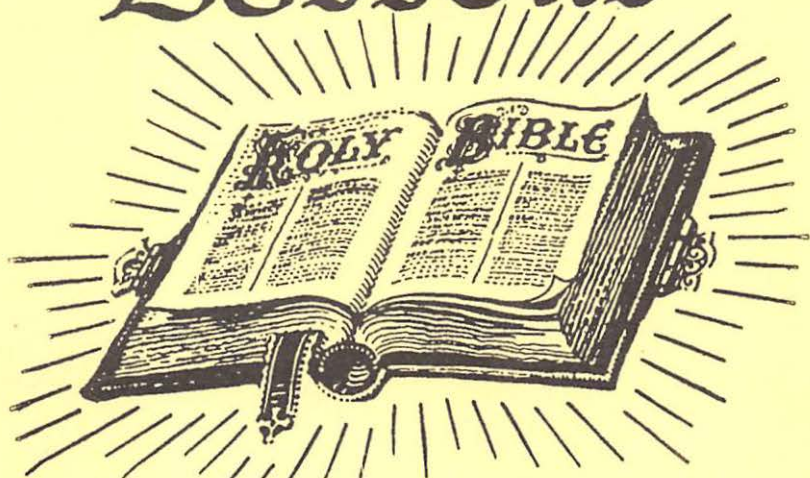


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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July, Aug., Sept.
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Volume 40

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**Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church**
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BIBLE LESSONS FOR THIRD QUARTER, 2008

THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 2008

We are inspired to set forth a series of lessons about various people in Bible history who were examples of pleasing God in their lives. Their testimony and the works that follow them are challenging and encouraging to us. We will start with Noah followed by Moses. Then we will have lessons about two women, Hannah and Ruth, each with two lessons. Then we will have a lesson about Job, and how he overcame adversity and loss by his confidence in the faithfulness of his God. The last six lessons will be from the book of Daniel and how he and his faithful friends overcame the trials they encountered in their Babylonian captivity. We trust the Lord will bless these lessons for everyone's enlightenment and encouragement.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



JULY 6, 2008

THE FAITH AND OBEDIENCE OF NOAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee: they shall be male and female.

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

Matthew 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

I Peter 3:20 ...Once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

II Peter 2:5 And (God) 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.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Believing what God had said concerning the coming destruction of the world by a massive flood, Noah obeyed God's voice and followed His instructions to build a great ark for their salvation and escape. His faith is a great lesson for us today who seek to be saved and to escape the last great destruction that is yet to come.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 6:7, "*destroy*": The Hebrew word means to wipe off or erase. "*it repenteth me*": God is saying here that he regretted and was sorry that He had ever made man.

Verse 8, "*found grace*": Came forth to, attained and acquired favor, kindness, and graciousness from God.

Verse 9, "*perfect in his generations*": Had attained to perfection and completeness with God among his family.

Verse 14, "*gopher wood*": It is generally believed that this wood was from the cypress tree. Adam Clarke comments on this: "Because the cypress is not liable to rot, nor to be injured by worms. The cypress was anciently used for ship-building. This wood abounded in Assyria, where it is probable Noah

built the ark." At any rate it was the wood that was proper and well suited for its purpose. "*pitch*": This is generally believed to be like asphalt or tar, and of a consistency that would render objects waterproof.

Matthew 24:39, "*knew not*": Were not aware of their danger and did not take the warnings of Noah seriously.

I Peter 3:20, "*the longsuffering of God*": This was God's putting up with the sinfulness of mankind while His servant Noah toiled in building a means of salvation and escape for himself and his faithful family. "*saved by water*"; Carried safely through the waters of the flood.

II Peter 2:5, "*the old world*": The ancient world in Noah's time. "*a preacher of righteousness*": By his faithful obedience to the command of the Lord God, Noah set an example that preached a message to those of that day, and also to us today. It is very probable that Noah had plenty of opportunities to witness to those who asked a reason of the faith that was in him with meekness and fear. (I Peter 3:15.) He was without doubt a faithful herald and witness of God's righteous way of life.

Hebrews 11:7, "*moved with fear*": Began his work of obeying the will of God with great carefulness and reverent respect, being fully persuaded that there was coming a flood that would destroy all those who were not prepared. "*prepared an ark*": Engineered; provided labor, time, energy, and means; accurately constructed every detail and part of the assembly of the ark; put it all together soundly and successfully, and fulfilled every requirement that God had laid down for him. "*by the which he condemned the world*": By Noah being a witness and herald of God's promised coming of the destruction of the world by a flood, and building a means of escape, he made the world more responsible before God and more fit and worthy of the destruction that they suffered. "*became heir*": Noah's obedience to God made it possible for him to inherit that vital righteous reward that comes only to those who believe and trust in God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From Genesis, and several places in the New Testament, we have chosen this lesson of one of God's faithful witnesses whose testimony has come down through the ages to us for our enlightenment and encouragement. The account of Noah and

his faithful obedience to God, and the reward that he and his family gained, cover the 6th through the 9th chapters of Genesis. In the New Testament, Noah is referred to with great commendation and respect. Jesus likened His Second Coming to be similar to the destruction of the flood that came on the world that had rejected Noah. Peter spoke well of Noah and his faithful work of building the ark and being a herald of the righteousness of God. And in Hebrews 11:7, which we have chosen for our Memory Verse, we find Noah mentioned in the list of those who were faithful to God in their lives.

When we view the massive work that Noah was given of God to accomplish in preparation for the promised destruction of the world, we are filled with wonder and admiration for this godly man and his family. Adam Clarke says that his studies show that the cubit was almost twenty-two inches. That would make the ark's length of three hundred cubits to amount to 547 feet, the fifty cubits for its width to be 91 feet, and the thirty cubits for its height to be over 54 feet. This was a massive vessel whose capacity was more than sufficient to contain all the persons and animals said to have been in it with sufficient food for each for more than twelve months.

And then, think how such a great work was accomplished on the strength of this man's faith and reverent obedience to his God, with respect to what he had not yet seen! This really bears out why God was so pleased with Noah and his family. How long it took for him to build such a giant ship we do not know. But we do know that Noah accomplished it perfectly and in God's due order.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS

1. What caused Noah to be willing to build the ark?
2. How was he a "preacher of righteousness?"
3. How did Noah qualify to be an heir of righteousness by faith?
4. What were some of the great difficulties that he surmounted?
5. How did Noah find grace in the eyes of the Lord?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It means much for a person to attain the favor and fellowship of His Maker. Noah was a just man and strove for a perfect life and walk with God. He did not conform to the

world around him. Josephus, the Jewish historian, brings out that Noah sought to live apart from society. He sought to please God. The world was filled with wickedness and unbridled lusts of the flesh. Jesus said that they "married and were given in marriage." This indicates that the lust of the flesh pretty well ruled their passions and desires. It was because of this lustful and filthy condition that God passed His judgment and purposed to bring it to an end. Jesus pictures the world in a similar state at the time of His Second Coming. And we see it being fulfilled in the world we live in today. It is going to mean a lot for us to be counted worthy to escape the destruction that will come at Christ's second appearing. The lust of money, pleasure, men and women relationships, and racial hatred and strife are ruling this present evil world. May we let Noah's example inspire us, in like manner, to be obedient to the warning that we have also been given. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Genesis 6:8. "But with thee will I establish my covenant;..." Genesis 6:18. It is wonderful that God has had men and women who have not conformed to the sinful patterns of the societies in which they lived. Their love for their Creator has made them exceptions to the status quo, and God responded to their love by making exceptions for them. What if God had been unable to say, "But Noah..."? You and I enjoy life today because of the faith and obedience of Noah.

Obedience is faith in action. It is relatively easy for one to say, "I have faith," however, when one obeys God, even in the face of ridicule and extreme opposition, their character begins to shine as a star in the eyes of God. The world will scorn the faithful soul who seeks to please the Lord because their life is a testimony of righteousness that brings condemnation on those who are sinful. However, scorn and ridicule did not stop Noah from toiling day after day to build the ark, and neither should it stop us from doing His will in a world that is rapidly becoming as evil as those societies who have been destroyed by God.

It is reported that an evangelist once asked William Booth to reveal the secret for his success in ministering to the poor

of London. Through eyes moistened with tears he responded. "There have been men with greater brains than I, men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that He would have all of William Booth there was....all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will and all the influence of my life."

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



JULY 13, 2008

MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

6 And he (the LORD) said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

Numbers 20:10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Psalm 106:32 They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

MEMORY VERSE: And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. Hebrews 3:5.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Moses, because he gave up his position in Egypt to be a part of the oppressed people of God, was mightily and wonderfully used of God in leading Israel out of Egypt. But because they provoked his anger, he disobeyed God and was not allowed to lead them over into the promised land.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 11:23, "*proper child*": A handsome, fair and beautiful child. Stephen said in Acts 7:20 that he was "exceedingly fair." The Jewish historian Josephus states that, as a small child, "it happened frequently that those that met him as he was carried along the road, were obliged to turn again upon seeing him, and stood still a great while to look at him; for the beauty of the child was so remarkable that it detained the spectators, and made them stay longer to look upon him."

