

# Bible Lessons



**“Now the just shall live by faith.”  
—Hebrews 10:38**

**Volume 47, No 1  
January • February • March  
2015**

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

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Volume 47

January—February—March

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## The Chamber of Peace

There's a chamber for those who are weary  
There's a rest for the faint by the way,  
A retreat from the burdens so dreary  
A relief from the heat of the day

Wisely hath the good Master provided  
For the ones who remember His name  
That the journey His wisdom hath sighted  
Be free from all cause of their shame.

He knows every grind of the spirit  
The labor of sinew and heart,  
And now on His throne He can hear it  
That falls of His followers' part.

So in His great plan He hath given  
A chamber apart from the strife  
Whose windows are open to Heaven  
Receiving the sunlight of life.

Here let me, when worn is my stepping  
Retreat while the storm blows without,  
Secure in His glorious keeping  
From foes that are thronging about.

Sweet peace! Calm assurance forever  
Is mine through the tangles of life;  
Their clouds have no power to sever  
His countenance beams through the

## BIBLE LESSONS FIRST QUARTER, 2015

### THEME FOR LESSONS

For this series of Bible Lessons we are greatly inspired with the subject of faith in the great Almighty God and how it worked in various men and women in Bible history. These wonderful accounts have been preserved for the benefit and inspiration for us to help us to attain to this vitally important way of heart and life. We pray that the Spirit of God will bless this series of Bible Lessons for the good and encouragement of all who partake of them.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### JANUARY 4, 2015

#### HOLDING FAST THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

Hebrews 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

21 And *having* an high priest over the house of God;

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Hebrews 10: 38, 39

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God desires and wills for us as His mortal creation to be fully persuaded of Him and all of His works and believe and fully trust in Him for our eternal salvation and victory over sin and death.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 10:19, "*boldness*": Strong confidence. "*holiest*": The very presence of God.

Verse 20, "*through the veil*": In the Old Testament this was the veil that in the tabernacle hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, which was a type of Christ's body that He offered for our sins, enabling us to enter into the fellowship and presence of God.

Verse 22, "*our bodies washed with pure water*": Our hearts and lives made clean through obedience to the pure Word of God.

Verse 34, "*enduring substance*": Everlasting possessions.

Verse 38. "*faith*": Trust and firm confidence; firm persuasion and conviction of God and Christ and full belief and reliance in them. "*draw back*": To turn away from believing and obeying God's command and will. "*perdition*": Eternal damnation.

Hebrews 11:1, "*substance*": Confidence and assurance. "*evidence*": Strong proof and conviction.

Verse 2, "*elders*": Those of ancient times including those mentioned in this chapter. "*obtained a good report*": Testified a good witness for God.

Verse 3, “*framed*”: designed completely and brought forth. “*things which are seen*”: The visible, material, and earthly realm. “*not made of things which do appear*”: Brought forth by the eternal and invisible Word of God.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

We begin our study of faith from the writings of what is generally believed to be that of the apostle Paul. We start with what the writer was encouraging the Christians of his day concerning their experience with the Lord in this New Testament age. By having faith and obedience to Jesus and His teachings, we enter into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God and our Saviour. We enter the realm of confidence, trust, and firm persuasion of the eternal treasures of life everlasting in the world to come. We cease from living to the flesh and the vanities of this mortal state and lay hold of confidence and trust in eternal values that Christ through His risen life and presence at the right hand of God has made available for us. This is the faith and persuasion that is presented to mankind through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 37 and 38 are quotes from Habakkuk 2:3, 4. It reads somewhat differently but basically is the same: Verse 4 reads: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” The terms “lifted up” and “drawing back” are the same essence. Being lifted up is pride and drawing back is unbelief. These are the basis of people’s rejection of God’s truth in His Word. And let us notice verse 3 that shows how the heavens and the earth were designed and brought into being by the Word of God. This is the basis of faith. Believing that the world and all things therein were the creation of God Almighty is an important basis of the faith we must have if we make any worthy progress in being men and women of true and unailing faith.

In Hebrews 11 we begin the wonderful history of several who were great testimonies and examples of faith in God. We have the definition of faith clearly expressed along with the example expressed in God’s wonderful creation of the worlds, the heavens, and earth. This shows that the material earthly realm along with the beautiful heavens were made of invisible sources, the Almighty Word of the Almighty God!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. What must we have to draw near to God and Jesus Christ?
2. What assurance and confidence can we have in this grace?
3. What causes a person to draw back and cast confidence away?
4. Why can we draw near with a true heart in full assurance?
5. What is seen in Creation that assures us of the reality of God?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the greatest testimonies of the greatness and goodness and reality of an Almighty God and Creator is to look around us and behold His great works. It surely is as stated in Psalm 19:1-4: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day (day after day) uttereth speech, and night unto night [night after night] sheweth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.” Paul quotes from this speaking of the gospel in Romans 10:17, 18: “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” So we see that all creation is a vivid testimony and declaration of the reality and truth of an All-wise, All-loving, and Never-failing God and Creator. And this also helps to assure us concerning the Almighty God and His faithful and gracious Son, Jesus Christ. The same God that brought Jesus into the world and worked in Him with all the miracles and healings brought to pass is the God who created the beautiful world that is evident day after day. Having faith in God is no problem when one opens his eyes to what is before him. I marvel as I look at the grasses and many things that can be grown in the soil, along with the beautiful trees. It is a splendid testimony of the reality of God Almighty, and is an incentive to help us to believe the gospel that is proclaimed concerning Jesus Christ and His great salvation!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

## The Race

Whenever I start to hang my head in front of failure's face,  
my downward fall is broken by the memory of a race.  
A children's race, young boys, young men; how I remember well,  
excitement sure, but also fear, it wasn't hard to tell.  
They all lined up so full of hope, each thought to win that race  
or tie for first, or if not that, at least take second place.  
Their parents watched from off the side, each cheering for their  
son,  
and each boy hoped to show his folks that he would be the one.

The whistle blew and off they flew, like chariots of fire,  
to win, to be the hero there, was each young boy's desire.  
One boy in particular, whose dad was in the crowd,  
was running in the lead and thought "My dad will be so proud."  
But as he speeded down the field and crossed a shallow dip,  
the little boy who thought he'd win, lost his step and slipped.  
Trying hard to catch himself, his arms flew everyplace,  
and midst the laughter of the crowd he fell flat on his face.  
As he fell, his hope fell too; he couldn't win it now.  
Humiliated, he just wished to disappear somehow.

But as he fell his dad stood up and showed his anxious face,  
which to the boy so clearly said, "Get up and win that race!"  
He quickly rose, no damage done, behind a bit that's all,  
and ran with all his mind and might to make up for his fall.  
So anxious to restore himself, to catch up and to win,  
his mind went faster than his legs. He slipped and fell again.  
He wished that he had quit before with only one disgrace.  
"I'm hopeless as a runner now, I shouldn't try to race."

But through the laughing crowd he searched and found his father's  
face  
with a steady look that said again, "Get up and win that race!"  
So he jumped up to try again, ten yards behind the last.  
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought, "I've got to run real fast!"  
Exceeding everything he had, he regained eight, then ten...  
but trying hard to catch the lead, he slipped and fell again.  
Defeat! He lay there silently. A tear dropped from his eye.  
"There's no sense running anymore! Three strikes I'm out! Why  
try?"



I've lost, so what's the use?" he thought. "I'll live with my disgrace."

But then he thought about his dad, who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low, "you haven't lost at all,  
for all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.

Get up!" the echo urged him on, "Get up and take your place!

You were not meant for failure here! Get up and win that race!"

So, up he rose to run once more, refusing to forfeit,  
and he resolved that win or lose, at least he wouldn't quit.

So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been,  
still he gave it all he had and ran like he could win.

Three times he'd fallen stumbling, three times he rose again.

Too far behind to hope to win, he still ran to the end.

They cheered another boy who crossed the line and won first  
place,

head high and proud and happy—no falling, no disgrace.

But, when the fallen youngster crossed the line, in last place,  
the crowd gave him a greater cheer for finishing the race.

And even though he came in last with head bowed low, unproud,  
you would have thought he'd won the race, to listen to the  
crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well."

"To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell."

And now when things seem dark and bleak and difficult to face,  
the memory of that little boy helps me in my own race.

For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all.

And all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.

And when depression and despair shout loudly in my face,  
another voice within me says, "Get up and win that race!"

— Author Unknown

**JANUARY 11, 2015**

## **THE FAITH OF ABEL AND THE SIN OF CAIN**

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

speaketh.

Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

2 And she again bare his brother, Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear.

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

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

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

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

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We do not have to do evil and sin against our fellow man and our creator. Abel did what pleased God because he had a strong desire to do so. He had faith and confidence that God would bless him. Cain could have obtained the right sacrifice to offer unto God but instead he took his own way and that led to jealousy and hatred and the murder of his righteous brother.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 4:2, *“keeper of sheep”*: A shepherd of flocks. *“tiller of the ground”*: One who works the ground to grow fruits and vegetables.

Verse 3, *“an offering unto the LORD”*: A gift in the form of worship.

Verse 4, *“firstlings of his flock”*: The first lambs to be born. *“the fat thereof”*: The richest, best, and choicest of all the lambs. *“had respect”*: Looked upon it well pleased with favor.

Verse 5, *“very wroth”*: Glowed with anger. *“his countenance fell”*: His face greatly filled with anger.

Verse 7, *“sin lieth at the door”*: Sin is crouching to come in. *“unto thee shall be his desire”*: Toward you is sin’s target and aim. *“thou shalt rule over him”*: Yet you should ride over it; and not let it overcome you.

Verse 11, *“cursed from the earth”*: Cursed more than the ground that received your brother’s blood.

1 John 3:12, *“of that wicked one”*: The evil one: Satan.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Adam and Eve, the first man and woman that God created, had been deceived and beguiled by Satan to partake of the fruit from the tree that God had forbidden them. Therefore, God had sent Adam forth from the beautiful garden of Eden to till and work the ground, the dust that he had been taken and formed from. God had Cherubims, or Angels, placed at the east of the garden and a flaming sword to keep man from partaking of the tree of life. Thus man had to work hard to produce from the ground what fruits and vegetables needed for his body’s nourishment. In time, God gave Eve conception to bring forth children. She brought forth two sons,

Cain and Abel, and said, “I have gotten a man from the LORD.” We are sure that Adam and Eve enjoyed their two little boys as they grew up to manhood. Just how old they were at the time our lesson tells we do not know, but they were old enough to take on work and responsibility.

Cain was a tiller of the ground. He could grow and produce fruits and vegetables were which were vital to their health and strength. Abel was blessed to have under his care sweet sheep and enjoyed their little offspring of lambs. Somehow Adam and Eve sought to teach their sons about the Almighty God and what to do to gain His mercy and favor. That is why the boys each brought something from their produce to be presented to the LORD as an offering and sacrifice. While Abel brought lambs who were the first to be born and the very best, he offered with them earnest and sincere prayer. I am sure that he did this, even though the scripture does not tell it. God was very pleased with Abel’s sacrifice and somehow let His favor and acceptance be known. But while Abel was sincerely presenting his offering, his brother Cain brought of the fruit of the ground and offered it to God. Somehow Cain did not bring with his offering the sincerity, earnestness, and humbleness of heart that God was looking for. It is the same today. The sacrifices of prayer, obedience, and faith that we present to the Lord must be backed by repentance, sincerity, and submission to His will. Sad to say, as our lesson tells, Cain reacted so ugly and displeasingly in God’s sight. He was very angry, and instead of amending his ways and seeking God’s mercy and favor, he took it out on Abel and ended up killing him. God was greatly moved with displeasure toward Cain and compassionate remembrance of Abel. Thus the voice of Abel’s blood cried out to God. It was the faith and obedience and sincerity of Abel that has put his name in the book of records of the godly and righteous people before God. It is a vital lesson for us today. How earnest and sincere should be the sacrifice of our lives before our gracious Creator!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What made the difference before God between Cain and Abel?
2. What reaction should Cain have made for his rejection by God?

3. What attitude and spirit did he allow to fill his heart and soul?
4. What lesson can we receive and be benefited by God's dealings?
5. How should Cain have reacted for his failure instead of bitterness?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

God is still today looking at the offering that people bring to Him. What is well-pleasing to Him? Let us notice Romans 12:1,2: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove [find out and experience] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." To gain the favor and acceptance of the Almighty God is the greatest and most rewarding quest and effort we can make. It is worth it all to give all to God and receive all He has for us to be blessed with and enjoy. To go through a form and fail to present to God true sincerity and submission and faithful obedience is a drastic and tragic mistake that many have made through the years of time. Even as Christ made the supreme sacrifice of letting those ungodly men take him out and hang Him to the cross as an offering for the sins of mankind, even so must we, as our scripture says, present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We must deny the flesh, the world, and the current of society around us and strive to live and conduct ourselves in godliness, holiness, humility, meekness, faith, and true submission to His kingdom and will. And, just as Abel received witness and testimony from God of His acceptance and well pleasing, so can we be richly blessed with the Holy Spirit to bless and guide and fill our hearts with joy, gladness, and rejoicing!

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

## **REFLECTIONS**

When the Lord asked Cain of the whereabouts of his brother Abel, Cain retorted with a question to the Lord, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain demonstrated by the hatred in his heart and his

murderous deed that he was not a very good keeper to his brother Abel.

But maybe we need to ask ourselves, "Are we our brother's keeper?" And what does the Word of God say about this?

I Peter 1: 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Romans 14:13, "Let us not therefore judge one another, any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

John 13: 35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

I Cor. 8:12, "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

So we see that we *are* our brother's keeper! Sis. Angela Gellenbeck wrote it well in the song, "We Need Each Other Brethren." "Lord, give us true warmth and affection, when one fails, help us rescue his soul; 'He's not heavy, for he is my brother." let us cry as we carry his load."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**JANUARY 18, 2015**

## **THE OVERCOMING FAITH OF ENOCH**

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe *that* he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Genesis 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Jude 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

11 He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

17 To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

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

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

**MEMORY VERSE:** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John:5:4

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Just as Enoch overcame the world of sin and transgression against God and walked with God in full fellowship, so can we through faith and obedience to God through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, walk in full fellowship with

Him and overcome death in that last great day to attain to eternal life.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 11:5, "*translated*": Changed to an immortal everlasting state. "*was not found*": His body was never discovered by humanity. "*pleased God*": Entirely gratified God's purpose and pleasure.

Verse 6, "*believe*": Count and declare as true; give full credit and acceptance.

1 John 5:4, "*overcometh*": Conquer, prevail over, and get victory against.

Revelation 2:7, "*paradise*": Realm of eternal life and happiness.

Verse 11, "*second death*": "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Verse 17, "*hidden manna*": Spiritual Bread of Life that Jesus gives.

Verse 26, "*power over the nations*": Overcoming control of this mortal life.

Verse 27, "*rod of iron*": The powerful eternal Word of God.

Verse 28, "*morning star*": "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Words of Jesus from Revelation 22:16.

Rev. 3:5, "*the book of life*": God's record of all who are faithful to Him. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15.

Verse 12, "*pillar*": Unfailing support. "*new Jerusalem*": The New Testament spiritual Jerusalem: The Church of God. "*my new name*": The name of Jesus Christ of everlasting worth, the Saviour of the World.

Verse 21, "*sit with me in my throne*": Share my eternal power and glory.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Enoch is our second Old Testament figure in this series of examples of faith in God. Adam Clarke believes that Enoch was early instructed in the things of God, initiated into the worship of his maker, and dedicated to His service. Clarke observed that the phrase "walked with God" in the Hebrew means "set himself to walk with God." This means that he was fixedly purposed and determined to live for God. No doubt Enoch received a very godly education and was moved by the Divine influence through it.



Therefore, he was determined to work and walk with God. He was a married man and had a large family. Being cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit and striving for perfect holiness before God, not only his soul, but his body was kept pure. At any rate, in the sight of God he was counted worthy of being translated and escaping death.

Along with the scriptural account of Enoch, we have included scriptures that deal with how we should strive to overcome by unyielding and earnest devout faith this present evil world and be accounted worthy of being in the resurrection with Christ. Just as Enoch set himself to seek to earnestly please and walk with God, we must also earnestly seek to overcome and have the victory in our souls that God wants us to have. The New Testament is very clear and unyielding in the counsel and guidance we need to be more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

We have included from the epistle of Jude a quotation from Enoch concerning the Lord's coming in power to execute judgment upon all for the woeful sin and ungodliness of mankind.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why was Enoch blessed to be translated and not to suffer death?
2. How can we obtain the victory that will overcome this world?
3. What will be our reward for having and maintaining true faith?
4. What will be the power we will have in Christ over the world?
5. What is the real City of God, the New Jerusalem?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

