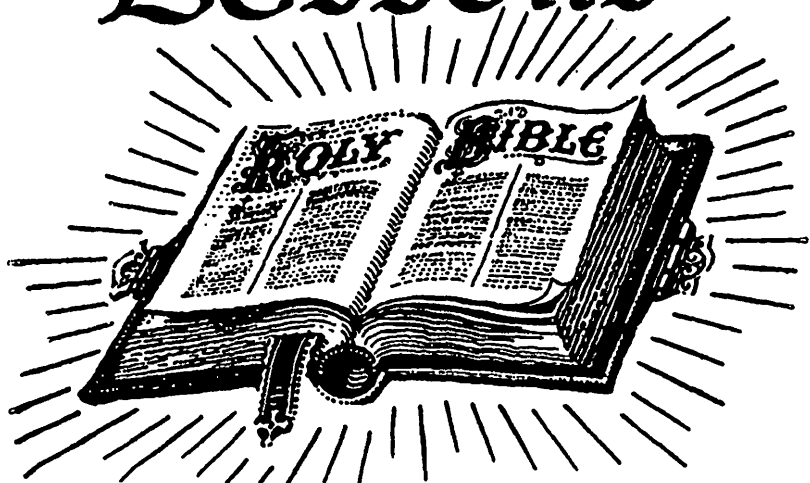


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 40

October, November, December

No. 4

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**Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church**

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR FOURTH QUARTER, 2008

THEME FOR FOURTH QUARTER

We are inspired to study the lessons found in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ of His quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures and His application of them to what He was dealing with at each particular time. We observe the importance of the Scriptures to Christ and His followers, and it is very interesting and enlightening to see how they interpreted and applied them. The last two lessons will cover the wonderful account of the conception and birth of our precious Redeemer, Jesus Christ, in accord with the Christmas season. Our prayer is that the Lord will bless these studies to spiritual edification for everyone.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



OCTOBER 5, 2008

RESISTING THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL

Matthew 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Deuteronomy 8:3 (God speaking to Israel by Moses) And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Matthew 4:5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Deuteronomy 6:16 Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them:

9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Deuteronomy 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you.

Matthew 4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

MEMORY VERSE: We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus resisted the temptations of satan and did not yield in any point, holding fast to the Word of God and chose to please His Father rather than to yield to the attractions of the world and the flesh.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 4:2, "*was an hungred*": Was famishing and craving for food.

Deuteronomy 8:3, "*manna*": The Hebrew expression is "What is it?" The children of Israel came out one morning to find the face of the ground covered with small round things, and when they saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: ("What is it") for they wist (knew) not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. (Exodus 16:14-15.) "*knewest not*": They did not know what it was or what its contents were. God worked in this manner to show them that bread and literal food, of itself, was not the main source of their nourishment or support. It was His Word and their obedience to His Word that ministered to their need. And Jesus quoted this in His resistance to the temptation of the devil to acquire the literal food that His body

was craving. Later the angels came and ministered to Him the things needed, but Jesus would not yield to the suggestions of satan to get it.

Matthew 4:5, "*pinnacle*": Highest corner.

Verse 7, "*tempt*": The Hebrew from Deuteronomy 6:16 means to try, prove, or put to the test. The Greek expression here means to test thoroughly.

Deuteronomy 6:16, "*Massah*": This was the name of the place, as recorded in Exodus 17:1-7, where the people of Israel camped and found no water to drink. They complained and contended with Moses about it, murmuring against him and saying, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" The Lord told Moses to go and smite the rock with his rod and water would come out. Verse 7 says, "And he called the name of the place Massah (temptation), and Meribah (striving), because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?" Adam Clarke comments here: "After such proofs as they had of His presence and His kindness, this was exceeding provoking (to God.) Doubting God's kindness where there are so many evidences of it, is highly insulting to God Almighty." Jesus was tempted here to cast Himself down from the high pinnacle of the temple to prove that He was the Son of God, the devil furnishing scripture from Psalm 90:11 and 12 to try to assure His safety. But Jesus refused the offer, and quoted scripture that forbids deliberately putting God to the test. God has promised to protect us in times of danger, but to deliberately plunge ourselves into dangerous situations for show is tempting God.

Matthew 4:10, "*Get thee hence, Satan*": Jesus is telling the devil to go, withdraw, and get out of His presence.

Hebrews 4:15, "*cannot be touched*": Is not able to sympathize. "*our infirmities*": The frailties and weaknesses of our human flesh. "*in all points tempted*": Enticed on every line of fleshly appetites and desires. "*without sin*": Unmoved, untouched, and absolutely pure from defilement or wrong.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had just previously come from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. Though John did not feel worthy of such action, he submitted to Christ's entreaty and baptized

Him. The Spirit of God descended from Heaven and God spoke saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark 1:12 says that immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. There our Saviour was put to extreme tests and temptations of the devil. In our lesson today we see the extent of this series of temptations. Jesus went without eating for forty days and nights. This is beyond normal human strength. And then, at the end of His fasting, in the depths of His famished craving for nourishment, Satan suggested that Jesus command the stones to turn into loaves of bread. This was the appetite of the flesh. Jesus resisted that on the solid rock of God's Word. Then the devil suggested that Jesus jump down from the high pinnacle of the temple to show that He was the Son of God. Since there were usually people in that area of the temple, Satan made it seem logical that it would be a good way for Jesus to show Himself. But Jesus said, "It is written again." Satan used the scripture, but Jesus counter-balanced it with other scriptures and would not yield. Then Satan tried to tempt Jesus with the kingdoms of the world, but Jesus would not pay homage to the devil, but held fast to His integrity with God. He was tempted in all points that man can be tempted with, and was victorious over the devil. And, through His help and grace, we, too, can overcome all the temptations that we might meet on this journey of life.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What made food so tempting to Jesus?
2. What did Jesus say about bread?
3. In what way was jumping down from the temple tempting God?
4. What attraction did the sight of earthly kingdoms present to Jesus?
5. Why did Jesus have to be tempted in this manner?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I John 2:16 tells us that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Jesus met all three of these influences in His temptations, as shown in our lesson, and all along His life's journey. The lust of the flesh and the appetites of the body He was able to subdue and keep in the will of God. The lust of the eyes, the human way of looking at things from

an outward show, Jesus was able to overcome by not yielding to the suggestion of the devil. The pride of life and being lifted up in the eyes, the praise and admiration of men He was able also to conquer and subdue. Let us look to our Savior today, for at His throne of grace He can minister to us help and strength to overcome all the powers of temptation we might meet in life. — Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There was one voice that could be heard above the others, one laugh that was more jolly, it was Old Bill. His good-natured personality won him the favor of being considered the leader of a group of fellows who called themselves the "bunch." Each night they made the rounds to the saloons then at a late hour staggered homeward. Everyone, but Old Bill, knew he was a drunkard. Oh, he had tried many times to quit. His friends had warned him. His wife had begged him a hundred times with tears running down her face. He had promised again and again to quit drinking, but his habit continued.

One night Bill staggered through the door of his home to find his wife deathly sick. For three days he watched by her bedside, and then the end came. In her dying hour she laid her hand on his and pleaded with him for her sake, and his own, to quit drinking. Bill promised, with hot tears falling like rain, and he meant it with all his heart.

Two days later as he took his final look at his dear wife's form, he vowed with all his strength of will never to drink again. He walked back to his home and the silence that greeted him was more than he could bear. He was heart-broken. Before long a couple of his buddies came to sympathize with him. After a brief conversation, one pulled a bottle from his pocket and offered him a drink. "No, Jack, I'm going to quit the stuff; I promised her I would." "Sure," said Jack, "But you need a little now to settle your nerves." And he lifted the bottle to his own lips then held it out to Bill. The odor of the liquor caused Bill's recently made vow to fade into history. He reached for the bottle and a minute later it was empty. It was a week later before Bill knew what had happened. He had been drunk all week, and he didn't even know what day of the week it was. He then knew, as never before, that drink was his master.

Bill's life continued in a downward spiral. His home and possessions were sold to pay expenses. A kind neighbor gave

him a place to stay and Bill worked for him when he was sober enough to do so. One day some two years later, life was looking pretty bleak to Old Bill, yet, as usual he headed for his nightly entertainment at the saloon. On his way he heard singing. Bill muttered, "I wonder what is going on." He walked in the direction of a tent that he found filled with people. "Strange-looking show" he thought as he approached the entrance. A pleasant young man invited, "Come in, I'll get you a good seat."

Bill soon found himself seated, listening to the singing, and he enjoyed it. Presently a man arose and, with tears running down his face, related that he had been a drunkard, and that after years of trying to overcome the habit, he had finally turned to God for help, and that he was now a free and happy man. Bill understood the struggle part, but not the rest. His life had been one long series of failures. Bill thought of his wife and his broken promises to her. He wondered if she knew he had broken his last vow to her. Did she weep over him now as she used to? Bill's thoughts were deep and his heart was heavy; he wondered, "Would the Lord help me too?"

Near the end of the service the speaker invited men to Christ for the help they needed. Old Bill suddenly found himself up front holding the man's hand and telling him that he wanted help to break the power of drink. They knelt side by side and the saved man began to earnestly pray for Bill. Bill didn't know how to pray, he had never prayed before in his life. The other man was praying for just what Bill needed and Bill began to agree—his heart joined in. It seemed God came close, so he said: "Yes, God, I'll quit it if you'll help me. I'll be a man if you'll help me, but I can't do it by myself!" That was all, but he meant it, and he felt that God would help him. A strange, quiet peace came into his heart, and he really felt happy. He went home sober that night.

The news of Bill's conversion was the topic of conversation in all the saloons in town. The prediction was that "He'll be back by Saturday night." But Bill didn't come back. His heart was changed. He was telling others of the deliverance God had given him. He told his friends that he didn't want strong drink anymore, but they didn't believe him. The prophecies continued week by week but Old Bill never returned. He was living a joyful Christian life and he never tired of telling what the Lord had done for him.