Verse 26, "*the reproach of Christ*": The humiliating treatment and abuse that Israel suffered as slaves was relative to what Christ suffered. "*he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*": The Greek simply says, "For he was looking for to receive the reward."

Verse 27, "*endured*": Kept on and did not give up.

Verse 29, *"assaying to do"*: Attempting in a piercing effort to destroy.

Numbers 12:3, *"very meek"*: Fervently, exceedingly meek, depressed and gentle in spirit.

Verse 8, *"even mouth to mouth"*: Conversed in a close and familiar manner. Deuteronomy 34:10 stated that the LORD knew Moses *"face to face."* *"apparently"*: As plainly seen. *"not in dark speeches"*: Not in riddles and words with hidden meaning. *"the similitude of the LORD shall he behold"*: He shall look intently at the form and shape of the LORD.

Numbers 20:12, *"believed me not, to sanctify me"*: Counted me not true to present me before Israel as clean and right.

Psalms 106:32, *"the waters of strife"*: The waters of Meribah (Numbers 20:13) where Moses was angry at Israel and smote the rock instead of speaking to it as the Lord instructed him to. *"went ill with Moses for their sakes"*: Was grievous to Moses on account of them.

Verse 33, *"provoked"*: Was bitter and displeasing toward. *"spake unadvisedly"*: Moses spoke rashly and in heated anger.

Hebrews 3:5, *"faithful in all his house"*: Up to the time that this was spoken, as recorded in Numbers 12:7, Moses had been true and obedient to the direction and command of the LORD in all things. He was faithful in all of God's house and with His people.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is about a great and important character in Bible History. He is generally regarded as the author of the first five books of the Bible. As Deuteronomy 33:10-12 states: "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel."

We have first what the writer in Hebrews 11:23-29 says about Moses. Let us take note that it was the faith of his parents that helped to save him from the fate that took many babies at that time. Then we have described the faith Moses had that caused him to give up his position as the son of

Pharaoh's daughter (which position could have meant the throne of Egypt.) But he gave it all up to take his stand for the sake and welfare of the people of God under the yoke of bondage of Egypt. This shows the sense of values that Moses had gotten into his heart, a sense of values that we all need. Oh, it is a great account of how Moses followed God's leadings in going back to Egypt and confronting Pharaoh to let God's people go. The keeping of the Passover, along with the rest of the plagues that fell on Egypt, were certainly great difficulties to surmount.

We have included the account of how Moses was meek and did not try to defend himself when he was criticized by Aaron and Miriam. God stood up for him there, being well pleased with Moses in his meekness and lowliness of heart. But we also need to consider how that, later, Moses was not obedient to God at the rock and let his anger rule his spirit instead of the meekness that he had shown before. It is a lesson and warning to us today. Much more can be brought out about Moses, but these lessons will suffice. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What great decision did Moses make for God?
2. What caused him to make this decision?
3. Why was Moses blest to be so close to God?
4. What did Moses do to incur God's displeasure?
5. What warning does this present to us today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Moses was a great leader and servant of the most High God. The place that he filled in following the Lord God in leading His people out from the bondage of Egypt was surely a most difficult, heart rending and perplexing responsibility. God was surely displeased with him for his failure at the waters of Meribah. Deuteronomy 3:23-26 tells how he besought the Lord to let him go over to Canaan anyway, but the Lord answered, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." So Moses had to submit to God, and he did as best one could. It is so good that God did not cast him away, but had mercy on him. We see him appearing on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah and Jesus and talking with Him concerning "his decease which he should accomplish at

Jerusalem." Luke 9:28-31. His faith in giving up his position in Egypt to be free and available for God to call him to be the leader in bringing Israel out of that woeful bondage is surely commendable, and an example that everyone should follow today. This kind of sense of values will help us to give up this vain world and take up our cross to follow Jesus. We know that Moses did not regret that decision he made and we, too, will be glad that we have given up all to follow Jesus all the way. We will be glad and well repaid for all that we have to suffer and fulfill in the life of faith and obedience to God and His perfect will.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

At forty years old Moses made a momentous decision, a decision which implied that he believed and was convinced of several things. First, the Hebrew God, Jehovah, the God of whom his birth parents had instructed him, was the true and living God; and secondly, the people, who were his native people, who were now suffering in bondage to his adoptive people, the Egyptians, were the true people of that God. He would voluntarily become one of them and help them if he could, suffering with them if that were necessary.

The burning bush where Moses heard God's voice was a vivid symbol of the relationship that Jehovah had with His people, the "church in the wilderness." (Acts 7:38.) They were a tough, wild, prickly desert bush, and He was the "consuming fire" that dwelt among them. He should have consumed them, they *deserved* for Him to consume them, but as Jeremiah the prophet would observe years and years later, about these same people, "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are *not* consumed...." Lamentations 3:22.

Moses' close, personal relationship with Jehovah brought him right into the middle of the many conflicts God had with His people, and their rebellion against God was hurled many times right at him. Several times, God told Moses to move aside, because He was going to destroy them. Moses interceded and God listened to his pleas. At other times, Moses became tired of his awesome task and God comforted and strengthened him, urging him not to become discouraged. What a special relationship he had with God.

A minister once told me that our greatest trials and tests would be right from the people of God. We too, must obey the voice we hear coming from the burning bush. We need to remember the weakness and folly of humanity, and bear with each other, as God does with us. We, like Moses, remembering the eternal recompense, will do well to choose to "suffer affliction with the people of God," whatever that will mean for us.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



JULY 20, 2008

THE FAITH OF HANNAH

1 Samuel 1:1 Now there was a certain man...of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah,

2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh....

5 ...Unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

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

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

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

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

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah....And the LORD remembered her.

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

24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her,...and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young.

25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. I Samuel 2:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Hannah, childless and barren, wept sore and prayed earnestly to the Lord that He would give her a son, making a vow that she would give him back unto the Lord all the days of his life. God answered her prayer and gave her a son whom she named Samuel. Hannah kept her promise, and brought him to the house of the Lord and left him there with Eli the priest.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Samuel 1:5, "*worthy portion*": Double portion. This was probably the food that was given to those bringing sacrifices as part of the feast that went along with the service. Elkanah gave Hannah a double portion because of his love for her and because she had no children.

Verse 10, "*wept sore*": Wept greatly.

Verse 11, "*vowed a vow*": Made a solemn promise.

Verses 24, "*weaned*": It is generally believed that Israelite babes were weaned at three years of age.

Verse 28, "*lent*": Given.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is the first of a two part series of lessons about a barren woman's earnest pleading before God for a son, and the promise that she made and kept of giving him back to the Lord for all the days of his life.

The man, Elkanah, had two wives. Now it is a proven fact, and history has shown it to be so, that having more than one wife is not only displeasing in God's sight, but it is also not an advisable practice. But, in the Old Testament times, we have different men who had more than one wife. In this case, of Elkanah having two wives, it brought sorrow and discord to the family. His one wife, Peninnah, was blest to be able to bring forth children. The other wife, Hannah, was barren and had no children. It is brought out in the Scriptures not included in our lesson that Peninnah became a source of trouble and distress to Hannah because she was always provoking Hannah and making her fret because she was not able to have children. And Peninnah would do this when they went up year by year to the house of the Lord to worship and sacrifice. This caused Hannah great grief and much weeping.

Elkanah tried to comfort Hannah with the suggestion: "Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" But his idea was fruitless. To have a kind and loving husband is a wonderful treasure, but it still cannot take the place and fill the void in a woman's heart that having a sweet little baby of her own can do. Thus Hannah rose up and left the feast and went into the temple of the Lord. There she poured out her heart before the Lord in bitterness of soul. In her heart she promised the Lord that, if He would give her a son, she would give him back to Him all the days of his life. She was praying with her heart with her lips moving, but with no sound from her voice to be heard. Eli, the priest, was sitting by a post of the temple, and was watching her. When he saw her lips moving and no sound coming forth, he accused her of being drunken. But Hannah answered him that she was not drunk, but was pouring out her soul in the abundance of her complaint and grief before the Lord. Eli then encouraged her to go in peace, for God had granted her the petition that she had asked of Him.