We have in our lesson today a figure and account of a man who, in the midst of a world that was given over to lust and ungodly ways and desires, was influenced enough by those who sought to train and help him in his youth to seek after and earnestly strive to please God and have His help and favor. Even though sin and transgression were abounding in this world and in his day and age, somehow he was influenced to seek the LORD, feel after Him, and find Him. We have his record before us. He is reported to have walked with God for three hundred years. Disregarding the

allurements of sin and the inclination of the flesh to go after lust, covetousness, and all the current of the evil world around him, Enoch steadfastly chose to seek after God's favor and blessings. The opportunity that he took advantage of is still open for us today. Even with the blessings that have been made possible for us in this age, we must make a clear and definite decision to seek the Lord and give our hearts and lives to Him. All around us flows and glows the allurements of worldliness, vanity, and pride. But the word of God declares that we must seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near. The wicked must forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and return unto the LORD. Isaiah 55:6,7. We are also exhorted in Acts 17:27 that we "...should seek the Lord... feel after him, and find him." We must resist temptation and the allurements of sin and seek and feel after God and His fellowship. Sad to say, the general current of humanity is after the flesh and its lusts and treasures. But if a person will be strong, as Enoch was, in seeking the Lord, the grace and overcoming strength of God can be ours unfailing! Sad to say, there are so many who draw back from giving up their ways and thoughts. The thrill of physical pleasure and fleshly gratification has a strong tendency to rule the hearts of humanity. The love of money, the root of all evil, along with sexual attraction and thrills has the upper most rule in the hearts and lives of humanity today. It is for every one to take heed and turn their hearts toward the benefits of reverence and love for God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

Oh, Enoch, sir, I long to know the path you walked while here below--

With God!--and is it true, *three hundred years* He walked with you? Could you see Him? or touch His hand? What form had He? Did He command--

Or sing, or laugh--what voice had he, as you two walked in company?

You had no printed verse or book. You heard His Word, you read His look.

There was no written law, or Psalm, or promise that was healing balm.

But only Presence--His alone. That was enough. He was your own. Your confidante, your friend, your guide. Your father who walked by your side.

What did He share? Did He explain of mortal sin and human pain? The questions that plagued man for years, of life and death, of toil and tears?

Did you know angels? Did you see, forward and backward into eternity?

You saw His coming--that we know: you spoke of judgment and of woe.

But oh--that last morning as you walked, and listened, spell-bound, as He talked--

Did your road, as it curved around the bend, just drop away at horizon's end,

How did it feel for flesh to turn to spirit, in a twinkling--did your heart burn

With gladness? did you leap in rapturous praise in your upward sweep?

Oh, Enoch! just as you a single trumpet heard and rose to view Sweet heaven; may we also hear that trumpet call, that voice so dear.

Your righteous life, that pleased the Lord, and bore witness of His grace outpoured;

Now beckons us to journey too, by faith in step with Him, like you.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

**JANUARY 25, 2015**

## **THE GREAT FAITH OF NOAH**

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

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

6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

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

9 These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

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

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

15 And this *is the fashion* which thou shalt make it *of*: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

16 A window shalt thou make into the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof: *with* lower, second, and third *stories* shalt thou make it.

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

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

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

20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every *sort* shall come unto thee, to keep *them* alive.

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather *it* to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and

became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Hebrews 11:7

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Because of the terrible sinful condition of mankind, God decided to destroy them from the face of the earth. But because of Noah and his family who were leading godly earnest lives before Him, God gave Noah instructions for the means of escaping this destruction.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrewes 11:7, *“moved with fear”*: Obeyed God with sincere reverence. *“condemned the world”*: Brought judgment against all humanity. *“became heir”*: Fully possessed.

Genesis 6:6, *“repented the LORD”*: Made the LORD very sorry.

Verse 7, *“I will destroy man”*: I will wipe off man.

Verse 8, *“found grace”*: Obtained favor and good will.

Verse 9, *“walked with God”*: Was in full fellowship and well pleasing before God.

Verse 14, *“gopher wood”*: A special kind of wood thought to be cypress. It was a very stout wood very suitable for being used to build the ark. *“pitch”*: This was a substance like asphalt that would withstand water.

Verse 15: *“cubit”*: Eighteen inches or one and one-half feet. The length of the ark was 300 cubits which equaled 450 feet; the breadth (or width) was 50 cubits which equaled 75 feet; and the height of the ark was to be 30 cubits which equaled 45 feet. Such were the dimensions of the ark.

Verse 18, *“with thee will I establish my covenant”*: With Noah was God’s promise of deliverance without fail.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Since the fall of man from fellowship with God and pleasing their Creator, humanity had sunk in a mire of filth, lust, greed, and all manner of sin and transgression. In the first few verses of this 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis there is indication of uncontrolled lust of men toward the opposite sex. Men looked upon the women and “...they took them wives of all which they chose.” This is an indication of lust and inordinate desires that grew and multiplied upon humanity until the Almighty God who created the world and its inhabitants became very angry and displeased. He was very sorry that he had made man on the earth. And with that grief and displeasure came the decision and purpose in the heart of God to bring it to an end.

But, thank God, there was one family that was still seeking to do what was right and pleasing in His sight. This helps us to see and realize that we as humans do not have to go the way that is displeasing to our gracious Creator. Noah did not follow the current of society. He, along with his wife, their three sons, and their wives, were striving to hold fast to the LORD. It is the same today. The world that we live in is sunk in the mire of lust and sinful desires and ways. But we do not have to follow that kind of way of living. Just as Noah was a good example of faith and obedience to God, we can do the same in our day. Oh, how much better it is to resist temptations and the allurements of sin and the world around us and to strive to live and conduct ourselves after a godly manner that is pleasing to our Creator! 2 Peter 2:5 speaks how God "...spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." It is evident that while Noah and his sons worked on building and preparing the ark, they spoke to those around about, declaring what was coming and warning them to turn from their sinful ways to seek the mercy and pleasure of God. Thus Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

Noah did according to all that God commanded him to do. Sad to say, there were no converts to his preaching. Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives were the only ones who entered the ark along with all the animals and birds that also went in. Today we are living in the last and final days of time. Jesus will soon come from the Heavens to bring this world to eternal judgment and damnation. It is for us to take diligent heed to His Word of warning found in the New Testament and prepare our hearts to meet the Saviour in the air and be accounted worthy to share with Him His eternal glory!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How did Noah manifest the true faith that God was pleased with?
2. Why was God so sorry that He had created man on the earth?
3. What did God decide that He would do about it all?
4. What did God tell Noah to do in order to escape the flood?
5. What was Noah's response to God's instructions given to

him?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

We would all be wise to consider the challenge and responsibility that faced Noah in comparison with what we today are facing. We are living in an age much like what Noah lived in if not a worse one. We are persuaded by the Holy Scriptures that Jesus will come again in power and great glory and accomplish the utter destruction of this present heavens and earth. He will gather all mankind to face Him in a great judgment bar. And just as the flood destroyed the ungodly multitudes in the flood in Noah's day, even so will God Almighty send to eternal damnation all who are not obedient to the faith of His Son Jesus Christ. Over 2000 years have passed since Jesus passed from earth up to the right hand of God to intercede for us. The ages past have looked for His second coming, but the years have passed and we are still looking for Him. It will pay us a great reward to be diligent in our faith and obedience to Christ and the will of God in preparation of that great and awful day. Personally, I have deep convictions that the time is very close at hand. May God bless and help us all to take heed and be prepared to meet that day with victory.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## **REFLECTIONS**

The future's civilization depended on one man's obedience to the great God of heaven's call to build the ark to save the people's lives from the flood that would come on the earth. There could be no improvements on past designs, no testing for leaks, balance, ventilation, nor sanitation. The whole ark was designed by the master planner, our wonderful creator who would be the only one outside giving the last check before liftoff and closing the door on the vessel. It sounds exciting to think about while we are sitting in our comfortable pews this morning in a clean air conditioned building with electric lights etc. But what was it like when the door closed and the last rays of light were seen for days as the old world began perishing?

Do you suppose through the noise of the heavy rain as the

fountains of the deep opened up and the canopy that covered the earth came down that the cries were unbearable of the men and women pounding on the outside? “Let us in, Noah, let us in. Please, Noah open the door!” We don’t know the answer to that, but we can imagine Noah and his family kneeling down and asking God for mercy as the waters started climbing higher and higher around them. What an eerie sound it must have been.

The careful placement of all animals involved strategically built pens with latches to keep them in and apart from the sleeping quarters of all four families and their sealed food supplies that nothing could be lost or spoiled. Do you suppose the first few days there was little sleep as they checked for leaks and rechecked the animal cages for safety? The weight distribution in the ark had to be perfectly balanced to keep it from having a list.

When you consider the faith that Noah had, he stands out as one of the greatest in the Bible, taking into account that he probably sold all of his possessions to buy materials and spent 100 years to build it. I find it amusing that it has been said that he was the richest man that ever lived because he floated all his assets. No matter what speculations man has, we know God designed it and Noah faithfully followed his plan and it worked! Can you imagine the excitement they had when the waters receded and the ark began to settle back down on the earth, carefully guided again by the hand of the loving creator into a special spot where it would stay upright and not tip over? Our faith becomes stronger when we read about God’s plan for mankind and one man named Noah who followed that plan.