At first the "bunch" laughed at him and made him the object of many rude jests. Then they laid plans to trap him.

One day, one of them stuck an open whisky bottle under his nose, saying, "Smell it Bill; ain't it a fine odor?" Bill stepped back, all smiles, and said quietly, "Well, Tom, drink was my master a long time, but I have a better Master now." Then he went steadily on his way. Eventually he won the respect and confidence of all.

Finally, the end came; Old Bill died with a peaceful smile upon his face. The "bunch" followed him to the grave. They could not understand the wonderful change that had taken place in his life. After the burial they stood talking in a little group by themselves. "I thought the drink had him for sure," said one; "I don't see how he beat it." "It was not Bill who did it," said a quiet voice behind them; "it was Jesus Christ." They turned and saw the pastor walking away. "Guess the parson must have it right," said another. "It was a pretty good job, too." —Selected and condensed by Bro. Willie E. Murphey



OCTOBER 12, 2008

THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And He closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Yewill surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus came into the world to heal and set people free, but too many people in the world who need this deliverance are not aware of what they are in bondage to and what they need to be healed of.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 4:16, "*as his custom was*": Our Lord had been brought up as a child and young man to be faithful in attending the public services in the synagogue. This is a very important part of a child and young person's life. As Adam Clarke remarks: "To worship God publicly is the duty of every man, and no man can be guiltless who neglects it." We might add that there are those individual cases where persons refuse to attend church services on account of convictions against what is taught and upheld in such. God knows and understands that. But to deliberately neglect the worship of God because of slothful negligence is a serious affront to our Maker.

Verse 17, *"opened the book"*: Unrolled the scroll.

Verse 18, *"bruised"*: Crushed, beaten, mistreated.

Verse 19, *"the acceptable year of the Lord"*: The time approved and chosen of God to accept and receive all who seek Him for His salvation.

Verse 20, *"minister"*: Attendant or assistant.

Verses 22, *"bear him witness"*: Beheld and observed him. *"gracious words"*: The message of hope and deliverance for a crushed and fallen race.

Verse 25, *"of a truth"*: It is true.

Verse 26, *"save"*: Except.

Verse 31, *"with power"*: Backed by Divine Authority.

Hebrews 7:25, *"to the uttermost"*: Completely, entirely and to the utmost degree.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus Christ had just returned from the forty days of fasting and overcoming the temptations of the devil, filled with the Holy Spirit and the power of God. He came and taught in the synagogues of Galilee, and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. He no doubt had done many miracles and healings as He went from place to place.

He came then to Nazareth where He had been brought up from childhood. And on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue where He had attended services in His youth. We do not know whether it had been His custom to stand up and read from the law and the prophets, but it may have been. Someone, probably the attendant, handed Him the book of the prophet Esaias, or Isaiah. He unrolled it to the place which is in our Bible editions today found in the 61st chapter of Isaiah, starting at verse 1. It is generally believed that it was the Septuagint Greek version that He read from. There is a little more to that part of Isaiah 61:1-3 than what is quoted here in Luke 4. Not only was the acceptable year of the Lord to be preached, but "the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint (give or reward) unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

But Jesus came to declare to them that this scripture from Isaiah was being fulfilled in their ears on that very day. This meant that He was the One Who was being anointed of the

Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news of healing, deliverance, recovering of sight and the acceptable day of salvation. But then it is shown that the people did not receive His message. Then He mentioned the two happenings in sacred history that show what conditions were existing even then. Why was Elias (Elijah) not sent to any of the many widows in Israel, and why was Naaman, the Syrian, the only leper cleansed in the time of Eliseus (Elisha)? It was simply that these prophets would have been rejected by the others, even as Jesus was going to be rejected by His own countrymen that very day. And we see what happened as they ran Him out of the city and tried to destroy Him even then. But His time had not yet come, and Christ was able to escape. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus declare about Isaiah's prophecy?
2. Why did the people react toward Jesus as they did?
3. What was the healing, deliverance and good news Christ offered?
4. Why did Jesus mention Elias and Eliseus?
5. What did the people of Nazareth endeavor to do?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is a sad scene that is revealed in our lesson today! Jesus was being mightily used of God in other places, but when He came to where He had been brought up as a child and young man, He found a different reception. He had taught in the other cities, being glorified by all. But in Nazareth, among people who had known Him before, He was despised and rejected. Mark 6:1-6 tells about His visit to Nazareth and how the people were offended at Him. And it says in verses 5 and 6, "And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief."

It is a fact that our Lord and Savior was, as Isaiah 53:3 foretold, "...despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." And also Isaiah 8:14 prophesied that He would be "for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel." He is yet the same today. He is still being despised and rejected by the proud and self-sufficient of humanity. Only the

poor in spirit, those who mourn and are anxious to find the real peace of God, the meek, the honest and pure in heart, those who are aware of their captivity to sin, and their doom to eternal hell—only these, I say, will esteem Him as He really is and find Him precious to their souls. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I'm sure you have done as I have, many times, while reading this account of Jesus' declaration of His fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy and the people's wrathful response. I have shuddered with amazement and horror at their rejection and unbelief. But think about this for a moment: Is their response really any worse than what many people today have done with the Gospel message? We are told that Jesus came to heal our broken hearts; how many of us have gone for years with brokenness in our lives, because we have not yielded completely to Him? He said He came to deliver the captives; how many of us still slave under the bondage of sin—addictions, fears, anger, weakness, carnality? How many are really set at liberty from the bruises of the past? Injuries still lay buried beneath layers of self-protection, and healing has never taken place.

Someone has said that indifference is the worst kind of rejection. Not taking full advantage of the precious and complete deliverance Christ brought us, never gaining the victory simply because we are too busy with the cares of this life, too lazy to make the effort to seek Him diligently, and too unconcerned about the matters of utmost spiritual importance—this is just as horrible as thrusting Him out of our city, intent upon casting Him off of the cliff.

Have you really believed to the saving of your soul?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



OCTOBER 19, 2008

CHRIST BRINGING DIVISION ON EARTH

Micah 7:5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her

mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

MEMORY VERSE: He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Matthew 10:37.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Choosing to follow the meek and lowly Jesus in His holiness and separation from this present evil world will put us at variance with those who are not willing to take the way of the cross, even with those of our own family in the flesh.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Micah 7:5, "*friend*": Companion or whoever you associate with. "*guide*": Close and familiar friend. "*keep the doors of thy mouth*": Guard the opening of your mouth, that is, be very careful what you speak or say. "*her that lieth in your bosom*": God-given wife or companion.

Matthew 10:28, "soul": The life of one's body, the inner man. "hell": The Greek word is *Gehenna*, which is the lake of fire, the place of everlasting punishment.

Verse 29, "farthing": The lowest measure of money. "without your Father": The same expression in Luke 12:6 says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?"

Verse 32, "confess": Acknowledge and openly testify and honor. "deny": Forsake and turn away from.

Verse 35, "sword": War and conflict.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is found as part of the instructions that Jesus Christ our Savior gave to His twelve disciples when He sent them forth to go out into the cities, towns and villages to preach the kingdom of God, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils. Luke 9:6, speaking of the same, said that "they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere." Then in verse 10 Luke said, "And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done." But, though we may not all be commissioned personally of the Lord to go out like this, yet there are truths and words of instruction that we can be enlightened by in our present day.

Part of our lesson today is referring to what is written in Micah 7:5-6, which we have as the first scripture of our lesson. In our lesson Jesus applied that to Himself in verses 35 and 36, weaving His teachings around the fact that His work in this present evil world would bring sharp conflict and contradiction with the spirit that rules in this world. The prophecy of Micah was the Word of the Lord that came to him during the reign of several kings of Judah, Hezekiah being one of them. Even back in those days there was the strife and conflict between those who truly loved and served God and those who served Him not. Along with Micah's words of warning that Jesus quoted is a statement of faith and trust in the Almighty in Micah 7:7, "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." That is the confidence that we can have today in the great conflicts and oppositions that we will meet in this world.

In our lesson, Jesus gives us important words of comfort and counsel that will help us through the trying times we will encounter. "Fear not them which kill the body," "The very hairs

of your head are all numbered," and His promise to confess us before His Father if we will be faithful to confess Him before men; all these are encouraging to the faithful soul. Then we have the warning to not love anyone, not even our life, more than we love Christ. There is also a cross that every one of His children will have to bear: suffering, persecution, shame, reproach, rejection, and even death. But, if we will be willing to bear that cross and lose our life for His sake, we shall find it unto life eternal in the resurrection from the dead and the world to come.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we not have to fear them that kill the body?
2. What did Christ send on earth instead of peace?
3. What makes foes in one's own household?
4. How can we prove that we love Christ more than anyone else?
5. Why must we be willing to literally lose our life for Christ?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In our lesson today we are brought face to face with the reality of the awful situation we are facing in our stand for Christ and what He brought when He came into this wicked world. He brought salvation and eternal hope for us, but along with this comes tribulation and great straits of difficulty and sorrow. Jesus said in John 16:33, at the close of His final conference with His disciples before He was arrested and sentenced to the death of the cross: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

This world is not a very nice place. Oh, it has lots of beauties and enjoyable blessings in nature and what God created in the beginning. But our earth is laden and pressed down with sorrow, disappointment, strife, perils, misery, death, destruction and all kinds of trouble. There is sickness, storms of adverse weather, accidents, destructive fires, financial problems, poverty and many other things that make life full of woe and grief. But, most of all, there is the darkness and error that fills the heart of man, because of his pride and lustful desires for things that are displeasing to God. This

awful germ of woe is in the government, the operation of business and man's struggles for success and prosperity. But there is hope and help for us in the grace of Jesus. He was in the world and suffered and was tempted so greatly, but He overcame and was obedient to His Father and submitted Himself to suffer the death of the cross. But God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places to intercede for us and give us grace and help for every time of need.

