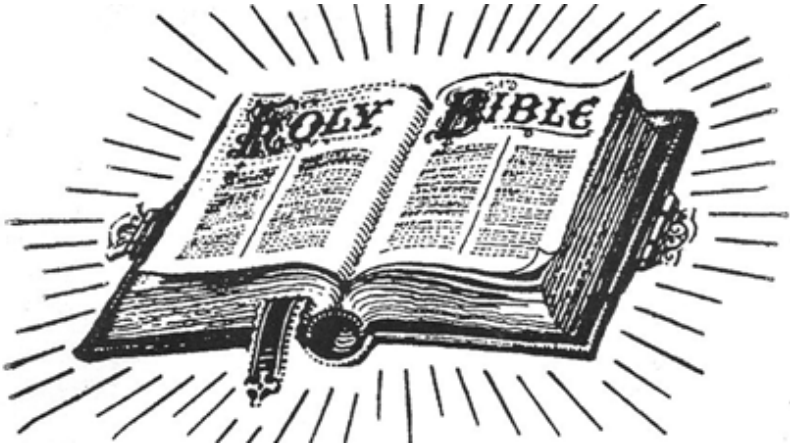


# Bible Lessons



**“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell  
the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks,  
consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the  
generation following.”**

Psalm 48:12-13

**Volume 50, No 4  
October • November • December  
2018**

*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 50

October • November • December

No 4

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Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church  
Reprinted from a lesson series by Bro. Leslie Busbee  
In this issue: *Reflections* contributed by  
Bro. Fari Matthews, Bro. Bob Wilson, Bro. James Bell,  
Bro. Darrell Johnson, and Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

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## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR FOURTH QUARTER, 2018

### *The Church of God in Prophecy*

For this quarter I feel it would be good to bring back from the archives a lesson series written by Bro. Leslie Busbee. For those of you who are new to this curriculum, Bro. Leslie wrote the Bible Lessons starting in the early 1980's until illness overtook him in 2015. After his death in 2016, I had several people tell me that they surely missed Bro. Leslie's lessons! Truly, he was a student of the scriptures and presented the truths of God's Word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As his daughter, I was personally aware of the burden, prayer and time he put into each book.

The scriptures presented in these lessons were very instrumental in showing me a personal vision of the church of God, securing my feet into a firm foundation of truth and helping me to stand amidst many opposing winds of doctrine. My prayer is that our readers today would also be blessed by a personal revelation of God's church as we study His Word together.

The last three lessons of this series are about the birth of Jesus Christ, a topic that was especially dear to my father's heart and "brand new" to him every Christmas season.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

**OCTOBER 7, 2018**

### **THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD'S HOLINESS**

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

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

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

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

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

Isaiah 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

2 In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

3 And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

5 And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. —Psalm 48:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Despite the fact that many people profess godliness, use the name Church of God, and do not live up to the Bible's holy standard, the plan and purpose for His Church remains the same. The Church of God is to be lifted up in holiness and righteousness above the confusion and evil of the world, in peace and purity from all sin. Her name is written in heaven, and she is a place of refuge from all the troubles of this life.

## **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Isaiah 2:2 "In the top of the mountains": in the heights of perfect love and holiness of heart and life. "Above the hills": above all the creeds and organizations void of spiritual life that are operated by men.

Isaiah 2:4 "Swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks": Instead of fighting against each other with the Word of God, we apply the Word of God to our lives, upturning the soil of our souls, preparing us to let the truth grow and prosper in our hearts, and pruning off from our lives every unfruitful branch.

Isaiah 4:1 "Seven women shall take hold of one man": This is definitely spiritual language and refers to the numerous organizations of men who recognize the right name of the Church, but are in darkness as to what it means to be worthy of that name.

## **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The scriptures in our lesson today are referring to God's Church in this present Gospel age. The prophet's keen vision was transpiercing the ages with spiritual understanding of the people of God united under Christ, lifted up in His grace and holiness, taught of Him, being judged and redeemed by the Word and blood of Christ, and covered and protected by His blessedness.

This is what the Christian Church under Christ is to be like. It is purely spiritual language that we have speaking to us in our lesson today. It is not to be taken in a literal sense that the house of God is to be set in the literal mountains somewhere. Why, that would put it in Nepal/China among the Himalayan mountains where the common people would have no access! No, it is not to be carried out literally. It is a truly spiritual experience to have this high and holy way carried out in our lives in this world. Let us picture Zion, which is the spiritual name for the Church (meaning clear, bright, and sunny) in the light of our lesson as being lifted up above this old world of sin and sorrow, triumphant in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Is it possible for us to attain unto the holiness and righteous heights of Zion in our human understanding and strength?
2. What is the attraction that causes men and women to flow unto the city of God?
3. What is the attitude of the worldly and carnal mind when confronted with the standard of holiness that God has for His Church?
4. What will a sincere and humble soul who is thirsting for righteousness say when he sees the high and holy standard of the Church of God?
5. What are we to do with the holy weapons of plowshares and pruning hooks?
6. What is the invitation to souls today that is found in our lesson?
7. Explain how people attempt to be called by the right name and yet wear their "own apparel."
8. What will be the status of everyone who remains in Jerusalem?
9. How is the filth and blood purged from Jerusalem?
10. What do the terms "Zion" and "Jerusalem" refer to?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Many times when the standard of holiness that God wills and designs for people today is preached and expounded, the reaction in the heart of man is, "Oh, I could never live like that!" or, "That is too high a plane for me to get up to!" or, "There is no way that man can live up to that kind of teaching!" Many accept these ideas and never seek to attain unto the holiness of the Lord.

I once heard of an old army captain back in the time of the early morning church. He had heard of the Christians and was curious to know who and what kind of people they really were. He crept up in the shadows near the Christians' assembly and, from his unseen position, listened to what the preacher said. He was so struck by the high plane of living that was preached and brought out, that he came away and told his associates that there was no possible way for any man live to what that preacher had said. He went as far as to say that

there would be only one way that it could be done, and he could not see how that would be, of course. The only way to live that way would be if a man could be changed from the ordinary and be given a new heart and mind. He recognized that man in his natural condition could not live like that, but what he did not realize was that God had a way to do just that; that is, give a man a new heart, soul, and mind.

The enemy turns many people away from the truth because of this. People need to realize that we can only successfully live a Christian life by being raised up by the power of the resurrection of Christ to His holy life of faith and love. This lifts us up in Him and we can bear the name "Church of God" unashamed, wearing the garments of holiness and feasting on His heavenly manna. Praise the Lord!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

Mountains have played a significant role in Bible history. God told Abraham to offer Isaac on one of the mountains of Moriah. Genesis 22:14 says, "And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." This is close to where our Savior was crucified on Mount Calvary near Jerusalem. God also spoke to Moses, gave him the law, and visited Israel on Mount Sinai.

