

Bible Lessons



The people that walked in darkness have
seen a great light

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2014

Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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BIBLE LESSONS, FIRST QUARTER 2014

THEME FOR FIRST QUARTER, 2014

For our series of lessons this quarter, we feel inspired to go to the prophet Isaiah and the prophetic scriptures concerning Christ and His Church. Isaiah is truly a gospel prophet with so many of his prophecies referred to and brought out in their fulfillment in the New Testament. The sinful condition and veil of darkness over the heart of man is clearly brought out. The New Testament Church, the Bride of Christ, is so brightly foretold. Let us remember that this is the manner in which the Almighty God moved in laying the foundation for His great work of salvation for His people. He prophesied about it and told it so vividly before it came to pass. This shows His wisdom and power. There is much spiritual food and good for the soul in these wonderful prophecies. Let us study them with earnest zeal and fervor, for they are wonderful blessings of the LORD JEHOVAH for us to enjoy.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

January 5, 2014

ZION'S NEED TO BE REDEEMED

Isaiah 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah *and* Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they have gone away backward.

9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, *and* we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment: righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall* be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

MEMORY VERSE: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Rebellion, sin, transgression, and iniquity ruin the heart of man and separate him from God and His blessings. God, in His mercy for us, has promised and provided redemption from sin; but we must repent and turn away from the evil of our ways for His grace to take effect. Otherwise we will perish and be destroyed forever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 1:2, "nourished": Made large, increased, promoted and prospered. God had surely done this to Israel, bringing them up from bondage in Egypt and making them a great na-

tion. "brought up": Set on high and exalted. "rebelled": Became bitter and unpleasant, offensive to a holy God.

Ver. 3, "crib": Manger or stall, the place of protection and feeding. "doth not consider": The Hebrew word meaning is "have not understood." Because of their lack of spiritual understanding in the dealings of the LORD GOD, the people of Israel were drawn into unholy ways of living before Him. Right understanding is surely something worth seeking God for.

Ver. 4, "Ah", An expression of woe; alas! "laden": heavy. Their mighty sinfulness weighed their lives down with great sorrow and guilt. "corrupters": Those who bring about decay of morals and ruin of character. "provoked unto anger": The people did this unto God by spurning, holding in contempt, and despising the LORD and His Word. So it is with many in this day.

Ver. 9, "very small remnant": Few who survive.

Ver. 21, "How is": How as. It is not a question, but an exclamation of sorrow and wonder. "Become an harlot": Being richly blessed and highly fed, Israel became undisciplined and unmanageable, which led them into unchaste, lewd, and immoral ways.

Verses 16 and 17, The Hebrew reads: "Wash yourselves, purify yourselves, remove the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease doing evil. Learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the oppressor, judge the orphan, and contend for the widow."

Ver. 18, "let us reason together": The Hebrew says, "Let us be right". This means to straighten up, come clean, fully repent and reform.

Ver. 25, "purely purge": To be refined as with lye (strong cleansing soap). "Take away all thy sin": Remove every foreign substance from one's heart and life.

Ver. 27, "converts": those who return to God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today the sad picture of the woeful condition of Israel, the nation that Isaiah was called to prophesy to. This entire first chapter presents a dark condition of sin and transgression that rested upon this people whom God had so richly blessed. God's dealings with Israel and their resulting rebellion against Him was a lesson that is justly to be portrayed

to all humanity.

Before Moses was taken away, God inspired him to speak to Israel a song. It is recorded for us in Deuteronomy 32. One of the things that Moses brought out in that song as a witness against Israel was how much God had blessed Israel. God brought Israel from Egypt and "...made him ride on the high places of the earth." He gave Israel to eat of "the increase of the fields," "honey and oil out of the rock," butter, milk, the fatness of wheat, and the "pure blood of the grape." But then he said in verse 15: "But Jeshurun (a symbolic name for Israel meaning "upright and straight") waxed fat, and kicked: ...then he forsook God *which* made him and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." Moses, in his song says about the same in substance that Isaiah says in our lesson today. God richly blesses people, but too often these blessings have an ill effect upon people's lives. It does not have to be this way, but too often it is.

We have one scripture in our lesson (Verse 9) that is quoted in Romans 9:29. Paul was speaking of Israel and their failure to attain to the true righteousness. He quotes from this and other sources in Isaiah. We would be wise to view the history of Israel as God would have us to, to take warning and give diligent heed lest we fall into the same trap that they did.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How does God want His rich blessings to affect us?
2. Why did Israel rebel against the Lord, having been so blessed of Him?
3. What important lesson should we learn from this?
4. What is God requiring man to do concerning his sinful condition?
5. What will happen to us if we do not attend to correct our sinful state?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Too often prosperity, especially that of a material and fleshly nature, has a drastic and harmful effect upon the souls of men. It does not really have to be that way. We need to be aware of this peril and take the appropriate steps and meas-

ures to offset this threat. God is so gracious and He loves to bestow rich blessings of His goodness on those of His own. This He did to Adam and Eve. And this has He done over and over to His people down through the ages.

But we must remember that we have an adversary. Satan is on hand to whisper his suggestions into our minds. We need to be on our guard and not be ignorant of his devices. How did Satan get Eve to yield? Close observance shows that Satan sowed the seeds of discontent and a slight despising for what God allowed. He made Eve feel that God was depriving her of being as a god. This caused her to look on the forbidden fruit with attraction and desire.

This is the way Satan still works on humanity. Instead of being thankful and appreciative of what God has blessed us with, we can get to looking around at other things. Here is where we must be careful—I mean diligently careful and on our guard. Satan worked on Israel the same way. It was in Samuel's time as judge that the leaders of Israel clamored for a king. God wanted to be their king, and He used men as judges to help oversee the state of affairs. And this system had worked for a long time, but the people became critical of God's blessings.

It works the same today. Much of the turmoil and strife of our world is caused by unthankful, unholy people who are lustful, demanding, and self-centered. But to the lowly, meek, and submissive soul who is thankful and full of praise to God for what he does have, there is reserved a happiness and peace that surpasses any pleasure that lust and greed might attain to.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Turning your back on someone, especially someone who has invested time, love, and energy into you, is discourteous at best and abhorrent at worst; it just is not considered polite, right, or good. Yet that is exactly the picture Isaiah paints of what the nations of Judah and Israel did to God. Their heads were turned by the gods of the land and by their own lusts until eventually they were "gone away backward" (Is 1:4). They turned their backs on the very One who had nourished them, brought them up as children, and loved them.

Fast forward approximately 700 years. Jesus told the disci-

ples who followed him, many of whom were steeped in tradition and religious ceremony, that unless they would eat of His flesh and drink of His blood they had no life in them. The cross of Jesus -- their Savior, Healer, Friend, Teacher, and Father -- was an offence to them. John 6:66 says, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." The Jews' decision to reject Jesus was ultimately to their extreme detriment.

Fast forward another 2,000 years to the day in which we live. The scene really hasn't changed all that much. People are following their own deplorable lusts; the gods of our current world have turned away the heads of so many from the very God who created them until they have "given Him their backs" in favor of their own way. The question Jesus asked his twelve disciples is still relevant today: "Will ye also go away?" Peter's response: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Oh, blessed hope! If we willingly and obediently give the sinful ways of the world the "determined and straight set of our back" and humbly turn our faces TOWARD our loving Heavenly Father, truly He will cause us to "eat the good of the land."

--Julie Elwell

January 12, 2014

HUMBLY ASCENDING UP TO GOD'S HOUSE

Isaiah 2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

12 For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that* is proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

MEMORY VERSE: Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of? Isaiah 2:22.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God is calling us to humble ourselves from our pride and worldliness, forsake our idols of self and vanity, and be transformed into a new life of humility and being led by the Spirit of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 2:2, "The top of the mountains": The head, forefront, and foremost of all. This is spiritual language that portrays Christ's Church as a holy people triumphant and reigning over all the powers of Satan and this present evil world. "Above the hills": The hills represent the raised efforts of man to be religious and godly. The salvation of God goes beyond what man in his best can do. Man really can accomplish nothing of any value in his own strength and wisdom. But the quickening grace and power of Christ can lift a man up to the heights of holiness and victory and perfect peace. "Flow": This

is referring to the bright and beautiful assembly of the redeemed souls of men who find Christ to be their all in all. We are drawn to Him through His loving Spirit and come with rejoicing to sit together with Him in the heavenly places.

Ver. 3, "Zion, Jerusalem": This is speaking not of the old literal Jerusalem in earthly Israel but of the holy mountain of the New Jerusalem, the Church of God, the Bride of Christ. (See Hebrews 12:22 and Revelation 3:12.)

Ver. 4, "swords into plowshares, spears into pruning-hooks": This is the change from carnal warfare and physical combat unto the spiritual operation of the heart of man, working in the Spirit to bring himself into subjection to the will of God. Instead of exerting mortal effort to fight mortal man, we are called to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), breaking up the fallow ground of our heart to be the vineyard of the Lord, and the cutting off of everything that is not in fellowship with the holiness of the Lord.

Ver. 12, "upon": Against, or in opposition to.

Ver. 22, The Hebrew reads: "Cease yourself from man whose breath is in his nostril, for in what is he to be esteemed?" Why take into account and be swayed by such a fleeting pile of dust? "...Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" Isaiah 51:12

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is another vivid prophecy of the New Testament Church of God and the work of the grace of Christ in the souls of men. It portrays the humbling of the heart from pride and worldly vanity and the ascension of the soul of man being exalted by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to the heights of holiness and victory.