—Bro. James Bell

**FEBRUARY 1, 2015**

## **NOAH’S ESCAPE FROM THE FLOOD**

Genesis 7:1 And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.



6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that *are* not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and all the high hills, that *were* under the whole heaven, were covered.

20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

22 All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of life, of all that *was* in the dry *land* died.

23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping

things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained *alive*, and they that *were* with him in the ark.

24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

**MEMORY VERSE:** For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Matthew 24:38, 39.

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** When Noah and his family and all the animals and birds were safely housed within the ark Noah had built, God sent rain from heaven and opened up the fountains in the ocean and the earth was flooded and every human being that was not in the ark perished. Because of his faith and obedience to God, Noah and his family were saved from destruction.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Geneses 7:4, "*living substance*": Creatures with life and breath.

Verse 13, "*in the selfsame day*": Right before the rain started falling they entered the ark.

Verse 14, "*creeping thing*": Reptiles. "*fowl*": The large birds. "*bird*": The small birds. "*of every sort*": Of every different size and shape.

Verse 15, "*two and two*": Two of each: male and female.

Verse 16, "*shut him in*": Closed the door behind him.

Verse 17, "*bear up, lift up*": The ark floated above.

Verse 20, "*fifteen cubits upward*": The waters were twenty-two and one half feet above the tops of the mountains.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Noah obeyed the LORD in all that God commanded him and built the great ark-ship that was to house him, his family, and a great number of animals and fowls of the air. In our lesson today, we see the ark being inhabited by those for whom God had given direction. Noah, being at the age of six hundred years, with his wife, their three sons and their wives, went into the ark and God shut them in. The rain began to fall, and fountains of water in the ocean were

broken up and gushing forth. It is an interesting account that the Holy Scriptures give of this great event. It shows that Noah was able to put his faith into action and accomplish what was needed. Despite the wickedness and lustful society Noah was a part of, this godly man was able to fulfill all the will of God that had been communicated for him to perform. It sounds like, according to the Bible account, that it took forty days of rain to bring enough water around the ark to bear it up. Every creature of man and beast perished except those who had taken their place in the ark. As in our first text, Hebrews 11:7 says, Noah, being warned of God about the coming flood and moved with godly fear, prepared the ark for the saving of his house and family; and this faith brought God's judgment upon the world.

This is all a great lesson and example of faith that we need to have today. We are under the decree of Almighty God that this present world we live in will one day pass out of existence. The Word of God that put everything together and in shape will cause it all to pass out of existence. It sounds like, according to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 that it will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Paul states that we will be changed to immortality at the coming of Christ and the final trumpet. Oh, how we need to be steadfast in our faith and obedience to the Word of God like Noah was!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What did God tell Noah and all of his house to do?
2. What other creatures were given room in the ark also?
3. What took place after all were safely situated in the ark?
4. How high above the mountains did the waters rise?
5. What happened to humanity that were not safe in the ark?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

In our previous lesson we had the account of God's favor to Noah in the face of His judgment against the wicked and unholy society of mankind. God made known to Noah what He purposed to do and gave him directions of what course to take. And it is so good to know that Noah's faith enabled him to go to work with his sons to build the ark. We see him obeying God. This was his only

hope of escaping the terrible judgment of Almighty God. This wonderful account of Noah's faith and obedience to God is a type of the faith and obedience we today need to be working on and endeavoring to fulfill. We live facing the wrath of God that He will one day pour out on this ungodly world. According to 2 Peter 3, just as the world in Noah's time was overflowed with water and perished, "...the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Verse 7. This great day of God's wrath will come as a thief in the night, The main current of society has little or no thought about this world passing away. But we who are seeking to please God and be led by His Spirit know and feel keenly the destruction promise He has given. "*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting [rushing and hurrying] unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*" Verses 11, 12. In Luke 21:34-36 our Saviour declares: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting [overeating], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

God has made a beautiful earth for us to dwell in. He has provided all the things necessary for a happy life: wife, children, family, fellowship, friends. He has also provided for our natural body and spiritual body. He has provided many different types of food, night and day, all the different seasons of spring, fall, and winter and it is all for our enjoyment and happiness. I would be completely satisfied here if it weren't for one little word: sin. Sin has darkened the picture of God's creation and has brought untold misery and broken many hearts and lives. God didn't create sin, He gave man a choice. Some people like to blame God for the ills

we have but He never intended it to be so.

It is difficult to comprehend the depths of depravity and hardness of the human heart without God. Societies like Noah's get so corrupted in evil that the only remedy is destruction. It mentions in Genesis that the thoughts and imaginations of men were only evil continually. When the cup of iniquity has waxed full, God has brought destruction on many races and peoples of the past. Likewise, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were given over to evil. II Peter chapter 3 talks about the end of time and verse 4 mentions that people do not believe in an end of time, saying, "...all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Verse 5 then states, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." No amount of evidence will convince the willingly ignorant. Many years ago, we were on a field trip down in the Arbuckle Mountains in southern Oklahoma, and the park guide told us that the mountains were full of fossils that show that water had one time covered them.

Yea, let God be true and every man a liar. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Lord, help us to do likewise.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

**FEBRUARY 8, 2015**

### **GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH**

Genesis 8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven

were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.

3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first *month*, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him;

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

9:8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

11 And I will establish my covenant with you: neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations.

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And I will establish my covenant with you: neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. Genesis 9:11

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** After God brought Noah and his family safely through the flood, He established a covenant with them that no more will all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood; and He gave them the rainbow to be seen in the cloud as a reminder of His covenant.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 8:1, “*asswaged*”: Began to be lowered.

Verse 3, “*abated*”: Decreased and brought lower.

Verse 21, “*sweet savour*”: Soothing fragrance and sweet pleasing smell.

9:12, “*token*”: Sign. “*perpetual generations*”: Humanity unto the end of the world.

Verse 13, “*bow*”: Rainbow.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The flood had prevailed upon the earth for an hundred and fifty days. This equals about five months. For these five months Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives had lived and sojourned in the ark along with all the animals and birds. We can

imagine their state of life, activities, and responsibilities that they had endured during those many days: animals and birds to be fed, their own state to be handled and seen about from day to day. Thus, there was great patience, responsibility, and mastery of duty that each one shared in this long period of time. As it was with the other characters portrayed in this eleventh chapter of Hebrews, there was a great need of courage, devout determination, and steadfast faithfulness in each one of these individuals. We do not have much information about their daily routine and activity. We do have the scenes of Noah sending out the raven and then the dove to get a better concept of the situation. And when the dove came back from her second outing with an olive leaf in her mouth and then remained without coming back, this told Noah that things were getting more back to normal. Later God spoke to Noah that they could go forth from the ark and permit all the animals and birds to also make their exit. Could we imagine the activity that went on as the animals who had been caged in all this time were turned loose? It was probably quite a scene to be witnessed!

It is no wonder that Noah built an altar and made burnt offerings to the LORD. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour from the hearts of the family of Noah. This brings to our mind what we as born again Spirit-led children of God can look forward to welcoming and enjoying when our blessed Saviour bursts through the heavens in His second coming to receive His beloved Bride for everlasting embrace and happiness! Just as Noah was faithful and obedient to God and was richly rewarded, even so we also will have a blessed everlasting reward for being faithful and true! May we all be steadfast and true to our precious Saviour all the way!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How long did the flood prevail upon the earth?
2. When did Noah's family with all the creatures come forth?
3. Why did God want to make a covenant with Noah?
4. What did God make a promise to do in this covenant?
5. What was the token that God gave of this covenant?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**



Despite the wickedness and evil that God was grieved about in the world back in the days of Noah and his family, He abounded with love, mercy, goodness, and kindness to this man Noah. He wanted to bless and pour out His wonderful goodness in a bright and glorious manner upon this man who had been so faithful and obedient to do what God had told him to do. It was a great big undertaking for Noah, with the help of his sons, to design and gather materials for the construction of this huge ship that would ride the waves of the flood that God was going to bring on. It was no small undertaking. While they were intensely applying their strength and skills to accomplish this great task, Noah had the world and society he lived among to witness to and explain the reason for his building this great big ship out on dry land. Think of the ridicule and scoffing he bore from the ungodly and darkened minds of the people! But Noah did not let any of this trouble hinder him from working at the task that God had put before him to do.