We must yield our lives to Him, seek Him with all our hearts in prayer and earnest submission to do His will. We must set our affections on Him and things above. We must renounce pride, covetousness, unholy passions and desires, and follow Him in humility, mercy, forgiveness, self-denial and obedience. We must live to please Him and keep ourselves in the love of God. It is not easy, but, by His grace, we can do it. Let us face up to this great challenge and accept it. It is the only way that we can escape the destruction of this present evil world. Paul faced it and fought a good fight and overcame, and so can we by the help of the Lord. "...Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

While we do have to be **in** this world, we do not have to be **of** this world. We are surrounded by people all of the time: at home, at work, at school, at church. Be careful who you are influenced by. This can make or break a Christian. Be a positive influence on their lives rather than allowing their companionship to be a negative influence on yours. We have many, many good examples in the Bible of saints who put God in the forefront of their lives and their lives were blessed: Joseph, Ruth, Daniel, just to name a few. Then there are also examples of those who were sidetracked by the influences of their families and friends: Samson, Solomon, Aquilla and Priscilla.

I remember a song I heard as a child that said "How do you treat God, how do you treat God? Like a G-O-D or a D-O-G? How do you treat God?" The gist of the song was do we put God

as our first priority or do we just toss Him a bone and promise to take a walk with Him later? God wants be the center of our lives; not husband or wife, not children, not sister or brother. He is a jealous God. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." was not just a passing comment. It was a commandment. He is the ultimate authority.

May our determination be such that no person can draw us away from our Lord and Savior. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Galatians 5:7. When God is the center of your life, everything else will fall into place.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



OCTOBER 26, 2008

THAT WHICH TRULY DEFILES A MAN

Matthew 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Mark 7:17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

Matthew 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

Mathew 15:20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

MEMORY VERSE: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. Mark 7:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Men and women are made impure and unclean in the sight of God because of wicked ways and thoughts that proceed from their innermost being.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 15:1, "*scribes*": Men employed to write the words of the Law of Moses. "*Pharisees*": The word itself means "to be separate." Adam Clarke describes them as "very numerous sect among the Jews, who, in their origin, were, very probably, a pure and holy people, but, in the process of time, like all religious sects and parties, they degenerated, lost the spirit of their institution, and had only a form of godliness."

Verse 2, "*tradition*": A precept handed down from generations previous.

Verse 5, "*It is a gift*": The Pharisees taught the people to give as a gift to the Pharisee leader the means needed to care for their parents. It was a covetous practice that went right against the law of God. This was the tradition that Jesus was talking about that made the commandment of God of none effect.

Verse 7, "*hypocrites*": False professors of godliness.

Verse 11, "*defileth*": Profanes, pollutes, makes unclean.

Verse 18, "*heart*": The center and inmost seat of affections, desires, attitudes, intentions, and dispositions of a man.

Mark 7:21, "*evil thoughts*": Depraved and injurious motives.

Verse 22, "*covetousness*": Greedy desire for worldly gain. "*wickedness*": Malice, ill-will. "*lasciviousness*": Loose and lustful desires uncontrolled by godly fear. "*evil eye*": Looking upon others with a hurtful purpose. "*pride*": Haughtiness; exalting of one's self. "*foolishness*": Not controlled by good sense and godly wisdom.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Pharisees were a leading class of men who professed to be godly and obedient to the law, but they were void of the Spirit of God and were in great error in their teachings. Their spirit did not blend with the Son of God, and they were constantly at odds and in disagreement with Him. We draw our lesson today from Matthew and Mark telling of one of these conflicts.

In Mark's account the Pharisees had seen some of Christ's disciples eating bread without washing their hands, and they found fault. He stated that the Pharisees, except they often wash their hands, would not eat, and that it was a tradition of the older leaders. And Mark went further to say that they had many other traditions such as washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels and tables. They were ready to criticize and condemn anyone who did eat without this washing. But Christ had the answer and showed what scripture they were fulfilling in this tradition, and in another practice that had the leaders taking means as an offering or gift from people who really should have used it to care and provide for their parents. Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29:13. He rightly labeled them as hypocrites.

After His conflict with the Pharisees, Christ spoke to the people the parable that it is not what comes from without that defiles a man, but rather that which comes from within. He explained more fully to His disciples that it was the corruption within the heart of man coming out that really defiled the man. And He listed what those evil things were. This agrees with what Solomon said in Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." —

Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus say would really defile a man?
2. Where does this defilement in a man come from?

3. Why are people today unaware of the depravity of their hearts?
4. Where does all the adultery and fornication come from?
5. How can people so easily transgress God's law in these things?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The heart of man is where all the trouble and wickedness in the world comes from. When man sinned against God and transgressed His commandment in the beginning, it planted the principle of sin and disobedience right down in the center of man's affections, desires and appetites. Jeremiah 17:9-10 states it just like it really is: "The heart is deceitful above all thing, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins (thoughts and intents), even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." While the Pharisees were very careful about outward cleanliness of things, Jesus drove right at the real problem, and that was what was in the heart. The hearts of these self-righteous Pharisees was corrupt and full of evil. How could they think so highly of themselves and have such murderous feelings toward Christ? How often they would converse among themselves about how they could have Him killed! Their hearts were corrupt, but they were not aware of it, and they had no desire to be aware of it.

People are just like that today. How many of the things that Jesus listed as being in the heart do we see working in our world today? They are all there. Why is there so much murder taking place in our society? It is because it is in the heart. Think of all the double-marriages and adultery spread abroad in our land. There is nothing so plainly exposed, described and condemned in the Holy Scriptures than the sin of adultery. Why is it so rampant and in such a great proportion? It is because of the depravity and wicked lust that is rooted in the heart of man.

What about covetousness, and the love of money? Paul said in I Timothy 6:10 that the love of money is the root of all evil. It is one of the worst depravities that mortals fall a victim to. It is evident that the Jewish leaders in Christ's time were defiled with this evil. Why would they want people to take the means that they needed to support their parents with and give

it to them? Covetousness was in their heart. How about thefts? Think of all the dishonesty in government, business, and private life today. The desire for worldly gain promotes this corruption in our society. It is in the heart, deeply rooted in the corrupt and evil nature that possesses people. Oh, it is an evil and wicked society that we live among. But most people are not aware of their evil condition of heart and life. God gave us His law, and Jesus has given His life as a ransom. If we will be honest and humble before God, His Spirit will convict us of the defilement of our hearts and it will be a means of drawing us to Him to find salvation and deliverance from our sins.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The words we speak and the acts we do are a window to man's innermost being. Jesus mentioned that the type of tree could be determined by its fruit. Every good tree bears good fruit and an evil tree bears evil fruit. Sometimes people try to hide the evil that is in their hearts, but this cannot be successfully accomplished because the evil will crop out with its ugly fruit sooner or later. Then people know what we are. Sometimes we can try to mask over the evil by doing some good works, once again this will turn out unsuccessful because good works will not annul the bad. On other occasions, people try to believe they are good within themselves, and all the time the bad fruit bears another testimony.

What people need today is a heart transplant. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26. That is a bargain I ever heard of one. The Lord will take the hardened (through deceitfulness of sin) heart and give us a brand new one that is pure, honest and holy; that causes us to walk in His statutes. With a new heart comes new and good desires and it will bear good fruit that our families will want and enjoy.

The plan of salvation meets man's deepest need. No wonder the writer wrote, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The burden of guilt and sin are removed with the old heart.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

NOVEMBER 2, 2008

MARRIAGE: THE INSTITUTION OF GOD

Matthew 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh, What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

MEMORY VERSE: The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. I Corinthians 7:39.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God's plan from the beginning was for marriage to be a wonderful blessing and benefit to man, and if we will seek to know His will, and be submissive thereto, we can have the great happiness that He designed for us in marriage.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 19:3, "*tempting*": Looking for something to find fault with. "*for every cause*": For any reason.

Verse 4, "*made them*": Planned, designed and created them as such.

Verse 6, "*joined together*": Yoked and coupled to each other. "*put asunder*": Separate; take apart.

Verse 7, "*divorcement*": Complete separation and disunion.

Verse 8, "*hardness of your hearts*": Being blind and destitute of spiritual understanding.

I Corinthians 7:3, "*due benevolence*": The kindness, love, tenderness, concern, care, interest and deep devotion that each owes to the other.

Verse 4, "*power*": Authority or control. The husband and wife should have this mutual attitude to one another: "My body is not mine, but yours. I want you to be pleased with me, more than what I would be pleased."

Ephesians 5:25, "*gave himself for it*": Laid down His life on the behalf of the church, for her salvation, welfare and happiness.

Verse 29, "*nourisheth*": Feeds, cares for; ministers help, support, protection and tender feelings of regard and esteem. "*cherisheth*": Clings to and diligently protects and shelters with tender affection.

Verse 30, "*members of his body*": Each one of Christ's followers who are truly His is a vital part of His glorified body. Oh, what a wonderful treasure we have in being joint-heirs with our blessed Savior!

Verse 33, "*in particular*": Individually, or one by one. "*reverence*": Hold in loving respect.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will look into one of the greatest (if not the greatest) themes of the Bible. It is that of God's institution and plan of marriage for man and woman, and that which it is a direct type and testimony of. When God created man He had in mind to make them male and female and establish them in a union of love, pleasure and happiness. But He also had something else in His wonderful heart and mind. He wanted to exemplify another greater and more wonderful marriage-- the marriage of His true and faithful people to Himself. And He set it all up for our benefit and total happiness.

