)

Step #6 - Lack of submission - Saul's rebellion was a result of his lack of submission and a lack of godly repentance.

The rest of Saul's life was miserable. He was plagued with depression, an uncontrollable temper and extreme jealousy which led to his complete spiritual destruction.

People of today are really no different than Saul of old. This pattern continues to be repeated. Find a person who has prob-

lems with rebellion, or stubbornness, or a temper or jealousy or is just completely miserable and you will probably find disobedience somewhere in their past.

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in JESUS, but to trust and obey."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



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MAY 25, 2003

KING SAUL WHO PLAYED THE FOOL

I Samuel 16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

1 Samuel 18:6a And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul,...

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

I Samuel 26:2 Then Saul arose,...having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

18 And [David] said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

22a And David answered and said,...

23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed.

I Samuel 28:1a And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel....

5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

6 And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

7a Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her....

I Samuel 31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.

I Chronicles 10:13a So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, *even* against the word of the LORD, which he kept not....

MEMORY VERSE: The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. Proverbs 12:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because Saul had transgressed the word of the LORD and grieved away the Spirit of the LORD, it left his heart open for the seeds of pride, jealousy, hatred, and murder to take their bitter root in him. These things dominated his life and brought him to a horrible end.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Sam. 18:7), The Hebrew says, "And the women who were playing answered and said." The words "one another" is not in the

original text. One meaning of the Hebrew word for "answered" is to sing, shout, testify or announce. This means that they were lifting up their voices to laud what David had been able, by the help of the LORD, to accomplish.

(I Sam. 26:21), "*played the fool*": acted foolishly. The Hebrew says, "I have been silly."

(I Sam. 28:6), "*Urim*": In the breastplate of the High Priest of Israel instituted by God as recorded in Exodus 28:30, along with other precious stones, were placed two other wonderful objects. It is not clear about their shape or appearance. But they were called the Urim and the Thummim. They meant "Lights" (Urim) and "Perfections" (Thummim). It would appear that they ministered supernatural discernment and communication with God to the high priest for the benefit of the worthy seeker. One of the horrible things that Saul did in his jealous rage and hatred for David was the murder that he ordered upon Ahimelech, the high priest at Nob and all the priests and their families and possessions. He did this because Ahimelech had befriended David who had come to him for help. How could Saul have had any hope of getting help by the Urim, that is, by the high priest, when he had given the order to have him slain?

(I Sam. 28:7), "*familiar spirit*": The word "familiar" is really not in the original Hebrew text. The word "spirit" is translated from a Hebrew word that suggests a necromancer, which Webster defines as a person who claims to foretell the future through alleged communication with the dead.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Although Saul had proven himself to be disqualified and unfit to be the king over God's people, the LORD did not immediately remove him from his office. But the absence of the Spirit of the LORD afforded room in his heart for other things that soon began to trouble everyone concerned. Because of the jealousy that sprung up in Saul toward David after the giant Goliath was conquered and the Philistines were routed, trouble after trouble took shape. Two different times David narrowly missed being murdered by Saul's javelin. He finally had to leave home and take refuge in the wilderness. Saul went on expeditions in search of David but was thwarted each time by the Providence of God over David. Twice David had a chance to run a sleeping Saul, at his feet, through with his sword but he refused to lay a hand on the Lord's anointed.

The sad and woeful life of Saul soon was running out. The Philistines began to mass their armies to make war on Israel. Saul was filled with fear and dread. He tried to seek the Lord for help but got nowhere. In our lesson we have the pitiful picture of him seeking help from a witch. He wanted to talk to Samuel who had died some time ago. But what he saw and heard in that visit to the witch of Endor filled him with more dread and fear. The apparition that spoke to him foretold his defeat and death at the hand of the enemy. And it came to pass very soon. Saul committed suicide and thus came to an end a life that could have been so different. Had he only conquered his pride and vanity of mind he could have gone down in history as a great man for God. How quickly can a man's life pass by and soon pass away. It does not pay to trifle with God and rebel against the truth. No one could have expressed it better than Saul himself when he said, "I have played the fool and erred exceedingly." —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Saul not resist the feelings of jealousy for David?
2. What evil passion followed this jealous spirit that possessed him?
3. What could Saul have done to regain the favor and help of God?
4. What did Saul do in a desperate effort to know what to do?
5. What lessons do you think we can draw from the story of Saul?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Paul said in I Cor. 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (or object lessons): and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The panorama of the life of Saul affords many critical counsels that people even today would do well to take heed to. The steps and sequences of Saul's downward course are still weighed up by the Word of God and are for us to seriously consider. Saul did not have to take the way that he sadly took. He could have avoided it. God has given to each of us a will and power of choice. We have many temptations and influences that the enemy of our souls will employ to get us to go the way of transgression. Here we have what was seen in the lives of those in past lessons: our sense of values. It is ever with us and we must choose the right values or we will be tripped up every time.