God gave Hannah the son she had requested, and after she had weaned him she brought him to the temple and left him there in the care of Eli to serve the Lord all the days of his life.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Hannah in bitterness of soul and sore weeping?
2. What promise did Hannah make to the Lord?
3. What did Hannah name her son, and why?
4. When did she bring and leave her son at the temple?
5. What did she tell Eli the priest about her son?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In our lesson today we can see that Hannah was in a situation that was much like what the meek and lowly children of God are faced with in this day of time. Hannah was persecuted and provoked sorely by Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah. Hannah had a tender and loving heart and this abuse caused her to weep greatly. Peninnah belittled and cast Hannah down because she was unable to have a child. But Hannah had knowledge of the greatness and goodness of the Almighty God. So she took advantage of the greatest privilege that we as mortals have. And this privilege is to carry everything to God in prayer. She rose up and, in bitterness of soul and weeping, went into the temple of God and "prayed unto the LORD."

Peninnah was probably not aware of the fact that the Almighty God can and will help those who call upon Him with a sincere and humble heart. As our Memory Verse, taken from Hannah's testimony in the next chapter, verse 9 states, "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail." People who trust in their own human strength will end up on the losing side. This is a conflict that has raged through the ages. Human strength pits itself against others. But the poor and needy, and weak and helpless find unfailing strength in God as their refuge. The apostle Paul found it in the host of persecutions and infirmities that he suffered, saying, "...When I am weak, then am I strong." II Corinthians 12:9-10. And II Corinthians 13:4 states that though Christ "...was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God..." "By (human) strength shall no man prevail." Many saints

"...out of weakness were made strong..." Hebrews 11:34. Hannah availed herself of the wonderful privilege that God has granted to humankind. It is the blessedness of coming before the throne of grace and obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in time of need. Those who are sufficient in their own strength and abilities do not feel the need to seek a higher power. Hannah gained the victory in her need and also in the conflict that was pressing against her concerning Peninnah. She was able to attain the blessing of children, accompanied by special fellowship and favor with God. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Psalm 127:3. Conception is of the Lord. Ask any woman, who is unable to bear children, they will tell you of the hunger they have for a child/children. Rachel said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." One who is barren will notice every baby, every baby garment and even every other woman who is with child. There is a longing in their heart that is indescribable. Hannah recognized too, that conception was of the Lord. For although she had a husband who was able to father children by another wife, she was unable to do so herself.

The Lord heard the cry of dear Hannah and she conceived a son—Samuel. As she promised, she gave Samuel back to the Lord to labor in the temple for Eli. The Lord blessed her sacrifice and gave Hannah five more children—three sons and two daughters. "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Psalm 127:4-5.

Contrary to the mind of the world, the Lord blesses with children. They are not curses to be taken for granted. Little children bring such sunshine into our lives by their sweet smiles, cute words and playful hands. But with delight comes also responsibility. We are to cherish them, love them and guide them in the ways and admonitions of the Lord.

And interestingly enough, have you ever thought, Heaven will be full of children, but there will be no children in hell.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

JULY 27, 2008

HANNAH'S PRAYER OF PRAISE

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

2 There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

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

6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.

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

10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.

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

MEMORY VERSE: He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD. Psalm 113:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord is glorified when He brings the poor and needy in heart to the abundant riches of His grace, and gives them of His love and goodness to enjoy victory and success in eternal things here in this life and in the life to come.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Samuel 2:1, "*rejoiceth*": Exults or leaps up for joy. "*mine horn*": One's triumph, success, victory and dominion over obstacles, adversity, mistreatment or other difficult things in life. For this to be for the good of one's spiritual well-being, it must be brought about through God's blessings and help. "*my mouth is enlarged*": I have been given liberty and boldness to testify and declare my triumph and the favor of God to me against satan.

Verse 3, "*arrogancy*": Feeling important in one's self without modesty or shame for one's wrong. "*God of knowledge*": God knows what is behind a person's every move, and the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrew 4:12.

Verse 4, "*mighty men*": Men confident in their own ability. "*they that stumbled*": Those who are weak and who falter and hesitate to assert their own ways and thoughts.

Verse 5, "*full*": Abounding in their own strength and wealth. "*hired out for bread*": Have become empty and beggars. This is expressive of those who excel in their own strength becoming destitute while those who are poor and needy find deliverance and provision through God's help, as Hannah had found so wonderfully.

Verse 6, "*The LORD killeth*": Life and breath, success and failure, triumph and humiliation are all in God's control. Let those who are prosperous be aware that God can bring them to poverty, and let those who are brought low be assured that God can and will bring them out if they will wait on Him and be faithful.

Verse 8, "*pillars of the earth*": God created and sustains the heavens and the earth by His decree, and He will hold up those who will trust and obey Him.

Verse 9, *"the feet of his saints"*: The ways and works of those who seek to please Him. *"by strength shall no man prevail"*: By personal human ability alone can no man really be successful.

Verse 10, *"adversaries of the LORD"*: Those who strive and work against His will. *"broken to pieces"*: Smashed and destroyed forever. *"out of heaven"*: From eternal realms shall He come to mete judgment. *"the ends of the earth"*: The utter extremity of earth and time and the complete number of mankind.

Verse 20, *"for the loan which is lent to the LORD"*: The Hebrew meaning here is: *"because of the petition which she asked of the LORD."*

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson is the continuation of our previous study about Hannah, the mother of Samuel. This includes the expression of triumphant joy that she experienced in the help of the Lord God of Israel and how He answered her earnest prayer in her grief and bitter sorrow. It is to be remembered that she had an adversary that caused her much anguish and sorrow. This was Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah, who was blessed to bring forth children while Hannah was barren. It is evident that this woman had a very ungodly and proud attitude that caused her to heap scorn and ridicule upon Hannah because she was not able to have children. But Hannah did what a wise woman should do. She took it to the Lord in prayer. And God heard and answered her prayer. Oh, what a wonderful privilege we have, to go to our God with every burden and need that comes to us in life! Even back there in those days of long ago, long before Christ came and brought about His great Priesthood that we so treasure today, yes, even then God was a refuge and a strength to those who sought Him in prayer. And if He was that willing to help the poor and needy in those times, how much more is He willing to send help to those who come to Him through Christ! It is as the writer says in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Hannah's prayer and praise brings out the truth about God's favor to the poor and needy who are destitute of

strength. In her case, it was the barrenness of her womb and her inability to bring forth children. And, while also being also oppressed and cast down by another, she found refuge in calling on the name of the Lord. And with her prayer was a promise to God that she would give her desired son as a gift to service of the One who gave him. It is wonderful that God granted her desire and gave her a son who, in his capacity as being the Lord's, had a life of great service to Him. And, as our faithful God usually does, He rewarded Hannah with more children to bring up and enjoy. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How was Hannah's horn exalted in the Lord?
2. Why is it not wise to talk proudly about one's own abilities?
3. What happens to people who boast and despise others?
4. Why is God so inclined to hear the prayer of the poor and needy?
5. What is going to happen to all the adversaries of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When my wife and I had moved to Anthony, Kansas to pastor the flock of the Lord there, we found a house that we felt would be a blessing for us to purchase. But we took it to the Lord in prayer and sought His guidance and will concerning the matter. I remember as we prayed earnestly about it that the account of Hannah came forcibly to my mind. It was as if the Lord through the Holy Spirit put it to me like this: "Are you willing to consecrate this house to God and give it wholly to Him, even as Hannah promised to give her son to the service of God?" That was a serious and challenging proposal to us at that time. We prayed and yielded to the Lord and promised to have the house dedicated and completely the Lord's property for His service and whatever He would desire it to be. The Lord heard our prayer and worked it out for us to purchase the property and we enjoyed our life there for nearly three years. Then God worked it out for us to sell it when it came time for us to make another move for Him. It is good and wise, in whatever petition we make before God, to consecrate the matter wholly unto Him and keep our hearts yielded to do His will about everything. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Psalms 126:5-6 states, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*." Remember, earlier Hannah prayed with weeping for God to help her in her barrenness and now she returns with a prayer of praise and great joy for God's mercy and goodness that was extended to her.

Again in Psalms 138 David says, "...I will praise thee with my whole heart...I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth...In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me *with strength* in my soul...Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly...."

It is wonderful and great, how the Lord of lords and King of kings would hear and see the tears of those who have had great needs, trouble, affliction and difficulties, then through His love and mercy send the needed help. Hannah's prayer shows clearly how those that are self-sufficient, failing to recognize their need of the Lord, will come to want, and that those that see their insufficiency and put their trust and confidence in the Lord will come to strength and be blessed in their God.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



AUGUST 3, 2008

THE FAITH AND SACRIFICE OF RUTH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

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

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

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

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

19 So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

MEMORYVERSE: And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Ruth 1:16.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is a wise move for a person to be willing to leave their people and the gods of fashion, pleasure and worldly wealth and come to the true saints of the true God and live and die in the true faith and religion.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Ruth 1:1, "*when the judges ruled*": In the period of time after the death of Joshua before Israel had a king, when God raised up certain ones who were leaders and ruled the people. "*Bethlehem-judah*": The town of Bethlehem in the land (or province) of Judah. "*went to sojourn*": Left their native country because of the famine and moved to Moab to live.