We first consider what Christ said to the Pharisees when they asked Him if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for any reason. Jesus referred them to the Scriptures and what God planned for marriage in the beginning. He showed them very plainly that it was never intended for man and woman who were united in marriage to separate except in the event of the death of one or the other. "Let not man put asunder what God has joined together." But the Pharisees countered with the question of why Moses made provision for man to put his wife away with a writing of divorcement. Notice where Jesus put the blame and cause for this provision. It was "because of the hardness of your hearts" that Moses allowed them to put away their wives. It was not in the original plan. Therefore we need to keep in mind how God intended marriage to work and bring the desired blessing.

In order to show the real divine grace and goodness in marriage, we have two different sources from Paul's writings that bring out the real essence of God's plan. In I Corinthians 7 we have the function in marriage of the sweet and loving attitude of kindness and affection that wife and husband owe to each other. Also he shows how each allows the other to control and have authority over his or her body. If couples who are married will maintain that kind of relationship in the love and fear of God, there will be no separation or divorce. Then from Ephesians we have the glorious and wonderful truth of marriage being a picture of the relationship we who are redeemed and saved in Christ have with Him. Oh, what a precious truth this is! All who unite themselves to Christ in the salvation and sanctification of the soul become members of His body, and make up His bride. Oh, may the Lord bless this to every one and illuminate each heart to its glorious reality!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. In instituting marriage, what was God's original plan for man
2. Why did Moses in the law make provision for divorce-ment?
3. How should man and wife relate to each other for happiness?
4. What is marriage between man and wife a type of?
5. What does it mean for us to be members of Christ's body?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To experience true love and happiness in a marriage union between a man and woman is a blessed and wonderful experience in life. God designed and intended that it be such. He planned it for man's joy, pleasure and happiness. To have a beautiful wife to love, enjoy, live with, work with, go places with and then to enjoy her company night and day is truly a precious treasure. But it must be God—planned and brought to pass in each individual case. It is sad to behold in our society the many marriages that crumble to failure and separation. God instituted the first marriage of Adam and Eve. But sin came into the world, and with it came frustration, failure, sorrow and many broken and ruined lives. Every person really needs to give their heart to God and let Him lead them in this all-important matter.

But there is another marriage that is even more wonderful and enjoyable. And that is for us to give our hearts to Jesus in love and devotion, and become a part of His holy spotless Bride that He will love and cherish forever and ever! When we give up the world, die to self and our ways, become new creatures in Christ and let His Holy Spirit come and live within our hearts, we become members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones. We possess the same Spirit that He had when He was here in this mortal flesh. And when He comes in power and glory to judge the world, we will be changed to immortal bodies like unto His immortal body. Oh, it will be worth all that we ever suffer to attain unto that blessed resurrection unto life eternal! Oh, let us each one exercise care and be sure we live faithfully in His blessed will through all of this life unto the very end!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

While the divorce courts in our land are busy with the issues that arise from married couples who are breaking up, there are still a few people who believe that the vow, "til death do you part" is God's plan for their lives. And at the same time, these special people are doing everything within their power to make their sojourn through this life a happy one. You are likely acquainted with dear Saints that have lived many years of life together and were still so deeply in love with each other that their separation, brought about by death, was a painful experience. Their beautiful lives testify of the power and grace that God offers those who are committed to living to please Him rather than themselves.

Individual circumstances may vary from one couple to another and it is easy for those having problems to think, concerning those who are being successful, "but they don't have to put up with what I have to." That statement may be true, but rest assured, God's grace is sufficient for you too. Those who will put forth the necessary effort to seek and implement God's plan for their life will also find His strength and favor.

There is no greater place to apply I Corinthians 13, commonly referred to as the "love chapter," than in a marital relationship. Those who will take the principles of this chapter and diligently apply them in their own life are sure to see a notable improvement in their home. It will certainly transform you, and it will likely have a dramatic effect on your spouse also. Selfishness, pettiness and complaining are guilty of causing many disruptions in family relationships, and each individual should carefully guard against these unChristlike behaviors.

As we yield to one another in the spirit of Christ we will find that the bond of unity strengthens and our joy will increase; the enemy will be defeated and another testimony of God's overcoming power will be given to an unbelieving world. Then when death claims our loved one we can find consolation in reflecting on the victorious experiences God has given us and look forward to the day we also join the hosts of Saints who are rejoicing around God's throne in Heaven.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

NOVEMBER 9, 2008

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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

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

John 3:3 ...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

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

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

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God's everlasting kingdom is not an earthly dominion of human power and rule, but it is rather a spiritual power and rule that rules in the hearts of men, changing them from sin to righteousness, from fleshly things to spiritual realities, and lifts them up from this fleeting world to eternal treasures in the world to come.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Mark 1:15, "*at hand*": Has come near. "*repent ye*": You must reform, amend and change your ways from sin and transgression to holiness.

John 3:3, "*born again*": Born from above.

Verse 5, "*born of water and of the Spirit*": Be changed from a fleshly life to a spiritual life in obedience to the Word (as a cleansing like unto water), and to the Holy Spirit of God.

Verse 7, "*Marvel not*": Do not be surprised nor think it strange.

Matthew 5:3, "*poor in spirit*": Having a deep sense of one's destitute condition and need.

Matthew 6:33, "*seek ye first*": Make it your priority and most important matter. "*all these things*": All the material things of food and raiment. "*shall be added*": Shall be abundantly provided.

Luke 16:16, "*presseth*": Puts forth determined and all-out effort.

Luke 17:20, "*with observation*": With outward show.

Verse 21, "*within you*": Inside your heart and spirit; your inner man.

John 18:36, "*not from hence*": Not from here in this present world. It is from God and Heaven.

Verse 37, "*Art thou a king then?*": Are you really a king? "*Every one that is of the truth*": Any person who is of a true heart and is honest before God and man, genuine and sincere without hypocrisy or deceit.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is the grand and glorious subject of the kingdom of God that Jesus came to bring to us from Heaven, to be set up in our hearts and lives. We do not have any quotations of Him from the Old Testament Scriptures included in our lesson, but there are plenty of references to Christ the King of glory and the kingdom of God to be found there in the prophets and Psalms. In our lesson we have the kingdom of God set forth as to what it is, where it is set up, how to enter into it, and what it can mean to the soul of man.

The kingdom of God is not a dominion such as what man seeks to have and maintain in his pride and selfish desires. It is a rule and government of God working and guiding and controlling our lives in purity and righteousness for our eternal welfare and happiness. It is a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in being led and governed by the Heavenly Father, through His precious Holy Spirit dwelling in the hearts of men. Our Memory Verse expresses this very well.

To enter this heavenly kingdom we must repent and turn away from all sin and unrighteousness and be willing to trust in and obey all the teachings of God and His Son Jesus Christ. It is being changed into a new creature, and is a new birth of life from above. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and this is what our Savior told him. One has to be born from above, born of the Word and the Spirit of God. As Matthew 5:3 says, (part of the Savior's Sermon on the Mount,) we must be aware of our poverty and destitute condition before God. This contradicts the pride and vainglory that humanity is so prone to take on. We must face up to the truth about ourselves and be willing to confess our lost and sinful condition of heart and life. We must seek earnestly for the kingdom of God and make it our number one priority. Nothing in this world is as important as being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. (Colossians. 1:13.) We must give up all our ways, thoughts and treasures to be able to gain entrance to the kingdom of God. We must press our way into this wonderful life, and let God set it up in the depths of our hearts.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What all must we do to enter into the kingdom of God?
2. Why is the new birth so important to gaining entrance?
3. Where is the kingdom of God to be set up?

4. What are some of the things we must give up?
5. How is the kingdom of God so much greater than everything else?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus came to set up a kingdom that will never pass away. The thrones of men and kingdoms of this world have come and gone from the scope of history. Men have arisen with great power and held sway over nations and peoples. But after a time their kingdom crumbles and someone else takes over. Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Adolph Hitler, and many more have portrayed the vanity of earthly rule and dominion. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the great Babylonian Empire, had a dream that he needed to have interpreted to his troubled mind. And he found that Daniel was able, by the help of His God, to give him the answer that he needed. Daniel showed him that the dream pictured that his kingdom of Babylon would be followed by three more great kingdoms, namely, the Medes and the Persian, the Greek and the Roman Empires. But Daniel brought out that the dream foretold that during the Roman Empire, the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom that would stand forever. Daniel 2 tells the story. This everlasting kingdom was the great kingdom that Christ set up by His faithful obedience to God, His death on the cross, His triumphant resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. "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.

This is the spiritual kingdom that God has set up through the indwelling Holy Spirit, which is given to all who believe in Jesus and follow Him faithfully. We who have been partakers of the glory and majesty of this spiritual dominion of love, humility, holiness, purity and victory over sin are full of joy and happiness, even though we strive not for the vain pleasures and treasures of this present evil world. We have found the true riches of grace and hope, and are willing to relinquish all fleshly desires in preference to the victory and peace experienced deep down in our innermost being.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When John the Baptist began announcing the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah, Matthew records that he said, "...Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. I remember a minister in my youth that told us that this translated literally: "The royal majesty of the heavens approaches."

My thoughts go to the beautiful descriptions of the King of kings in prophecy. David said, "I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty...." and again, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty." Psalm 145:5; 45:3. Isaiah promises, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty...." Isaiah 33:17. He had a vision of the Messiah, Whom he saw "...high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Isaiah 6:1. John recognized that Isaiah had seen Jesus Christ, revealed in His glory. (John 12:41.)

Today, have you seen Christ in His majesty and glory? Do you gladly herald His arrival to those who need the message? Are you enjoying the greatness of the kingdom and reigning with Christ over all your enemies? Do you commune daily with the *Royal Majesty of the Heavens*? —Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



NOVEMBER 16, 2008

CHRIST'S LOWLY ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

Matthew 21:1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

MEMORY VERSE: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matthew 11:28-29.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus Christ, the King of glory, made His entrance into Jerusalem seated on a lowly donkey. He then went into the temple, (called in the Scriptures the house of prayer,) and cleared it of the crowd of moneymakers. Then when the leaders complained about how the children were praising Him, Jesus quoted what the Scriptures said about that.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 21:1, "*Bethphage*": A small village just east of Jerusalem.