Saul put little value on obedience. He counted other things more important. His power and position as king went to his head. When David was praised more than himself, he felt threatened that he would lose his position. Instead of acknowledging the truth and humbling himself, he reacted in evil anger and sought to kill David. He would see his error and try to straighten up but his selfish lusts would rise up and overpower him again. There are many like that in the world today. Evil temper and anger control many a person. And as they get older it gets worse. So it is with every other fault that lies uncorrected in the heart of man. And eternity without God is an awful price to pay for neglect and procrastination. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Saul, early on, had God's favor and blessing. He was chosen, out of all Israel to be king, by God himself. However, his life record as king went down in failure, away from God. In contrast, King David's life was one that ended in victory. Similarly, both men failed God. Was Saul's failure greater than David's? What made the difference?

How we respond to failure or sin becomes vitally important to us as Christians. Like the soul, a wound that is not properly cared for can become seriously infected and life threatening. However, a wound that has been cleansed and protected can heal and become sound again. By blaming others, Saul failed to accept responsibility for his own actions. By failing to humble himself, he became infected with jealousy, anger, murder and pride. David, on the other hand, simply said, "I've sinned." We have recorded his prayer of repentance in the 51st book of the Psalms. David found healing and restoration in God.

As Christians we may sometimes fail the grace of God. It is critical how we respond and what actions we take. If we don't want to play the fool as Saul, it will be necessary for us to repent. Repentance includes making amends for wrong as far as possible and asking people's forgiveness as necessary. If we make a mess, we should be willing to clean it up. There is an encouraging scripture found in I John 2.1—"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

—Bro. Bob Wilson

JUNE 1, 2003

WISE SOLOMON, A PREY TO FOLLY

1 Kings 3:3a And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father:...

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that *was* the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

II Chronicles 1:8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed ~~great~~ mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so great?*

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king.

12 Wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

I Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore.

30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

I Kings 11:1a But king Solomon loved many strange women,...

2 Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they

come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princess, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father.

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.

Nehemiah 13:26 ...Among many nations was there no king like unto him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. I Corinthians 10:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Even the most beloved, godly and wise among men can fall away into the depths of folly and sinful defilement if they allow their affections to turn toward the beggarly elements of this world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Kings 3:4), "*that was the great high place*": In II Chronicles 1:3-6 it tells us that the tabernacle which Moses had made in the wilderness was there at Gibeon with the brasen altar in its rightful place before it, "and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it." It was on this brasen altar that Solomon offered the thousand burnt offerings.

(I Kings 4:29), "*largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore*": Adam Clarke quotes from a Lord Bacon who observed: "As the sand on the sea shore encloses a great body of waters, so Solomon's mind contained an ocean of knowledge."

(I Kings 11:1), "*strange women*": The Hebrew says "foreign women." He had already taken the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, (I Kings 3:1) and now he takes in more.

(I Kings 11:9), "*appeared unto him twice*": The first was at

Gibeon when God asked Solomon what He should give him. Then in I Kings 9:2 God appeared to him the second time after he had finished the House of the Lord and had dedicated it. These two special visitations should have been enough to have firmly established Solomon in assurance and deep heart conviction of God's goodness and reality that would have helped him stave off anything that would drawn him away from God. And it was enough but Solomon let the guard down before the allurements of feminine beauty and fleshly lusts.