Verse 2, "*Ephrathites*": Born in Ephrath which was another name for Bethlehem.

Verse 5, "*left of her two sons and her husband*": Bereaved of them.

Verse 6, "*giving them bread*": Breaking the famine and blessing them with supply of food again.

Verse 14, "*Orpah kissed her mother in law*": This means that she kissed her farewell and went back to her people and her gods. "*Ruth clave unto her*": Ruth would not leave her but purposed to leave her people and stay with Naomi.

Verse 16, "*Intreat me not*": Do not beg me. "*where thou lodgest*": Where you stay or make your dwelling.

Verse 17, "*the LORD do so to me*": The Hebrew expression says, "Thus Jehovah may do to me and more so if only death will part you and me." In other words, Ruth was determined that nothing but death would separate her from Naomi. This showed that she had faith in the God of Naomi that all would be well with her in His care.

Verse 18, "*was steadfastly minded*": Had made herself strong to make the decision to go with Naomi.

Verse 19, "*was moved about them*": This means that the people of Bethlehem were quite stirred and excited to see Naomi among them again.

Verse 20, "*Naomi*": This means "pleasant." "*Mara*": bitter.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is the first of two parts of a most touching and inspiring story that took place in ancient Bible history. We are going back long before David and Saul, the first two kings of Israel. It was during the time that judges ruled. Some of the judges are familiar to us, such as Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. It is the story of a family who, in a time of famine when the food supply was critically short, decided to journey to the country of Moab where things were better. Moab was situated south of Israel on the east side of the Dead Sea.

Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion made up this family. Just how long they were in Moab before the first tragedy struck we do not know. Death visited that family circle just as it has done to every family in history. Elimelech died and Naomi was left with her two sons in a strange land. But the two sons by now had grown to manhood, and their affections had gone out to two young women of Moab. Mahlon's wife's name was Ruth. (Ruth 4:10), and Chilion's wife's name was Orpah.

Ten more years went by. And tragedy and sorrow struck again. Both Mahlon and Chilion were taken in death. We do not know what caused their death, but here was Naomi, grief stricken and bereft of her husband and two sons. This is where things began to take shape that bring out God's special Providential working. Think of the sorrow and anguish that Naomi suffered! She actually felt that the hand of the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her. But there is a vital lesson in all of this for us today. God does allow bitter things to come our way, but we can see from this lesson that God works for our good in all the bitter things that we might suffer in life.

Having heard good news from her home country, Israel, Naomi decided to return there. At first, both daughters-in-law were with her as they started out. But then Naomi tried to persuade the two young women to go back, as she did not feel that she had anything to offer them. Orpah decided that she would go back and she did. But with Ruth it was different. There was a special bond between her and Naomi. But there was something else—It was a drawing to the God that, no doubt, Naomi had testified about. Ruth's decision to go where Naomi would go, lodge where she lodged, and have Naomi's God to be her God was an ultimately wise and profitable decision. In our next lesson we will see how it all worked for everyone's good.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Elimelech decide to take his family to Moab?
2. What double tragedy struck Naomi while in Moab?
3. Why did Naomi decide to go back to Israel?
4. Why did Ruth decide to go with her, and why did Orpah not go?
5. How did Naomi feel concerning all that had happened to her?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is true that the Almighty allows bitter things to come to pass in the lives of His people. Let us think of some of the Biblical examples of this. There was Joseph who was hated of his own brothers and deliberately sold as a slave to Egypt. Then consider what he suffered in Egypt, being falsely accused and cast into prison. But it worked out for good, for Joseph and for his father and brothers. There was David, Daniel, the three Hebrew children, and ultimately the Son of God Himself. He had a bitter cup to drink. He was tempted to draw back from it, but yielded to God, saying, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." God's people have had to drink the bitter cup many times. But, as Paul said in Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Galatians 3:9. It is quite fitting that the Lord would find at least one seed of faith in the lineage of Lot to be blended into the glorious kingdom of His dear Son. For God made a special effort to spare Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. While the Moabites, descendants of Lot's older daughter, worshipped idols, Ruth learned through the influence of her mother-in-law and husband to love the one true God. The intensity of her love can be observed in the passionate response she gave her mother-in-law when she was entreated to return to her own people. "...Thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me." Ruth 1:16-17. To make a statement of this magnitude and mean it with all of her

heart obviously caught the ears of God, for it was born of faith that paralleled that of Abraham. This decision meant leaving home, friends, family and possessions, and going to a strange country not knowing what lay before her.

God was before her, and that made all the difference. While the life of Ruth's sister, Orpah, vanished into obscurity, the story of Ruth lives on and on. If we could ask her today about her resolve to go with her mother-in-law, I am sure she would joyfully and emphatically proclaim, "That was the best decision I ever made."

Even though the way before us seems dark and foreboding, when we are given the opportunity to choose the way of faith in God, let us boldly step forward, believing that He will be there to show us the next step. As we take those steps, let us rest securely in the knowledge that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



AUGUST 10, 2008

GOD'S REWARD TO RUTH

Ruth 1:22 ...And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth 2:1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left

thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

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

15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and...the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

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

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

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Ruth 2:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: By Ruth being willing to leave her home and kindred in Moab to lovingly go with her mother-in-law, Naomi, it brought her into the family of God and put her in the lineage of King David, which also was the lineage of Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Ruth 2:2, "*glean*": To gather ears of grain after the reapers have passed over the field. God had made provision for the poor and needy by a commandment found in Leviticus 19:9-10, which says, "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not

glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather everygrape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God." Also, in Deuteronomy 24:19, God said, "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands." God made provision for people like these two widows to obtain the food they needed.

Verse 3, "*her hap was to light*": It happened by chance. She did not realize whose field it was that she chose to glean in, but it was the hand of God that caused it to be.

Verse 8, "*fast by*": Close to.

Verse 11, "*heretofore*": The Hebrew says, "yesterday and the day before."

Verse 12, The Hebrew says, "May Jehovah repay your work, and may your wages be complete from Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." Oh, what a wonderful blessing Ruth gained by leaving the land of her birth for the welfare and care of Naomi, her precious mother and friend!

Verse 16, "*let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her*": The Hebrew says, "and you shall surely pull out for her from the bundles."

Ruth 4:14, "*hath not left thee this day without a kinsman*": God made provision, as recorded in Deuteronomy 25:5, for the next of kin to one who dies to take over his property and marry his widow. In the 3rd and 4th chapters it tells how Ruth offered herself to Boaz as her near kinsman. But Boaz, confessing that there was another who was closer kin than he was, initiated the required process to open the matter before the elders of the city, and the other kinsman gave permission to Boaz to take possession of the property left by Elimelech and his sons and to marry Ruth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we see how God richly rewarded Ruth for her willing sacrifice of leaving her kindred and the land of her birth to come to a people that she had not known before. Perhaps Ruth was not fully aware of what a treasure she was to gain, but out of the goodness of her heart, and the love she had for Naomi, she offered willingly to do what she did. And the

greatest thing about it was that she became a member of the people of Israel, the people of God, and that she became a part of the lineage of the Messiah, the long looked for Savior of the world.

Our lesson shows a picture of the provision God made in His law for the widow and the poor to glean after the harvesters and get grain with which to make bread for their sustenance. Ruth had to overcome her fears and timidity of being a foreigner before those round about, and go to the fields and seek to glean some of the grain. The Lord was looking out for her and caused her to start picking up grain in the field of Boaz, who was a near relative of her husband and his mother, Naomi. It is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible.

There is a great spiritual lesson in the thought of having a near kinsman to take over the property of the dead and to marry his widow. Job said in Job 19:25, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." The Hebrew word for "redeemer" here is "kinsman," the same as in our lesson. This speaks the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ is our near kinsman and He is our redeemer; to redeem the property we lost in Adam—our salvation and fellowship with God. Jesus came to redeem us from all sin and the sentence of death, and in Him we can gain back what we lost in the fall of man into sin and death. How wonderful that He is our kinsman, the Son of God, faithful and triumphant over Satan and the sin that slew our fore-parents of long ago!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Boaz and what kind of a man was he?
2. Why did Ruth need to go out and glean after the reapers?
3. Why was Boaz so impressed and inclined to show Ruth favor?
4. What did God work out for a reward to Ruth and her happiness?
5. What was said about how valuable Ruth was to Naomi?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Boaz stated to Ruth a truth that is so wonderful and important to us today. We have chosen it as our Memory Verse for this lesson. Ruth, in leaving her country and kindred, and

in her love for Naomi, coming to Israel, had come and found refuge under the great overspreading wings of the Almighty God! Oh, what a wonderful blessing for us who leave the paths of sin and this present evil world and take up our cross to follow Jesus! Why? We come and find a safe shelter and protection under the wings of God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust..." Psalm 91:1, 4. "...As a hen doth gather her brood under her wings..." so the Savior would gather all who will love and obey Him under His protective care. Luke 13:34 and Matthew 23:37. We will be protected under His wings from the destructive elements of this wicked world and gain the victory of peace and happiness now and eternal life in the world to come. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"What does this say to me?" is a question that I often ask as I study the Bible. The wonderful way that God provided a husband, a home, a family and a future for the woman who had left everything behind causes me to ask, "What did Ruth do—what can I do—to obtain the blessings of the Lord? Let's examine several of Ruth's attitudes and actions.