And Noah got it done and the ark was ready to take on the animals and birds that God had instructed him to gather for the trip. Sure enough, the animals were taken in and housed in the many various-sized rooms and places that the ark had to offer. It was a huge and difficult job that Noah did. And then when they were all loaded and God had shut them in, the rain began to fall. Probably many people came and begged to be given an entrance into the ark. But God had shut Noah in and had shut the world out. This is all a type of what God will do in that last great day. Now is the day of salvation, and now is the accepted time. We must yield our hearts to God and take His holy way and be ready to stand before Him in that last great day. God will be so glad to receive all who are faithful and true to Him in His great salvation! Let us be diligent to have faith in God and His Son Jesus and be accounted worthy to attain to the resurrection of the dead!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

What a beautiful sight Noah and his family witnessed in that first rainbow as they stepped out of the ark into a newly cleansed world. This rainbow represented a covenant to mankind that is still in existence after 4,000 years! From time to time, there will be flooding

in certain areas and regions of the world but never a total deluge.

Even now, it is always such a pleasure to search and find a rainbow in the clouds after the rain. In studying the prism of the rainbow, we know that the color red is followed by orange, then yellow, green, blue, indigo and lastly violet. It is never distorted and the pattern is always the same. This is all created by the hand of an awesome and wonderful God. While it is fascinating to enjoy the beauty of the rainbow and to study the science of light refractions, this covenant is not to be esteemed lightly.

Let this rainbow covenant be a reminder that while the earth will never again be destroyed by water; the next time it will be melted and evaporated by fire. The God who created this world out of nothing is able also to make it disappear completely. Peter gave this warning, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. . . Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness . . . Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." Just as certain as the rainbow points back to the covenant made with Noah; it also points forward to a final judgment day. It pays to be sober, to be vigilant, to be ready.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**FEBRUARY 15, 2015**

## PILGRIMS AND STRANGERS WITH ABRAHAM

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

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

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

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

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

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Psalms 39:12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

Psalms 119:19 I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy

commandments from me.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear. 1 Peter 1:17

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We are today pilgrims and strangers in this life even as Abraham was. Abraham's and our true possessions are not in this fleeting earthly life. We are living for a much better place to possess, an eternal home to share with all who have also had the faith that Abraham had.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 11:8, "*after receive*": Possess in the eternal future.

Verse 9, "*sojourned*": Lived as a foreigner or stranger. "*tabernacles*": Temporary dwellings such as tents. "*with Isaac and Jacob*": As they also lived.

Verse 10, "*looked for*": Looked forward hopefully for. "*a city which hath foundations*": A great society of godly people to live forever. "*builder and maker*": Creator and Perfector.

Verse 11, "*past age*": Past normal time for having children.

Verse 12, "*as good as dead*": No more than a mortal.

Verse 13, "*persuaded*": Fully convinced as truth. "*embraced*": Welcomed and held on to earnestly. "*confessed*": Acknowledged without question.

Verse 14, "*declare plainly*": Make clear and distinct.

Verse 15, "*been mindful*": Held in special memory.

1 Peter 2:11, "*strangers and pilgrims*": Sojourners and passers through.

Verse 12, "*conversation honest*": Good and upright behavior. "*in the day of visitation*": When God brings the truth to light.

Psalms 39:12, "*stranger*": Alien; foreigner. "*sojourner*": pilgrim.

1 Peter 1:17, "*sojourning*": Living as a foreigner.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

We have for our lesson today another vivid and inspiring picture of a man of faith and obedience to God. Abraham, through his overcoming persuasion and obedience and unflinching trust in the Almighty God, was a prime example of faith for us to follow. He fills the title of the father of the faithful of many nations. His example of

faith and obedience to God is one we all need to follow after and imitate. We begin our lesson from Hebrews 11:8 following mention made of some examples of faith before Abraham. Abraham, whose name at first was Abram, was called of God to leave his native land and go to a land, a land that he knew not where it was. But Abram obeyed God and he started out, not knowing where he was going. In the account of Abram from Genesis 12, we see how his faith developed and brought him through various wonderful experiences. We see how that Sarah, his wife, also had a faith in God that enabled her to conceive and bear a son when she was past the age of child-bearing.

In our lesson from Hebrews, we have a vision spread before us of the great outreach of Abraham's faith in his wonderful children through the ages. As verse 12 declares, their number is as the stars of the sky and as the sand by the seashore. These lived and died in the faith of their father Abraham. These declare plainly that they seek a better country than that of this old world; they seek a heavenly country, and God hath truly prepared for them an everlasting city. We have included other scriptures that express the thought of our earthly life as a pilgrimage and a sojourn. This earthly life is but temporal and will one day pass away. But the hope we have by believing and obeying our God assures us of an eternal home. This is the faith of Abraham. We even have a scene in Luke 16 of the poor beggar Lazarus who was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. Oh, what a hope this signifies and shows so sweetly! Oh, let us be of good courage to seek for and lay hold of the faith and hope that is offered to us in the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus in accord with the faith of father Abraham!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What was the first example that Abraham showed of his faith?
2. How does faith cause us to view the things of time and earth?
3. What does faith cause us to think and feel about earthly life?
4. What does faith cause us to set our affections upon?
5. How does faith cause us to truly and gladly live here on earth?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Thank the Lord for the sweet inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives! His blessed presence uplifting us above the vain and earthly influences is vital and a great benefit to our precious souls! He points our hearts and minds toward the blessed Hope that we have in living for Jesus. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 has a wonderful message for us. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal." How sad as we look out on our society today to see people so taken up with things that are seen. Yes, the fleshly, earthly, material vanities are the ruling factors in the majority of mankind. Houses, cars, money, sports, the opposite sex, and many other vanities rule people's lives. But we who are born again and led by the Spirit of God are taken up with visions of eternal values. All of this old earthly realm is going to pass away in a instant. We need to get down to business and take time for things that are unseen. Prayer, Bible study, and other ways and means of worship to God are so important. In chapter 5 of 2 Corinthians, Paul continues this thought of eternal values. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [tent] were dissolved, we have a building of God [immortal body], an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Oh, how vain and empty are these earthly things when compared with the eternal blessings the Holy Spirit inspires us to behold! May the Lord stir our hearts and help us to live and walk worthy of that eternal prize that awaits for us in eternal glory. There have been many precious saints down through the ages that have proven the unseen eternal things are worth all one might endure and suffer for. Let us keep our eyes on the everlasting treasures that are waiting for us to have and enjoy.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

It's been right here, all the time, yet I haven't seen it until now. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived in the "land of promise"--the physical land of trees and plains and mountains; yet they still called

themselves strangers and pilgrims and sojourners! They didn't feel at home; they didn't put down roots or build fine mansions, or immerse themselves into the culture. So if it were the *literal* land which was the true inheritance, they would have said, "This is it!" But, it says they were looking for a city made and built by God which had eternal foundations. David identified himself with them, calling himself a sojourner too. Peter calls the life of the saint a "sojourning". He also says that we as New Testament saints enjoy what the Old Testament pilgrims only saw afar off. The Hebrew writer says that we complete, or make perfect, the faith of those pilgrims by what we have been given in the Holy Spirit. We have received that kingdom which cannot be removed! We have been made members of that city which came down from heaven—the New Jerusalem, whose builder and maker is God!

When I saw this, I wept—tears of joy at the glory and wonder of what we have in the Holy Spirit, the Church of God, and the citizenship of that heavenly city. I wept tears too at the folly of putting down roots in this world, being consumed by material possessions, cares, riches, and earthly pursuits. And I wept tears of grief for the millions of modern Jews and Christians, who are still looking for an earthly kingdom to be set up in the "promised land" and others who think that the "promised land" is only heaven, only to be gained after we die.

Oh--it is ours now. Let us live in it, and claim it, and enjoy the fulfillment of Abraham's promise. And even then, as wonderful as it is, it is just the *earnest* of our inheritance; truly, the rest and the best, comes later.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **FEBRUARY 22, 2015**

### **ABRAHAM'S ULTIMATE FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD**

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his

ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;



because thou hast obeyed my voice.

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

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

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Romans 4:20, 21

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Abraham did not draw back from obeying God when God told him to go to the distant land and offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. He went as far as to put Isaac bound upon the wood on the altar and took the knife and was about to kill Isaac when God stopped him. His obedience going that far was accepted by God, and Abraham was richly blessed and rewarded forever.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 22:1, "*tempt*": Put to the test.

Verse 3, "*clave*": Split up in smaller pieces.

Verse 9, "*bound*": Tied up with cords.

Verse 17, "*in blessing I will bless thee*": Surely I will bless thee. "*in multiplying I will multiply thee*": Surely I will multiply thy seed. "*thy seed*": Thy offspring and descendants of all who follow the example of thy faith. "*possess the gate of his enemies*": Overcome all his foes with victory.

Verse 18, "*be blessed*": Be benefited with heavenly blessings.

Hebrews 11:17, "*tried*": Put to the test.

Verse 19, "*received him in a figure*": It was like receiving Isaac from the dead to be relieved of having to slay him as a burnt offering.