The Church of God which Jesus purchased with His own blood is raised up to the elevated plain of the Holy Spirit control and inspiration. This is above the weak and beggarly zeal and efforts of man. It is above the confusion and strife that rages in the world of religions and churches and movements. It means much to be quickened together with Christ from the dead state of sin and to be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places with Him. (Ephesians 2:5-6.)

But in order for us to experience this experience of flowing unto this wonderful fellowship with Christ, we must first humble ourselves from our pride and cast away from us all our idols of earthly love and infatuation. All of our selfish and fleshly habits and ways must be given up. The styles, fashions, and ungodly activities must be denied. Through faith in Him and the work of His Holy Spirit, the soul can experience this wonderful transformation to the realm of spiritual life and peace.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What spiritual heights does Christ raise us up to in Him?
2. What must we do before we can experience this transformation?
3. What are some of the idols that we must cast away?
4. What does it mean to turn our weapons into groundbreaking tools?
5. Why must we cease from being hindered and influenced by man?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Force and constraint cannot effect the real change that needs to take place in the soul of man before God. Man must be able to visualize and understand what God is calling him to, and he must be convinced of its value and what it offers him. This is what takes place when a lost sinner hears the gospel and beholds the risen life of Christ and the heavenly blessings that can be his in Him. He sees his lost and wretched condition and beholds the great deliverance that can be his by humbling his heart to obey the Lord and to follow Him.

When people realize their desperate plight of condemnation and guilt of sin and are made aware of what Christ offers to them, it causes them to make a pure decision to flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. Their language in the Spirit of the Lord is, "Come ye, and let us go up to the house of the Lord, and let Him teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths!" They hear the law and the Word of the Lord coming forth from the Church of God ministers and the lives of His saints. It causes them to make a move for God.

To prove our decision to go up to the Lord's house we

must be willing to cast away our false gods of pleasure, pride, fashion, and the love of money. It is one thing to be interested, and it is quite another thing to pay that price that will make it ours. We must change our ways and be willing to conform to Christ if we expect to reign with Him in the heavenly places.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

A precious thought is expressed in Psalm 84:5. "Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; in whose heart *are* the ways of *them*." The Revised Version renders it like this: "...in whose heart are the highways to Zion." Let us ask ourselves a few questions. Are the highways to Zion in my heart? Am I flowing upward to His house?

Salvation makes us a part of God's church, the Bride of Christ, a member of Zion; yet we are constantly seeking for and reaching forward to that exalted plane of His holiness, that mountain of His house, that secret place of the Most High, that place of reigning with Him and that deeper place of humility. We know we have "come" to Zion; now we seek to abide there. We want to be like the ones in Jeremiah 50:5 who "...ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten."

Paul expressed it this way: "Not as though I had already attained....but I follow after....Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: ...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14).

There is no higher place for which to press than God's holy mountain. Let us go ever onward and upward, as individuals and as the body of Christ.

--Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

January 19, 2014

THE CALL OF ISAIAH THE PROPHET

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I

send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.

12 And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13 But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and *it* shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

Matthew 13:13 Therefore speak I (Jesus) to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

John 12:37 But though he (Christ) had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 He hath blinded *their* eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

MEMORY VERSE: Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Luke 8:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Isaiah was called of God and sent to spiritually blind and deaf people whose hearts were hard and not open to God's Word. This blindness of heart and mind is a condition that infests humanity as a whole as it was thus in the time of Jesus and is even so now in our day. Such a condition keeps many people from knowing the truth of God's Word, but the truth will be made known to those who have an open heart and a willingness to obey His precious doctrine.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 6:9, 10, "Understand": The Hebrew word translated "understand" means to separate mentally or distinguish. The Word of God has many different parts, angles, thoughts, and principles. To understand means to know each individual part of the divine communication from God and its application and its relationship with the other parts. "convert": To turn from wrong to the right

Verses 11 and 12, The Hebrew reads: "Then I said, Until when, O Lord? And He said, Until cities might be desolate without inhabitant, even the houses without man, and the land laid waste for a desolation, and Jehovah has sent mankind far away, and great is the desolation in the midst of the land."

Ver. 13, The Hebrew reads: "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it will return, and it shall be burned as a strong tree, and as an oak, which in being felled has a stump left; the holy seed is its stump." The term "holy seed" is referring to all who will humble their hearts in submission to the truth and be willing and obedient to God.

Matthew 13:18-14, "parable": a similitude, or a fictitious narrative of common life that holds and contains a hidden meaning or moral. "understand": While the Hebrew word for "understanding" in the Old Testament means to separate or distinguish, the Greek word in the New Testament means to "put together." Understanding is a great and highly important thing in any phase of life. It is something that is truly worth seeking earnestly to God for. It is just as Proverbs 4:7 declares: "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

LESSON BACKGROUND

The call of Isaiah and the mission to the people of Israel that God gave to Him is unusual and strange. It shows the spiritual darkness that humanity had gotten into in Isaiah's day and that is yet sadly sunk down into. The darkness and ignorance was so gross that it was useless to try to get truth to them in plain talk. So instead of trying to get light to them, the thing to do is to bring darkness and hardness, shut their eyes, and keep them from being converted. This would bring desolation and move mankind far off at a distance. It would look like this would be the finishing touch of complete destruction. But no, there would be a small part that would return and be saved, just as the stump remains from a felled tree.

Jesus applied this prophecy to the people of His day. But while Isaiah was told to make the people's heart gross and close their eyes, Jesus declared that the people have closed their eyes. Paul quoted this in Acts 28:25-27 in the same way. But John 12:40, which we have included in our lesson, says that the Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart lest they be converted and healed. Uniting these two seemingly different applications, we come to the conclusion that we are all responsible to seek to have before God a tender and open heart and that if we harden our hearts against the Lord, He in turn can and will harden our hearts. Jesus spoke in parables to the crowds to illustrate His doctrine and at the same time He was hiding it from them. But if any who heard would have a longing to understand the truth He was holding out to them, they could gain it. God would see to it that they would.

Our Memory Verse holds a vital truth: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given." Hath what? This is a deep scripture. What is He talking about? Jesus quotes this saying different times.

May we each one give this some fervent thought and prayer.
—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the greatest darkness that there is in the world?
2. What should we seek God earnestly to have concerning His Word?
3. Why is hiding something the best way to get people Interested?

4. Why did Jesus speak to the crowds in parables?
5. Why does God harden and blind the eyes of man?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The gospel of Christ and the message He brought us from His Heavenly Father is a mystery. It is a hidden wisdom not discerned by the worldly, proud, and lustful mind and heart. It does not work to try to teach an unregenerated person the truths of spiritual life and peace. The mind of man is so blinded and dull of hearing and void of understanding. No human effort or tactic can change this sad condition. No trickery or cunningly devised oratory can be employed to get the truth of God over to the carnal man of the crowd

But though this condition does prevail with humanity, there is a way that man can be enlightened by the Lamp of Life. Through the conviction and dealings of the Holy Spirit, the heart of man can be drawn to the ways of the Lord. The truth of His Word must be preached by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Jesus gave out His doctrine, and probably for the most part His words were not received. But there were those who did receive His words and were spiritually blessed and enlightened thereby.

Humanity is so blinded by the lusts and fascinating things of this world. Houses, cars, television, entertainment, sports, recreation, and the many exciting thrills of physical appetites and passions have a tendency to so absorb the mind and heart that the spiritual message of God has very little attraction, if any at all. But there will be those who will turn and seek to find the heavenly way. Yes, they will be few in number, as Jesus said they would be. But by them coming clean before God in true and earnest conviction and repentance and taking hold on the pearl of great price, they will be made so precious in the sight of God and His people.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

This lesson brings to mind the reading in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Any major purchase, such as a house, land, or vehicle, requires three things. First, there must be a desire for the object of purchase. We would not buy

something for which we have no interest or desire. Secondly, there has to be some forethought of the purchase. We weigh the advantages and the disadvantages of the object to be purchased. We may read up on the reports or titles to obtain a better understanding of the object of purchase. Thirdly, we have to decide if the purchase is worth the monetary sacrifice. It is just as Jesus said, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*?" Luke 14:28.

Thus it is with the buying of this gospel truth. Do I desire this truth? Am I interested in the truth? Have I counted the cost? How much am I willing to sacrifice for this truth?

On the other hand, once purchased, do I still count it precious or am I willing to sell the truth for a lie, for deceit, for some bitterness, for hurt feelings or human error?

Buy the truth. Sell it not. We thank GOD for the truth!

--Sis. LaDawna Adams

January 26, 2014

OVERCOMING WORLDLY FEAR WITH GODLY FEAR

Isaiah 8:9 Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God *is* with us.

11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let him be* your fear, and *let him be* your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion.

Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. I Peter 3:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Fleshly minded people can wield tremendous influence and will seek to bring us under their power, but we must deny their ungodly pressures and follow the Lord and His testimony alone.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 8:9, The Hebrew reads: "Suffer evil, O peoples, and be broken: and listen all from far places of the earth: gird yourselves and be broken, gird yourselves and be broken." God is calling for a broken spirit and a contrite heart, (Psa. 51:17) and Jesus said concerning Himself, the rejected but chosen Stone of the corner, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." We must choose whether we will be broken now and have a place on this eternal Rock of our salvation, or reject Him and have Him fall on us later in His wrath.

Ver. 10, The Hebrew reads: "Counsel a plan, and it is broken; speak a word and it shall not rise, for with us is God." The ideas and imaginations of the ungodly are broken and defeated to start with and has always been and always will be defeated and frustrated. But God is with the poor and contrite of spirit who trembles at His Word. Isaiah 66:2.