She didn't feel that anyone owed her anything. She showed that by her willingness to serve Naomi, even when Naomi pointed out, "Look, I have nothing more to give you."

She was convinced, as Moses was, that Jehovah was the true God, and the Hebrews were His people.

She left her native people and her gods to follow God and His people, even in trouble.

She wasn't too proud to be identified with the poor who had to glean from the fields of the wealthy.

She didn't try to attract the attention of the men around her.

She humbly and obediently obeyed Naomi in following a custom unfamiliar and strange to her.

She understood in her heart the concept of putting herself at the mercy of the Redeemer, and humbly asked for his care and lordship over her.

Oh, if I can only remember that humility, dependence upon God and obedience bring the blessings of His redemption, care and protection! —Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

AUGUST 17, 2008
THE PATIENCE OF JOB

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

2 And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon

the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

MEMORY VERSE: ...The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. Job 1:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God allowed satan to be turned loose on Job's earthly possessions and family, and though it all was tragically taken away, including his seven sons and three daughters, Job glorified God and refused to curse God as satan had said he would.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Job 1:1, "*eschewed evil*": Turned away from things displeasing to God.

Verse 3, "*substance*": Possessions. "*household*": Service, management, and operation; that which is accomplished and wrought.

Verse 9, "*Doth Job fear God for nought*": In other words, "Has not fearing and serving God been materially profitable for Job?"

Verse 10, "*hedge*": Wall of protection and safety.

Verse 11, "*touch*": Smite, strike and effect all to hurt and loss. "*curse*": Turn against and condemn.

Verse 16, "*fire of God*": Probably referring to lightning and its terrible force.

Verse 17, "*made out*": Formed or shaped in organization and control.

Verse 20, "*worshipped*": Bowed down in contrition and submission to the will of God, accounting Him worthy and wise in what He allowed and worked.

Verse 21, "*naked shall I return thither*": I will leave this world and go back to the dust and to the nothingness that I came from.

Verse 22, "*nor charged God foolishly*": Did not criticize or accuse God of any wrong-doing.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today concerns one who has influenced the children of God down through the ages because of his faithfulness and steadfastness of heart in the utter depths of suffering and loss. It shows how God allows things that are hard and bitter to come our way for our good, and it shows what is the right attitude and course we are to take in those times of adversity and hardship.

In our lesson today we will survey the first phase of the trial of Job's faith. First we are told of what God had blessed him with. The large family of sons and daughters along with the enormous amount of wealth and possessions show the greatness of God's dealings and provision entrusted to him. In verses four and five it tells how his sons feasted in their houses every day of the week, and invited their three sisters to come and join them in their festivities. And we see Job rising early in the morning and offering sacrifices and prayers on their behalf, fearing that, in their revelry, they may have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. This he did continually, every day. So we see that Job had a fervent heart of love and compassion for his children and was greatly concerned for their spiritual welfare.

Then we have satan coming along with some of the worshippers of God before the Lord. Now, just how that all was, we may not rightfully understand. But let us commit those things to God and consider what went on. The Lord brought Job to satan's attention, noting how faithful and true he was in pleasing God. Then satan responded with the idea that Job was such because he had been so favored and prosperous in material things. He charged that if Job were to be deprived of his possessions he would retaliate against God and throw curses against Him instead of blessings. So we see

that God purposed to put Job to the test, and gave satan freedom to destroy the possessions that He had blessed Job with.

On a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job with the report that all of his oxen and asses were herded away and that his servants had been killed in the process. And then another messenger came with another report about his sheep and servants being consumed with a fire from heaven.

Then another came to report that Job's camels were all carried away and his servants slain. And then, to top it all off, the news came that a terrible wind had blown down the house where his sons and daughters were feasting and all of them were destroyed. All of this came to Job in just a short time.

What did Job do? He fell on his face and worshipped God and justified his Maker regardless of all this calamity. He refused to be offended and blessed the name of the Lord anyway. This is a great example of humility and submission to God that our Creator is well pleased with. Thus Job was an example and a pattern that it would do all of us well to imitate in our lives and in our times of suffering and loss.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of man was Job said to be?
2. What did satan suggest that God do to Job?
3. How did he think Job would react to adversity and loss?
4. What did Job do when he received the tidings of woe?
5. What did Job say about himself and about God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

From one of our Savior's apostle's, we have these words: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part

he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." I Peter 4:12-16. As it was in Job's suffering, so will it be in our times of trial and adversity. God will not always avert trouble and affliction. He will not always deliver us from suffering and woe. He will permit us to go through hard and distressful situations. We will suffer and be carried through the furnace of affliction. His people have had to go through these things all down through history. It is His way of bringing us to glory and eternal rejoicing. Let us remember this in those times of trial and adversity.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Job was a man of integrity. He was blessed in many ways. The Scriptures say that "...this man was the greatest of all the men of the east." Job 1:3. He enjoyed good health, a loving family and great prosperity. And we notice that he did not take any of these things for granted. For he was faithful to offer sacrifices—even for his possibly neglectful children. If Job had lived in our modern day and time, he would have been the perfect example of the secular reasoning of "God wants you to be wealthy."

So what happens when we become afflicted? What if one of our children dies? What will become of us spiritually if we lose everything we own? Does this indicate that the Lord does not love or care for us anymore? No! Does this mean that we are not doing right? No! Yet, too many times, in our human reasoning, we believe our spiritual success hinges only on blessings and not on the trials and tribulations. We love serving Him when we have extra money in our pocket. It is not hard to testify for Him when we are feeling good and our family is successful.

Our spiritual success should be built on the same integrity that Job had for the Lord. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." The Lord never intends to harm us, but wants to see if our integrity holds for Him—in the good times and in the bad.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

AUGUST 24, 2008

DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS TAKE A STAND FOR GOD

Daniel 1:3 And the king (Nebuchadnezzar) spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

MEMORY VERSE: It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. Ecclesiastes 7:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is better to obey God rather than to please man, even at the peril of one's life. God's ways are contrary to the ways of men and this present evil world, and there will be times when to please God we will have conflict with the demands of men.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 1:3, "*well favoured*": Fair and good looking.

Verse 5, "*so nourishing them*": To make them grow and advance in mind and body. "*three years*": This was the period of time they were to be fed with the king's food and wine.

Verse 8, "*purposed in his heart*": Firmly set his heart. "*king's meat*": Food that the king prescribed. It probably included unclean meats that the law of God to Israel forbade.

Verse 9, "*tender love*": Compassion.

Verse 10, "*worse liking*": Worselooking. "*of your sort*": Of your age. "*endanger my head*": My head might be cut off.

Verse 12, "*Prove*": Test or try out. "*pulse*": Vegetables.

Verse 20, "*magicians*": These were horoscopists, those who could write and engrave and make magical lines and figures. "*astrologers*": These were sorcerers, men who worked enchantments.

LESSON BACKGROUND

King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had come to Jerusalem and surrounded it with his army. He took the king and his family, servants, princes and officers to Babylon. He also carried out all the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house. He carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: and none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. (II Kings 24: 12-14.) In our lesson today we see how the king spoke to his servants to bring certain of the children of Israel of the royal family to be taught the learning and the language of the Chaldeans. Among these we find Daniel and three of his friends. The prince of the servants of the king renamed these four men with Babylonian names. Daniel became Belteshazzar; Hananiah became Shadrach; Mishael became Meshach; and Azariah became Abednego.

As our lesson shows, these young men were to be fed with the king's food and wine for three years, so as to make them (as the king thought) fit for service before him. Here is where Daniel took the first step (of which we have record) of doing the will of God in the face of opposition. He was a young man. It is so vital that young people take their stand for God and His holiness and be faithful in their decision to follow the Lord instead of the ways of the world. Daniel was firm in his decision, and challenged the king's servant to try him and his friends for ten days, giving them vegetables and water instead of the king's food and drink.

Having special compassion and favor for these lovely young men from Israel, the chief of the king's servants conformed to Daniel's request. And then, after seeing how much better they looked than the other young men who ate and drank what the king prescribed, he took away the portion of meat and drink that they were supposed to take, and gave them vegetables.