The majesty of mountains speak to us of greatness, might, stability, permanence and strength. Psalm 87:1 states, "His foundation is in the holy mountains." Psalm 125:1-2 says, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

A mountain can also offer quietness, solitude and rest. The cares and responsibilities of this life can be so taxing and wearisome. Jesus often escaped the stress and noises of the crowd by going up into a mountain to pray alone.

We have also heard of mountaintop experiences. They are special places where God is revealed to us in a spectacular or wonderful way. Mark 9:2 tells us that, "Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain

apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them." The glory of the Son of Man was revealed to them in a wonderful way. The Lord will do this, at times, to prepare us for a difficult time ahead. "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places" (Psalm 18:33).

Mountains have also been a place of hiding and refuge from an enemy. Jesus told his people that when they saw Jerusalem encompassed, they were to flee to the mountains.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills (The *Septuagint* rendering is *mountains*), from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2). The Lord is our mountain of stability, strength, quietness, and refuge. Let us be thankful and continue to trust in His wonderful name!

—Bro. Bob Wilson

**OCTOBER 14, 2018**

### **BUILT ON A SURE FOUNDATION**

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

Psalm 118:22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.



1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 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,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

—2 Timothy 2:19

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus Christ was a solid Rock, a living stone of truth, holiness, faithfulness, obedience, humility, love, and steadfastness for God. He is the Son of the living God, and the revelation of Himself to man brings a steadfastness to the soul as we build our faith and hope upon Him.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 28:16 "Shall not make haste": Haste means *excitement* or *hurry*. This indicates fear, doubtfulness, or shame. The rendering of this verse in 1 Peter says "confounded" and in the *Septuagint* it says, "shall by no means be ashamed."

## LESSON BACKGROUND

From Isaiah and the Psalms come two important prophecies concerning the foundation of the Church of God. Jesus Himself did not shy away from the responsibility that was on Him of being the Rock upon which the Church of God was to be built. He was a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; yet, He was also the refused, the disallowed, the rejected stone, who was set at naught by the builders, or the professed people of God. These people were going about to establish their own righteousness and were not submissive to the righteousness of God. How clearly Peter brings out and applies these scriptures!

Isaiah's expression of the future foundation for the Church came in the midst of his denouncing the scornful men of his day whose life-language spoke of making an agreement with hell and a covenant with death, making lies their refuge and hiding themselves under falsehood. People were doing so in Christ's time, and they are doing so today. Isaiah went on to say that their hiding places would be swept away.

Jesus quoted from the 118th Psalm about Himself being as the rejected stone and becoming the head of the corner. It is true that to some He is a precious and solid Rock upon which to build, while to others He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Isaiah 8:14). It is our decision as to what He will be to us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### DISCUSSION:

1. Upon what does every person in this life need to build his faith and hope?
2. In what way is Christ a solid Rock?
3. What does Christ have that qualifies Him to be the foundation of the Church?
4. What does Christ have that causes many to refuse Him?
5. What kind of disposition causes people to reject Him?
6. A building is positioned upon and fastened to its foundation. What is our application to Christ in our building upon Him?
7. Is there any other real foundation for us to build upon

besides Christ?

8. To whom is Christ precious?
9. What is Christ to the disobedient? At what do they stumble?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

What a blessing to have a solid foundation upon which to build our experience of faith, love, and hope in God! Without this foundation of Jesus Christ in His blessed revelation to our hearts, all would be in vain and hopeless.

Jesus was a tried stone. He was put to the test and tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin. The devil was turned loose upon Him, but he never yielded to the enticements and pressures of Satan. He triumphed openly over him. He endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself and overcame their antagonizing arguments and accusations. The hardships and privations of this mortal life He endured gracefully. He was not hardened to the needs of humanity by their relentless coming unto Him. He did not become weary with their errors and ignorance. He was strong, and as a servant He bowed beneath the yoke of suffering that His Father put upon Him. He never flinched under that dark prospect of being despised and rejected of men.

Oh, how we love and admire Him! He was so strong, steadfast, and faithful! When we survey His life of service and humility, our hearts are warmed with love and devotion. We gladly turn from the paths of sin and worldly pleasure, and press closer to Him! All in this world is uncertain, vain, perishable, changeable, and unsatisfying to the heart of man, but in Christ we find a solid Rock upon which we lean, cling to, and for which we gladly give our life, our love, and our all.

Oh, the great mistake that so many make who reject Him for the vain pursuits of this fleeting world! Many do reject Him. They did it back then, and they are doing it today. He is the same; so precious to those who love and obey Him. What a great reward will be given to those who cleave to Christ through all of earth's little while and find themselves triumphant when all of this earth passes away forever!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

Our chapel is in a quaint little suburb of Dallas known as Balch Springs. I am told that the town received its name because of the many underground springs that run through it. When we were preparing to build, one requirement was that the foundation plans had to be designed and stamped by a structural engineer.

Because of the possibility of underground springs, the engineer suggested that several 20-foot core samplings of the soil be taken and analyzed so that we could know what type of ground we were building on and what type of foundation was needed. It was an expensive process, but we were willing to take every precaution and spare no expense to have the assurance that the chapel was built on a solid foundation.

Christ is concerned about His church as well. He said, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The most important part of any structure is not its beauty, but the integrity of its foundation. It must be engineered to support the weight and withstand all the elements that are sure to affect it.

Every day people are building their hopes and dreams on defective foundations and wondering why their lives are falling apart. What they’re building may initially appear beautiful, but it is not structurally sound and cannot withstand the forces of life.

We design and construct our own lives. We are not victims of our circumstances, quite often we engineer them. Our choices help create the environment of our circumstances. We make the choice of what we build and where we build it; whether upon Christ—the Word of God—or upon our own ideas and philosophies. We choose how we build and we choose what we accept or reject in the construction process.

We are building for eternity. May God help us to build wisely.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**OCTOBER 21, 2018**

**THE CITY OF OUR SOLEMNITIES**

Isaiah 33:2 O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

5 The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?

19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.

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

21 But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

22 For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. —Psalms 48:2-3

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Church of God is a safe dwelling place, the home of the soul, where the solemn and sacred worship of God in spirit and truth is ever carried on, where the Lord himself reigns, supplies, blesses, and preserves His people in eternal joy.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Isaiah 33:14 “Sinners in Zion”: This refers to professors of religion who are void of the true grace of God, and yet seek to be among the saints. Hypocrites are those who profess to be saved without a real experience of salvation.

Isaiah 33:18 “Receiver”: a trader or weigher of money.

Isaiah 33:20 “Solemnities”: appointed times, places, signs or meetings (*Strong’s*). This word refers to the assemblies, the meetings, the sacred ceremonies and observances of the Church in her worship to God.

Isaiah 33:21 “Galley; gallant ship”: these terms refer to a large and flashy display and show of worship or religion that is so prominent in man-ruled organizations.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

In the midst of the low state of hypocrisy and deceit of sinful man, God has placed His Church. For those who will humble themselves to walk with God, the Lord will be their shield and stay, but for the proud and deceitful and hypocritical there will be fear and consternation.