(Neh. 3:26), "*outlandish women*": women from foreign lands.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today the account of a man who rose so high and also fell so low. I would refer everyone to Adam Clarke's comments on the greatness of Solomon and also of his iniquity at the end of I Kings 12. He really brings it out in detail.

We have in our lesson God's special visitation to Solomon after he had sought the LORD so earnestly and had offered the great sacrifice on His altar. We combine for this part the account in I Kings with that in II Chronicles. The whole story of Solomon has its beginning before this. God had prophesied to David about this son of Bathsheba and some of the things spoken of him were afterward applied to Christ. Solomon had everything to his advantage and benefit. But the power, position and wealth that he had as king afforded temptation and potential for sin that he failed to resist and overcome. Such it has been with many through history. We can see now why God at the first did not want Israel to have a king. He, the LORD GOD, would be their king. But the nation of Israel rejected God on that score. And they paid for it as He said in Hosea 13:11, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."

We also include the saying of Nehemiah when he was dealing with certain in his day who had taken wives from foreign nations. He pointed back to the folly and error of Solomon, the beloved of his God, and how foreign women had prevailed on him to sin against his God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was God so pleased with Solomon at the first?
2. What did God bless him so richly with?

3. What was the main temptation that took Solomon?
4. Are there still these same kind of temptations today?
5. What situations were Solomon's as king that helped cause his fall?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Solomon had the right priority in mind when faced with the decision about what he wanted God to give to him. He could have asked for long life, wealth and the life of his enemies. But he was feeling the weight of responsibility for the great nation he was called to lead and govern. He chose right and God was pleased with his choice to ask for wisdom, understanding and knowledge. He spoke much of these three things in his writings. These things we still need to seek for and receive from God today. James 1:5 encourages us to ask of God for wisdom, for He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. But we are to ask in faith, nothing wavering. All the wisdom one can get hold of can be lost, easily lost, if we are not stable and willing to deny self and bear the cross for Jesus. Jesus, our Lord, was made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. (I Cor. 1:30.) He was strong and steadfast for the will of God. We can look to Him as He was in all points tempted like we will be, and yet without sin. (Heb. 4:15.)

Think of how far Solomon went and how vain was his foolish heart. He had seven hundred wives plus three hundred other women. What shame and ridiculous folly! Think of the expense to house them all and provide for their daily needs. And the worse thing was the effect that it all had upon his faith and integrity with God. Sad to say, there is not the least shred of hope that he ever repented or got right with God again. Adam Clarke quotes from an Arabic writer of the thirteenth century, Abul Farage, and he states that Solomon died without repentance. Here we have the end of another who could have been a great blessing for God and humanity had he not given over to the devil.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This is one of the saddest lessons that I know. Solomon was a man that God had appeared to twice in person and had blessed so wonderfully with wisdom and understanding. Yet, the enemy found a way to cause the fear of God to slip out of his heart. We

must be on our guard so the enemy will not be able to turn us away from the One who paid such a great price for our redemption. Let us look at some of the words of Solomon that should have directed and protected his own heart.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel." Prov. 1:1.

"The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Prov. 1:7-10.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life." Prov. 4:23.

"Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth." Prov. 5:18.

"The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul." Prov. 16:17.

"He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls." Prov. 25:28.

"Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*." Prov. 30:7-9.



JUNE 8, 2003

AHAB, CHAMPION OF WICKEDNESS

I Kings 16:30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

1 Kings 21:1 And it came to pass after these things, *that* Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which *was* in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it *is* near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased...And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, *and* eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed *them* with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

17 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also take possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according

to all *things* as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

MEMORY VERSE: It shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God. Ecclesiastes 8:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There is no telling how far a person will go in the depths of wickedness and folly when there is no fear of God before his eyes.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Kings 16:31), "*a light thing*": unimportant, trivial and trifling. What Ahab had given over to before was not a serious matter to him, for he really went to the depths of iniquity in marrying Jezebel. "*Baal*": Meaning "master or owner," the name attributed to the false god of several of the nations around Israel.

(I Kings 16:33), "*grove*": In the Hebrew this was an image set up to Ashtoreth, the Phoenician goddess of love and fertility. The word "grove" refers to the trees or thickets planted about the altars of these false gods to obscure and hide the obscene and immoral worship performed there.