At the end of the three years when they were brought before the king, they were found to be ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in his kingdom. This was a great testimony to the greatness and goodness of the true and living God. It was no doubt a great witness to this heathen Babylonian king, and a preparation for the things that were to come later.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Daniel purpose in his heart to do and why?
2. Instead of the king's food, what did Daniel request to be given?
3. What test did Daniel suggest the king's servant to make?
4. What was the result of that test?
5. How did Daniel and his friends turn out at the end of three years?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It takes much courage to take a stand for what one believes in when it is contrary to the ways and thoughts of people you are among. God gives men the power to choose the way they want to go. It is easy to just go along with the crowd and do and be what everyone else is doing and being. But we must remember that we live in a world whose spirit is adverse and far out of line with the ways and thoughts of God. And when we decide to go God's holy way, we are going to be in contradiction in many ways with the society that we live among.

We can think of different people who had been good examples of this. In our first two lessons this was demonstrated. Noah and Moses both had sharp conflicts with the world they lived in. You can imagine the pressure and ridicule that Noah bore in his engagement of building the ark. And we can see what Moses met when he gave up his tie to Egypt to go with the people of God. It is just that way with people who make a clear decision to go with God today. We will meet with opposition, contradiction, persecution and mistreatment from the world around us. But this is one of the proofs that God has arranged for His people to make manifest.

In our lesson today we have Daniel and the three Hebrew children refusing the food and drink that the king directed for them to take. But we see that they were strong and determined to obey God regardless of the cost. And we see how God rewarded them. Let us remember that God will not fail to recompense all that we suffer for Him. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Without purpose of heart and godly convictions we cannot make a success of the Christian life. "A double minded man is

unstable in all his ways." Adam Clarke writes, "The man of two souls, who has one for the earth, and another for heaven; who wishes to secure both worlds; he will not give up earth, and he is loth to let heaven go. This was a usual term among the Jews, to express the man who attempted to worship God, and yet retained the love of the creature." Jesus plainly told us that we could not serve two masters.

Reuben, although a son of Jacob, was told that he was "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel;" Reuben followed the path of pleasure instead of valuing God's Word. Water has no form of its own, it simply takes the shape of its container. Without purpose of heart we will conform to the flesh and world.

Daniel's heart was so set on God that he was willing to suffer for the truth. God blessed Daniel for his stand. Joseph was another one who was willing to suffer for right. God, in the long run, honored the honesty, integrity and purity of heart of these men.

We live in a generation where the name "Christian" has become so watered down that it can encompass disobedience to God's Word. While the music plays and many bow; let us be willing to stand for God, and God will be willing to stand with us, even in the furnace.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

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AUGUST 31, 2008

DANIEL AND THE KING'S PROPHETIC DREAM

Daniel 2:1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, where-with his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king;

28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days....

30 ...This secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for *theirs*akes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

32 The image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

38 ...Thou art this head of gold.

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

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

47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God showed, in the dream He gave to king Nebuchadnezzar, that the kingdom of Babylon was the first of four great kingdoms that would rule in the earth. In the days of the fourth kingdom, He, God Himself, would set up an everlasting kingdom that would consume and destroy all of these other kingdoms. This was fulfilled in the spiritual kingdom that God would set up in the hearts of men through the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 2:1, "*his sleep brake from him*": His sleep was finished on him. This means that he woke up and could not go back to sleep.

Verse 30, "*but for their sakes that shall make known*": But in order that the meaning to the king could be made known.

Verse 31, "*sawest*": Were seeing or looking. "*whose*

brightness was excellent": With an extraordinary brightness. *"terrible"*: Terrifying.

Verse 39, *"inferior"*: Lower and less in wealth and power.

Verse 42, *"the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken"*: The kingdom will have outward strength and force but will be without real inward strength and virtue. This proved to be true of the Roman Empire who ruled the world in the time when Christ established the spiritual kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17.)

Verse 44, *"shall not be left to other people"*: Only the people who will qualify and be accepted in God's sight will be able to enter this kingdom.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we see Daniel and his three associates facing a great crisis. King Nebuchadnezzar was awakened from his night's rest with a troubled spirit resulting from a vivid dream. He commanded to call his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and other members of his Chaldean court about this matter that troubled him so greatly. The first problem he had was that he could not remember what the dream was. When he told them that he had dreamed a dream, they responded with a request for him to tell them what the dream was and they would show the interpretation. But, then he told them that it was gone from him and that if they would not make known to him what the dream was he would have them cut in pieces and their houses made a dunghill. But if they would tell him what the dream was, he would reward them with gifts and great honor. He expected them to be able to fulfill this request.

But those whom he was dealing with put up their pleas that not a man on earth has that kind of power. The king countered them with the charge that if they could tell what the dream was, then he would know that they could also give the interpretation. They told him that none could do that except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh. Finally the king flew into a rage and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed. And this decree included Daniel and his three associates.

But when Daniel was notified about it, he put in a plea with the king for space of time to see about the matter. He went

to his three friends and they began to seek their God about it. And God wonderfully answered their prayers and revealed in a night vision what the dream was and what was the interpretation. Thus Daniel was accorded audience with the king and, giving glory to his wonderful God, he told the king what the dream was, and what it meant.

Daniel brought out that the dream was foretelling future events; the image represented four kingdoms, and Babylon was the first. Afterward would come another kingdom, and then a third, and then a fourth. The fourth kingdom would be partly strong and partly broken. And in the days of that fourth kingdom the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom that would stand forever. This, beyond all doubt and question, pointed to the spiritual kingdom that Christ Jesus brought down from Heaven to save from the power of sin and to rule the souls of men unto eternal life. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the problem that the king had with his dream?
2. What was Daniel's request before the king?
3. What did Daniel and his three associates do about it?
4. What was the dream and the interpretation of the dream?
5. What did Daniel say the God of heaven was going to do?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The four universal kingdoms in our lesson were the Babylonian, Medes and Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Rome was ruling the world when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He was the Son of God, the Almighty God manifest in human flesh. Through His ministry and obedience to the will of God, He offered the sacrifice of His precious blood on Calvary that atoned for the sins of mankind and established a spiritual kingdom that would rule in the hearts of men and qualify them to obtain eternal life. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Had King Nebuchadnezzar remembered his dream, there would have been many who would have given him an interpre-

tation. Their interpretation, however, would not have been from God but from man's wisdom.

God had a special message for man and it was presented in such a way that there could be no mistake of the source, or of the interpretation. Not even Daniel claimed to have the wisdom necessary to provide the revelation and interpretation, for he said. "But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for *any* wisdom that I have more than any living,..." Daniel 2:30. It is easy for us to think, "Oh, Daniel was a wonderful man of God and He gave him this revelation." But it would be good for us all to take note of a couple of points that might help us understand why God revealed this matter to him.

The King was in a rage because his wise men could not reveal the dream and ordered them to be put to death. Daniel asked the captain of the king's guard, "...Why is the decree so hasty from the king?..." Things of eternal, spiritual importance should not be dealt with in a hasty, haphazard manner. Those who carefully and prayerfully seek the Lord will be rewarded with truthful answers that will direct the soul in the paths of righteousness.

After requesting time from the King, Daniel went to his companions, the three Hebrew children, and sought their agreement in seeking an answer from the Lord. It was not earthly wisdom Daniel was seeking, but he recognized the power of agreement in prayer, and he realized the Lord could just as easily reveal the dream to either one of them instead of himself. When an urgency for an answer from the Lord is needed, it is not a matter of to whom or how the revelation comes, but the fact that the truth is made known.

We praise God for revealing this prophetic revelation to Daniel and for sending His Son to establish this heavenly Kingdom in the hearts of men and women at the time of the Roman Empire. God is gathering people from every nation under heaven to be a part of this wonderful, spiritual union.

The knowledge of our personal entrance into the Kingdom of God is also as important a revelation as the revelation of the King's dream was to Daniel—it is a matter of life or death. May each of us be sure that we have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. "...Be very sure, Your anchor holds and grips the solid Rock."

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

SEPTEMBER 7, 2009

DELIVERANCE FROM THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5 That at what time ye hear the sound of...all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.

6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

7 ...When the people heard the sound of...music, all the people... fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

9 They spake and said to the king...O king, live for ever.

12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up.

13 ...Then they brought these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar...said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury,...and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were

in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the furnace.

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the burning fiery furnace.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar...said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They...said..., True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said,...ye servants of the most high God, come forth...Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 ...And the king's counsellors...saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants who trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

MEMORY VERSE: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Romans 8:35, 37.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must yield our bodies as a living sacrifice and be willing and determined to suffer tribulation or death rather than to displease God and fail to worship Him as He wills for us to do.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 3:1, "*threescore cubits*": If their measure of a cubit equaled about 1 1/2 feet, then the height of the image would

have been 60 times that, or 90 feet. *"breadth thereof six cubits"*: The width of the image would have been 9 feet.