Verse 2, "*ass*": A slow, sure-footed, long-eared, beast of burden; a donkey.

Verse 3, "*ought*": Anything. "*straightway*": Right away; at once.

Verse 5, "*meek*": Mild, humble, gentle; an attitude of taking evil treatment without complaint, reviling back or threatening. "*foal*": The Greek word means son or offspring.

Verse 8, "*strawed*": Spread.

Verse 9, "*Hosanna*": Meaning "Oh, save!" and is an exclamation of adoration and praise.

Verse 10, "*moved*": Shaken or trembling.

Verse 16, "*perfected praise*": Uttered praise that is worthy and acceptable.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson from the life and teachings of Jesus, today we have three different incidents when scriptures from the Old Testament were quoted with reference to what was going on at the time. Jesus had come from Galilee and was nearing Jerusalem. It was His purpose to come riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. It does not say that Jesus referred to the Scripture Himself that prophesied that He would do this, although we know that He well knew about it. Matthew states the scripture that is found in Zechariah 9:9, which we will quote now from the King James Version: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon as ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." So Jesus, in fulfillment of the scripture, sent two of His disciples into the village where they found the donkey and its colt just as He had said they would. Mark 11:5-6 says that they were questioned about taking the donkey as Jesus had said. And, being allowed to take the donkey, they brought it to Jesus. Jesus mounted it, and with multitudes going before and following after, He rode into the city.

Very soon Jesus went into the temple, and beheld the moneychangers at work buying and selling creatures that were to be used for sacrifices. His zeal for the House of God took hold and He drove them all out, quoting from Isaiah 56:7. This prophecy is really fulfilled in the spiritual house that Christ was to bring about, but He applied it just so for that literal house as well. The House of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth is a true House

of prayer. (I Timothy 3:15.) The children of God who are born again and led by the Spirit of God live in constant communion with God and the Savior at His right hand.

Jesus ministered to the blind and the lame that came to Him in the temple, and healed them. It was visible to the leaders, and they were sore displeased, especially when they heard the children praising Jesus. But Jesus quoted the scripture from Psalm 8:2, which says, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength...." The phrase "perfected praise" is the Greek Septuagint version reading. These incidents show how Jesus applied the sacred Scriptures to His wonderful operations in His ministry.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus want to come riding into Jerusalem on a donkey?
2. What does this signify and bring out about Jesus?
3. Why did the presence of moneychangers displease Jesus?
4. What scripture did He use to support what He did?
5. How did Jesus justify the children for their praises?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus rode upon the lowly animal, called an ass. Webster's dictionary says that an ass is "a patient, slow, sure-footed, long eared animal, a donkey." The prophet called Jesus King, and truly He is to every lowly and humble child of God. He did not come to Jerusalem riding in a fine chariot drawn by fine horses. Today, people who have the characteristics of a donkey are the ones whom Jesus, by His Spirit, is resting upon; for they sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh to receive praise of men. Are you willing to bear the reproach of the cross, to be counted as one of the despised few, that Christ by His Spirit may rest upon you? Are you willing to take the lowly and humble way through life that you may wear a crown of glory? Isaiah 32:20 says, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." In this verse we understand that God's ministers are typified by an ox or an ass, and those who support them with their means and other substance (in order to get the Gospel to men,) are blessed people. The characteristic of a child of God is to be slow and sure. They are not hasty in their decisions and often you will

hear them say, "Wait until I pray about the matter." Spiritually speaking, their ears are long and they reach to Heaven and hear what the Lord will say unto them. When the world looks upon a real child of God they think he is obstinate and set in his ways, determined and contrary to the course of this world. They look upon him as stubborn because he will not take medicine but trusts the Lord for his healing. Thus they say that we, the children of God, are stubborn, because we will not attend the picture shows, games and races. They say the sisters are dull and stupid, that they do not know when the styles in dress change, for they just keep on wearing their long dresses, long sleeves, and long hair. Many things that God's children do seem foolish and childish to the worldly wise and great men of the earth. Yes, the child of God is like the ox and the ass, determined to let God work in him, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

—From the writings of Bro. Fred Pruitt,
in God's Gracious Dealings

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made a den of thieves." Matthew 21:12-13. Jesus entered the temple with Holy Spirit boldness; He did not cleanse the temple through a carnal temper tantrum. We see that after the temple was cleansed then the "blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them." This healing could not be done until the greedy merchants were driven out.

Clark's Commentary says, "Our Lord alludes here to those dens and caves in Judea, in which the public robbers either hid or kept themselves fortified. They who are placed in the Church to serve souls, and do it not, and they who enjoy the revenues of the Church, and neglect the service of it, are thieves and robbers in more senses than one.

"Our Lord is represented here as purifying His temple; and this we may judge He did in reference to His true temple, the Church, to show that nothing that was worldly or unholy should have any place among His followers, or in that heart in which He should condescend to dwell. It is marvelous that these interested, vile men did not raise a mob against Him; but it is probable they were overawed by the Divine power, or

seeing the multitudes on the side of Christ, they were afraid to molest him.

"Having condemned the profane use of the temple, He now shows the proper use of it. It is a house of prayer, where God is to manifest His goodness and power in giving sight to the spiritually blind, and feet to the lame. The Church in which the blind and the lame are not healed has no Christ in it, and is not worthy of attendance." —Sis. LaDawna Adams



NOVEMBER 23, 2008

BEING TRUE KEEPERS OF GOD'S VINEYARD

Matthew 21:33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

MEMORY VERSE: ...The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Matthew 21:42 and Psalm 118:22-23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus presented a parable that pictured Israel as evil husbandmen of God's vineyard, who lost sight of their true state and responsibility before God, turned against Him and His servants, and finally killed His beloved Son that He had sent to them.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 21:33, "*parable*": A story of common life conveying a lesson or moral. "*householder*": Master of the house, or head of the family. "*hedged*": Built a barrier or protective fence. "*let it out*": Rented it. "*winepress*": A pit or vat dug to house the apparatus that squeezed the juice from the grapes to produce wine. "*tower*": An elevated structure as a "lookout" for safety against thieves and intruders. "*husbandmen*": Workers who dressed and cared for and harvested the grapevines.

Verse. 37, "*his son*": Mark 12:6 expressed it, "one son, his well beloved," and Luke 20:13 says, "my beloved son." "*reverence*": Respect, regard, and highly esteem.

Verse 38, "*heir*": The one who was to inherit the vineyard. "*setze on*": Take over the vineyard.

Verse 41, "*He will miserably destroy those wicked men*": The Greek says, "Bad men! He will badly destroy them.

Verse. 42, "*rejected*": Refused to accept. "*this is the Lord's doing*": This happened from the Lord. "*marvelous*": Wonderful; to be admired and gratefully received.

Verse 43, "*the head of the corner*": Or, chief corner stone. This was a stone in the foundation of a building to which two sides were to line up in a perfectly square corner, or 90 degree angle. This corner would be what the whole building lined up to. This is what Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God, is to His Church, His people. His life, teachings, ways, attitudes and

every principle of His life was without sin and blameless before God. He was the perfect example laid down for us to follow and to line up to.

Verse 44, *"fall on this stone"*: Bowed in complete submission and trust and builds upon that stone, finding refuge in Christ. *"shall be broken"*: This means broken in spirit and made humble and submissive. *"on whomsoever it shall fall"*: On whoever Christ falls upon in His wrath and judgment. *"grind him to powder"*: Bring upon him everlasting destruction in the last great day.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our last lesson we had the account of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey, His clearing out the offensive element in the temple, His healing in the temple and the children praising God for His works. In our present lesson it is the next day and He is back in the temple having more "run ins" with the chief priests and Pharisees. He had just given them the example of the man with two sons who he instructed to go and work in his vineyard. The first one responded with "I will not," but afterward he changed his mind. The second son said, "I go, sir," but he went not. Then He compared these scribes and Pharisees to the son that did not go, even though he said he was going. And He likened the son who at first refused to go, then repented and went, to the publicans and harlots. He flatly stated that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before the big talkers like the scribes and Pharisees.

This set the stage for the parable of the householder and his vineyard. The husbandmen to which the vineyard is lent out is likened unto Israel after the flesh. They made a big profession of being the people of God, but brought forth no fruits of true righteousness that God was desiring to see. The prophets that God sent to them were hated and persecuted down through the years. And finally God sent them His well beloved Son, Jesus, and they slew Him on Calvary's cross. The question was asked, What will the Lord of that vineyard do to these wicked husbandmen? Our lesson says that the scribes and Pharisees answered Him that those wicked men would be destroyed and the vineyard given to others who would render the fruits.

And then Jesus quoted from Psalm 118:22-23. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the

corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes." This scripture is quoted in other places. Peter boldly labeled the Israelite leaders who were persecuting the Church as the builders who set at nought the stone that God made the head of the corner. (Acts 4:11.) How sad that a people who had seen so much of the great majesty of God could be so blinded to refuse and reject the Rock that He set among them. It harbors a warning that we had all better take heed to.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the fruit that God wanted from Israel?
2. Why did God send His Son, and who was that Son?
3. Why was Jesus rejected of the leaders of Israel?
4. What did God make Jesus to be for the souls of men?
5. In what way is a soul who falls on Jesus broken?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus Christ was made the foundation of the New Testament Church of God. Peter stated that Christ was "...a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." I Peter 2:4. In verse 8, he declared that Jesus was "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient..." This is drawn from Isaiah 8:14. It all sums up to declare that Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the living God, is the Rock that His Church is built upon, but not everyone will accept Him and build upon Him. Peter, speaking about Christ being the stone chosen of God and precious, quotes also in verse 6 from Isaiah 28:16, "...Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." He says further in verse 7, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious...." But the Rock that is so precious and blessed to some is a rock of offense and a stone of stumbling to others. Let us all take diligent heed that we stumble not at the Word, that is, His teachings and counsel and the convictions of the Holy Spirit. The standard of holiness and separation from sin and the world is offensive to those who love the world and what it has to offer. Jesus and His high standard of righteousness, godliness, humility, self-control, purity, modesty, meekness and all the fruits of the Spirit will be rejected by the blinded and deceived soul. But all that are willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land. (Isaiah 1:19.)