(I Kings 21:1), "*hard by*": joined to.

(I Kings 21:4), "*heavy*": peeved, sullen and sad.

(I Kings 21:9), "*set on high*": brought up before the people to be accused and judged.

(I Kings 21:10), "*sons of Belial*": These were men without profit; worthless, wicked and destructive.

(I Kings 21:25), "*stirred up*": To incite, stimulate and seduce. To take and have such an evil and corrupt minded woman for a wife was Ahab's chief and utmost folly. She wielded an influence over him that did more to bring the wrath and judgment of God upon them than anyone else.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today the worst and most wicked king that ever ruled Israel. Much of this was through the influence of his dreadful, corrupt and ungodly wife Jezebel. It was to Ahab that Elijah pronounced the awful famine of three and one half years. Ahab was the son of Omri who "wrought evil in the eyes of

the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him." I Kings 16:25. Ahab seemed to have a dual personality. At times he would be softened toward the worship of the true God, and then other times he would plunge himself into the depths of evil. In a battle with the Syrians under king Benhadad the Israelites were triumphant but Ahab let Benhadad go when he promised to restore what had been taken. This brought the anger of the LORD because he had let go out of his hand a man whom God appointed to utter destruction. I Kings 20:42.

After the sentence of doom was given by Elijah for the death of Naboth, Ahab humbled himself to sackcloth and fasting. God was moved to lessen the sentence of evil. But later when Ahab joined with Jehoshaphat the king of Judah in battle against Ramoth-gilead he met his bloody end. He was killed and the dogs licked up his blood just as Elijah had said they would. And Jezebel was eaten of dogs later. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the worst thing that Ahab did in his evil ways?
2. What does it mean to sell one's self to do evil?
3. What concerning Naboth's vineyard showed Ahab's weak character?
4. Why was Jezebel so successful in manipulating Ahab?
5. What would be a most important lesson to learn from Ahab?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Ahab had much in his life that was a real detriment to him. He had the odds stacked up against him of becoming a real follower of God. His father was a wicked man and it is doubtful if Ahab had any real training as a child in the fear and worship of the true and living God. The influence in a child's life is such a critical matter. This is true today just as it always was. We look out on our society and we see so many things that are out of joint and proper order. There is immorality, lewdness, impurity, dishonesty, murder, strife, drunkenness and filthy life styles abounding everywhere. The awful influence of the ungodly communication from the television is surely doing much to sink the world into the pit of corruption it is in.

But Ahab had other things that pulled him down. He married a heathen woman who cared for nothing more than sensual

pleasure and self. He did not have to marry that wicked woman. He fell under her influence. This was the prime and most costly error he ever made. And so it is today. Next to being saved and right with God, being in the order of the Lord in the choosing of one's lifetime companion is the most serious and important step one can ever make. It is so needful that such a step be taken only through prayer and the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

Ahab had a chance, though, to be a good man. God worked mightily with him through Elijah, His prophet. Ahab felt the thrust of the Lord's anger and beheld the Lord's mercy in the abundant rain He sent to break the long and terrible drought. He met face to face with Elijah and had a chance to amend his ways. But he failed to do so. The end of his life was pitiful and sad. It could have been different if he had so chosen and had put forth the needed effort. Remember what Eccl. 9:11 says: "...Time and chance happeneth to them all." —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The lesson today is about Ahab but an underlying theme is the influence of Jezebel. Prov. 14:1 says, "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." A wife has awesome power in her hands. The influence of a godly wife can transform a wicked man through her meek, chaste and prayerful disposition. Many men in history were changed through the efforts of a godly woman, including St. Augustine and John Newton. Every action, word and attitude of a godly woman is to build up her husband and children. She studies diligently to know how to bring into each day an atmosphere of joy and congeniality. By praising her husband, submitting sweetly to his authority, lifting him up in the eyes of his children, praying earnestly for him and cheerfully serving his needs, a woman builds a strong marriage, a "house" that will be a true refuge for the whole family. She nurtures the characteristics of godly leadership in her husband, bringing out his best.