Isaiah is giving us a foretaste or a preview of the blessing and comfort that will be found in being born again and dwelling in the New Jerusalem, the Church of God. The judgment and righteousness of the grace of God fills the heart of the redeemed soul. It brings stability and strength to endure the pressures and tribulations to which the saints are exposed. Verse 18 in our lesson is referred to by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 1:20 when he said, "Where is the

wise! where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The spirits of strife and covetousness are not in the Church of God. It is a quiet habitation that will never be removed. We love one another and are not out for financial gain. The Lord is our all in all. What a blessing to be in the Church of God and enjoy the peace and harmony that prevails among the saved and sanctified!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. Can you make a list of the many benefits that can be enjoyed in the Church of God?
2. Zion filled with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What is wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord to us in Zion?
4. Why are the sinners in Zion and the hypocrites afraid?
5. To what does the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings refer?
6. Who is it that will dwell with the everlasting burnings?
7. What do our eyes behold in the Church of God?
8. What kind of people dwell in Zion?
9. What do you see when you look upon Zion?
10. What is the Lord to His people in Zion?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Oh, what a beautiful picture of Zion, the Church of God, that we have before us in our lesson today. To be in Zion, one must be born again by the Spirit of God, and walking in the light of His precious Word every day. The Lord will lead us in the paths of righteousness if we are really His sheep and His own. The Lord Jesus, being at the right hand of God exalted, rules and reigns from heaven above. He fills the habitation of His people in the spiritual heavens with judgment and righteousness. He stabilizes us with His wisdom and spiritual knowledge of Himself because the fear of the Lord is our treasure. We will be lifted up into the heavenly places with Christ, and will be able to resist the devil and overcome all of his devices.

Our souls will feast on that bread of life that comes down from heaven and we will drink freely of the water of life that flows out from the throne of God, clear as crystal.

This brings a division between those who serve God sincerely and those who serve Him not. Satan blinds the minds of the proud and unbelieving so that they cannot behold the things that God has provided in His Church.

The saints are not a fierce people, hard to entreat and get along with. They use great plainness of speech, declaring in a knowledgeable tongue the wonderful works of God. There is quietness and assurance forever in the habitation of the righteous. Her stakes, the promises of God, shall never be removed. The Lord is our judge, and His judgment is unto truth and victory. He is our lawgiver, writing His laws down in the tender tables of our hearts by the Spirit of God. He is our King and Savior. What a safe and happy place to be in: the Church of God upon the solid Rock, Jesus Christ!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

The following is a testimony by my grandmother, Vera Forbes, explaining how God led her to Zion, the Church of God (taken from *Memoirs of George E. Harmon* by Vera M. Forbes):

“On January 1, 1914 I was married to Erle E. Forbes in Texas, and immediately moved to Clovis, New Mexico, where Erle’s home had been for some time. I was a Methodist and gave my church letter to the pastor on the first Sunday I was there. I was soon taking part in the Epworth League (Young People’s Service). One evening after Epworth League, Erle suggested that we go and visit the little chapel where his mother and sisters worshipped. I consented to do that. There I found a little group of people in a very small building. It was a little chapel all right, with no sign to label it as a chapel or a place of worship. Across the front of the whole width of the building were the large words: ‘HAY BARN.’ But what I found inside made the difference. It was a very unusual, but touching service. The songs were all new to me, even though I knew many songs, for my parents, my sisters and brother were all choir singers, as well as myself. After the service the people were all so very friendly and gave me a hearty



welcome. We continued to attend Sunday night services there after the Epworth League.

“My dear little mother-in-law had one of the song books they used (Select Hymns), so I began to play the songs on the piano, and to learn them. They were very soul-inspiring. I soon learned and loved them and could sing with them at the services, even though they had no piano. I was also learning more than songs. I was learning what salvation really meant; the experience one has after being saved from sin; also what faith is and how to exercise faith in God; also to have faith for the healing of the body. Brother Harmon illustrated the difference in faith and feelings. Feelings he showed as a wavy, up-and-down line, while faith was illustrated as a straight line that goes straight up to God and heaven.

“Brother Harmon preached about the need of one being baptized when he is saved. Oh, I had wanted to be baptized when I got saved at the age of ten years, and had taken off my hat to be baptized, but the preacher asked, ‘Were you baptized when a baby?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ The preacher then said, ‘Well, you don’t need to be baptized again.’ From that time on I had wondered about my baptism. From the light that was now coming from the preached Word, I saw that not only was I given privilege to be baptized, but that it was commanded of the Lord. Brother Harmon made the whole Christian life look so very wonderful.

“One day as I sat at the piano learning some of the songs, I came to one that said: ‘Brighter days are sweetly dawning, Oh! the glory looms in sight.’ Oh, my eyes filled with tears and I could see no more! I got up and fell on the floor and poured out my heart to God, saying, ‘Lord, if what Brother Harmon is preaching is the truth, and if this is really Your way, please help me to know!’ Immediately an audible Voice spoke to me and said, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it’ (Isaiah 30:21). I looked around, but there was no one there. I knew God had spoken to me right from Heaven. I said, ‘All right, Lord, I will accept the truths in these songs and what Brother Harmon is preaching from the Bible.’ I arose feeling so happy! I am still thankful God spoke to me, and from that day I have endeavored by the help of the Spirit to walk in the glorious light of God’s Word.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

OCTOBER 28, 2018

**BEAUTIFUL FOR SITUATION—ESTABLISHED FOREVER**

Psalm 48:1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

Psalm 87:1 His foundation is in the holy mountains.

2 The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

6 The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

**MEMORY VERSE:** There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. —Psalm 46:4

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Church of God is beautifully situated on the bright hills of glory and perfect holiness, founded on the Word of God, inhabited by those who are born again and enrolled in the Lamb's book of life.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 48:2 "On the sides of the north": This evidently refers to the position of the site of the temple, which was situated in the north section of Jerusalem.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The things that are spoken in the Psalms of Zion and Jerusalem are fulfilled now in the Church of God which Jesus purchased with His own blood, and which is built upon Himself, the solid Rock. Zion, the city of David, and Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, are types of the New Testament Church. In speaking of what we are come to in Christ, Paul said in Hebrews 12:22: "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..."

In Revelation 14:1, John saw a lamb (Christ) standing upon the mount Zion. So whatever is spoken in the Psalms concerning Zion finds its ultimate fulfillment in the spiritual experience that we have in Christ today as His Church. And it is all so true, clearly discerned by the spiritually enlightened men and women who are born from above. The two Psalms that we quote from in our lesson go together in their description of the beautiful situation of the city of God. She is the city of the great King, Jesus Christ. Psalm 87:5, in the Septuagint, reads: "A man shall say, Sion is my mother; and such a man was born in her." This points to the new birth that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus in John 3. Paul called the Jerusalem which is above "the mother of us all" in Galatians 4:26.

The love for the city of Zion and Jerusalem which the children of Israel who wholly worshipped God very strongly expressed was evident in the sacred writings, and this same love should fill the heart of the child of God today. And it does, as we hear the Savior's voice in the holy Church of God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the things about the Church of God that are so beautiful?