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This parable is an accurate picture of what was actually happening. The leaders were rejecting the householder's son. In verse 41, the scribes and Pharisees unknowingly pronounced their own doom – "He will miserably destroy those wicked men...." This was accomplished approximately 40 years after the death of Christ. It was a very dark time in Israel's history.

The angel Gabriel had foretold Daniel of the destruction. Daniel 9.26, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince (Roman army) that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Also in verse 27 . "...and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because He understood the severity of their calamity was quickly approaching. Josephus details the destruction and all their sufferings. He also relates how a flank of the Roman army, for some unknown reason, was out of place and many of the just people escaped the city. We understand this to be God's people. Jesus said, when ye see the city encompassed know that the end is near. Then he that is on the rooftop, let him not take anything with him but to flee. The persecution of Christians helped to send Christians away from the city, and this seems to be the last opportunity. This showed God's mercy to His children.

As Jesus wept over the city He made the statement that their eyes (spiritual perception) were closed because they knew not the time of their visitation. In like manner, it greatly saddens and grieves us to see friends and loved ones that live so careless and indifferent to God's Word. It is just a matter of time until the consequences of sin take effect and what a miserable harvest to have to reap.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

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NOVEMBER 30, 2008

GOD OF THE LIVING AND CHRIST LORD OF ALL

Luke 20:27 Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him,

28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died.

32 Last of all the woman died also.

33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife.

Mark 12:24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

Luke 20:34 ...The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Matthew 22:31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...?

Luke 20:38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.

Matthew 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

MEMORY VERSE: ...They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Luke 20:35.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus through the Scriptures showed the Sadducees and Pharisees that their doctrines were not according to the power of God, for they denied the resurrection and called Christ David's son.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 20:27, "*Sadducees*": Adam Clarke says, "the Sadducees originated from Sadoc, a president of the Sanhedrin and a teacher of the law in Jerusalem, about 264 years before Christ. He taught that we should not serve God through expectation of a reward, but through love and suitable reverence only, inferring that there were neither rewards nor punishments after this life, and, by consequence, that there was no resurrection of the dead, nor angel, nor spirit, in the invisible world; and that man is to be rewarded or punished here in this life for the good and the evil he does."

Mark 12:24, "*ye know not the scriptures neither the power of God*": They were ignorant and unenlightened to the true meaning of the Scriptures, and the great extent and magnitude of the power of the Almighty God, Who created man in the first place from the dust of the earth, and is well able to quicken and bring him back in a resurrection to life again, eternal life.

Matthew 22:31, "*as touching*": Concerning.

Luke 20:35, "*accounted worthy*": Deemed entirely deserving.

Verse 38, "*all live unto him*": Life is entirely a gift from God, and should be lived entirely unto Him in perfect devotion, confidence, submission, obedience, trust and hope.

Matthew 22:43, "*How doth David in spirit call him Lord?*" The scripture Jesus is quoting is Psalm 110:1, which is one of the main prophecies of Christ and His ascension to the right hand of God as our intercessor until the end of this world. Christ was in the lineage of David many years down the line, but in the Holy Spirit that was inspiring him, David called Christ his Lord.

Verse 44, *"The LORD said unto my Lord"*: This is the identical way it reads in Psalm 110:1. The LORD is from the Hebrew word "Jehovah," Who is the Almighty God, the Creator of the heavens and earth and all things therein. The expression "my Lord" refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was made Lord of all through His being resurrected from the dead and taken up to the right hand of God to intercede for us while this earthly life lasts.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today has two parts. The first part is our Saviour's answer to the Sadducees and their question about whose wife a woman would be if she had been married to each one of seven brothers. We cannot say for sure, but it could be that this story about seven brothers all dying, with each one having been married to this one woman, was a thought up effort to try to put Jesus to silence or to frustrate Him. For such an event would be a rare occurrence to humanity. But, at any rate, Jesus had an answer that put them to silence. (Matthew 22:34.) In our lesson, we have combined the accounts of Matthew and Mark to go along with what Luke had to say about it. Both Matthew and Mark relate how Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for their ignorance of the truth in the Holy Scriptures and of the power of God. This is so true in many cases. Paul said in I Corinthians. 8:2, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

Luke's account expresses something that the others did not mention. It is a worthy statement that Luke made in his account in verse 35 about "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead." It is going to mean everything to be thus accounted worthy. In Luke 21:34-36 he brought out what Jesus said about being ready for His second coming, saying in verse 36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

The second part is Christ's referring to the prophecy in Psalm 110:1 about Him being set at the right hand of God. This is a vital prophecy, and it is mentioned several other places in the New Testament. Jesus knew what it meant. We are using Matthew's account of this.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Sadducees question Jesus about the resurrection?
2. What did Jesus say about marriage in that world to come?
3. How did He show that God was a God of the living, not the dead?
4. What scripture did Jesus quote concerning Christ being Lord?
5. What did Jesus mean by the words, "All live unto him"?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There shall be a general resurrection of all the dead. It will take place at the Second Coming of Jesus in that last day. Every person who has ever lived will be there. It will be no problem or difficulty for the Almighty God to call all humanity of all the ages of time back to consciousness and awareness again. It will be the great resurrection day, the day that all history has pointed toward, the Day of Judgment and retribution to every person for what he had done and spoken in this mortal life. It was a life that God gave to everyone and must be answered for, and rewards and punishments must be passed out. Every person who has lived on this earth will be fully alive, conscious, and filled with thoughts and wonder. We will all be in the body that we have prepared for while in this corruptible mortal frame.

If we have sought earnestly after the great Creator to please Him and accept His grace and salvation, if we have believed and trusted in His love and precious promises, if we have turned away from all sin and transgression and sought after righteousness and holiness, if we have loved our fellow man and forgiven from the heart all trespasses committed against us, if we have set our affections on things above and not on things on this fleeting earth, yes, if we have sincerely and willingly obeyed His loving commandments, we will be in that number who will be clothed with an incorruptible and never dying body. But if we have been careless, selfish, lustful and disobedient to the Gospel of the Saviour, Who is our great righteous Judge at that day, we will have a body that will bear everlasting punishment in the flames of torment where the worm dieth not. Let us take heed and seek to live godly and be accounted worthy to obtain that eternal resurrection.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"I have written to him the great things of my law, *but they were counted as a strange thing.*" Hosea 8:12. Just as there were scoffers in the time of Jesus who did not believe in the resurrection so there are those today who attempt to denigrate that precious reality. God has revealed wonderful mysteries to mankind through His Holy Word, but so many in our society have chosen to reject these revelations, considering them to be fairy tales and classifying them as myths. This unbelieving spirit of the world has an adverse impact on God's people, not only subjecting them to ridicule and scorn, but more subtly causing them to likewise question God's Word and generally be weak in faith. Our institutions of "higher learning" are rife with skeptics who delight in attacking any who dare to believe in the miracles of the Bible. As evidenced in this recent presidential election, there are so many influential "stars" in our country who hate God so viciously that a candidate for public office has to choose their words carefully to keep from being objects of their venom. Seeing these things so openly manifest in our country should cause God's people to be more diligent about their relationship with God and be more supportive of one another. As the days become darker, we are going to need one another in a greater way.

The prayer the Apostle Paul prayed for the Saints at Ephesus is very appropriate for us today. Let the writings of this servant of God transcend the ages, resound in our hearts and encourage our experience of salvation—making it more real and vibrant. And may our faith in the resurrecting power of God hold firm in this age of unbelief.

"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every

name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1:15-23.

As we realize that God's power is not limited nor diminished by time, let us therefore delight in the knowledge that we are His children and exercise our faith in ways that bring deliverance and healing to those around us and glory to His precious name.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



DECEMBER 7, 2008

BEING DRAWN TO CHRIST BY GOD, THE FATHER

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

32 ...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

35 ...I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

48 I am that bread of life.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

MEMORY VERSE: It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. John 6:45.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: For a person to truly effectively come to Christ, he or she must be aware of their sinful condition before God the Father, and be willing to give up their sinful ways in true repentance before Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

John 6:26, "*Verily, verily*": Truly, truly.

Verse 27, "*Labour not for the meat which perisheth*": Do not be so concerned and striving for the literal food that will pass away. "*him hath God the Father sealed*": He is testified by God to be secure and fully accepted, and to be eternally preserved, as the means to obtain life everlasting.

Verse 37, "*in no wise cast out*": In no way reject or turn away empty.

Verse 46, "*save he which is of God*": Except the One Who is from God, and this is His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 51, "*my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*": Christ's body was the sacrifice that was to be offered for the atonement of the sins of mankind. We who would be delivered from the power and penalty of sin must accept the sacrifice of Christ's flesh and absorb it in the salvation of our souls. Thus His flesh becomes a symbol of meat, that is, the food that we take in for the saving of our lives.

Verse 54, "*whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood*": Whoever will accept the sacrifice of My body and My blood and absorb it into his heart and mind, as the means of his or her salvation, has eternal life.