The contrary is sadly true. A woman can bring out the worst, the meanest, the lowest in a man. She can belittle him, refuse to submit to him, disrespect his leadership in the home in the eyes of her children, gossip about him, be deceitful to him, grudgingly

serve his needs and expect nothing less than the "house," her marriage falling in around her.

Let's use the power tools in our hands to build a strong house.
—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



JUNE 15, 2003

**THE LAST KING OF BABYLON: FOOLISH, RECKLESS
BELSHAZZAR**

Daniel 5:1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which *was* at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

8 Then came in all the king's wise *men*: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. *And* the king spake and said unto Daniel, *Art* thou that Daniel, which *art* of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?

14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods *is* in thee, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour.

20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts,...till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is*, and whose *are* all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

25 And *this is* the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

26 *This is* the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

MEMORY VERSE: For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 14:11.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Despite having knowledge of the greatness of God shown in Nebuchadnezzar before him, Belshazzar

refused to take it seriously and give good heed and would not humble himself. Instead he lifted up his heart in hardened pride and dared to worship and serve other gods, disregarding the knowledge that he had of the true and living God. Thus he was weighed in the balance of true justice, found wanting, and his kingdom and life were brought to an end.

WORD DEFINITIONS FROM THE HEBREW

(Daniel 5:5), "*against*": opposite. "*part*": the palm.

(Ver. 6), "*loosed*": shook.

(Ver. 8), "*interpretation*": meaning.

(Ver. 13), "*Jewry*": Judah.

(Ver. 14), "*understanding*": insight "*excellent*": extraordinary.

(Ver. 16), "*dissolve doubts*": solve problems.

(Ver. 20), "*his mind hardened in pride*": His spirit grew hard to act insolently. Webster defines insolence as being "disrespectful of custom or established authority."

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the sad account of Belshazzar and his insolent ways that brought upon him the wrath of God and quick destruction. Belshazzar was really, according to history, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. According to the prophecy of Jeremiah 27:7 all nations were to serve king Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son. At any rate, we see in our lesson the folly of a man who knew how the God of heaven had worked with his foreparent. He saw what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar when he got lifted up with insolence and disrespected the authority of God. He should have taken the lessons portrayed seriously and amended his ways accordingly. This is the main lesson we see portrayed in Belshazzar. He refused to receive the counsel handed down to him.

Another thing that contributed to Belshazzar's apostasy, as it had been in many before, was the influence of those about him. His princes, wives, and concubines caused him to be drunk on pleasure and fleshly thrills as much as on wine. We see the reckless spirit he had, daring contemptuously to bring in the sacred vessels from the temple of the God of Israel and drink wine

from them along with praising the gods of vanity. This was an affront and a daring defiance against the God that had worked so mightily to show His power and authority in his time. He knew about it and was held accountable for what he knew.

When this bold and overbearing tyrant dared to bring in the vessels from the holy temple in Jerusalem and drink his wine in them, mingling the praise of false gods with it, that was the last straw in the eyes of the Lord. His judgment was swift and complete. And he left his name down in history steeped in folly and shame, a warning and a reminder to all of us how careful we should be about going against light. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What knowledge did Belshazzar have about the true God?
2. Are we accountable for what knowledge we have, and why?
3. What should Belshazzar wisely have done?
4. What act helped greatly to bring the judgment of God upon him?
5. What influences are there that contest us in remembering God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the main things about Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar that worked havoc in their lives were them allowing their hearts to be hardened. In our word definition for “his mind being hardened in pride” we have the word “insolence” brought forth in the Hebrew meaning. This reminds me of the term “presumptuous” in Psalm 19:13, which was translated from this same root word in the Hebrew. It says, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*.” The Hebrew meaning is: “Withhold thy servant from being presumptuous.” This is insolence, a hardening of the heart and mind and a lack of being sensitive to the fear and pleasure of God. These men mentioned in our lesson today allowed their hearts to be seethed and made insensitive to the effect of godly fear that visited them. They had a chance to know and to be moved with godly fear. But they hardened their hearts against it.