2. God known in her palaces for \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Why should we seek to have a clear understanding of the Church of God?
4. Is it possible for us to live in Zion and not know about her "towers, palaces, and bulwarks"?
5. What is the mountain of God's holiness to us today?
6. Can you think of some of the glorious things that are spoken of the Church of God?
7. How can a person enter the Church of God?
8. Who established the Church?
9. What will decide a man's status in Zion when the Lord comes and counts up the people?
10. What kind of birth is the Psalmist really talking about?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Many hundreds of years before Christ came and the Church was built, the Spirit of God inspired the writers of the Psalms to vividly portray the glorious aspects of the Church. Peter said that it was not unto themselves, but unto us that the writers of old did minister the things that are now reported by them who preach the gospel (1 Peter 1:12).

The Church of God is the most beautiful structure and organized body of people in all of time and eternity. To be saved and a part of the holy Church of God is the highest honor and privilege that can be given to a man. We not only are saved in Christ, but we are saved in His Church. The word "church" means a congregation, assembly, or a gathering together unto Christ. When we repent of our sinful ways of life and come to Jesus to believe in and follow Him, we find a transforming experience of the new birth. It is a resurrection from the dead state of sins and our empty ways of life to a new life of joy, victory, and hope in Him. This is what puts us into the Church of God.

The truths and the realities of this special relationship with the Lord are the towers, the palaces, and the bulwarks of Zion. How we need to explore and know these blessings so that we can continually testify of their blessedness to the generation that is coming on. Many times people get misinformed and are in the dark concerning the real happiness that is found in living for the Lord. The devil points out to

them the hard places and the difficulties, but hides the spiritual blessings and values found therein. Let us know and see as we have heard, so that we can vividly portray these blessings to the generation following.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

When we see the spiritual chaos of the world colliding with the pillars of truth that are established forever, we are humbled at the greatness of our God. Truth will stand the tests of time. How beautiful to see God's truth meeting the needs of storm-tossed souls in this day of 2018! Darkened elements of humanism, sectism, political correctness and this new acceptance of "diversity." Such things are beating hard on our doorstep trying to break down our beliefs in creation, marriage and even the laws of our nation which were founded on godly principles.

I'm reminded of the saying, "The world at its worst needs a church at its best." If ever we need to shine, it's now. Folks, the world is "smelling" us to see if there is any fragrance of the power of God's love in us. Fiery trials come to make us strong. People pick up on the beautiful scent a child of God leaves when going through afflictions, heaviness, trials, and tests. The old temple in Jerusalem was such a "smell-good-place" with all the spices, flowers, and incense, that it permeated into your clothing, skin, and hair. When we have "been with God" we too have a fragrance about us that the world is craving.

What a beautiful situation to see God "fitting in the jails, in the hospitals, in the inner cities and in every place where His people carry the gospel and bring life to a weary soul." We've seen so many people, whose lives were wrecked by sin, meet the "God of all grace" and be changed and delivered. The song says, "What the World Needs is Jesus." Just a glimpse of Him and His church coming in and working together is so beautiful and life changing.

How beautiful is the sound of saints worshipping God! It carries such power! When God's people are satisfied, full of the Spirit of God, and happy, then we are situated to feed the world. Finding this pearl of truth and sharing it with others is so beautiful! How fitting it is that God would plant His happy people who shine as lights in the

world right in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. God is putting His church in the very midst of chaos, confusion, and compromise to show forth His power and grace. Let us exalt His name as we look upon this beautiful situation!

—Bro. James Bell

**NOVEMBER 4, 2018**

**THE BLESSEDNESS OF LIVING IN ZION**

Psalm 84:1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

**MEMORY VERSE:** When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. —Psalm 102:16-17

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A place in the Church of God is a most desirable and enjoyable dwelling. It is far better than a thousand lures of sin in the world around us.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 84:1 "Amiable": Loved, well beloved, enjoyable, pleasant.

Psalm 84:6 "Valley of Baca": Valley of weeping.

Psalm 84:10 "Be a doorkeeper": To be in the vestibule or to wait at the threshold. The *Septuagint* word used here is "abject," which means the lowest place available.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Just who the author of this 84th Psalm is and the conditions that prevailed when it was written we don't really know, but we are persuaded that it is truly an inspiration of God and has great value to us in the Church of God today.

A love for the worship of God and the fellowship of His saints is a very vital ingredient in successful Christian living. The presence of the Lord and the sweetness of His spiritual blessings is held so sacred and dear by the true children of God. Our appetites are keen for His life-giving manna from above. We greatly treasure our habitation in His courts of love. Just as a bird finds a place for her nest, even so we have found a habitation in the Lord.

Verses 5 and 6 in our lesson are a little vague, but the *Septuagint* has a very good rendering which we want to share with you: "Blessed is the man whose help is of thee, O Lord; in his heart he has purposed to go up the valley of weeping, to the place which he has appointed, for there the lawgiver will grant blessings." How true this is in the Christian life! When trials and hard places come our way, we know that there is good for us in it all, and we purpose to go and pray our way through the valley of weeping until we reach the place that God has in mind for us, and the Lord answers prayer and brings us forth with joy abounding.

Anyone who really tastes and sees that the Lord is good agrees with the Psalmist when he said that a day in the courts of the Lord far exceeds all that we spent in sin. What a blessing to be in the house of

God, the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of the truth!  
—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the things that we can truly enjoy in the Church of God?
2. What did the sparrow and the swallow finding a nest mean to the Psalmist?
3. What do people do who dwell in the Church of God? What do we do in the valley of weeping?
4. Why are we not ashamed to ask God to look upon and behold us?
5. What is the comparison between living in sin and living for God?
6. Is the way of the saints better than the ways of the world? How much better? In what ways?
7. In what way is our God a sun and a shield?
8. Share situations in which God has given you “grace and glory.”
9. What will He do for those who walk uprightly?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When we compare the way of holiness and the blessings of God with the ways of the world and those things that are contrary to Him, we rejoice that we have, like Mary, made the wise choice! How sweet and pleasant it is to live for Jesus! How sweet His Word is to our hearts. It causes praise and righteousness to spring forth in our hearts. His presence accompanies us through the valley of weeping, turning it into a well of springing, living water abounding with blessings.

How He guides and teaches us vital lessons for the good of our souls! How glad we are that we have escaped the sinful ways of the world and the people of this wicked age! How we yearn to see others who are captivated by the devil wake up to their wretchedness and come to Zion on this high and holy way! Just one day with the Lord reigning in our hearts is better than a thousand days spent in the



vanities of this beggarly world. Much rather would we fill just the lowliest place in the Church of God that His beauty our eyes may behold!