Romans 4:20, "*staggered not*": Did not hesitate or draw back.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

From the writings of Josephus in his volume entitled "Antiquities of the Jews" is found the account of Abraham's offering of Isaac in more detail that I really believe is true. I felt inspired to include this

in our lesson. In chapter XIII part 3 we find this account. "As soon as the altar was prepared, and Abraham had laid on the wood, and all things were entirely ready, he said to his son, "O son, I poured out a vast number of prayers that I might have thee for my son; when thou wast come into the world, there was nothing that could contribute to thy support for which I was not greatly solicitous, nor any thing wherein I thought myself happier than to see thee grown up to man's estate, and that I might leave thee at my death the successor to my dominion; but since it was by God's will that I became thy father, and it is now his will that I relinquish thee, bear this consecration to God with a generous mind; for I resign thee up to God who has thought fit now to require this testimony of honour to himself, on account of the favours he has conferred on me, in being to me a supporter and defender. Accordingly thou, my son wilt now die, not in any common way of going out of the world, but sent to God, the Father of all men, before hand, by thy own father, in the nature of a sacrifice. I suppose he thinks thee worthy to get clear of this world neither by disease, neither by war, nor by any other severe way, by which death usually comes upon men, but so that he will receive thy soul with prayers and holy offices of religion, and will place thee near to himself, and thou wilt there be to me a succourer and supporter in my old age; on which account I principally brought thee up, and thou wilt thereby procure me God for my Comforter instead of thyself."

Now Isaac was of such a generous disposition as became the son of such a father, and was pleased with this discourse; and said, 'That he was not worthy to be born at first, if he should reject the determination of God and of his father, and should not resign himself up readily to both their pleasures; since it would have been unjust if he had not obeyed, even if his father had so resolved.' So he went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed." Then Josephus related how God intervned and expressed how pleased He was with Isaac's proposal and with Abraham's willingness to obey. I really am blessed with what Josephus reveals and felt that it would be wholesome and beneficial with our lesson.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What did God command Abraham to do with his son, Isaac?
2. What was Abraham's faithful response to what God

commanded?

3. How far did Abraham go in obeying God's command?
4. What did God do to stop Abraham from carrying it all out?
5. What kind of future did God promise to Abraham and his seed?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

In James 2:14-26 we have a very good word of counsel concerning faith. He first asked the question in verse 14: "What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" And part of his words in verses 21-23 applies this thought to Abraham and how he was justified by works "...when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." This declares to us that there is action and works to be carried out in our faith. Abraham obeyed God and took his son Isaac up and placed him bound upon the altar and took the knife to slay his son as a sacrifice. So it is with us. We must follow Abraham and all the faithful through the ages by obeying our God's will and good pleasure as proof and perfection of our faith.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## **REFLECTIONS**

As the caravan of ox carts, wagons and animals were parading down the road in the city of UR, the citizens of that town were witnessing more than just a man and his family moving to another town.

When the dust settled, something had happened as never before in that city. It was much more than a young man who was disgruntled with life seeking pleasures and wealth in another city. Truly few, if anyone, recognized what was going on with Abraham, who had a call from God. There were a lot of family and friends asking him questions, "Why do you want to leave?" "How long will you be gone?" "Is this some kind of secret?" We can readily see Abram's faith tested as he left his home looking for a city which had

foundations whose builder and maker was God. He may have been ridiculed when kin folks and neighbors probably looked out their windows and said, “He’s just restless; he’ll be back in a few weeks; he can’t survive on his own.” I am sure he left them with a lot of unanswered questions.

We know that Abram was following that still small voice from God as he journeyed away from his home town. I’m sure he had been lonely and tired as he made all the preparations to leave, loaded the ox carts, checked the wheels, repaired harnesses, and mended the tents. However, the excitement of doing God’s will gave him special strength. The first few days were probably familiar territory. At first, they could look back for several miles and possibly see their home, but as their days grew into weeks and their months into years, the territory continued to be different. He was beginning to feel his great dependence on God to direct him. Now there were no familiar faces nor places. It makes one appreciate his blind obedience to the call of God.

This move was very historic, unusual, and has great spiritual meaning for us today. God had a big plan! Abraham was following a skilled navigator who specializes in leading and guiding His children who put their faith in Him. His decision to heed the call of God would be affecting people till the end of time. This was an ordinary man following an unordinary call of God. We find Abraham, the father of faith, being tested on many lines; but the supreme test in offering up His only son would have been almost impossible for any parent. Isaac questioned his father about the sacrifice and asked, “Where is the lamb to offer?” Abram’s reply was, “God will provide.” This kind of faith comes with years of trusting his heavenly father and walking with Him through all the difficulties of life. Abraham’s faith in God shows us that we too can trust him to take us through unknown and difficult places. Abraham will be forever remembered as the “Father of Faith.” Let us be faithful to God.

—Bro James Bell

**MARCH 1, 2015**

**FAITH HINDERED BY UNBELIEF**

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of the course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Luke 1:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God sent his angel Gabriel to inform Zacharias that God had chosen him and his wife Elisabeth to be the parents of John the Baptist. Zacharias failed to accept and believe the message of the angel because he was thinking about how aged and stricken in years he and his wife were. As a reproof for his unbelief, Zacharias was stricken to be dumb and not able to speak until what God had promised would come to pass.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Luke 1:7, "*well stricken in years*": Well advanced into the upper years of life.

Verse 8, "*in the order of his course*": According to what duties he was to perform as a priest.

Verse 17, "*Elias*": The same as Elijah.

Verse 25, "*my reproach*": Elizabeth counted being barren and not able to bring forth children as a shame and disgrace to womanhood.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

A great number of years had rolled by since the prophets of old had prophesied of the coming of the Saviour and the great prophet who was to come before Him to prepare a people who would accept and receive Him as the Christ, the Anointed Son of the most High God. The prophets of old had prophesied of the Saviour of the world, and their prophecies had been studied and pondered by many of the sons of men through the long years and ages that had come and

gone for several centuries.

The forerunner of the Christ, the prophet who was to prepare the hearts of men to receive Him, was prophesied about in Isaiah 40:3-5, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." Then again he was prophesied in the last two verses of the Old Testament, in Malachi 4:5, 6, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children; and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

And now the time had come for the fulfillment of these prophesies. And God had chosen Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth to be the parents of the child who would grow up to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He sent His angel Gabriel to inform Zacharias that he was to be the father of this prophet. Zacharias responded with a question about how such could be, as he and his wife were so aged and beyond the time of life such as was told him. The angel informed him that his words would be performed but that Zacharias would not be able to speak until they came to pass.

There is a lesson to be observed in all of this. Zacharias was not excused and let off easily for his error. He was dumb and not able to speak from that time until after his son was born. We must not doubt or question the ways and workings of Almighty God. Zacharias should have weighed the matter carefully in his mind and given full credit to God of His power to do as He determines to do. Think of the nine months that this poor man spent not being able to speak and converse with his wife nor anyone else. I am sure that he thought much about how he should have counted God able to do what He promised regardless of the infirmity of their old age. So may the Lord help us to take a lesson from all of this and be diligent to have faith and believe all the promises that God has given us in His Word!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. What did the angel Gabriel tell Zacharias was going to happen?
2. Why did Zacharias question how he could know this?
3. What did the angel say was going to be with Zacaharias?
4. How did his wife Elisabeth feel and what did she say about it?
5. What lesson can we learn from this account?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

The Bible, God's Holy Word, teaches the plain truth about faith and what it means to take God at His Word and obey His counsel and instructions regardless of how things look and the conditions things are in. Zacharias answered the angel Gabriel without really thinking things through and weighing the matter with utmost care and thought. Perhaps the human mind would think that the angel was too stern with Zacharias to pronounce dumbness and not being able to speak for such a length of time. But we must realize that to doubt God's Word and His ability and power to accomplish His purpose is a serious offense to Him. God wants us to recognize that He has "ALL POWER!" Nothing is too hard for Him to accomplish. All the elements of the creation are under His control. When we weigh the many miracles that Christ accomplished during His ministry, we must recognize that He was invested with great power from His Father. He proved that all the elements were under His jurisdiction and control. Feeding the 5000 men and the women and children with five small loaves and three fishes was an outstanding miracle. The elements were under Christ's full control. The lame, the blind, and all the other physical infirmities that Christ healed speak of the great power that God gave Christ to show His goodness and love. Oh, let us not doubt nor question what God is able to do, even in our day and time. Let us not limit God or discredit His power. This worldly society we live among is deceived by wrong ideas and persuasions. Jesus Christ, the Same: Yesterday, Today, and Forever! What He did while He was here on earth in the flesh He can still perform now. Let us not be afraid to trust and obey Him all the way!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## **REFLECTIONS**

Psalms 78 enumerates the many mighty works that God showed



toward the children of Israel, and verse 41 says , "...and limited the Holy One of Israel." These are some of the saddest words in Bible history. God promised the land of Canaan and brought them right to the borders of the land that flowed with milk and honey. They all agreed the land was just like the Lord had told them, but...there were giants in the land. The Lord had delivered them by great wonders and miracles, and yet they forgot when they saw the giants. They forgot their purpose; they forgot what the Lord had done. God so desired to give them the land, but their unbelief hindered and they perished in the wilderness. God had promised the land to them after they served the Egyptians for 400 years. Sadly, they wasted and wandered away in the wilderness when the account could have been so different.