Verse 57, "*he that eateth me*": He that accepts Christ and takes Him into his heart, life, and affections, to follow and obey Him in all things, he it is that in reality eats Christ.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the Apostle John's wonderful account of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ we have His outstanding teaching concerning one important aspect of His Ministry. The day previous to this, Jesus had miraculously fed five thousand men (besides the women and children) with five loaves and two fishes taken from a young lad who had brought them for his lunch. When the men beheld such a wonderful miracle, they were ready to come and take Him by force to make Him a king. Perhaps they thought that if Christ could be their ruler they would never have to go hungry again. They were carried away in their hearts with such an idea. But when Jesus perceived their notion He withdrew from them and went into a mountain alone.

The next day the people came looking for Him on the other side of the sea. When they found Him, Jesus met them with a warning that we all need to take heed to today. He knew that it was the literal food that they were all so full of wonder about. Christ did many physical wonders in His ministry here on earth. But the greatest wonders that He wanted to open people's eyes to were the spiritual blessings that are eternal. And it is still the real burden of His ministry today in the hearts of His followers. This earthly food is but temporal and will soon perish. Christ has the spiritual food that He wants us all to partake of. And that is what He is introducing and bringing out in our lesson.

The people made mention of the manna that their fathers under Moses had partaken of, quoting from Psalm 78:24-25, still thinking of literal bread. But Jesus, once more, sought to turn their minds in the direction of spiritual things. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Probably thinking this was some special kind of literal bread, they were all in favor of Him giving them this bread. Then Jesus declared that He, the Christ, was that bread of life.

But in the thought of the bread of life, Jesus brought out that only through hearing and learning of His Father would a man be drawn to come unto Him. He stated firmly that no man can really come to Him except by way of hearing and learning of His Father. In verse 45, He quotes from the wonderful prophecy found in Isaiah 54:13, which says, "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." This is being spoken to the Church who was to be His Bride of love. Verse 1 of that chapter is quoted

by Paul in Galatians 4:27 and is speaking of the new and spiritual Jerusalem, which is the New Testament Church. It is through loving and seeking the Heavenly Father and being taught and enlightened by Him that we are drawn unto His Son to partake of His Spirit and Bread of life. Sad to say, these very people who were so interested in the literal food were offended and went away, following Him no more. May God help everyone to be interested in spiritual values that are eternal.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the people desirous to seek after Jesus?
2. What did Jesus tell them that they should labor for?
3. Who did Jesus say would draw people to Him?
4. Why do we need to be taught of God in coming to Christ?
5. What does it mean to eat Christ's flesh and to drink His blood?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Sad to say, so many people do not seek to serve the Lord for the real purpose that they should. There are those who make a profession of godliness for what material gain they might acquire. The people who partook of Christ in the loaves and the fishes failed to see what He really had for them. When Jesus knew that they were becoming offended at Him, He said, "...Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not...." John 6:61-64. And then He said again that no man can come unto Him except it were given unto him of His Father. So what does it mean to really "eat" Jesus? We know it is not a literal eating. What is it? We really need to understand fully what He meant. It is a spiritual eating, a receiving in the heart of His Word and of His Spirit. It is obedience and submission to His instructions, His ways, His attitudes, His merciful disposition, and His faithful submission to the will of God. It is to deny self and the spirit of this present evil world and to take up the cross and follow Him. It

is to put our full trust in the merit of His blood for atonement of our sins, and then put Him first in our hearts and lives.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let's think for a moment of the different ways in which the Father works with all humanity to draw them to Christ. One of the first is the universal language of creation—the lessons about the character of the Creator that are clearly displayed in the heavens, in a flower, in a new baby. If a person will seek, God will answer that searching by revealing more of Himself in further dealings. (Romans 1:19-20.)

Another way God draws a person is through his or her own conscience. The Scriptures and the testimony of many people witness to the reality of an inner prompting that led a person to change his way of living and seek for a relationship with God. (Romans 2:11-15.)

God uses dreams to deal with mankind. I had a friend whose grandfather knew very little about God or Scripture. One night, during a time of sickness, he saw in a dream a sign with this Scripture reference in large letters: Job 33:14. When he found a Bible and looked it up, he read of how God deals with mankind through sickness, bringing him to repentance and deliverance.

God does use sickness, sorrow, personal calamity, or national disaster in a person's life to bring him "to himself" and make him think seriously about his eternal soul. (Luke 15:17.) Above all of this, I believe God's preferred, perfect way to deal with lost souls is by reaching out to them through the love of His disciples. Through our earnest prayers, tender entreaties, genuine loving service, and Christ-like example, Jesus, being lifted up by our lives, would draw ALL men unto Him. (John 12:32.)

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



DECEMBER 14, 2008

CHRIST APPEARING ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

19 ...And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre:

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

MEMORY VERSE: ...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luke 24: 25-26.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus kept these two disciples from recognizing Him while He revealed through the Scriptures His real self. And now we, not having seen Him with our natural eyes can behold Him through spiritual revelation by the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 24:13, "*that same day*": The first day of the week when Christ arose from the dead. "*threescore furlongs*": 60 furlongs. A furlong is 1/8 of a mile. 60 times 1/8 equals 7 1/2 miles. This was the distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Verse 15, "*reasoned*": Discussed.

Verse 16, "*holden*": Retained and kept from recognizing.

Verse 17, The Greek expression of Christ's words: "What words are these which you exchange with each other, while walking, and are downcast?"

Verse 22, "*sepulchre*": Tomb or grave.

Verse 25, "*O fools*": This is an exclamation, saying, "Oh, you sensual and unwise, judging by human sight alone!" "*slow of heart to believe*": Dull in your hearts to receive and accept the real truth.

Verse 26, The meaning here is: "Was it not binding and necessary for the Anointed One to suffer these things, and be raised from death and the tomb to be highly exalted into Heavenly honour and dominion?" Most of the disciples and many of the Jews had some idea that the Messiah would be exalted to some kind of kingly power, but they could not understand the need for Him to suffer such humiliation and shame. And likewise they could not comprehend what His glory took in, that is, that of being raised from the dead and to sit at the right hand of God in the heavenly places.

Verse 27, "*expounded*": Interpreted; opened up the meaning.

Verse 28, "*whither they went*": Where they were going. "*made as though*": Appeared and acted like.

Verse 29, "*constrained*": Compelled by earnest entreaty.

Verse 30, "*took bread, and blessed it, and brake*": While He

sat at the table with them, Jesus took the loaf and gave thanks and invoked God's blessing upon it, and divided it into smaller pieces.

Verse 32, "*Did not our heart burn within us*": Was not our inner man warmed and enlightened?" "*opened to us the scriptures*": Expounded and explained to us the sacred prophecies.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have a most wonderful scene portrayed. It was evening of the first day of the week. It had been a hard ordeal that the disciples of Jesus had undergone in the previous days. They had seen their Lord and Master taken from them and sentenced to be crucified as a criminal by the Jewish leaders. They had to keep hidden and out of circulation for fear of the Jews. Early that morning, several women went to the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body with spices, and returned to the disciples with a report that the tomb was found empty, and two angels had appeared to them, informing them that Jesus was alive. Their words seemed as idle tales and they believed them not. Peter and John had also gone to the sepulchre and saw it empty, "wondering at that which was come to pass." And this was what the two men in our lesson were discussing as they went on their way to Emmaus.

But, suddenly, their conversation was interrupted by a Stranger Who asked what they were discussing. The two disciples began to explain what they were talking about, what had happened and of the report that had come to them about their Master supposedly being alive. Then Jesus took over the conversation, first rebuking them for their ignorance and unbelief, then going through the wonderful prophecies of the Old Testament that pointed toward Christ, what He must suffer, and the glory that He would attain to.

It would be quite a study if we would begin at Moses, as Jesus said, and all the prophets and the Psalms, and behold what they foretold about the Christ that God was to send to earth. We will not enter into that wonderful series of prophecies, but it is a study that every child of God needs to get interested in and enter into with fervent heart and mind. It was over a 7 mile walk to where they were going, which would probably take at least 2 or 3 hours. So we can see that it was quite a wonderful and lengthy discourse.

Then as they sat at the table with their Guest while He blessed the bread and gave to them, they became aware of Who He was, and then He was gone from their sight. Oh, what a message they had! No wonder they got up from that table and took off as fast as they could back to Jerusalem!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were these two disciples discussing as they walked along?
2. Who came and broke into their conversation?
3. What did He say concerning their talk?
4. What did He inform them about from the Scriptures?
5. How were they made to know that it was Jesus?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is wonderful how the Holy Scriptures reveal the plan of God being prophesied from the very beginning of time. Even to Adam and Eve was an insight given of how the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. God showed His wrath against sinful man in His destruction of the world in the time of Noah. Then to Abraham was given the promise that in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed. And we could go on and on through the sacred writings that have been preserved and handed down through the ages! After Christ had ascended back to Heaven to sit at the right hand of God as our Great High Priest and Intercessor, it became the message of the apostles and followers of Christ to the world. And it is still the message that we all need to take heed to. Peter stated in his message to the people that "...those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." He mentioned then that Moses had spoken about a prophet that God would raise up like unto Him. "Yea," Peter said, "all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." Acts 3:18-24 This is the way God has worked in His wisdom to bring about the wonderful redemption from sin through Christ His beloved Son. Oh, how we need to hear and believe to the saving of our souls!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

These men on the road of Emmaeus were identified only as "two men on the road to Emmaeus." The Scriptures finally identify one as Cleophas, but the other is never identified. They later tell the good news to the eleven disciples so we know that these two were not of the original twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. Yet, our Lord had such a compassion for them. He loves to cater to the "nobodies." He is not a respecter of persons.

These two, who were on the road to Emmaus, were in the depths of despair. No doubt they were feeling disappointment at the outcome of the crucifixion, and were confused by the reports of the empty tomb. They were traveling away from Jerusalem as all their hopes had been dashed in that city. They were feeling the great sorrow of losing their dear friend and Savior and having to cope with their grief. Then came Jesus. He appeared to these two men and preached to them a message of hope, from Moses to the present. Their hearts were lifted up even though they could not identify the preacher. What a message that must have been!