Ver. 12, "Confederacy": An alliance, league, or organization that is not directed of the Holy Spirit. Man is ever trying to organize and hatch up schemes to push forward drives and carnal efforts under the guise of religion or works for the good of humanity. It is wise to steer clear of human organizations and live close to God. "Nor be afraid": Do not dread, nor stand in awe. (Hebrew.) Think of the many saints who have endured the pressures of their time and taken their stand for God and His truth at the peril and sacrifice of their very lives!

Ver. 13, "Sanctify the LORD": Pronounce and observe as clean and perfect the LORD; regard Him as holy, sacred, honourable, reverent, and worthy of our perfect trust and obedience. "Let him be your dread": Stand in awe at Him alone.

Ver. 14, "a gin and a snare": How and why is the Lord Jesus to be thus to the souls of men? 1 Peter 2:8 says that Christ is "a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." We will either humble ourselves and accept His holiness and find deliverance, or we will resist His truth and be destroyed.

Ver. 16, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples": This refers to the testimony of the Lord Jesus and His law of spiritual life and victory. He hides it from the wise and prudent and reveals it unto babes, those who become as little children. (Matt. 11:25, 18:3).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a very important prophecy of Christ and His Church. Isaiah was inspired to speak under the inspiration of God. The king of Assyria was threatening to overrun Israel. Isaiah's words of warning and encouragement became a prophecy of Jesus Christ and those who sanctify the Lord in their hearts and fear Him rather than man.

1 Peter 3:14 is a referral to our lesson where Peter was seeking to comfort those who suffer from the world. "If ye suffer

for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," as our Memory Verse states. We need to take heed to it as it will save us from losing our souls in the long run.

Peter also points this prophecy to Christ in 1 Peter 2:8 as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence. Paul also refers to it in Romans 9:32-33 in speaking of Israel which followed after the law of righteousness not attaining to the law of righteousness. "Wherefore?" he asks, and then answers, "Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; [And then along with this prophecy Paul joined it with Isaiah 28:16], As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

Jesus knew that the world did not know nor receive Him, but God had given Him certain men out of the world, as He mentioned in His prayer in John 17:6. These men (except for Judas Iscariot who proved to be false) were chosen of God and given to Christ to be His disciples and to be the first heralds of the gospel. That is why He said in this prophecy in Isaiah 8:18: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me." In speaking of Christ, the captain of our salvation, being one with us and not being ashamed to call us brethren and quoting from Psalm 22:22, he quotes from our lesson in Hebrews 2:13, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." This is truly an important prophecy of Christ Jesus.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. In what way must we be broken to be able to serve God?
2. Why must we beware of worldly associations?
3. How is it that Jesus is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense?
4. In what way are the Lord's disciples an exclusive and separate people?
5. Who is this child born unto us, and this Son who is given?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I like to ponder and meditate on the scene of the last meeting of Christ with His disciples before He was taken from them

and crucified. In John chapters 14 through 17 we find this beautiful and sacred meeting described. He said of them in 14:17 concerning the Holy Spirit, "...whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." In verse 22 Judas (not Iscariot) asked Jesus how it was that He would manifest himself to them and not to the world. The Saviour's answer showed that it had all to do with our attitude toward His Word: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Then He followed with, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." It is through the avenue of the Word and the Spirit (the lifeline of the Church) that Christ is revealed and made real to us. It is this inner awareness and reality that makes the saints of the most High an exclusive people, separate unto Him.

He also spoke of His peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Ver. 27. At the close of His talk in 16:33 He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He mentioned several other things about the world being adverse to Him. He is saying as Isaiah said He would: "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me!" If we really have Jesus, the real Jesus, there will be a distinct separation between us and this present evil world, as He prayed in 17:14, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

"Associate yourselves." "Take counsel together". "A confederacy." These phrases propose the ideas of uniting forces and powers together for a common cause. These confederacies can wield tremendous influence and seem a marvel to the human mind. They can create a false sense of security to the human heart and to nations.

God warned the children of Israel against making leagues with other nations and trusting in them. Instead of turning to God in repentance they seemed to want to go another route. Proverbs 11:21 states, "*Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Isaiah 30 warns us against trusting

in the shadow of Egypt. These evil confederacies that fight against truth and righteousness will one day fall and be broken, though they prosper and seem all powerful at present. There are powers at this present time in the world with tremendous financial backing that are calling evil good and good evil.

In the 73rd chapter of Psalms we find that Asaph's faith was wavering and sliding at the prosperity of the wicked. It was difficult and painful to his view. He was coming to the place of thinking he had cleansed his hands in vain. Then he went into the sanctuary of God and was able to see their end. Let us not be dismayed at the powers of wickedness.

Our salvation will be in sanctifying the Lord of hosts Himself. Let us examine our paths and turn again unto God, for He will be our sanctuary.

--Bro. Bob Wilson

February 2, 2014

THE HOLY SPIRIT POURED UPON ZION

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isaiah 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

2 And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns *and* briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy *in* the joyous city:

15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.

Isaiah 33:20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down: not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

Isaiah 35:1 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.

9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.

10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

MEMORY VERSE: And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. Isaiah 32:17

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord God has given His Church for a foundation, a tried and tested Stone, a Rock for a refuge and shelter for His people. He has poured out His Spirit upon us that we might overcome spiritual deadness and be no more a wilderness or desert. Thus we can find that highway of holiness, and, as the redeemed of the Lord, come to the fullness of His blessings with great joy and gladness.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 28:16, "sure foundation": This is a foundation that is set, fixed, and settled, never to be moved. "believeth": Fully trusts with unwavering confidence and assurance. "not make haste": Not yield to fear, anxiety, distress, gloom, discontent, or any other negative influence. The Septuagint Greek translation reads, "shall by no means be ashamed." 1 Peter 2:6 quotes it, "shall not be confounded." Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is that tried and precious Cornerstone, the foun-

dation of the Church of God.

Isaiah 32:2, "great rock": This means that it is weighty, firm, and unfailing. "weary land": This means hearts of men that are weak, failing, drooping, suffering, and living under unfavorable and difficult conditions of poverty and sorrow. Such is the condition of the soul in the bondage of Satan and sin.

Ver. 13, Let us quote from the Hebrew: "On the ground of my people thorn and briers shall go up, even over all houses of joy, the jubilant city." This is the description of the spiritual condition of man void of the Spirit of God under the law and condemnation for transgression. The other scriptures accompanying this also picture trouble, distress, and desolation.

Ver. 15, "Until the spirit be poured upon us": This desolate condition would persist and remain unsolved until the soul receives the grace of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. "wilderness, fruitful field, forest": These can be likened unto the various conditions of the soul. Under the bondage of sin we are like a desert or wilderness. In Christ we are transformed into a fruitful field, and through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit we can be as lush and thick with green verdure as the beautiful forest.

Ver. 16, "dwell, remain": Being permanent with no fear or peril of being removed.

Ver. 17, "work of righteousness shall be peace": The action and operation of God's righteousness is without strife and forceful pressure. It is peaceful and gentle. "effect": The service and benefit and what it produces. "assurance": Trust and confidence.

Ver. 19, Let us quote from the Hebrew: "Though it hails when the forest is felled, and the city is laid low in a low place." This is probably connected to the verse before about His people being in sure dwellings and quiet resting places even when it hails, etc. The Septuagint Greek rendering of this says, "If the hail should come down, it shall not come upon you: and they that dwell in the forest shall be in confidence as those in the plain country."

Isa. 33:20, "solemnities": This is referring to the special seasons, festivals, assemblies, and set gatherings of the Church for worship and the service of God. Every true citizen of Zion loves these times of worship.

Isa. 35:1, "be glad for them": In the chapter just before this

the prophet mentioned in verse 16 about the LORD's mouth that commanded and His Spirit that gathered them. So he is referring to the Word and the Spirit, the two faithful witnesses which make up the lifeline of the Church. Those who sense their barrenness and desert conditions of heart and life will be glad for the inspiring and quickening life of the Word of the Gospel of Christ along with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 8, "It shall be for those": The Hebrew rendering says, "And it is for them, the traveler of the way, and fools shall not go astray." We who seek to go the strait and narrow way that leads to life are counted as fools by the world but we have enough wisdom and knowledge that will keep us in the way of holiness, and we need not go wrong.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are combining scriptures from four different chapters of Isaiah in our lesson today. Each one of these prophecies are set with a background of the sad condition of Israel at the time of Isaiah's ministry. There was the crown of pride, the drunkards, and those who sought to make a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. A spiritual drought had taken effect in the hearts of the people because of their yielding to the fleshly lusts and influences of the wicked world around them. But Isaiah prophesies of good things to come.

Our text in Isaiah 28:16 is quoted in I Peter 2:6 and applied to Jesus. Isaiah 35:3 is quoted by the writer in Hebrews 12:12. All of these are prophecies that come to pass in the New Testament Church of God. Both chapters of Isaiah 32 and 35 are foretelling the blessing that God would send to the Church in the infilling and anointing of the Holy Spirit. And Isaiah 33:20 is a direct reference to the true Zion of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of the first born, which are written in heaven, which is brought out so well in Hebrews 12:22-23.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What all must we do to make sure that we are on the sure foundation?
2. What is the desert that is so in need of the freshness of the Spirit?