Verse 16, *"we are not careful to answer thee in this matter"*: The Hebrew says, "We have no need to return a word to you on this matter." In other words, they were saying that they did not need to answer before him, the king of Babylon, but they were standing before their God to whom they would be responsible.

Verse 18, *"But if not"*: They knew that their God could deliver them from the fire. But their decision and consecration was, if God did not deliver them from death in the fiery furnace, and He permitted them to burn to ashes, they still would not serve other gods, nor worship the golden image that the king had set up and commanded them to bow down to. This is the same decision that every child of God must make. God can deliver us, but if He does not deliver us, we will not bow down to the gods of this present evil world.

Verse 21, *"hosen"*: The Hebrew says "gowns." *"hats"*: Turbans or head coverings.

Verse 25, *"no hurt"*: No injury.

Verse 27, *"singed"*: Scorched.

Verse 28, *"yielded their bodies"*: Gave over and consecrated their bodies to suffer and to die as the ultimate sacrifice one can give to their God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today relates the third experience that the king of Babylon had with the God of Daniel and the three Hebrew children. He had seen what these young men had attained to before him; first in their beauty and health by rejecting his food and wine and eating vegetables to please their God; and then how God had revealed his dream and its interpretation through them. Now the Lord God is unveiling more proof of His reality through the faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the face of a burning fiery furnace. We might wonder about the grossness of this heathen king's heart and the vanity of his mind to want to erect such a gigantic statue and demand his subjects to pay homage to it. But this is the way of blind and foolish humanity. Surely he had seen that the God of these young men was a miracle working God. We do not see that Nebuchadnezzar made any comment about God in the first incident of their refusal to eat of his food and drink of

his wine, but after Daniel had told him his dream and revealed the interpretation thereof, he acknowledged that Daniel's God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings.

But then he decided to make this great image. He sent to gather together the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image. Daniel was not included in this host, but his three friends were. So we see this great host assembled before the image and the requirements set forth to bow down and worship and the promised punishment for any who would not obey.

We can imagine the startling effect that seeing these three young men, standing erect while everyone around them were on their faces, had on those who looked on. Think of the courage and confidence in their hearts to enable them to do so. Oh, what an example they portrayed, and what courage they have helped many to have thereafter in the trials and tests of life! Their answer to the king showed that they were not the least bit afraid of what they were facing. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, but if not, be it known that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image that thou hast set up!" Oh, what strength and decision they had before their God! And then when the king looked in and saw those three young men walking about in the flames with no hurt, accompanied by one like unto the Son of God, it had a profound effect upon his mind and heart. May this be a great incentive to us to be faithful and obedient to God regardless of the consequences and what we might have to suffer in so doing.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the majority of the people bow down before the image?
2. Why did the three Hebrew children not bow down before it?
3. What was their confidence in God about the whole matter?
4. How complete was God's deliverance to them?
5. What was Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to how they came out?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What a great and wonderful God is our Heavenly Father! He is the Creator of the sun, moon and stars, and this wonderful world that we live in! He spoke it all into being by His spoken Word. And He can still do miracles for those that pray to Him and obey His Word in their daily lives. He brought the three Hebrew children through a fire so hot that its flames leaped out and killed the men who threw them in. There is nothing that He cannot do. Let us hold fast our confidence in Him all the way!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I would like to comment on the fourth question asked in our lesson: "How complete was God's deliverance to them?"

1. They were *loose*. The fire only served to burn the ropes with which they had been bound. Madame Guyon wrote,

My cage confines me round;

Abroad I cannot fly;

But though my wing is closely bound,

My heart's at liberty.

My prison walls can not control

The flight, the freedom of the soul."

2. They were "*walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt.*" I once read that a scientist did an experiment that showed a hollow place of stillness in the middle of a flame of fire. An explosive was carefully shielded and placed into this hollow, and then the protective covering removed. No explosion followed, but if a slight agitation occurred, the central security was lost, and an explosion was the result. The lesson was that if we are totally at rest in our souls, we will not be hurt by the fire, even though we are right in the middle of the flame, but if we are rebellious, fearful or restless, we shall be disappointed and hurt by the trial.

3. There were four men, instead of three, and the form of the fourth "*is like the Son of God.*" A precious verse of song comes to mind:

"The world's fierce winds are blowing,

Temptation's sharp and keen;

I feel a peace in knowing

My Savior stands between;

He stands to shield me from danger,
When earthly friends are gone.
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone."

We can be assured that the Fourth Man is always in every difficult situation, affliction, temptation and fiery trial. We are NEVER ALONE!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



SEPTEMBER 14, 2008

GOD'S KINGDOM TRIUMPHANT OVER ALL

Daniel 4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

3 How great are his signs! And how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

5 I saw a dream which made me afraid...

10 ...I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.

12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

13 ...And, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven.

14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth:

16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of

men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

20 The tree that thou sawest,...

22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong:...

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth,...and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;

24 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field,...and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

26 ...And thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled...: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

34 And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned

unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever,...

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those who walk in pride he is able to abase.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all. Psalm 103:19.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God rules over all the affairs of man. He permits man to go his own way, but will ultimately rule over all mankind and determine who is truly worthy and fit to share in the eternal reign of His kingdom of righteousness, peace and everlasting joy.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 4:13, "*watcher*": A guardian angel.

Verse 16, "*seven times*": Seven years.

Verse 17, "*to the intent*": So that, or for the purpose. "*ruleth*": Is Master. "*the basest of men*": The lowliest of men.

Verse 19, "*astonied*": Stunned, devastated, stupefied; not able to speak.

Verse 27: "*if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility*": If your prosperity will endure longer.

Verse 34, "*at the end of the days*": At the end of the seven years.

Verse 35: "*he doeth according to his will*": God's will is going to be done regardless of what man chooses to do. It is for man's advantage and happiness to submit himself to the will of God, but if man chooses to go his own way, God's will prevails ultimately even to the destruction of those who refuse to obey Him.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the final chapter in the account of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

God sent him another dream that made him afraid and troubled him greatly. He summoned all the wise men of Babylon to come before him that the interpretation of the dream would be made known to him. But they could not tell him the meaning of the dream. At last Daniel came in before the king and the dream was told to him. He described what he saw in his dream: the great tree in the earth, the height thereof reaching to the heaven, and all about it.

When Daniel heard the dream, he stood speechless for about an hour. He finally was able to tell Nebuchadnezzar what the dream meant. He, the king of Babylon, was that tree, and he was going to be stripped of all that power and majesty and driven out to live in the wilds for seven years. This was to show him just who the true King and ruler among men really was.

Twelve months went by, and still he was lifted up in himself and made the statement that all of this power and glory was his own doing and accomplishment. And then it happened. He became like a beast and had to be driven out into the fields to live like an ox. For seven years he lived in this manner. And then, one day, God restored his reason and understanding. He came back and took over the kingdom, his lords and counsellors accepting him back to power again. But he was a changed man, for he realized what everyone of us need to realize and remember. God rules, and is going to have His way, whether it be for our salvation or for our destruction. "Those who walk in pride God is able to bring down." Pride does not pay.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the tree in king Nebuchadnezzar's dream represent?
2. What did the dream foretell would happen to the king?
3. What was Daniel's counsel to the king?
4. Who took care of the kingdom while the king was like a beast?
6. What was the king's spirit and attitude like after all of this?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Proverbs 16:19. For thus

saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah 57:15. "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." Proverbs 29:23. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." James 4:6, 10. "Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." I Peter 5:5-6.

—Selected by Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Pride is a very deceitful package. While it looks pretty on the outside, it carries dangerous consequences. Pride gives a false sense of invincibility—that no one or nothing can touch you. This particular lesson brings to mind two other instances of great leaders that were brought low by their own conceit.

In the book of Esther, we read of a prideful man named Haman. He had received favors and position from the king, yet none of this satisfied so long as he saw that one man, Mordecai, would not bow down to him. Haman was so full of wrath that he connived a decree to be signed by the king that would rid him of not only Mordecai, but also of the entire Jewish race. However, after three days of prayer and fasting, Queen Esther was able to make her request known to the king concerning prideful Haman's plans. Haman was executed on the very gallows he had so carefully prepared for Mordecai. Pride cost Haman his life.

Another instance of pride is found in the book of Acts. We find that one day, King Herod "arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Acts 12:21-23. King Herod died as a result of his pride.

Beware of pride.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

SEPTEMBER 21, 2008

HOW PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION

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 plaister 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.

10 Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed.

11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him.

12 Now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel,

14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is 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:

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 the God in whose hand thy breath is, 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: Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Although Belshazzar, as king of Babylon, had knowledge of how God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar and brought him down from his pride and vanity, he had refused to take lessons from it, and had not humbled himself to seek God's blessings. He paid for his pride by being slain by the invading Medes and Persians.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 5:6, "*countenance*": The brightness and cheerfulness of his face. "*joints of his loins*": The bones of his body. "*were loosed*": Shook.