Jesus did not many mighty works because of the people's unbelief while at Nazareth. It is true, our unbelief can hinder God from accomplishing what He would like. The Great I Am, Creator, Counselor and Friend; the one who has all power in heaven and earth is actually limited by us. The same exact thing can happen to us! "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." We need to ask ourselves if we are possessing the spiritual land of victory that God wants us to possess in our lives, are our hearts content with how God is working thru our lives or is there deeper longing for more. Then let us take steps of faith, commitment, consecration that will enable us to conquer in His name!

—Bro. Bob Wilson

**MARCH 8, 2015**

### **THE FAITH OF MOTHER MARY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

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

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

41 And it came to pass, that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb.

43 And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

45 And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name.

50 And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;

55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own home.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. Luke 1:45

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Mary's faith took in the wonderful news from the angel that she was to bring forth the Son of God, and Elisabeth's greeting was a great and wonderful blessing of encouragement to her.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 1:27, "*virgin*": A young unmarried woman. "*espoused*": Engaged to be married. "*house of David*": Family and lineage of David.

Verse 28, "*Hail*": A cheerful greeting.

Verse 29, "*cast in her mind*": Was quite perplexed and disturbed

Verse 38, "*be it unto me*": I believe that it will be so.

Verse 45, "*believed*": Received, accepted, and counted to be so.

Verse 46, "*magnify*": To declare great and wonderful.

Verse 48, "*low estate*": Lowly, humble in heart and life.

Verse 54, "*holpen*": Taken hold of in turn; succored and greatly blessed and helped.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Six months after the angel Gabriel brought the message to Zacharias of the Lord giving him and his aged wife conception to bring forth a son, we have the wonderful account of his visitation to Mary. God chose Mary to be the mother of the Saviour of mankind. There is no doubt that Mary was a righteous and God-fearing young woman. We can understand why Mary questioned the words of Gabriel that she was to conceive and bring forth a son. She was not married. It is very likely that she and her fiancé, Joseph, had already become engaged to be married. Matthew 1:18-25 gives an account of this that when Joseph was informed of Mary being with child, he was minded to put her away secretly, not willing to make her a public example. But the angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and informed him of what was really taking place. So we see that there were problems to deal with, and we are blessed to know that God was faithful to help them. At any rate, Joseph and Mary were united and looked forward to the birth of the Saviour.

The wonderful words that Mary uttered in the presence of Elisabeth and Zacharias are so inspiring. Her soul magnified and honored the Lord for so regarding her lowly and humble life and state of mind with goodness and grace to choose her to be the Mother of the Saviour. He overlooked the proud and worldly minded to favor those of low degree. And so it is with our gracious Heavenly Father today. As 1 Peter 5:5, 6 says, "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Thank the Lord for this wonderful truth!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Can we see why God chose Mary to be the Mother of the Saviour?
2. What caused Elisabeth to be made aware of Mary's blessing?
3. What did Mary have to say about all of this wonderful blessing?
4. What did Mary say about the proud, the mighty, and the rich?
5. What did she say about those of low degree and the hungry?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Our lesson today is a wonderful and inspiring account of how God favored a lowly maiden to be the Mother of the Saviour of the world. It was in the plan and purpose of God to send to humanity a Saviour who would manifest His power, holiness, and grace in a human body and offer his body as a sacrifice for our sins and be risen from the dead to eternal life and glory on our behalf. God brought it about in such a wonderful way. It is an account in the Holy Scriptures that is so precious and inspiring to our hearts. And how He worked first in making the birth of John the Baptist to take place is so wonderful, too. We love this precious account in the Bible. How thankful we are for the blessings of our loving heavenly Father in bringing this all about! The account of Mary and Joseph in Matthew 1:18-25 includes the quotation of the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Oh, how wonderful that the Almighty God went to such blessed ends to bring about our salvation and deliverance from sin and death! No man on earth could accomplish this, but God made a way by causing a godly and faithful woman to bring forth a human baby that grew up and brought salvation and everlasting hope and life to us poor and needy human beings. No wonder Mary was so joyful about it all. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: ...He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him;....He hath shewed strength with his arm,....exalted them of low degree,.....filled the hungry with good things." As He did to Mary, God can still bless the souls of men with His goodness, grace, and help.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

"Behold the hand maid of the Lord." We see in these words that Mary exhibited a total humility and willingness to do whatever the Lord so desired of her. The scriptures bear out that in all the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus as well as the thirty three years after his birth, Mary "kept all these sayings in her heart." She was present at the wedding for the first miracle when Jesus turned the water into wine. She witnessed the healings and miracles

at his hands. Mary was at the foot of the cross when he took his last breath. Mary was also one of the first to visit the tomb. After the ascension of Christ, Mary was one of the hundred and twenty in the upper room fasting and praying before the day of Pentecost.

The servant duties for Mary did not cease after Jesus' birth. She was a willing and useful vessel of the Lord for many years—all the days of her life. We too can be a servant of the Lord if we have a willing heart and an empty vessel. It is then that the Lord is able to do with us abundantly and above all that we can ask or think. The Lord has a special purpose for each and every life but it cannot be developed or realized until we are willing to become empty of our own special abilities and talents so that he can fill us with his Holy Spirit. Then, we too can testify as Mary did, "For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name!"

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**MARCH 15, 2015**

### **BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

Luke 1:57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all.

64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of

Judaea.

66 And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

68 Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness, and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

**MEMORY VERSE:** That he [God] would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. Luke 1:74, 75

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God blessed Zacharias and Elisabeth with knowledge and foresight of the purpose and ministry their son, John, would fulfill as a forerunner of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the

world.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 1:66, *“laid them up in their hearts”*: Seriously took them to heart and considered them well.

Verse 69, *“horn of salvation”*: Triumphant and overcoming power to be saved and delivered from the power of sin and death.

Verse 71, *“saved from our enemies”*: Delivered from the the rulership of Satan and ungodly ways of life. *“from the hand of all that hate us”*: From the overcoming influences of this present evil world.

Verse 78, *“dayspring from on high”*: The rising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. Malachi 4:2

Verse 80, *“the day of his shewing”*: The time of his appearing and ministry.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

We had in our former lesson for March 1 the account of Zacharias being visited by the angel Gabriel with glad tidings of him and his wife Elisabeth to bring forth a son to be named John and of his ministry going before Christ to prepare people to believe in Him. It was brought out how Zacharias faltered in believing what Gabriel told him because of his and Elisabeth’s aged condition. Then we saw what came on Zacharias of being dumb and not able to speak. This condition prevailed throughout all the months of Elisabeth’s expecting of her baby. Then we see Elisabeth bringing forth her son and the dispute Elisabeth had with her neighbors about the name to be given to her child. Elisabeth declared that he should be called John. Then they turned to Zacharias for his word, and he wrote it out, “His name is John.” Then we see Zacharias’s mouth opened immediately and his tongue loosed and praises to God coming forth. That was a great sign for those round about; and fear came on the people, and they wondered what manner of child this was before them!

Then we have Zacharias being filled with the Holy Ghost and speaking wonderful words of prophecy and praise to God. This message he spoke forth is a wonderful testimony and declaration of the goodness and power of Almighty God in the salvation that He prophesied about in His holy prophets and would bring forth in the coming Saviour Jesus Christ. He stated that this was all the fulfillment of the mercy of God that He promised in times past to



Abraham and the children of Israel. He so sweetly declared how that we can be delivered and set free from sin to serve God without fear of failure or defeat from Satan, "...in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life," Oh, what a message our dear Zacharias brought forth that day! "The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace"! Praise the Lord, it all came to pass and we today can still enjoy and experience this great salvation!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did Zacharias and Elisabeth want to name their baby John?
2. Why did their friends want to name him after his father?
3. What did the angel say their baby would grow up to be?
4. What did Zacharias say the prophets had spoken about?
5. What kind of salvation did he say would be given to us?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

As we survey and meditate on this New Testament account of Zacharias and Elisabeth, there are some things we would like to comment on. First, I would take note of what was said at the first of them. Luke 1:6 states that "they [Zacharias and Elisabeth] were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Now that is a great amount of good that can be said of a person. We need to consider this very well in our viewing of what Zecharias went through on account of his failure to accept the angel Gabriel's informing him of the son that his wife Elisabeth was to bring forth. Now the angel's sentence of him going to be dumb and not able to speak until the day those things would be performed was for a wise purpose for him and for us. We must be diligent in our faith and not allow circumstances and conditions to hinder us from believing what God has made known will be. We do not find that this sentence of not being able to speak had any bearing or effect on the faithfulness of Zacharias. He stood right with Elisabeth all through those nine months of pregnancy and awaiting the birth of their son, John.