3. When he speaks of Zion, what is the prophet prophesying of?
4. What is the real effect of the work of God's righteousness?
5. What must we faithfully do to be able to walk the way of holiness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The indwelling Holy Spirit is the answer to all of our spiritual needs, and this is what Jesus came to make available to us. By His obedience to the will of God, Christ purchased us for Himself and provided a perfect cure for all of our sinful woe. He went back to the right hand of God after paying the ransom for our redemption and sent the Holy Spirit to live in and work through His children. The effect of us receiving the Holy Spirit poured out from on high is a truly quiet and peaceful experience of victory and happiness. It puts us on the Highway of Holiness, and we can walk thereon and never need to err or go astray as we faithfully follow His truth in everything. Thus we can build on that solid and sure foundation, Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. Above all else, seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit and maintain a faithful walk before Him all the days of your life.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

A heart that has been changed by the indwelling of this King of Righteousness will be the man or woman who will bring forth spiritual fruit even in the midst of hard and difficult places. There is a scene in *Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian viewed a fire burning against a wall and one standing by it throwing water on the fire to put it out. The fire only burned higher and hotter. When Christian sought to know the meaning of this, he was taken to the other side of the wall where a man with a vessel of oil in his hand continually poured oil on the fire. So it is that Christ continually fills the hearts of His children with grace and strength to be triumphant even when surrounded by the desert of sin.

Richard Wurmbrand was imprisoned for many years in Romania for the "charge" of preaching the gospel. He said many times a brother in prison would be preaching to the other prisoners when the guards would suddenly burst in and haul him

down to the "beating room." They would bring him back, bloody and bruised, and throw him on the floor. Slowly he would pick up his battered body, straighten his clothes and say, "Now, brethren, where did I leave off when I was interrupted?" Pastor Wurmbrand said, "We were happy preaching; they were happy beating us--so everyone was happy." May we all strive to have the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our lives so we can say as the apostles, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

—Patsy Smith

February 9, 2014

THE ACCEPTABLE DAY OF SALVATION FORETOLD

Isaiah 49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

3 And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages:

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my high-ways shall be exalted.

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his peo-

ple, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

22 Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.

MEMORY VERSE: I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

II Corinthians 6:2

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It was God's sovereign will in Christ Jesus to raise up all the fallen of the nation of Israel to be saved from all sin, and He also would extend the offer of His grace to all nations of men on the earth..

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 49:3, "My servant, O Israel": This is definitely referring to Jesus Christ, the true Israelite. He was the seed of Abraham possessed with the same identical spirit of faith and obedience to God that Abraham had.

Ver. 5, "Though Israel be not gathered": Old literal Israel was scattered in the ways of sin and rebellion against God. Never more were they to be God's chosen people. Christ Jesus was to be glorious and accepted in the eyes of God from that time even for ever.

Ver. 6 "a light thing": To save the lost of Israel was just a small part of the plan of God in Jesus Christ's mission to mankind. The whole world was to be included in the provision of His grace.

Ver. 8, "acceptable time": A favorable and satisfactory opportunity with God for the salvation of mankind. "establish the earth": This first literal earth was wrecked and under the sen-

tence of eternal destruction because of the heavy weight of sin and transgression upon it, as Isaiah 24:20 states. It was the sinful condition of the hearts of men that made it so. In Christ bringing salvation and victory to us over the dominion of sin, we are established and given hope of a new eternal heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, as II Peter 3:13 states. "desolate heritages": This can be applied to the blessings that man was destitute of because of sin and transgression.

Ver. 9, "prisoners": Those in the prison house of sin. "Shew yourselves": This is the call to the unrighteous and sinner. It is to say, "Come out from your hiding place in sin and crooked ways; acknowledge your desperate need and wretched condition; surrender yourself to God, and give up your sinful ways of life." "high places": The Hebrew says, "bare and open places". This points to an exposed and unashamed state where we can give forth a clear testimony and witness. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Matthew 5:14.

Ver. 11. "exalted": High and lifted up above sin and worldliness. The Hebrew says here, "My highways shall be high." God's highway of holiness truly is "above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." Proverbs 15:24.

Ver. 22, "standard": The Hebrew meaning is "a flag, banner, or signal." It is the line and code of holiness as revealed by the Word and the Holy Spirit.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we have another very vivid prophecy from Isaiah concerning Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, His great salvation, and His Church and its function in this world. We want to take notice of the places where this chapter is quoted from in the New Testament. It is very important to observe how the New Testament writers applied the various prophecies that they quoted and referred to.

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch in Pisidia. The Lord was blessing the Word to the Gentiles, but the Jews were contradicting and blaspheming. So the brethren responded to the stubborn and hard-hearted Jews: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unwor-

thy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And then Paul and Barnabas quoted from verse 6 in our lesson: "For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." The Gentiles were glad when they heard this, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Acts 13:45-48.

The apostle Paul warned about the danger of receiving the grace of God in vain in II Cor.6:1, and then quoted from Isaiah 49:8 of our lesson, saying, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." Then he added the steadfast truth: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation". II Cor. 6:2.

The apostle John saw the wonderful vision of the great multitude of the redeemed of all ages and spoke concerning them from Isaiah 49:10 of our lesson, saying, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Rev. 7:16-17.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the prophecy in our lesson pointing forward to?
2. What else did God have in mind besides saving Israel?
3. Who were the prisoners to whom He spoke?
4. What does the Lord say to His Church when she feels forgotten?
5. Can you name some of the desolate heritages God wants us to have?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus said in Matt. 24:14 that "...this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." He wants every person to have a chance to hear the good news of the kingdom, that is "...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost". Romans 14:17. Let us be diligent to be in tune with God and always be ready to bear witness for Him.

This is the day of salvation, a space of time and a chance

for us to receive the grace of God and let it accomplish its designed purpose. It is possible for us to receive the grace of God in vain, that is, hear it and not allow it to have its rightful effect. Jesus spoke about the devil taking away the Word from our hearts and of us being offended at the Word and also of the cares and riches and pleasures of this life choking the Word out. It is sad that many believe in vain. I Cor. 15:2. People need to come out into the light, expose their true sinful condition, and allow Christ to save

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

What a beautiful detailed picture of Christ and His mission is presented in the reading today! It alludes to the announcement to Mary that she would bring forth God's Son and call His name Jesus. It foreshadows his lowly life as a servant. He often said that He was not here to do His own will but to honor and glorify His Father.

He was that "Shiloh" testified of in Genesis 49:10: "...unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*." Even Caiphias, who knew not that he was prophesying of Jesus, said, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." John, who recorded this, added, "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." John 11:52.

He became our Light, our New Covenant, our Salvation, our Shepherd, and our Standard-bearer. We who were far off (Gentiles), He has called near.

On that dark, awful day at Calvary, God accepted His Son's sacrifice for the whole world. He heard Jesus' prayers and saw His tears, came to His aid, and gave Him strength to finish the work triumphantly, bringing in the blessed day of salvation.

And as the nails pierced through His precious hands, they forever engraved the names of His beloved—our names—upon His palms.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

February 16, 2014

GOOD TIDINGS OF PEACE TO ZION

Isaiah 52:1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

3. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean *thing*: go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel *will be* your reward.

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut

their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

MEMORY VERSE: And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Romans 10:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has promised and provided redemption and deliverance for the soul of man from all uncleanness and bondage of the devil so that we can know Him and rejoice in His peace. But we must renounce and come away from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit if we would be clean vessels for the Lord.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 52:1, "uncircumcised": Spiritual uncleanness due to lack of temperance and control of the desires of the flesh.

Ver. 2, "arise, and sit down": A command to rise up from the dust of impurity and transgression to possess the kingdom of peace and triumphant grace. "bands of thy neck": These are the captivating lusts of the fleshly mind that keep us from being spiritual and holy before God.

Ver. 3, "sold yourselves for nought": Sold for nothing; sold under sin (Rom. 7:14) with the cords of vanity, emptiness, and for no eternal profit. "redeemed without money": Purchased not with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Ver 6. "Behold, it is I": Behold, look at Me! "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of *our* faith." (Hebrews 12:2.)

Ver. 7, "mountains": The elevated plains of holiness.

Ver. 8, "see eye to eye": This is a united vision with every one filled with the Holy Spirit and enlightened with spiritual understanding that brings a unity of doctrine and application of the holy Scriptures.

Ver. 9, "waste places": These are barren areas in the lives of all who are void of the Spirit of God. These empty places shall be filled with good things by the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 11, "that bear the vessels of the Lord": Those through whom the Lord dispenses His holy doctrine and spiritual food for the souls of men.

Ver. 12, "rereward": The Lord will be a rear guard and protection to bring about safety and victory. He will go before us and will also come in behind us to gather us up and provide the ultimate triumph over Satan.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is filled with prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy Church, which is the Zion of God and the New Jerusalem. The message of the prophet is to the captive souls of men who are sold under the bondage of sin. And the price for our deliverance is something more than material wealth, for it is the price of the blood of the innocent Lamb of God.

Verse 7 of our lesson is quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 10:15, for which we have our Memory Verse. Paul applies this to the preaching of the gospel of Christ. And how beautiful is the life of those who live and proclaim the glorious gospel of the Son of God! Paul also alludes to this in describing the Christian armour and labeling what our feet are to be shod with, namely the preparation (readiness) of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15).