I recall a day when I attended a family get-together and was so vexed and grieved at the ungodly attire of some of those present. But later that evening, during the prayer service at the chapel, God visited my soul with this Psalm. Oh, how the words in verse 10 just vibrated in my soul! How much better is the meek and modest dress and deportment of the saints of God in Zion! How cheap and ignorant are the customs of the people of our time! Exposing their bodies in such lustful and shameful ways is just an index to the corruption of their hearts. We have found a much better way! With God giving us light and shielding us from all harm, we enjoy the best of life in every way.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

It is a beautiful thing to be a part of a home where there is harmony and purpose. Where there is joy, laughter, and a genuine enjoyment in being among those who truly love you. A refuge where each member is considered precious and valuable, and the concerns of each one, no matter how small or insignificant, are addressed. A place where discipline and correction are given by the parents in gentleness, with an eye toward pointing all to God's will in every situation. Where all of one's needs, be they spiritual, emotional, temporal, or physical, are met. When one has experienced living in a home like this, this sense of belonging to a unit with eternal purpose keeps those who have grown up in such a blessed haven near and always seeking for ways to return.

I believe it is much the same in God's church. The security found in an atmosphere of Godly love, gentleness, and kindness draws God's universal family together; we are "knit together" as the Apostle Paul states in Colossians 2. And this familial bond fosters the willingness to receive the reproof and instruction that God imparts to us through the anointing of His ministers to preach His Word, and through the precious dealings of His Holy Spirit. In such an environment, the desire to remain in God's presence and in

fellowship with His people is strong. I have personally experienced what the Psalmist expressed, that it is much more fulfilling to serve in the kingdom of God with others who are like-minded than to explore anything the world has to offer.

There is, however, a role each one of us has in nurturing this bond of perfectness. Our Heavenly Father will always demonstrate His care for His children, but it is also important that we, as brothers and sisters in Christ, maintain this sense of belonging together in humility and charity as we each strive to carry out the purpose for which God has called us.

—Bro. Fari Matthews

**NOVEMBER 11, 2018**

**PROMISES OF COMFORT TO ZION**

Isaiah 35:8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

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

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

Isaiah 54:1 Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

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

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

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

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

12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

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

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

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. —Isaiah 52:8

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** By way of the highway of holiness have come many precious souls in this gospel day unto Zion, the Church of God, and although their numbers are few in comparison with the multitudes who throng the way to destruction, they are precious in the sight of God.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 35:8 "The wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein": The *Septuagint* renders this passage a little clearer: "But the dispersed shall walk on it [the highway of holiness] and shall not go astray."

Isaiah 54:1 "Children of the desolate": This refers to the converts and children of worldly churches and organizations not led by the Spirit of God, whose children are not won by the true gospel, but by weakened and loose doctrines of men that appeal to the flesh.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

We have drawn our scriptures today from the 35th and 54th chapters of Isaiah. Chapter 35 is definitely full of New Testament predictions of peace, prosperity, and salvation through Christ. Through the grace of Jesus, the desert hearts of men will rejoice and blossom as the rose. Weak hands will be strengthened, and feeble knees will be confirmed. Life and health and praises break forth in the dry and parched wilderness. There is found that highway of holiness on which the ransomed of the Lord return with singing to Zion's blessed state. The life of Christ and the fulness of His grace restores mankind to the glorious city of God.

Isaiah 54 follows the description of Christ's atonement and suffering in chapter 53. The last verse of that chapter closes with a note of victory for Christ; God dividing Him a portion with the great, and dividing the spoil (the triumph and victory) with the strong, making intercession for the transgressors. The first verse of chapter 54 is quoted in Galatians 4:27, after which Paul had declared that the Jerusalem which is above (the Church of God) is free, which is the mother of us all. Jesus also quoted from this chapter in John 6:45, when He said that all who come to Him are drawn of the Father, and are all taught of God. These quotations from this chapter and the way that the New Testament applies them, is ample proof that the main thing that is spoken of is the Church.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. Who will walk in the way of holiness?
2. What do people obtain when they come to Zion?
3. Why and how does sorrow and sighing flee away?
4. Who is the husband of Zion?
5. What special blessing will the children of Zion—the Church of God—have?
6. What is the heritage that God promises to the servants of the Lord?
7. Why does God allow His true Church to be barren, afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted?

8. Will He leave them thus always?
9. What does God promise to do about it?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

At the time of the prophecies of Isaiah to the Church, literal Jerusalem and the Israelite nation were in great distress. As he put it in chapter 64, verse 10: "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation." The prophet is pointing forward to the Messiah, the Christ, who would bring about victory and deliverance for the people. The people who would be united to Christ would make up the great Church of God which would go forth in triumph and power to the end of time.

Scattered among the hosts of apostate Israel were true hearts yearning and looking for a better day. God told Elijah in the time of his deepest despair that He had yet reserved unto Himself seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knees to the image of Baal.

God knows where the faithful and upright in heart are. There is yet a remnant with whom God can work. They will be accounted worthy to walk before the Lord in white and travel the highway of holiness. They will come to Zion with great rejoicing. They will not draw back from the responsibilities that are theirs as the true saints of God. God promises them His help and blessings. They will pass through the fires of persecution and distress, but God will bring them out triumphantly at the last.

God's Church is a triumphant Church. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise against her in judgment shall be condemned. If God be for us, who can be against us? Christ is at the right hand of God, interceding for us. Let us sing and rejoice, for the Lord will have mercy on His true people and deliver them from all of their troubles and trials.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **REFLECTIONS**

Promises of comfort and hope were fulfilled to Zion after the Lord had chastened them for their idolatry and many sins. The verse

in Hebrews 12:5 comes to mind, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." When we are chastened, the enemy will be glad to tell us that God doesn't love us and that He doesn't care. However, just the opposite is true. Verse six says, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In the Lord's correction of the seven congregations in Revelation, He always held out hope, restoration, and comfort for repentance.

Verse eleven says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Let us not forget—we are the children of God and the Lord corrects us, as we also have corrected our children. The Lord has numerous means for chastening at his disposal. Affliction, financial loss, enemies, and family difficulties, to name a few. Chastening is difficult and grievous but much needed. Let us hold on with an humble spirit and endure during such times, because this is how we learn—and just around the corner is the comfort which we need.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

**NOVEMBER 18, 2018**

### **THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH FORETOLD**

Isaiah 59:20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

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

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

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the

brightness of thy rising.

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

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

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

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

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

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

20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. —Psalm 125:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Through the blood of the everlasting covenant in Christ our Redeemer, we can be cleansed from all sin and be made a glorious Church without spot before God unto which God can be glorified to bring precious souls to find refuge and salvation.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Chapter 59 of Isaiah is a description of the sinful and degraded state that mankind had sunk to. The need for an intercessor and means for salvation came up before God. There was no other one to fill this place but the "arm of the Lord," which was Jesus Christ. The last two verses of this chapter are the first part of our lesson today. It is a definite prophecy of the Savior and His gracious covenant of His Word and Spirit to be administered in the New Testament plan for redemption. The Redeemer shall come to Zion; Zion is addressed in verse 21 and in all of chapter 60, where perfect fulfillment is found in the New Testament Church.