It is a lesson of warning and wholesome counsel to us today. Things of godly exercise and conduct that have been established

and proven to be good and acceptable to God will be questioned. And when weighed by human reasoning and carnal understanding too often they are judged incompetent and not necessary. The heart becomes insolent and such practices that were once associated with holiness and godliness are now rejected and left off. Let us beware of this perilous threat! Standards of modesty, plainness of dress, Simplicity, shamefacedness that have their foundations in holy scripture are being questioned and attacked today. They are not always named out in scripture, but the Holy Spirit brings to light principles and basic elements of truth that will point them out to us. A little letting down and a little catering to the world will bring about finally a great falling away from holiness. The heart becomes hard and the spiritual eyes blind.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are two phrases in Daniel 5:22 that paint a very disturbing picture of King Belshazzar.

The phrase "hast not humbled thine heart," indicates an attitude of pride. You will notice that a proud look is at the top of the list of things that the LORD hates (Proverbs 6:17). Pride can be described in many ways: a high look, self-righteousness, haughty eyes, arrogance or vanity. But whatever the label, pride simply cannot withstand the judgments of God. It did not "hold weight" when King Belshazzar was being measured in God's balances then and it will not hold weight for us now.

The second phrase "though thou knewest all this" indicates an attitude of neglect. King Belshazzar was enlightened when he observed the judgments of the LORD on his own father, Nebuchadnezzar. But he neglected to allow this example to change his own life. Enlightenment brings responsibility. We cannot feign ignorance when the LORD has given us light. Neglect also does not "hold weight" in the balances of God. And it will not withstand the judgments of God either.

It is a serious matter to be weighed in the balances of God. Each of us will be weighed in that balance just as Belshazzar was weighed. How much better to hear "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" than to hear, "Weighed, and found wanting."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

JUNE 22, 2003

JUDAS ISCARIOT AND HIS FATAL PURCHASE

John 12:3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Luke 22:3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

Matthew 26:15 And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Luke 22:14 And when the hour was come, he (Jesus) sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.

21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

John 13:26b ...And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon.

27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

Matthew 26:47 ...Judas...came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Acts 1:18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called,....The field of blood.

MEMORY VERSE: Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard. Proverbs 13:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Judas yielded to the sin of covetousness and thought he could get gain by betraying Jesus for a sum of money, but when he saw that Jesus would not save Himself, he was filled with despair and took his own life.

WORD DEFINITIONS:

(John 12:6), "*bare what was put therein*": The Greek says, "carried away what was put therein." Judas was treasurer of the disciple group and this indicates that he helped himself to the contents of the money bag and used it for his own pleasure.

(John 13:26), "*sop*": This was a morsel of bread dipped in juice or some other liquid food.

(Matthew 27:3), "*when he saw that he was condemned*": Judas, seeing that Jesus was not going to save Himself from the sentence of death, tried to reverse his deeds. But, receiving no cooperation from the rulers, gave over to despair and committed suicide in guilt and shame.

(Acts 1:18), "*purchased a field*": The money he threw down in the temple was taken and used by the chief priests to purchase a field to bury strangers in. It may have been the very spot where Judas hanged himself and spilled his own blood. There is no clear indication of all the details of what actually did take place.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have sought to gather from the gospels the account of the sad error and end of Judas who had obtained a part of Christ's ministry but by transgression fell. (Acts 1:25.) We cannot bring out all the details and we leave it to each one to pursue a more complete knowledge of it in depth. But we do have several things that are very obvious that can be dire warnings for us to give heed to.

John tells us that Judas was a thief and took things from the money bag. There is something about the handling of money and wealth that is very treacherous for the soul. It has happened to many people through the ages of time. Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Luke 12:15. Paul explicitly warns us of the destruction that comes through the love of money in 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Many people have endured poverty and adversity and kept their faith and courage only to lose it when prosperity and wealth came their way. It appears that Judas did not believe Jesus would allow Himself to be taken and condemned to death. It would seem that he thought that he would bargain with those whom he knew were wanting to have Jesus put to death and betray Jesus into their power. The income of the money attracted him even though he felt that Jesus would not allow His life to be taken. But all of his plans fell through when he saw that Jesus was going to be put to death. He was sorry then and put forth an effort to give back the money and save Jesus. When he saw that this would not be, he was overcome with shame and disgrace, for he knew his deeds would be made public. He took the course that many sad and despairing souls have taken in the history of this world. He took his own life, proving that the way of a transgressor is hard and that one's sins will find him out and bring him to destruction.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What temptation common to man did Judas yield to?
2. Whose fault was it that Satan was able to fill his heart?
3. How many in the Scriptures can you think of who coveted money?
4. What course should Judas have taken to obtain mercy and be saved?
5. What became of the thirty pieces of silver and all other vile gain?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Wealth and material means we must all partake of in our mortal lives. And there is nothing sinful about using finances to help meet our needs. The group of disciples who followed Jesus about had to have means to buy food and other necessary items. Somehow Judas obtained the position of keeper of the bag. We would call him the treasurer. Someone needed to fill that place. How it happened and why he was given that position we know not.