Paul also refers to verse 11 in our lesson in II Corinthians 6:17. He had brought out the distinction and separation between righteousness and unrighteousness and between light and darkness, etc. He declared that we are the temple of God, that God would dwell in us, walk in us, and be our God. He said in verse 17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you." He said farther in chapter 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

In verses 13 and 14 of our lesson the prophet brings out the two seemingly conflicting images of the Redeemer. One the one hand He was to be exalted, extolled (lifted up), and be very high. And then on the other hand His visage (or outward appearance) was to be so marred (or disfigured) more than any

man. The Jews would hail a Christ that would be exalted and high but were unprepared for a suffering and humiliated One who came as a servant.

But, as the prophet went on to say, Christ would bring His salvation to the nations and the ends of the earth. Paul quotes from the latter part of verse 15 in our lesson in Romans 15:21 as he brought out in verse 20 that he had striven to preach the gospel not where Christ was named, lest he should build upon another man's foundation. Then he said, "But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand." --Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What Zion and Jerusalem is the prophet speaking to?
2. What are some of the bands that we must get loose from?
3. What are the glad tidings that we hear in the message of Christ?
4. How is it possible for us to see eye to eye today?
5. What is our part in becoming clean and pure in God's sight?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The beautiful garments the Lord wants us as His Church to put on are "bowels (tender feelings) of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." Colossians 3:12. This is the robe of righteousness and holiness before God. In speaking of the Lamb's wife in Revelation 19:8 it says, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." We are to be that holy city, and we must walk that highway of holiness whereon no unholy and no spiritually uncircumcised person will walk.

We can know when the Lord speaks to our hearts. He can be very real to us. How blessed for a person to be saved from this present evil world and sanctified by the Holy Spirit coming down from heaven to live in the heart! This is the kind of vessel the Lord can send forth with messages from heaven of the gospel of peace. Oh, how beautiful is such a life!

The true ministers of God, filled with the Holy Spirit and under His guidance and inspiration, do see the holy Word of God in unity and eye to eye. Our understanding may not be of

the same degree, but we strive for unity and bear with one another and speak often one to another. We seek earnestly for the Holy Spirit light and inspiration, and we know that He works to bring us to the unity of the faith and the fullness of the knowledge of the Son of God. And above all we seek to be holy and pure before Him in love, keeping ourselves from the unclean and defiling influences of this world. We go not hastily but wait on the Lord to go before us and to follow and gather us up.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Our *Lord* dwells in holiness, righteousness, and purity. As His children, this is the realm in which HE desires us to live also. To live beneath the *Lord's* holiness and yet claim to be His child is a direct insult to our SAVIOR. Hebrews 6:6 reads, "If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." I Cor. 7:23 When we truly get a vision of the price paid for our soul, it will bring us up to the holiness of our *Lord*. It will affect every word we say, every business deal that we make, every garment that we wear, every place that we go, and every person that we associate with. It will even affect the very foods that we do or do not eat.

Since we have been purchased by the LAMB of GOD, we are no longer under the servitude of this world's ambitions, its priorities, or its fashions. "We are free indeed."

"Living for JESUS, who died in my place,
Bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace---
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading, and give Him my all."

--Sis. LaDawna Adams

February 23, 2014

COMFORT TO THE GRIEVED AND AFFLICTED

Isaiah 54:1 Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with

child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;

3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

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

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

7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

9 For this *is* as the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

MEMORY VERSE: And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children. Isaiah 54:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: For the soul of man abused and afflicted by sin, grieved in spirit, and forsaken by the disappointing world, God has provided in Christ a perfect healing and fulfillment of joy and overcoming strength.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 54:1, “children of the desolate”: The desolate here is referring to the insensitive and blinded of this carnal world in their pride and haughty accomplishments and fleshly lusts. These can include churches, organizations, and religions void of the true Spirit of God who, through their earthly prosperity and fleshly wisdom have many more members and converts to their assembly than the holy people of God who are truly born again of His Spirit. “children of the married wife”: The married wife is the true Church, the Bride of Christ, who are joined unto Him in one spirit. Their beliefs and convictions of holiness and separateness from the world do not appeal to the worldly crew, so their numbers are generally much less.

Ver. 4 “reproach of thy widowhood”: This is contemptuous, rude, and humiliating treatment of being cast off and rejected. This can be from the world that a person under conviction for sin suffers when they turn from its folly to Christ or any other reproach they may bear for the sake of their godly fear. We were one time joined to the world and its vanities, but the Holy Spirit conviction upon our souls caused us to turn from this present evil age to seek things higher and nobler and such as are pleasing to God. Because of our decision and stand for the Lord, we are divorced and cast off and many times persecuted and mistreated. But God is giving us comfort that, in Him, we will find something so much better than what we had in the world of sin.

Ver. 5, “thy Redeemer”: The Hebrew meaning here is “Kinsman.” In the laws given to Israel by God there was a statute that called for the next of kin to take a widow to wife and take over her property and keep it from being wasted and taken

away by fraud. The story of Ruth and Boaz is a good illustration of this. This is a type of Christ, as our Kinsman, taking us who are bereft of love and soul peace (being cast off and rejected by the world) and redeeming us to spiritual life and victory. In Adam we lost our righteous estate, but Christ, our Kinsman and the second Adam, restores us to holiness and favor with God.

Ver. 6, "forsaken and grieved in spirit, refused": This is a further description of us in desperate need of consolation and hope that we found not in the world and other religions void of the true Spirit of the Lord. "refused": Rejected. The Hebrew says, "...a wife of young men when she is rejected." When a soul wakes up to the emptiness of the pleasures and treasures of this world and goes to seeking for heavenly things, he or she is rejected by their former associates. But if they seek the LORD with all their heart, they can find One who will take them in and give them eternal blessings for their joy and happiness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

What a wonderful prophecy we have in our lesson today concerning Christ and His Bride! The very first verse is a comforting appeal from the heart of God to us who are endeavoring to follow Him in the midst of the reproaches and sufferings that we bear for His Name's sake.

This first verse is quoted by the apostle Paul in Galatians 4:27. In this text of scripture he was bringing out about Hagar the bondwoman and Sarah the freewoman and their two sons from Abraham. Paul puts Hagar on the same level as the old Mosaic law and the old literal Jerusalem. He puts Sarah (the married wife) on the same level as the New Covenant in Christ and the New Jerusalem, which is the Church of God, the Bride of Christ. Paul stated that we are children of the New Jerusalem which is above, that is, it is spiritual and made up of all who are born from above by the Word and the Spirit. Then Paul quoted this first verse from our lesson, referring it to the Church. We who are of true faith and obedience to Christ are the children of the New Jerusalem, the children of the promise, the true seed of Abraham.

Jesus quoted from verse 13 in our lesson in John 6:44-45 after this fashion: "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. 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." Uniting the prophecy with the application Jesus used, we conclude that before a man can truly know and appreciate Christ, he must be taught about the Father. Being taught of God is to know of His holiness and the awfulness of sin. This prepares the heart and makes it fit and qualified to come to the One who can reunite us with the Father, having atoned for and delivered us from our sins.

The whole prophecy is woven around souls being prepared in heart to be married to Christ. We are prepared by being made conscious of our sins and having a longing and willingness to surrender to Christ and be washed and made heavenly pure.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the desolate have more children than the married wife?
2. How can a soul be like a desolate widow before God?
3. What is the prophet saying to us who are forsaken and grieved?
4. Why must we be taught of God to be able to come to Christ?
5. What are the things that God is promising to us in this lesson?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our lesson today is an encouraging message to us who truly leave all to seek to know our God and His Son. To really take up our cross to follow Jesus we put ourselves at variance with this present evil world. God's saints have had to suffer reproach and disgrace so many, many times through the ages. The true and faithful have, for the most part, been of the minority. They have been persecuted, hated, scorned, abused, and killed. But what we have in our souls in a personal love and relationship with our dear Kinsman makes up for all that we suffer from the spiritually desolate world.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee.” The small moments of trial, difficulty, and suffering can seem very long and big while they encompass us. Paul called them light afflictions that are but for a moment. Remember how Job felt forsaken and all alone. Every emotion he had told him that God was far off, uninterested, and didn’t care. Prayer seemed so ineffectual. However, the trial soon passed and the latter end was better than his beginning.

Our latter end can be better also if we remember that our trials are just for a small moment in the scheme of life, and to hold on to our confidence which hath great recompense of reward. Let us keep the right attitude during those times that are common to all of God’s children. I remember a phrase often mentioned by Sis. Lottie Joiner: “We are not going to heaven on flowery beds of ease.” Regardless of how close we live to God, life will throw us some curve balls—events and circumstances we didn’t expect and didn’t want. Let us arm our mind and spirit with this truth.

One of the great messages of the Bible is that of hope. Salvation is not just a onetime event that occurs when we first come to Christ. Salvation is lifelong experiences of God’s love, mercy, and justice. “Hope within our hearts assures us it is better farther on.”
--Bro. Bob Wilson

March 2, 2014

MAN’S SINFUL BONDAGE OF WOE

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

4 None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and

bring forth iniquity.

8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as *for* our iniquities, we know them;

13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

15 Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. And the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

16 And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

MEMORY VERSE: Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14:34.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Sin and transgression in the heart of man brought separation between him and his God, bringing abundant woe and despair. But God, not willing to leave man in this wretched condition, prophesied of One who would come as a Redeemer to deliver us from the bondage of sin.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 59:3, "hands defiled with blood": These are deeds and ways of life that harm and hinder others from knowing the way of life. We can be guilty of another man's blood when we fail to love and obey God like we should. We all have an influ-

ence on others for good or evil. We can be guilty of the blood of Jesus by refusing to let Him be our Redeemer and Lord. "iniquity": That which is not right and acceptable with God. "perverseness": Moral evil, that which is distorted and corrupt.