When the question was put to him of what the name of his son

would be, we see Zecharias firmly writing, "His name is John." This showed his faithfulness and integrity after going through the long period of silence and not being able to speak. When his mouth was opened and he began once more to speak, what did he say? He praised God! And being filled with the Holy Ghost, Zecharias blessed the Lord and spoke some wonderful words of gladness for the blessings of God to them. He declared that God had spoken wonderful words of old of what He was to do, bringing in salvation for humanity, granting us that we being delivered from our enemies might serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives. He foretold what his son would do in going before the Lord to prepare his ways and give the knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins. He concluded that all of this was "...to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Praises be to God that we can experience this great blessing today!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

We find the oath sworn by God to Abraham that Zacharias referred to in his inspired message back in Genesis 22:16-18. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord. . .that in blessing I will bless thee. . . and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. . . ."

Surely these Scriptures are clear proof that the Abrahamic promise is a spiritual one. Zacharias is not applying this oath to literal conquest. That had been accomplished literally by Joshua and David and Solomon. But as Hebrews 4:8 points out, true rest from our enemies wasn't accomplished by Joshua. The real enemies are the enemies of the soul. The real seed is Jesus Christ and all who believe in Him. He has bruised satan's head as He promised to Adam and Eve.

The promise is clear and complete. No enemy has been left unconquered by Christ. There is no need to serve Christ cowering in fear of being daily overcome by weaknesses and temptations. Perfect love casts out this fear! This speaks of holiness and righteousness, not just for a moment, but enduring throughout our whole lives. Not just forgiveness, but regeneration and victory.

Possessing the gate of our enemies: this is the "uttermost" to which we are saved by Christ.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

**MARCH 22, 2015**

## **THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST**

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

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from

them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

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

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

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

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

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

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10, 11

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem to be taxed, staying in the stable of the inn, Jesus Christ the Saviour was born and was wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a manger. And out on the fields in the same country the angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds and told them about His birth, and they came to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 2:1, “*taxed*”: Registered or enrolled.

Verse 3, *“his own city”*: The city where one was born.

Verse 7, *“swaddling clothes”*: Strips of cloth to wrap a baby in.  
*“manger”*: A feeding crib for cattle. *“inn”*: A hotel or lodging place.

Verse 9, *“sore afraid”*: Feared with great fear.

Verse 14, *“good will”*: Delight and kindness to humanity.

Verse 19, *“pondered”*: Meditated and thought much about.

Verse 22, *“days of her purification”*: Adam Clarke explains that this was 33 days after what was termed the 7 days of her uncleanness—40 days in all: after the birth of a male child. Leviticus 12:2, 3

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The wonderful account of the birth of Jesus Christ is and for many generations has been a joyous and inspiring story that has blessed humanity. Along with the events that happened before and led up to this precious story, it is all a cherished treasure in our hearts. We have in our lesson Luke’s account of Christ’s birth and why Jesus was born in Bethlehem instead of up north at Nazareth. For some reason Caesar Augustus, the emperor at Rome, decided that all the world should be registered and taxed, and everyone had to go to the city where he was from to have this accomplished. This, no doubt, was a great difficulty, because Mary was “great with child,” which meant that the time of her giving birth to Jesus was very near. And so it was that while they were in Bethlehem the time came for her to bring forth her precious little baby. This was all very difficult. And the fact that they could not find a convenient place to stay, the inn being crowded, and their to stay in the stable where animals were probably present, made it even more adverse. But God was with them, and she was able to bring forth her precious little baby and made a bed for him in the manger.

God made a wonderful move that brightened the whole scene for Joseph and Mary. Out in the country near by were some shepherds with their flock of sheep. They had a visitation from heaven and a lovely angel accompanied by the bright glory of God that informed them of the birth of our Saviour and told them what to look for. They saw and heard the bright throng of angels singing praises to God. It is no wonder that the shepherds were desirous to go unto Bethlehem to see what the Lord had made known to them. Perhaps it took a little time for them to search and inquire, but they hurried and were able to locate it all. I am sure that those shepherds cherished the memory of that precious incident in their

hearts always!

We have the scene of Joseph and Mary having to go to Jerusalem to present their precious baby to the Lord as the law of the Lord required. We will see the precious experience they had there in our next lesson.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What made Joseph and Mary's trip to Bethlehem difficult?
2. What took place while they were there?
3. What did the shepherds out in the fields see and hear?
4. What did the shepherds make known abroad?
5. What effect did all of this have upon Mary's heart?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

We ponder in our hearts as Mary did in her heart all the wonderful things that took place as revealed in our lesson today! On one hand, we think of the difficulties and hardships that she and Joseph endured. With her "great with child," the long trip from Nazareth down to Bethlehem was no doubt a difficult and treacherous undertaking. They did not have a nice car in which to travel nor paved roads. But they probably had a donkey for Mary to ride on, and Joseph had to walk and lead the way. So it is with times for all of us in this mortal life. Adversity, hardship, suffering, and difficult scenes come to all of us along life's way. But we must, as Mary and Joseph did, endure it all and press along the way we have to go.

Think of their time in Bethlehem, finding no place in the inn and having to take up a place in the stable to try to find shelter and comfort! On top of it all, the time came for Mary's little baby to come forth. Think how she had to wrap Him up in strips of cloth and lay him on some hay in the manger! It surely takes courage and patience to endure the adversities of this mortal life! Think of their wonder and thrill to receive the visit of the shepherds and hear their report of the visit of the angel of the Lord and the glorious concert of angels singing praises to God! No wonder Mary had so many

things to keep and ponder in her heart! Oh, this whole story from start to finish is an inspiration to our hearts! We will look forward to a continuation of the blessed account of our Saviour's growth from babyhood to adulthood and the great things He accomplished for us poor and needy people!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

In Acts 26:26 Paul said, “. . . this thing was not done in a corner” concerning Jesus Christ, his birth, life, and death. This was not a secret, hidden, nor-partially true event. This was prophesied through many different prophets hundreds of years before it came to pass. We will look at the book of Matthew 1:1-16.

Matthew begins with Abraham and traces Jesus' lineage through to Joseph (his legal father). Whereas in Luke's gospel 3:23-38 the writer traces Mary's lineage going backwards from Heli (her father) to Adam, who was called the son of God. We have a maternal genealogy in Luke and a paternal, in Matthew's gospel. Both lines are running parallel back to David's two sons through Joseph to King Solomon and through Mary's bloodline to Nathan. Most of us do not see the importance of this fact; but the reason it is important is because it proves he is the true Messiah.

Notice in Joseph's genealogy a man named Jechonias (heir to the throne of David) in Matthew 1:11. His name is also called Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 22:24-30. Verse 30 says, “Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.” This curse was placed on this king and his seven sons and their descendants which were mentioned in I Chronicles 3:17-18. If Jesus had been Joseph's biological son he would have been one of the accursed and never could have been the true Messiah.

When Joseph took Mary and the unborn child, he gave him legally the royal title given to him through King Solomon. Therefore, Jesus, the son of David, was the legal Messiah, the royal Messiah, the uncursed Messiah, the true Messiah, the only possible Messiah, and that royal line ended with the first born, Jesus Christ. Mary's line, although not royal, had no curse upon it and produced her son

Jesus Christ. The line, with the curse on it because of Jechonias' sins was King Solomon's royal line producing Joseph's lineage.

It is thrilling to me to see how God had all this planned too, that His son would be born of a pure blood line. The gift of God to mankind came in the form of a little baby boy named Jesus to be the savior of the world. What a wonderful blessing he has been to all the world who believe on him as the son of the most high God; and to those who don't, he remains Lord over all. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." 1 Peter 2:7.

Documented in: The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict, by Josh McDowell.

—Bro. James

Bell

**MARCH 29, 2015**

### **JESUS GROWS UP WITH GOD'S GRACE UPON HIM**

Luke 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and the rising again of many in



Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity.

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey, and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that

I must

be about my Father's business?

## **NOTICE TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS**

This issue of the Bible Lessons will be the last printed edition. Beginning the 2nd Quarter 2015 (Apr/May/June), Bible Lessons will be published free-of-charge by Church Of God Today and can be found online at **<churchofgodtoday.com>** beginning January 2015 for downloading and printing in book or other format.

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