When Jesus broke the bread for their evening meal, they were enlightened as to the identity of the Preacher, but He had already vanished from their sight. Had He made Himself known earlier, they would not have grasped the whole meaning of the message of good news given. The Lord still loves to comfort His people today and proves time and again that He is a personal Savior.

" Not one promise has He broken
Faithful to His trust is He.
Joy is mine beyond all measure
When my Savior talks with me."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



DECEMBER 21, 2008

THE ANNUNCIATION OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

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

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

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

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

Matthew 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

MEMORY VERSE: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Mary was not yet married to Joseph when she became with child through the quickening power of the Spirit of God, to be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Joseph was troubled about this and considered dissolving their plans for marriage until the Lord revealed to him what was really taking place.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 1:26, "*in the sixth month*": This was the sixth month of Mary's cousin Elisabeth's anticipation of bringing forth a son in her old age, who was to be John the Baptist. "*Gabriel*": The name of the angel who had visited both Elisabeth and Mary with news of the sons who were to be born of them. The meaning of the name Gabriel is "the might of the strong God."

Verse 27, "*virgin*": A young unmarried woman. "*espoused*": Promised and engaged to be married. "*Mary*": From the Hebrew name Miriam, who was sister to Moses.

Verse 29, "*troubled*": Disturbed. "*cast in her mind*": Wondered. "*salutation*": Greeting.

Verse 32, "*throne of his father David*": This was not referring to the literal kingship of the literal nation of Israel, but rather a spiritual dominion and rule in the Heavenly places at the right Hand of God over His people and Saints of the most High God. It is from the prophecy of David, in Psalm 132:11, where God swore in truth unto David, "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." Peter, in his message on the day of Pentecost, applied that directly to Christ. Acts 2:30.

Verse 33, "*house of Jacob*": This is not the literal house or natural offspring of Jacob, but rather the family of God who are of the faith of Jesus.

Verse 35, "*overshadow*": Envelop in a haze of brilliancy. "*holy thing*": Pure and sinless being.

Verse 38, "*be it unto me*": May it be to me. This is an expression of acceptance and of faith in what the angel had said would be to her.

Matthew 1:19, "*make her a publick example*": Let her be exposed to the public knowledge. "*put her away privily*": Break off their engagement secretly.

Verse 20, "*while he thought*": As he was pondering and meditating.

Verse 21, "*JESUS*": From the Hebrew word "Jehoshua," which is the same as Joshua, meaning "Jehovah saves."

LESSON BACKGROUND

The fullness of time had come, the time for the bringing to pass of the prophecies that had been spoken and written hundreds of years previously. Isaiah had prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a son, and His name would be called Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14.) God Almighty, weighing the hearts of all mankind, had chosen a lowly maiden of Galilee who lived in a town named Nazareth to be the instrument to bring forth the Savior, Who would save man from sin and death. Whoever it was who would be chosen for such an honor had to be unmarried. There were problems with such a move. To be with child before being lawfully wedded was looked upon as a great sin. But this was not an ordinary event. This was a special work of the Holy Spirit. And it had to be accomplished wisely and carefully.

Mary is shown as being very receptive and willing to believe what the angel Gabriel told her. She was informed that her cousin Elisabeth, who had been called barren, had conceived and was with child in her sixth month. Immediately after the angel left her, Mary hastened into the hill country to visit her cousin, and what a wonderful meeting they had! But by the time that Mary returned to Nazareth she no doubt sensed in her body the formation of that life God had imparted to her. She had to inform her fiancé, Joseph, of her condition. Joseph reacted like a normal just man would have. But God let him know what was really going on. And, it was good that Joseph had the same spirit that Mary had. When informed, by the angel, of Mary's conception being of the Holy Spirit, he took her to himself as his wife. Here were two people who were qualified for God to work through to bring about the great plan of salvation for the whole world of mankind and the generations that followed. It is a wonderful and true story that has inspired God's people through the ages.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Mary's first reaction to Gabriel's message to her?
2. How did she respond when the angel revealed what was happening?
3. Why did Joseph have a mind to put Mary away secretly?

4. What made him change his mind so readily?
5. What scripture of prophecy did all of this fulfill?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The prophet Isaiah stated that the Son of the virgin would be named Immanuel, which means, "God with us." It was love and concern for us poor human creatures under the bondage of sin and transgression, sentenced to death and everlasting destruction, that caused the Almighty to work like this. There had to be a man who was pure and unstained by sin to accomplish this great salvation. And there was no one who would thus qualify. So, as Isaiah 59:16 says, "...therefore his arm brought salvation unto him." "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Galatians 4:4-5. God had to come down in human flesh. Jesus had to be "...made a little lower than the angels..." "...He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Hebrews 2:9, 16. "...As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Hebrews 2:14. Oh, what a wonderful plan that God instituted from the foundation of the world! Here was the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head. Here was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb Who would open the book and loose the seven seals, Who was to be slain that He might redeem us to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Revelation 5:5, 9.) —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Rev. 5.11-13 "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Let us join in the great chorus of giving praise and honor and glory to the Father and his Son. Along with all the heavenly host, the angel Gabriel had a wonderful message to share with Bethlehem's shepherds. However, let us not forget that we

also have a great message to tell—Christ has come, He has made a sacrifice for our salvation, He is now our high priest and He is coming again!

Dear Saints, let us be encouraged in our Redeemer. Let us quit looking at the giants and our weaknesses. Don't let "I can't" be a part of our inward vocabulary. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Let this testimony give rays of hope to all those that are still under Satan's sway. Let victory be our chorus, His love reassuring, His promises enduring, and His help unfailing. May our lives and testimony bear witness of a victorious Savior who was born, lived, died and was resurrected to live evermore with great glory and power. Amen.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



DECEMBER 28, 2008

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

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

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

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The providence of God arranged for Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem at the time when Jesus was born. God gave witness to His good pleasure by sending His angels to announce the glad tidings of Christ's birth.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 2:1, "*all the world*": All the inhabited earth. "*taxed*": Enrolled, or registered.

Verse. 6, "*that she should be delivered*": That her baby should come forth and be born.

Verse 7, "*swaddling clothes*": Strips of cloth. "*manger*": Box or crib where cattle are fed from.

Verse 9, "*came upon them*": Suddenly became apparent. "*glory of the Lord*": The brilliance, the splendor, the brightness, the beauty and radiance of the beauty of the God of Heaven. "*shone round about them*": Illuminated them and the place

where they were keeping their sheep. "sore afraid": Feared with a great fear.

Verse 14, "peace, good will toward men": Peace in the hearts of men, kindness, satisfaction, happiness, delight, purpose and intention of help from the Almighty God.

Verse 17, "made known abroad": Publicly told about it.

Verse 19, The Greek says, "And Mary remembered all these sayings, and meditated about them in her heart."

Isaiah 9:6, "Wonderful": Miraculous marvel. "Counsellor": Giver of all wisdom in advice and instruction.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we have the wonderful account of the birth of our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ the Son of God. The prophet in Micah 5:2 prophesied that He would be born in Bethlehem, saying, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Phillips Brooks, the writer of the hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," had visited that area and was inspired to write the words:

*"O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie:
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light:
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

*"For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars: together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.*

*"How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.*

*"O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel."*

It was in the wisdom and plan of God that Christ should not be born amid wealth and ease of kings, but in the straits of poverty and adversity, as it is seen in there being no room in the inn, and His cradle a manger for the cattle. But this lowly place was atoned for by the glory of Heaven being shone to the lowly shepherds in the fields, and the glad tidings of the birth of Christ being given by the angel. And it is wonderful that even today the message of Christ can be conveyed to the meek and lowly heart with the glory of the Spirit of God in the inner man!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How was the birth of Jesus caused to be in Bethlehem?
2. How can we know that He was born amid poverty and hardship?
3. Who announced His birth and who got to hear it?
4. Why were they given a sign and what was the sign?
5. How did Mary handle all of this glory and wonder?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The Lord God determined that Mary and Joseph would have to be in Bethlehem for the birth of Christ. He caused the Roman emperor to issue a proclamation that everyone should be registered, and to do so each person must go to the town of his nativity. God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. And God worked that His Son be born in special circumstances that could be used to identify Him to those who would come looking for Him. The angel told the shepherds how they would know the newborn Savior when they saw Him. "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." We can be sure that that clue to His identification was sufficient. The shepherds hurried and were able to find Him. "In a manger" would denote a stable where animals are kept. "Wrapped in swaddling clothes" would denote a poor and humble parentage.

"They came with haste" and found the place where they were.

Jesus said, as recorded in Luke 10:21, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even

so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." How wonderful that God hides His blessings from the lofty and proud and reveals them unto the meek and lowly! It was to the lowly shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night, that the angel came with the glad tidings of great joy! And it is to the poor in spirit, to those who mourn, to the meek, to the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, to the merciful, the pure in heart, and to the peacemakers that God can be savingly known. And the revelation of Christ to the hungry heart, the willing and obedient, is truly the greatest blessing that man can receive in this life. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*I love to tell the story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His Love.
I love to tell the story,
Because I know 'tis true;
It satisfies my longing
As nothing else would do.*

*I love to tell the story;
For those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting
To hear it, like the rest.
And when in scenes of glory,
I sing a new, new song,
"I will be the old, old story
That I have loved so long.*

We never tire of hearing the "good tidings of great joy" that was delivered by the angels. Those tidings bring wonderful news to the ears and heart of every mortal. What a precious gift mankind has been given by Jesus coming to this world. The reality of this beautiful story is manifested in its ability to satisfy the deep yearning of man's heart for God. Let the delivering, saving, sanctifying, healing power that was unleashed in this earth because of His sacrifice fill your life with His magnificent glory, allowing the joybells of Heaven to freely ring in your life every day of the year.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

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