Verse 16, "*dissolve doubts*": Solve problems.

Verse 25: "*Mene*": A Chaldea word "a Mina" meaning to count or to number. "*Tekel*": The Chaldea word meaning to be weighed. "*Upharsin*": The same word as "Peres" in verse 28, meaning a split or divided Mina.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is about a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. In our text it sounds like Belshazzar was a son of Nebuchadnezzar, but Josephus tells us differently. He says in Antiquities of the Jews, Book 10, Chapter 21, that, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evil Merodach succeeded in the kingdom. He reigned 18 years, and was succeeded by his son Niglissar who retained the government for 40 years. Then his son, Labosordacus, took over, and after him was Belshazzar. So there was a period of years that went by before Belshazzar began his reign.

So Daniel was probably an old man when the events in our lesson took place. Belshazzar was probably the worst king of all, living only for pleasure and fleshly lusts, with all of his wives and women and the drinking parties they staged. But, at this feast we have on record here, he took a step that insulted the God of Heaven and, no doubt, hastened his end. He called for the golden vessels that had been taken from the house of God in Jerusalem and began to serve his guests with his wine in these vessels, and they praised their heathen gods therewith.

Then came the hand of God on the wall. He called for his wise men to read and interpret the words emblazoned before his terrified vision. But they could not read them nor interpret their meaning. The queen heard of it, and came into the banquet house. Josephus says that this was Belshazzar's grandmother. And she knew about Daniel and could remember how he interpreted dreams and mysterious things. So she suggested that Daniel be consulted, and the king sent for Daniel.

Daniel reminded the king of what had happened to his fore-parent, king Nebuchadnezzar, and how God had humbled him and made him know that He, as God, ruled in the kingdom of men. Then, after reproving him for his hardened pride, Daniel revealed the woeful message from the hand on the wall. Josephus says that the kings, Cyrus of Persia and Darius of Media, were at that time laying siege to Babylon. And, history tells us that that night they invaded the city and took the kingdom, killing Belshazzar.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of king does it appear that Belshazzar was?
2. What did he do at this feast that was a reproach to the true God?

3. Why was Daniel called upon at this time?
4. What did Daniel say as solid reproof to the king?
5. What message did the hand of God on the wall give to him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Daniel reminded Belshazzar of things that he knew about and should have taken to heart. Especially mentioned was the experience that his great, great grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had of being deposed from the throne and made like the wild beasts for seven years and learning the valuable lesson of fearing and respecting the true and living God. And, because he disregarded this, Belshazzar went his own selfish, lustful way and met the horrible end that he did. Could we not be persuaded that God is holding us today responsible to consider what has been brought out in the lives of individuals of history that point to the reality of a great and wise God and Creator who is worthy of our submission and honor?

Think about the errors and folly of men of history who wrecked their own lives and the lives of others only to come to a wretched and disgraceful end at the last! Not only in Bible history, but in the history of the world and of our own country we have examples of unwise and foolish people who made their mark as proof that man is nothing but vanity; how utterly useless their endeavors and efforts were. Then we look at Daniel, Joseph, Noah, Moses, and especially our Lord Jesus Christ. What a contrast! Let us be attentive to the lessons portrayed in histories of the past! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The summer of my 18th year, following high school graduation, stands a night I will never forget. In my dream, I was hoeing in a flowerbed, on a warm beautiful summer afternoon. All of a sudden, without warning, the clouds began to roll (like with a time-lapse camera) and the earth began to tremble under my feet. In the depth of my heart, like instinct, I knew it was the Lord's descent, coming for judgment. I also knew that I was not prepared to meet God. I did exactly what the Bible says, "every knee shall bow." I fell on me knees and began to cry out for mercy. Yet in my mind, I knew there would be no mercy. The door of mercy had closed. However, there was nothing else for me to do. Oh, the anguish and hopeless dread

that came over my soul as I realized that I had waited too late. When I awoke, with heart racing, I ran outside my bedroom in a panic. I remember going back into the bedroom and looking out the window. After a few moments, I began to realize that the beginning taste of hell I just had was a dream. I began to thank God that He had not come back. I knelt by my bed and began to call on the name of the Lord. It didn't stop there. I changed the way I was living. I changed the worldly music I had been listening to, and the immodest dress I was accustomed to wearing. I started going to services. My grandmother saw a change in me and bought me a nice Bible.

Although troubling, I thank the Lord for that dream, because it helped me to recognize I was lost and on the road to misery and hell. I wasn't raised in a Christian home, but like Belshazzar, I knew. My grandmother had taken me to services and camp meetings while I was growing up. I believed the Bible teaching on the Lord's Second Coming. Someday, it won't be a dream but a harsh reality. We will stand before the great throne of God and give account. The songwriter penned, "A shudder came over my spirit, when I thought what a moment might cost." How awful to hear the words, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The "hand writing on the wall" is a term that originated with the incident in the lesson and is often associated with trouble or eminent danger. Have you seen any "hand writing on the wall?"

—Bro. Bob Wilson



SEPTEMBER 28, 2008

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

Daniel 5:31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Daniel 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty day, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persian is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, thy God who thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: ...O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

MEMORY VERSE: Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. Psalm 37:37-38.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Daniel was faithful to keep up his usual devotions and worship before God regardless of the decrees of man against him. God delivered him from the lion's den, but those who accused him perished when they were thrown in.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Daniel 6:2, "*give accounts*": Render reports of the provinces to the three presidents. "*have no damage*": Suffer no loss.

Verse 3, *"thought"*: Was planning.

Verse 4, *"faithful"*: Responsible and worthy of trust.

Verse 7, *"save of thee"*: Except from you.

Verse 8, *"altereth not"*: Cannot be changed.

Verse 10, *"gave thanks"*: Offered praise.

Verse 11, *"making supplication"*: Making petitions and seeking mercy.

Verse 20, *"lamentable"*: Sorrowful.

Verse 24, *"accused"*: Sought to chew him up with slander.
"had the mastery": Overpowered. *"or ever"*: Before.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we saw the kingdom of Babylon taken over by the Medes and the Persians, and Darius, the Median, took the throne. This Darius recognized an excellent spirit in Daniel and preferred him above all the 120 princes and the other two presidents, and named him as the first president and planned to set him over the whole realm. This angered the others, and after failing to find any fault in Daniel, they decided to ensnare him. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave, (Song of Solomon 8:6) and in the heart of an ungodly person it can be just that cruel.

Darius overlooked the fact that Daniel was not among the group that proposed the making of the decree that any one who worshipped another God besides Darius for thirty days would be thrown into the den of lions. He probably felt honored by the idea. He thought so highly of Daniel and was full of sorrow and regret when the news came that Daniel had gone contrary to the statute he had signed. No doubt he studied the laws and books seeking to find some provision that would lift the penalty from this trusted servant.

But when he saw that nothing could be done to save him, he had Daniel cast into the den of lions at the close of the day. He nourished a ray of hope that the God Daniel had served so faithfully would deliver him. Try to imagine the joy that filled his heart when he heard Daniel's answer from the lions' den. And then you can see why he determined to have those evil men, plus their wives and children, thrown to the lions to die a horrible death.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Darius, the king, prefer Daniel above the others?
2. What causes jealousy to rise up in a person's heart and mind?
3. Why was the king not able to deliver Daniel from the lion's den?
4. Who delivered Daniel and how was he delivered?
5. What happened to those evil men who had planned Daniel's death?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions and they did not hurt Daniel. This faithful servant of God who was innocent and pure before Him spent a whole night in that pit with the lions. What a wonderful deliverance that was! Think how Daniel, no doubt, prayed before he was thrown in among those savage beasts! But he was not afraid, because he knew that he had done nothing wrong before God and also before the king. He had no fear. He could have been tempted to do his worship secretly, but he chose to carry it on before the open window toward Jerusalem "as he did aforetime." He knew they would be watching him, and he did not let the fear of man ensnare his soul.

I remember when I was a young boy in a Sunday School class, as the lesson we had this story about Daniel and how the angel came in and shut the lion's mouths. One of the young boys spoke up and said, "I don't see what would keep the lion's from jumping up on Daniel and clawing him to death!" I have thought about that statement through the years. What kept the lions from harming Daniel? It was more than just literally closing their mouths. The power of God controlled their nature and that closed their mouths and their claws.

One minister was speaking about all the animals that went into the ark, and asked the question, "How did they all go in so peacefully and orderly?" Then he answered, "The God of heaven tamed them!" God is still the refuge and strength of all who will trust and obey Him. What a testimony Daniel was, from his youth and up to old age, of the goodness and safety one can find in following God, as a dear child of His! Our God still lives and has control: He will not fail His faithful ones now!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

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