In chapter 60 the Church is called to arise from fear, unbelief, and all other hindering causes to shine out the glory that is rising upon her through Christ, her Redeemer. With the world in such gross darkness, her light will be outstanding. Her gates are to open wide to receive the souls who are being brought to her through the workings of the Spirit.

In Christ, the brass will be replaced with pure gold. Brass is inferior to gold, but can be polished and made to resemble gold. So human talent and wisdom can be polished to look like the real thing, but in the Church of God we will have gold instead of brass. Iron will be replaced with silver, a much more precious metal, although iron can also be polished or plated to look like silver. Brass will replace wood, and iron will replace stone.

In the true Church of God, the values are corrected and the rightful riches are restored. The leaders and officers of the Church are filled with peace and righteousness. The walls are salvation and the gates are praise. It is interesting to compare this chapter with the 21st chapter of Revelation in John's description of the New Jerusalem.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. Where is the Redeemer to come, and to whom will He come?
2. What is the covenant that the Lord promised to make, according to Isaiah 59:21?



3. Why is Zion commanded to arise and shine?
4. In what kind of condition is the earth?
5. What will happen when the glory of the Lord is seen upon the Church?
6. For what or whom are her gates to open?
7. What will they call her?
8. What will her walls be called?
9. How can we let the gates of praise be opened?
10. Why will we not need the light of the sun or the moon?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Several hundred years before the Church was put in working order, the prophet Isaiah was given a clear picture of her glory. Her gates of praise, her walls of salvation, the glory of God shining down on her from heaven, and all the other beautiful aspects of her glory is brought out in our lesson. All this is possible through Christ, our Redeemer, and the virtue of His wonderful, everlasting covenant.

Let us remember that this is the married wife, and not the desolate woman, the harlot. We must not resort to human ways and means to bring in converts. Let us press close to our Husband and be filled with His glory and His precious Holy Spirit. Let us put on the Lord Jesus and receive the mind of Christ. The children will come. He will bring them to us. Unless we abide in Him we can do nothing.

Oh, how beautiful for situation is the Church! Consider how the Church has been the joy of many generations! When a soul is spiritually made alive in Christ and united with her Husband, then she lives in close communion with Him. Jesus works through the members of His body, the Church, to bring forth children and fruit. As we rejoice in Him and let our light shine through the opened gates of praise, people are going to see that there is something different about us. There is no violence, as the members of the Church love each other and pray one for another. The light of God is continually shining upon us, and we are constantly walking in that light. The days of our mourning are ended. Our souls are happy, redeemed. and free.

"Oh, blessed truth that broke our bands! in it we now rejoice,  
While in the holy Church of God we hear our Savior's voice;

And gladly to His blessed will submissive we shall be,  
And from the yokes of Babel's lords from henceforth we are free!"  
—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

Before He built it, He envisioned it. It would indeed be a glorious church, a splendid structure—the habitation of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone.

To lay the groundwork of faith, the prophets would get just a glimpse of its glory. The apostles would set the framework with the glorious gospel of Christ and those who would believe would be privileged to experience the glory of his holiness.

It would be built with lively stones fitly framed together ever increasing and rising into a holy temple. It would be perfect, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Situated at the top of Mount Zion, the perfection of its beauty would shine forth to all the world and to every generation following. It would last, not just through time, but throughout eternity as well. It would endure forever.

He knew the cost. To get the highest level of quality He would have to pay the premium price. There would be no shortcuts, no substitutes, no bargains. The only way to obtain the level of glory He intended was to demand perfection. He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and to pay the ultimate price for it.

Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

He rejects that which is defective or inferior because that is not what He paid for. He willingly paid the highest cost. He has every right to demand the highest standard.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**NOVEMBER 25, 2018**

**CHRIST'S CARE FOR THE CHURCH**

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

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

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

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

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

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

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

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

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

11 Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold,

his reward is with him, and his work before him.

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. —Isaiah 12:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Not only did Jesus shed His blood for the Church of God, but He continually guards and keeps her as His beloved bride and is, from His place at the right hand of God, sending strength and help through His ministers to edify and build her up.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 62:4 “Hephzibah”: From a Hebrew word which means, My delight is in her. “Beulah”: From a Hebrew word meaning married.

Isaiah 62:5 “So shall thy sons marry thee”: The term has been interpreted several ways: 1. “So shall thy sons possess, enjoy, or dwell in thee” (*Septuagint; Vulgate; Targum*). 2. “So shall thy builder, or restorer, marry thee” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*). 3. “The people of a country are, in their collective unity, as the bridegroom, and the country is as the bride. They are bound, as the husband is to the wife, to cherish and protect it, to be ready to live and die for it” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*). See this link for reference: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/62-5.htm> (Definition added by Angela Gellenbeck)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The first part of Isaiah 61 refers to Christ in His ministry and salvation to the souls of men in captivity and sin. As a result of His sacrifice and gracious favor to men, He said that the old waste and former desolations would be built up (verse 4); that they would be named the priests of the Lord and ministers of our God (verse 6); and that all that see them should acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed (verse 9).

For this cause, the Messiah (Jesus Christ) exults in His Father and pledges eternal care and service to His Church, to cause it to spring

forth righteousness and praise before the nations. He wants the world to be able to see His Church functioning. He wants a visible Church, clearly witnessed by the people of the earth. Christ wants the righteousness to go forth as a lamp that burns. Although Satan works hard to keep the true Church in obscurity and has been successful at times to dim its brightness, Christ is at the right hand of God to strengthen and help His saints to overcome the flood of the devil.

The watchmen upon the walls of Zion are the ministers ever preaching the Word; warning comforting, exhorting, reproving, and directing. He wants every stone of hindrance and discouragement out of the way, a highway built up for souls to clearly follow, and a standard of holiness held up for the people. Jesus has come with His reward and has faithfully executed His work. The fruit of Christ's ministry and sacrifices is a holy people, sought out from this world, and brought into the marvelous light of the gospel.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. About what is Christ rejoicing in the Lord in our lesson?
2. Where will this righteousness and praise spring forth?
3. What does Christ want the righteousness of His saints to do?
4. By whom does God want the truth to be seen?
5. Instead of being called Forsaken and Desolate, what will be our spiritual name?
6. What do the watchmen do on the walls?
7. How can we prepare the way and lift up a standard for the people?
8. What will the saints of God be called?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Besides the blessedness of having the love and fellowship of His bride, the Church, the Lord Jesus has another purpose in maintaining His Church in this world. He wants her to shine out the light of life to the world around. He wants her brightness to go forth as a lamp that burneth. She is to be a crown of glory and a royal diadem of jewels in

His hand. This can only be through our close relationship with Him, our Beloved.

The thought of the land being called Beulah has been an inspiring one to the saints. Several beautiful songs have been written on this subject. The delight and joy that we have found in Christ is truly an indispensable treasure that we cannot afford to lose.