One of the greatest lessons to be learned in life is how to properly and wisely handle money. Jesus spoke of money and the danger of allowing our hearts to be placed upon it. I am sure that Judas heard Jesus speak concerning this danger. But the temptation came to him in the handling of the money for the disciples. Thoughts began to work in his heart. No doubt he pondered and studied about it. Were there any convictions that sought to rise up in his mind to warn him about the danger?

Each one of us is faced with this temptation as we live in this world that is largely operated and governed by the love of money and the process of getting increase of material wealth. It is a decision that we must all make and the temptations are many, let me tell you. Paul said in I Timothy 6:10 that the love of money is the root of all evil. You study it out, weigh all the evils and immoral practices in our society and you will see this to be true. If a person can get ahold of the truth of Christ and the Word of God about it, and resist the temptations of evil concerning money, it will be a great help to them in being a success for God. Satan has his stronghold in this matter and do not think that it is an easy cinch to avoid him in it. Most people are pretty weak when it comes to financial gain and prosperity. Let us all take heed and beware of this woeful threat to our eternal welfare. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

YOUR POSSESSIONS

Many men spend their lives
Seeking after gold,
Saying they must guard against
The time when they are old.

Such men seek possession
Of many worldly things,
To show before all others
What success and riches bring.

But what are their possessions
When they leave the earth at last,
And find there is no earthly thing
To which they can hold fast!

The only things you really own
Are in your heart and soul,
So filling these with beauty
Should be your earthly goal.

Thus when the world fades from your view
And your time on earth is done,
The possessions you take with you
Are what your soul has won.

A kind and understanding heart
Will belong to you always,
And love for God and fellow man
Will live beyond earth's days.

A life that is unselfish
Brings riches to a heart,
That always will belong to you
And never will depart.

How sad that lives are wasted
Seeking things that do not last,
And men stand empty handed
When their earthly days are past.

For all who try may store up
Untold riches in their soul,
Which they can have for always
If they seek life's highest goal.

by Viginia Wave McPheeters
— Submitted by Bro. Bob Wilson

JUNE 29, 2003

THE ISRAEL WHO REJECTED CHRIST JESUS

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

John 5:16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

37 (And Jesus said), The Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Matthew 23:37 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!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Luke 19:41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Acts 13:27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

MEMORY VERSE: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Romans 10:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The earthly nation and kingdom of Israel had a wonderful history of God's dealings and blessings but they had so hardened their hearts and their spiritual eyes were so blinded, that they did not recognize nor receive Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. They foolishly rejected Him and cast Him out, crucifying Him as a criminal. For this cause the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 5:17), "*hitherto*": In the past and up until the present.

(John 5:39), "*search the scriptures*": The Greek says, "You search the scriptures." He is not telling them to search the scriptures, but rather stating the fact that they *do* search the scriptures, that is, they examine, seek, inquire and investigate, thinking that in the scriptures is found the secret of eternal life. But the scriptures, Jesus declared, testify of Him, but they would not come to Him. This means that they had no spiritual under-

standing of what the sacred writings were pointing to.