Ver. 12, "transgressions": That which contradicts and breaks away from just authority and right. "sins": Both the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated as "sin" mean to err or to miss the mark.

Ver. 15, "truth faileth": This means that truth is lacking in people's minds and hearts. Deceit and dishonesty before God and man rules in many. "displeased him": It was evil in God's eyes.

Ver. 19, "lift up a standard against": To cause to vanish or flee away.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today deals with the basic problem that plagues the entire human race of man, which is sin. Sin is to blame for all trouble and the lack of peace and happiness. Sin is to fall short of the glory of God and to violate His standards of decency and justice. Man has fallen into sin. In sin he was conceived and shapened. Sin is a seed that is passed from generation to generation. It is a corrupt nature that has taken hold of the world and it rules with an iron hand. It is slavery and woeful bondage.

Our lesson is definitely quoted in the New Testament. In Romans 3 Paul expresses from the scriptures the sinful condition both Jews and Gentiles are in. One of these sayings, "The way of peace have they not known" comes from this chapter. And Paul, in describing the armor which a Christian should put on in Ephesians 6, speaks of the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation as the prophet speaks here. This is a prophecy of Jesus as He comes forth conquering the powers of Satan and sin.

Not only is the blight of sin described in our lesson, but we have here foretold the remedy and solution for this terrible disease of sin and iniquity. There was no other One who could bring about deliverance and make intercession for the lost souls of men. Jesus became the Arm of Jehovah, and was sustained by His faithfulness and obedience to God. He was

the greatest Warrior that ever hit the battlefield against the devil. He accomplished the will of God in providing a means of escape from sin.

Verse 20 of our lesson is quoted by Paul in Romans 11:26 when he said, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Compare these two scriptures. Both of these scriptures speak the same thing even though they are expressed differently, the one in Romans being from the Greek Septuagint translation.

Our lesson today is good news for the sin-sick soul who, in his heart, is turning from the ways of sin with a repentance and a true purpose to follow the Lord in his holiness.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does our lesson say is the cause of man's trouble?
2. What are some of the effects of sin that can be seen in humanity?
3. Who became the Arm of Jehovah to bring salvation to us?
4. Why did Jesus need armor? And why do we need armor also?
5. Who does the Redeemer come to and why is the term "Zion" used?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Sin and transgression against God's holy law of holiness and truth breaks the bond of fellowship and communion between God and man. God is offended and grieved with the selfishness and undisciplined spirit that has take hold of mankind. This brings a barrier, a separation that cuts man off from his Maker. And this is justly so. God, Who created the world and gave us our being, is worthy of all submission, reverence, and obedience. To rebel against His control and oversight is a reproach and a shame on our part. It gets us nowhere in the pursuit of happiness and satisfaction. It sows the seeds of sorrow and misery and can bring every transgressor to the same end of everlasting shame and contempt.

Sin is a disease, an evil disease that spreads like a cancer throughout the whole being of man. It is a leaven that ever

spreads and gets worse and worse. Sin is progressive and goes from one degree of iniquity and uncleanness to another, ever deepening and multiplying in corruption and shame. Man needs to be enlightened to the awful reality of sin. God has made it possible for us to be aware of sin and its woeful blight. "Every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God....for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:19-20.

Sin is elusive, that is, it seeks to hide itself and shift the blame to someone or something else. Too many people in our society today are totally unaware that they are in sin and have very little consciousness of sin or none at all. It is much easier to see the sin in one's fellowman than to be able to acknowledge it in one's own self.

Christ is become of no effect to so many because they sense not their true sinful condition. Jesus said to the Pharisees of His day, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." John 9:41. To so many Christ's death is of none effect because they do not have the least thought of how wicked and sinful they are.

But there are those who are made conscious of their sin and are willing to repent fully and be delivered from its power. To these people the Saviour comes. "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6. Those who hunger thus are those who are sick and tired of their sinful self. Sin and its pleasures do not satisfy the soul. Blessed is the man who becomes aware of his sin and is willing to turn from transgression and seek for the life of Christ. This state of being humble and willing to renounce one's sinful ways and to conform to Christ is the main qualification to become a member of Zion, the city of our God in truth.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Stormy weather conditions can have a certain appeal in the power and force in which they demonstrate themselves; however, when the force causes injury, loss, or death, then whatever appeal they might have had is very quickly gone. Two storm-chasers lost their lives a short time back; no doubt they started that chase with excitement pumping in their veins.

Emergency Alert! Satan is a violent and furious storm. In the beginning he appeals to the senses and the pleasure he can afford a life. The initial appeal, however, is a very thin veneer and dollar-store cheap. Consider the horrific damage he inflicted on the Children of Israel: defilement, blood, iniquity, lies, perverseness, oppression, vanity, mischief, turmoil, and revolt. He sucked them into the vortex of his storm and left debris and mass destruction in their lives. Romans 3:16 clearly describes those who do not seek God: "Destruction and misery are in their ways."

Thank God for a strong and righteous Redeemer who had His eye on His people! He is the glorious Son who came with power to break the chains of broken and destroyed lives.

--Julie Elwell

March 9, 2014

THE ZION OF THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

14They shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

22 A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

MEMORY VERSE: Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. Hebrews 12:22.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The New Jerusalem, which is the New Testament Church of God, is a glorious people, a city with gates open to all nations who receive the grace of Jesus Christ for salvation from the dominion of Satan and sin.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 60:3, "thy rising": The shining forth of the beauty and glory of God's holy and righteous people.

Ver. 5, The Hebrew says, "Then shall you fear and will be bright, and shall dread and your heart shall enlarge, for the sea's abundance shall be turned to you, and the wealth of the nations shall come to you." Godly fear and dread of grieving God is so vital for the preparation of the heart before God. The sea's abundance and the wealth of the nations refers to the love and devotion of humanity, the faith and obedience of redeemed souls.

Ver. 11, "forces of the Gentiles": In a literal sense this means the resources and strength and wealth of the nations. But we know that it mainly refers to the spiritual values of faith and holy devotion that man can render to Christ the Lord.

Ver. 13, "glory of Lebanon": Mount Lebanon was most

noted for its trees of cedar which were used in the building of the Old Testament temple of worship. But it is a type of usefulness and faithful service to God and His cause. We will give the Hebrew word for each of these trees mentioned: 1. Fir tree: The juniper tree that yields excellent oil for healthy purposes. 2. Pine tree: An enduring and hardwood lasting tree such as the oak. 3. The box: The cypress or cedar. All of these are valuable and useful woods for the service of man. So the obedient and faithful lives of all who trust faithfully in God will be of service to Him.

Ver. 15, "eternal excellency": Everlasting dominion and majesty.

Ver. 17 "officers": Spiritual leaders and overseers. "exactors": Those who lead and rule in righteousness and true holiness.

Ver. 21, "inherit the land": Possess and receive the benefits of the spiritual blessings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Ver. 22, "little one, small one": Despised, poor, needy, low, and humble.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our previous lesson from Isaiah 59 dealt with the wretched sinful state of man and gave a promise of a Redeemer who would come to those who would turn away from their transgressions and sinful ways to serve Him. The prophet also added in verse 21: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, [those who turn from transgression] saith the LORD, My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth....saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." Then we go right into our lesson today about the light and glory of God shining upon Zion, His people. This is fulfilled in the New Testament plan of salvation and the rise of the Church of God which Christ built upon Himself, the solid Rock.

The blessings that God promises His people, the Church of God, in this prophecy are spiritual treasures of heaven to be bestowed upon all who will humble their hearts to love, follow, and obey Him. We have this prophecy fulfilled in the holy city, the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, that John saw coming down from heaven in Revelations 21. Verses 25 and 26 of that

chapter refer to verse 11 of our lesson when they said, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." And Rev. 21:23 refers to verse 19 of our lesson when it said, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Our Memory Verse comes from Hebrews 12:22 where the writer declares that we are not come unto Mount Sinai and the old covenant of the law, but rather to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, labeling it Mount Sion and the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is very plain, comparing the New Testament references to Isaiah's prophecy, just what the prophet is foretelling. It is a wonderful experience to have this light, glory, spiritual wealth, and beauty a living reality in one's own personal experience of holiness and victory over sin through Christ, our great Redeemer!

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. To whom is the prophet speaking in our lesson today?
2. What is the wealth that is promised to the Church in Christ?
3. What are the walls and the gates of the New Jerusalem?
4. What is the land that the saints of God inherit in Christ?
5. What does it mean to be a small one to become a great nation?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is spiritual light and glory that shines in our hearts through the Word of God and the Spirit of God that is the illuminating radiance of the people of God, the Church of God. We live in a world of darkness, a society that is covered with gross darkness and ignorance concerning the things of God and what pleases Him. But for us who turn from transgression and sin there is light and understanding. We can behold with open face the glory of the Lord. Just as Paul said in Ephesians 1:18, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

We serve God with reverence and godly fear. We have

abundant grace and the gift of righteousness, whereby we are able to reign in this life by One, Jesus Christ. Our light is the everlasting light of God and in Him is no darkness at all. We are surrounded by the walls of Salvation, His Salvation, the free gift of His grace. We open up the gates of Praise shewing forth His love and goodness all day and every day.

Our values have been upgraded. Instead of the polished brass of human talent and abilities, we have the pure gold of holiness and perfection of heart. Instead of iron that will rust and tarnish by pride and evil influences, we have the silver of faithfulness and truth. Instead of splintery and decaying wood, we have the enduring overlay of brass and His preserving grace. And instead of stones we have the strength of iron. Ours is not the outward adorning but that incorruptible meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. I Peter 3:4.