There are many burdening things and Satan comes hard against the Church, but it is for every one of us to keep the joy of the Lord always in our souls and on display in our lives. God wants Jerusalem to be a praise in the earth. We need to enter in and go through His gates of righteousness, and be partakers of the heavenly blessings. We should "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:13).

Let us remember the words of our Lord: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). This is a great responsibility, but the key to its fulfillment lies in keeping our close communion with Christ, and letting Him work His will fully in our lives.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

The beauty of the picture painted by these scriptures is so great, it captivates the heart of the believer who is seeking for truth and holiness. But it is truly more than just a beautiful picture or ideal. It is to be a reality experienced by real men and women; not just "back then" but today, in our day. Maybe you don't think you see it just like this in reality. Is your vision dim? Have your own failures or the failures of people disillusioned you?

The answer lies in verses six and seven. An interesting meaning to the words "Ye that make mention of the Lord" quickens our understanding and brings hope and challenge: "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers." We are challenged to two things. First, we, as seekers, must continually remind the Lord of His promises,

prophecies, and provisions for Zion:

“Lord, You promised to make Zion a praise in the earth.” So we importune with God to send gospel workers and missionaries and Bible translators to all the earth. With our prayer, we offer ourselves. “Here am I, Lord, send me!”

“Father, You said that Zion’s righteousness and salvation would shine forth as a lamp that burns brightly. God, let your holiness be upon my life and in our midst, as you have foretold!” Give Him “no rest!” Keep praying until things start happening! Don’t give up. Don’t be discouraged.

Secondly, we are challenged, as watchmen, to never cease from warning, encouraging and witnessing to others. “Holy, holy, holy” is the watchword! Keep not silent! Never give up sharing, preaching, and teaching. In your home, on the job, in the prayer meeting, to the neighbors down the street, by your life and by your words, remind the world of holiness. BE the Zion who shines as a brilliant lamp that is ON FIRE!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

**DECEMBER 2, 2018**

### **THE CHURCH AS A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN**

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

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

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

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

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

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

children.

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

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

11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

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

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

14 And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. —Psalm 149:2

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The poor in spirit and those who truly fear God will be granted the blessing of being born into the Church of God to be nourished and fed with the glory, peace and comfort that God will extend abundantly.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Isaiah 66:2 “Contrite spirit”: From a Hebrew word which means smitten, referring to a heart that is broken, submissive, and humble. “Tremble”: Fearful and reverential feeling and attitude.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Our lesson today is from the final chapter in the book of the prophet Isaiah. The vision of Zion, the Church of God, that Isaiah gives us ends up in this final chapter in a blaze of spiritual triumph. In the chapter previous to this one, the prophet spoke of new heavens



and a new earth, and that God would create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy (verses 17 and 18).

The first two verses of our lesson are quoted by the faithful Stephen to the Jews in his final testimony just before he was martyred. He had brought out the fact that Israel had worshipped other gods even while they had the tabernacle of witness that God had given through Moses.

He also said that David desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob, but that Solomon built Him a house. He then quoted from Isaiah here, that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. He upbraided them for their stiffness and uncircumcised hearts and ears. They received the law, but did not keep it (Acts 7:42-53). This helps us to know that the real Zion and habitation of the Almighty God is not confined to a tent nor a temple of wood and stone. The true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man is a spiritual house.

The voice of noise from the city and the voice from the temple is the voice of Christ, tearing down the alienating forces of the old law system, and pointing people to the spiritual life that makes up true Zion, His holy Church.

Zion is then pictured as a woman great with child, ready to bring forth even before her pains come. The true Zion, the spiritual Church, was heavy laden with the seed of the gospel to be dispersed to the world. She was about to give birth to souls who were seeking for the true way. The New Testament shows what joy was in the hearts of men who responded to the call of the Lord and found access into the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of the truth.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. What did the Lord say was His throne and footstool?
2. Where is the real place of God's rest?
3. What kind of man is God looking for?
4. What will happen to all who refuse to acknowledge the true saints of God?
5. What kind of voice did the prophet hear? Whose voice was it?

6. What does Zion bring forth in, and even before, her travail?
7. Who is it that will be glad for Jerusalem and rejoice with her?
8. What does God extend to the Church, and with what measure?
9. When we are comforted in Zion, what effect will it have on our hearts and lives?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

What does it mean to be the children of Zion? We must hear, believe, and obey the gospel of Christ Jesus. We must turn from the flesh and the world, and anchor our souls in the unchanging Word of God. We must become men and women of faith, as the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

When we do believe with all of our hearts and launch out on the sea of God's love, we will find the spiritual nourishment from Zion that is promised in our lesson. If we receive a love for the truth and are willing to amend our ways from the ways of sin and the world, we will fall in love with Zion, the city of our solemnities. We will see her triumphant over all the powers of Satan, and we will rejoice with her when her victories are fulfilled in our own souls.

If our interests and concerns are toward the betterment of God's cause, then we will be able to partake of the consolations of Christ and His Church. Through the influence of the saints who are alive and yet in the world we can be comforted and blessed. Through the report of those who have long since laid their armor down and gone on to a brighter world above, we can be strengthened in the grace of God and inspired to hold on for victory. Through the sweet influence of the quiet lives of the saints we can learn the way of the Lord more perfectly. Their steady, unwavering faith will comfort and cheer us in our battles of life. We can really grow in the Lord and do things for Him.

And the peace! Oh, it is a peace that passeth all understanding. Surely we are blessed with a great privilege to be born again and be given a place in the great Church of God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

Isaiah's prophecy of the closeness of God to his people in our lesson today is a blessed reminder to us. In Isaiah 66:13 he speaks of the comfort of a mother and the Lord comforting us like that.

How wonderful it is to have a godly mother; and even more than that, it is to be a part of the beautiful church of God! She is our mother (Galatians 4:26).

The story in I Kings 3:16-28 reminds us of the love of a true mother and the love of the true church of God. All eyes were on the new king as they waited and watched how he would end the dispute with the two women who both claimed ownership to the baby. Solomon knew a true mother would have feelings for her baby and his decision to end the life of the baby brought those feelings quickly to the surface. The scripture says her bowels "yearned for her child." This was proof enough who really had the heart of the true mother.

My heart has truly hurt for families who have been separated by false religion. The demanding, narrow-minded and selfish ways of the false mother don't represent the true spirit of the church that God built. The good news is that the true church, the real mother, is loving, forbearing, and forgiving, and will go the extra mile even to the giving of her own very life to keep the baby alive. People are drawn to the heart of the true mother, and they find great comfort there.

—Bro. James Bell

**DECEMBER 9, 2018**

### **THE CHURCH OF GOD AS THE FLOCK OF GOD**

Jeremiah 50:4 In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God.

5 They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains:

they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place.

Ezekiel 34:11 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

John 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

**MEMORY VERSE:** He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. —Isaiah 40:11

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Church of God is compared to a flock of sheep; loved, cherished and cared for by Jesus Christ, the good

Shepherd, who laid down His life for the welfare and salvation of all who follow Him, and who preserves and sustains them all along the journey of life.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Jeremiah 50:5 "A perpetual covenant": Everlasting and unending promise of allegiance and faithfulness.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

From Isaiah and Ezekiel come beautiful prophecies concerning the Church of God as the flock of God, to be sought out and redeemed from their lost condition. Isaiah also said in 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way..."