(Acts 7:53), "*disposition of angels*": By means of, through the ministry and arrangement of angels. God used angels to bring the Mosaic law to the people. It was a wonderful sight and experience but it failed to reach the people's heart. The stubborn, proud and sinful disposition and nature of man, still yet today, keeps many from receiving the grace of God. It is not that they cannot, but it is that they choose not.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In this, our final lesson in the series of studies of people who were examples of the folly of resisting God, we want to consider the prime and greatest of them all, the Jews, who were the most blessed of all people in that God had bestowed upon them His living Word and the blessing of being their God. They became the most cursed of all people and were destroyed from being a nation and scattered as captives into all nations, "trodden down of the Gentiles," as Jesus foretold in Luke 21:24. They resisted the ministry of Jesus who gave them full proof of being the long awaited Messiah and Saviour. In our scriptures from John we see their antagonism against Christ. In Matthew 23 we have the Lord's pronounced condemnation and judgment against Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. He used the term "woe" over and over again as He pointed out to them their error and shame. We have in our lesson the final words that He finished with before He walked out and departed from the temple for the last time. As far as can be seen in the report, He never went back to the temple again.

We also include two quotes from the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

One is what Paul said of the Jews in his message in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. The other is the conclusion of Stephen's defense when he was being tried before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Right after he spoke these words the Jewish leaders, in a rage, stoned him to death.

In Luke 19:41-44 we have Christ's prophecy of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem which took place in 70 A.D. when the Roman armies brought misery and ruin to that ungodly nation.

They serve as an example of the wrath of God that will come upon all who refuse His offer of salvation. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. In what things did Jesus displease and anger the Jews?
2. What was the cause of them being critical and condemning of Him?
3. What all did the Jews have that should have been in their favor?
4. What did Israel as a whole do to God's Son He had sent to them?
5. What did Jesus prophesy would happen to Jerusalem?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In Psalm 95:7-8 we have a dire warning that the writer in Heb. 3:7-19 took up and emphasized in solemn tones. "...Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." We can see this in all of the lessons we have had in this series about people who got in trouble with God. It is the same in them all. They allowed their hearts to get hard. This shows us that we have something to do with hardening our hearts or softening them. It is in our power to do one or the other. There are outside influences and pressures from the world around us but we all are going to be held accountable to God for the decisions we make and the courses we take.

It seems that some people have everything in their favor to help make them what they ought to be. And, sad to say, so many of these favored ones fail to let the benefits sent from God to them have the intended effect. It is for each one of us to take diligent heed to our attitudes and our own personal condition. There is no substitute for humbling ourselves to obey and be in accord with the will of God. There is a sacrifice that each must make to attain to the favor of God. This sacrifice of our own way and our own pleasure must be made or the outcome will be disastrous. To persist in doing our "own thing" is the "wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." (Matt. 7:13-14.)

Isa. 53:6 declares that "we have turned everyone to his own way." and Prov. 16:25 says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." What is that "seem right" way? It is our own way, the way of self-gratification and human reasoning. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:...My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Isa. 55:7-8. It is wise for us to take heed to this decision and make an all out consecration to yield our wills to God and seek and ever seek His will to be fully done in every phase of our lives.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus came to the house of Israel and did the will of His Father. The good works of His Father were manifested by Him, as He healed their diseases, gave sight to the blind, cast out demons and forgave their sins but the children of Israel rejected their king and were united in their desire to destroy the One sent from heaven.

Notice how they joined themselves together to accomplish their wicked purpose. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven." Matt. 16:1. The religious leaders of the day who were divided over the teachings of Scripture came together to tempt Jesus. The political and civil authorities likewise came together against Jesus. "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves." Luke 23:12. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." Acts 4:27.

Even though Pilate washed his hands before the people and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person...." He still didn't set Jesus free but gave in to the people who were crying for his death. The following verse says, "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." Matt. 27:25. What a horrible curse they brought upon themselves as they took part in attempting to destroy the Son of God.

The sin of people rejecting Jesus as Lord and Saviour did not end with His death on the cross, it continues to this very day. Satan is still causing people to unite in their opposition to the truth of God's Word, He also wants to divide and scatter the people of God. Let us, who are redeemed from sin, saved by His precious blood and made a part of the kingdom of heaven, unite into one holy, visible body under the leadership of Jesus Christ. Thereby having greater power to take the truths of the Church of God to the lost, dying souls of this world who are crying for deliverance. God has called us and chosen us and let us be faithful to do our part to destroy the works of darkness by spreading the light of truth and obeying God.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



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