Instead of seeking to be big and important in the eyes of the world, we are content to be as little children, to grow up unto Him in all things, and be a strong nation, not in fleshly ways, but in faith, meekness, love, and goodness. Thank the LORD for the privilege of being in Zion, the New Jerusalem!

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Zion is truly "a joy of many generations." Light and truth about Zion can be revealed to us in this day of time who live in 2014 as well as to our parents and grandparents' generations. Here is an exerpt from Bro. Mart Samon's book, *From Darkness to Light*, telling his vision of Zion after being saved and then filled with the Holy Spirit:

"One thing I had always been confused on was which church was right. Where I was reared, most of the folks were Baptist people. They used to say if you were not one of them, you could not go to heaven. After I left home, I found there were a lot of people in other churches who said they were right, too, and if you did not go their way, you would be lost. I could never see how they could all be right: then the Lord gave me a vision. I saw a beautiful, perfectly formed cedar tree. It was not a natural tree, but was made of parts which were different sizes, shapes, and colors, like a puzzle. Every piece fit per-

fectly, had its place, and would not fit anywhere else. I remembered reading that He (Christ) was the head of the body, the Church. (Col. 1:18.) 1 Corinthians 12:27 says, 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,' and 1 Corinthians 12:18, 'But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.' Also in Acts 2:47, 'And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' I thought, 'Praise God, this is it!' When anyone gets saved, no matter how big or little, what color or nationality, that one is born into God's family or church, and He places each one just where He wants them. Thank God for light! I saw that I was a member of Christ's body, which is His Church. I have never been confused anymore about which Church is right. God has only one Church. We are born into it. The only way I can get out of it is to sin."

--Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

March 16, 2014

THE NEW JERUSALEM, A PRAISE IN THE EARTH

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp *that burneth*.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy

land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

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

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which* shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

MEMORY VERSE: For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. Isaiah 62:5

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has redeemed through His Son Jesus Christ a people to Himself to shine out in this world His honour and worth, a holy people that will live to His glory and be united with Him as His married wife for ever and ever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 61:1, “meek”: Depressed in mind and spirit; gentle, needy, poor, humble, and lowly.

Ver. 10, “joyful”: The Hebrew meaning is to spin around in rapturous delight; to leap for gladness.

Isaiah 62:4, “Hephzibah”: My delight is in her. This means that God has pleasure, desire, and high value in His holy people who leave all the world and self to follow Him. “Beulah”: Married: joined and united in holy wedlock as hus-

band and wife. In the Hebrew to marry means to be the master of. To master is to own, control, guide, teach, provide for, protect, love, and ardently care for.

Ver. 5, "thy sons marry thee": This is a unique spiritual expression. It really works that way. Any person who is born of the Holy Spirit and gains knowledge and understanding of the Church of God, the New Jerusalem, the holy bride of Christ, falls in love with Her and unites himself to Her with the same love that Jehovah and His Son has for Her.

Verses 6 and 7, "keep not silence, and give him no rest": The Hebrew says, Let not a pause be to you and give not a pause to Him." This expresses the endless and perpetual intercession and concern that the ministers of Christ engage in through prayer and service unto God and for His people's welfare. "a praise in the earth": A laudation. To laud means to give glory and praise and honour to. It means to commend the worth of, and to express approval and admiration of.

Ver. 10, The Hebrew says, "Pass! Pass through the gates, prepare the way for the people! Raise up! Raise up the highway; clear it from stones; lift up a banner over the peoples." Go in yourself and partake of God's salvation and grace. Live a life that will make the way plain for others to follow. Build yourselves up on your most holy faith that will show the high and lifted up way of holiness, separate from the world of sin. Lift up in the sight of all around you the holy and perfect way of a true child of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today Christ and His Church is seen prophetically in a beautiful vision given by the Holy Spirit hundreds of years before it all so wonderfully came to pass. The first part of Isaiah 61 was read by our Lord Jesus in Luke 4:16-19 when He visited the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read. And after reading from the scripture, "He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Ver. 21.

Many other things the prophet Isaiah said under the anointing and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In verse 10 Christ is speaking of His role as bridegroom for His bride, which is the Church He purchased with His own blood. In Isaiah 62:1 He

shows His holy and effectual intercession with God on behalf of His Church and Her holy bearing in this world of darkness. Oh, the wonderful and beautiful things He speaks about His beloved saints! He shows His delight and fervent desire for His Church and the close bond between Him and His people is likened unto that between a husband and wife. This holy relationship between the souls of humanity and the Lover of our souls is truly the land of Beulah that has been sung about and enjoyed by the saints down through the ages.

Then in verses 6 and 7 we have the ministers of God in their intercessory role of prayer and service for the Church and the cause of God. We have the weighty counsel in verse 10 of really entering in and partaking of the holiness of God and earnestly seeking to have the proper influence by our righteous and faithful lives upon the souls of men.

In verse 11 is the prophecy of Jesus as our salvation coming into the world to save His people from sin and death. His reward was with Him and His work was ready for Him to accomplish. This is also mentioned in Isaiah 40:10.

Then in verse 12 the focus goes back to the Church and the four things the saints of the LORD were to be labeled as, namely, "holy, redeemed, sought out, and not forsaken." Oh, what a wonderful prophecy the LORD gave through His servant Isaiah, and, praise His holy Name, it has been preserved for us to read and be blessed by today!

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. To what kind of people does the message of Christ Jesus appeal?
2. What are some of the ornaments that Christ decks Himself with?
3. Why does the Lord want His Church to shine forth in this world?
4. Why are we called Hephzibah and Beulah?
5. Name the things we are called upon to do as His Church.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The message of Christ and all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures do not appeal to the proud and carnal spirit of lust

and selfishness that is dominating the minds and hearts of so many people of this world. No, it is rather to the lowly and meek who sense their weakness and need of God's Word and counsel. Jesus Christ found His material for development in the lowly men who were ignorant and unlearned but had a hunger and thirst for righteousness. He came to them clothed with righteousness and salvation, not in outward beauty and show. His garments were communion with heaven and the beauties of holiness, humility, faith, love, patience, and wisdom. Because of His true and faithful obedience to His heavenly Father, He was given the high and lofty place at God's right hand to intercede for the souls of men on earth. He still holds that position for our spiritual good and welfare.

God's true and holy people who are joined to Him in holy matrimony in the Holy Spirit are His delight and peculiar treasure. The land that we as the saints of God are interested in is the experience of being married and intimately united with Him, our Lord and Master. Our language is: "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, *and* I will praise the Lord." Psalm 118:19. We seek to enter in at the strait gate and walk the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Matthew 7:13, 14. We would be that holy and redeemed people, sought out from the world and never forsaken by Him. --Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

This lesson brings to mind the scripture found in I Peter 3:4, "But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price." The LORD places great value on these virtues. You might know someone that is meek but not necessarily quiet or quiet but not necessarily meek. But the combination of virtues is precious in GOD's sight. Even in this life we find great pleasure in being with those who embrace these virtues.

A meek and quiet spirit is so contrary to the thinking and attitudes of this world. When did you last read the headlines of a newspaper and the article pertained to a celebrity or official that was of a meek and quiet spirit? Or when did you last hear of breaking news telling of events pertaining to a meek and quiet spirit?

I have noticed even in the general conversations of people around me an "attitude" that is promoted as admirable or cute. But not so with our LORD. His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. With the LORD's help, we should each one seek to equip ourselves with a meek and quiet spirit. This prepares us for that heavenly home.

--Sis. LaDawna Adams

March 23, 2014

TRUE ISRAEL A REJOICING, HER PEOPLE A JOY

Isaiah 65:1 I am sought of *them that* asked not *for me*; I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that* was not called by my name.

2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walked in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts.

6 Behold, *it is* written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom,

7 Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD.....

8 Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed.

22 For as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and

mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

MEMORY VERSE: But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. Isaiah 65:18

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The spiritual Israel in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is made up of people from all nations, being set free from sin and all that is grievous to the LORD JEHOVAH. He rejoices and joys in them, for they bring forth the fruit of holiness and are blessed with the fullness of His grace and glory.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 65:6, "recompense into their bosom": God holds every man responsible for his actions and ways. As He said in Ezekiel 18:20, "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Every transgression that we commit will come right back to us, unless it is forgiven and covered by the blood of Jesus. So in reality sin is not only against God, but it is against one's own self.

Ver. 8, "new wine in the cluster": A bunch of grapes containing juice for good. The new wine represents the Church of God which was to be brought out of all of God's workings with Israel and the old law system. It would take suffering and the crushing of the Son of God, but those servants who would be brought into the true Israel in Christ would be worth it all.

Ver. 9, "seed": That seed was Christ. Galatians 3:16. "my mountains": The Hebrew word is singular, "my mountain", which is the holy Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem, the Church that Jesus built and purchased with His own blood.

Ver. 17, "new heavens and a new earth": This is speaking of the heavens and the earth that we will inhabit after this first heaven and earth is passed away as it says in II Peter 3:13. But in a spiritual sense, we enter this new heaven and new earth in the New Testament experience of being born from above of the Spirit and walking and living in that blessed Spirit as new creatures in Christ Jesus. Only those who experience this spiritual transformation will be accounted worthy to inhabit that new heaven and earth.

Ver. 20, "an infant of days": This is an infant who never grows up, who dies in infancy. "old man": This is an old man whose heart and days are empty of the Spirit of God. "the child shall die an hundred years old": This is the spiritual experience of a true saint of God. Though he or she lives a hundred years and their body becomes aged, yet the Spirit of God within them can keep them pure, sweet, and gentle as a little child.

Ver. 22, "as the days of a tree": This is a child of God likened to the tree of life that lives and bears fruit for ever.

Ver. 25, "feed together": The Hebrew says, "feed as one." This is spiritual, speaking of people who have put off the ways of strife and hurt, and can live together in peace. "dust the serpent's meat": This is from the decree of God from the beginning concerning the serpent (a figure of Satan) "...dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:14, 15. This is telling us that Satan is cast out from the souls of men and will one day be cast into hell and everlasting torment.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a picture of the Church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament age of victory and full salvation. Chapter 64 ends up with a lamentation of Zion being a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation, and the holy temple burned with fire. The prophet is beseeching the LORD to be not wroth, very sore, nor remember iniquity for ever. He says in verse 12, "Wilt thou refrain thyself for these *things*, O LORD? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"

Our lesson in the 65th chapter is the response of God to the

prophet's prayer. The first two verses are quoted by Paul in Romans 10:20-21 in speaking of the rejection of old literal Israel and the law system, and the bringing in of the Gentiles into His salvation in Christ Jesus, who had not been called by His name. There were the preserved in Israel to be brought unto the Lord Jesus and the great host of the Gentiles as well.

Peter refers to verse 17 in II Peter 3:13 in foretelling the destruction of this present world and looking for, according to God's promise, (as verse 17 in our lesson speaks), new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. He says in verse 11: "*Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness." And in verse 14, "*Seeing that ye* look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." What a blessed hope and victory we have in the New Jerusalem, the true Israel!

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who are the people seeking God who were not called by His name?
2. Who were the rebellious people walking after their own thoughts?
3. What was the seed to be brought out of Jacob?
4. Which Jerusalem was to be a rejoicing and her people a joy?
5. What kind of people will inherit the real holy mountain of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The LORD JEHOVAH bore with the stubborn and rebellious nation of the Jews through the ages, all the day of their opportunity to be His true people. There came a time, however, when their day of grace was ended. He sent His own holy Son to live among them and show them His love and goodness. But the nation of Israel and its leaders rejected Jesus, the Son of God, and hanged Him on a tree as a criminal. For this the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost. They were cast out of His favor and the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles, who were not originally called by His name. In the

salvation of Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead, the Gentiles found fellowship with the LORD JEHOVAH.

All in literal Israel who received the Son of God were made sons of God and were ushered into the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. They were made new creatures in Christ, old things of the world and its vanity passing away, and their hearts and minds renovated by the work of the Holy Spirit. Happiness, soul rest, victory over sin, peace within, and life eternal became their inheritance through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is yet the blessing that we can have today if we will believe and obey the Gospel that God has sent to us in His blessed Son.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

One besetting sin of Israel under the Old Testament was their murmuring and complaining. After all the miraculous deliverances and divine intervention, we ask how could they have done such? They did it the same way we do when we focus on the negative and forget the love and mercy of God toward us.

He was found of those who didn't seek; He spread out His hands of help and mercy to a rebellious people. I remember times when God spoke to my heart when it was hard and closed toward Him. The wonder of His love is that He came back again and again. It is difficult to return to a door that has been closed on you. Yet God's love still knocks. I believe God is following hard on the sinner's trail, hoping that His love will gradually begin to soften his or her callused heart. It is His goodness that leads men to repentance.

One song says, "When I look o'er the past, I behold how His wide arms of mercy held me." Since I have asked the Lord into my heart and life, I can see places where I sinned, failed and grieved Him. Yet, His love and patience continue to lift us up and draw us closer to Himself. "...These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." I John 2:1 I am thankful that His love for us is not conditional on our good works and performances. It is an everlasting, enduring love that holds me up when I fail.

Let us enjoy our union with Him, relish His presence and His Word, and nurture and guard our relationship with Him as the

most valuable treasure in life. Don't allow it to grow cold or become old. May He be the sparkle in our eye, the joy in our step, the graciousness of our words, as one in love. Rejoice!

--Bro. Bob Wilson

March 30, 2014

COMFORT AND PEACE IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

Isaiah 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?

2 For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, even to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

3 ...Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations....

4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer: when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies.

7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the *womb*? saith thy God.

10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

11 That ye may... be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

12 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: ...ye shall be borne upon *her* sides, and be dandled upon *her* knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The poor and contrite who truly reverence and obey the word of JEHOVAH will be the children of the New Jerusalem, which is the Church of the living God. They will rejoice and be glad with her comfort and peace, and find eternal happiness in the blessings of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 66:1 "place of my rest": The place where God can dwell and be satisfied and pleased. This was not to be found in a manmade structure of wood or stone, but rather in the lowly spirit of the man who respects and obeys the Word of God.

Ver. 2, "look": This means to scan, look intently, and regard with pleasure, favour, or care. "poor and of a contrite spirit": The Hebrew meaning is "the afflicted and the smitten." Those who sense their weakness and need of the help and salvation of the Lord, being bruised and abused by Satan and sin, are the ones who will most appreciate the mercy God bestows upon them. "trembleth at my word": Having reverence, respect, and godly fear toward God and His law.

Ver. 4, "delusion": The Hebrew meaning says, "a caprice", which Webster defines as "a sudden turn of mind, emotion, or action caused by a whim or impulse; A freakish notion, a wander and straying from what is acceptable and right".

Ver. 6, "voice of noise": Sound of uproar. "voice from the temple": This could be very well applied to the teaching and preaching of the Lord Jesus, sounding out the judgments and doctrines of God that brought peace to all who heard and obeyed, and brought destruction to all who refused Him.

Ver. 7, In surveying the Hebrew text here we are persuaded that the real meaning of this scripture is that the travail and

pain comes before the birth. Verse 8 says "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." The fulfillment of this text is shown in Revelations 12:1-2 where the woman clothed with the sun, being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." This was the New Testament Church as pictured in Acts 2 when three thousand souls were saved, and later in chapter 4 five thousand men believed in Christ.

Ver. 13. "comforted": consoled and repaid for sorrow and trouble.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is a beautiful prophecy of the New Testament Church. We are not able to include all of this wonderful 66th chapter of Isaiah, but he who reads the latter part will see that this blessedness is perpetual for the people of God, even into eternity. The coming of the Lord with fire and judgment for the wicked is foretold along with the eternal reward of the righteous.

Stephen, the first martyr of the Lord Jesus, in his defense before the Jewish council, quoted from the first two verses of our lesson. He gave the history of the Jewish race beginning from Abraham. He showed how Israel provoked God and resisted His Spirit many times. He spoke of David desiring to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob, then followed with this assertion: "But Solomon built him an house." Then he quoted from Isaiah, saying, "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" Then Stephen upbraided them for always resisting the Holy Ghost as their fathers, being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. Acts 7:46-51.

Paul evidently alludes to verses 3 and 4 in our lesson, saying in II Thess. 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Also the travail of Zion is truly fulfilled in Acts 2, 3, and 4 where it relates of the great host of children that were born into the Church through the workings of JEHO-

VAH. What a blessed experience we can have in being inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, partaking of the abundance of her glory and her peace like a river!

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it foolish to try to build a literal house for God's dwelling?
2. What is the house that God really wants to live in?
3. What will God do with the soul who chooses his own selfish way?
4. Who were the children that Zion travailed and brought forth?
5. What blessings can we enjoy being in the New Jerusalem?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our lesson today reveals the secret of being acceptable with God and partaking of the true Jerusalem, the holy Church of God. First we are to be poor in spirit, contrite, humble, and lowly. And we must have an intense reverence and holy awe for His Word. If we fail to have this kind of spirit and insist on having our own selfish pleasure and ways, we are putting ourselves up for delusion and believing a lie.

The children that Zion, the true Church of God, brings forth are still today the godly seed that characterized the early morning Church. We can rejoice to know that we are in the true Jerusalem, and the spiritual treasures we find in the Spirit-led, Spirit-filled life are far beyond the fleeting pleasures of earth and time. We mourn for Jerusalem, for the reality of salvation and Holy Spirit leadership. We are not satisfied with the outward beauty and empty fleshly ways. We can find satisfaction and great consolation in the spiritual blessings that we find in the New Jerusalem.

We enjoy the peace of God that flows like a river in our inner-most being. We experience the loving care of the Lord and His holy saints. Though we are persecuted and cast off by the worldly and proud, we have the true fellowship of the holy saints of God and the blessed comfort of His Spirit.

--Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

There is no greater peace to be found than to have our hearts that are heavy with guilt and the devastation of sin to be washed and made whole by the blood of Jesus. There is no greater joy than to be accepted into the Kingdom of God and be numbered with the righteous of all the ages.

Observe in Acts 2 all the different nations that were gathered together on the day of Pentecost when the church was in its infancy. I never cease to thrill with joy when reading John the Revelator's vision in Rev. 7: 9: "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

There is a photo which one of the missionaries to Africa brought home that speaks to my heart in a very poignant manner. It is of a solitary tree out in the middle of a vast open grassland that has a crudely written sign tacked on it that says "Church of God." Thank God that His great Kingdom knows no earthly boundaries but is open to every honest, repentant heart to make him a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation. God's people, wherever they are found, will reflect the characteristics of their Heavenly Father because they are washed in the same blood and filled with the same spirit.

--Sis.Patsy Smith

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