However, we can turn with a weeping and repentant heart to God, seeking the way to Zion, and joining ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. We do not "join the Church," but we join ourselves to the Lord by way of being born again by the Word and Spirit of God.

God sends forth the Holy Spirit and seeks us out, drawing us unto Himself. Though we have been scattered and driven away from His blessings upon the mountains of sin in the cloudy and dark day of deception and confusion, He wants to bring us to our own land (the land of full salvation) so that we can go in through the door (Christ) and out into the spacious and rich pasture of His love.

We can lie down and not be afraid, resting in the bosom of love divine! Jesus proclaimed Himself as the good Shepherd, the door of the sheep to enter the fold of God. He has abundant spiritual life and victory for everyone. It is His blessed will and purpose to gather every soul who will believe, obey, and follow Him into the one, true Church of God. His sheep will hear His voice, and He knows them, and they will follow Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. Does anyone find God without truly seeking Him with all their heart?
2. What should be the desire of the soul who seeks the Lord?
3. In what way have we all been lost sheep?
4. Who seeks out the lost sheep?
5. In a cloudy and dark day, what causes the sheep to be scattered?
6. What kind of pasture does the Lord have for His sheep?
7. Who is the good Shepherd of the sheep?
8. In what way is Christ the door?
9. What did Christ come to give us?
10. Does Christ want His sheep to remain divided and scattered? How can they all be gathered into one?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Oh, how the devil has devised and worked to draw the souls of men away from the fold of God! By way of worldly attraction he deceives them; by way of pressure he drives them; and by way of confusion he discourages them. The result is a lost sheep wandering around in a cloudy and dark day. They are lost and do not know where they are or where they are going.

In the history of the Church there was a cloudy and dark day of about 350 years from the time of the Protestant Reformation up to the latter part of the 1800's, during which many sects and movements arose in the name of Christianity. Man-rule and human machinery infiltrated the ranks of the people, and the saints were scattered on the hills of spiritual Babylon and sectism.

But, thank God, He did not leave His people in that condition! God is calling His people away from Babel confusion, back to the fold of God on mount Zion. There the Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd and He uses men and women who are called of God to serve as under-shepherds (or pastors) to feed His flock.

In the true Church of God, pastors are not big bosses or overlords who love preeminence and the praise of men. The true ministers of God are servants of God and humble servants to the people. They seek to serve through the ministry of the Word and prayer. Over all is

Christ Jesus, the chief Shepherd. The flock is His. How sweet to be one of His own!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

One of my favorite works of music is George Frideric Handel's Messiah, an oratorio that depicts in musical form excerpts from Scripture pertaining to Jesus' birth, passion, resurrection, and eternal triumph as King of kings and Lord of lords. In the duet toward the end of the work's first part, I have often found comfort in the soothing tones of the alto singing "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," words that evoke such a sense of safety and security in One who cares so lovingly for His people! I have also considered how fitting it is that the great composer paired that Old Testament promise with the words sung by the soprano, "Come unto me all ye that labor, and I will give you rest," words spoken by Jesus, who is the fulfillment of Isaiah's inspired prophecy as our Good Shepherd.

Shepherds are generally found in very remote and sometimes dangerous locations—places that aren't conducive to the comforts and niceties of more advanced civilization, sacrificing their desires and needs for the safety and well-being of the flock. Similarly, God's own Son was willing to leave the splendor of Heaven and condescend to humble earth, to walk among His own creation, to rescue those that are lost, and to give His life so that His sheep might live. No hireling would do this; only our dear Shepherd!

It should be understood, however, that once we are in His fold, there is no need to wander off as wayward sheep often do. Everything we need for our protection, our health, our needs, is right here in the fold of God. The verse found in Psalm 100:3 states, "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

What a comfort it is to be cared for by such a kind and loving Shepherd!

—Bro. Fari Matthews

**DECEMBER 16, 2018**

**MARY CHOSEN AS THE MOTHER OF CHRIST**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

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

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

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



**MEMORY VERSE:** Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. —Matthew 1:23

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God Almighty chose a lowly maiden of Nazareth in Galilee, who was a pure virgin, to be the mother who would bring forth the Savior into the world to save us from our sins.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Matthew 1:18 “Espoused”: Promised, pledged, betrothed, engaged. It was a sacred and solemn time prior to marriage.

Matthew 1:19 “Make her a publick example”: Expose to infamy or disgrace; put to open shame. “Privily”: Secretly.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND AND APPLICATION**

Today's lesson is the first of a three-part series concerning the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the founder of the Church of God. In Luke's account we find that the angel Gabriel had announced to Zacharias that he and his wife, Elisabeth, despite their advanced ages, were to be the parents of a son whose name was to be called John. Elisabeth was a cousin to Mary. Mary paid a visit to her cousin very soon after she was informed by the angel Gabriel that she was to be the mother of Jesus. Elisabeth was already six months with child, and when Mary greeted Elisabeth upon her arrival at her house, the baby in Elisabeth's womb leaped for joy! How the two mothers-to-be rejoiced together!

Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, and they had not begun living together as man and wife. How sad that our society has lost sight of the sanctity of marriage! There is very little "waiting" until the marriage is completed. God is very highly grieved at the loose morals and the offence that mankind heaps upon His gracious plan.

As our lesson reveals, the truth of Mary being with child was a serious scandal in their society. That is why Joseph wanted to dissolve his engagement with Mary secretly. He did not want her to suffer the insults of the public. Think of the emotional strain that was upon both Mary and Joseph. After he was enlightened by God as to

what was really going on, Joseph went ahead and married Mary, no doubt rejoicing in what the Lord was bringing to pass.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. What kind of people were Mary and Joseph?
2. Why did Mary's being with child present a problem?
3. What was Mary's first response to the salutation of the angel Gabriel?
4. What did the angel tell her was going to happen?
5. What was Joseph's first reaction to Mary's news?
6. What did the Lord show him to do?
7. What was to be the name of Mary's son?
8. What was He to do for His people?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Just a lowly young girl was Mary of Nazareth when God chose her to be the vessel to bring forth the Saviour into the world. There were probably many young women in Galilee, but Mary was highly favored. The Lord was with her. This means that she was serving God and God was accepting her. We do not know the background of Mary, but we are sure that she was devoted to the worship of God.

God waited until after she was betrothed to be married before He sent the angel to announce His wonderful intentions to Mary. It had to be clear to Mary and Joseph that the child she was carrying was a divine miracle from God. The truth of the virgin birth of Christ is one of the cornerstones of our faith. If Christ was not born of a virgin, then our faith is vain. The prophet Isaiah had prophesied, as quoted in our memory verse, that a virgin, an unmarried woman, would conceive and bring forth a son (Isaiah 7:14).

For a brief period of time Mary was in danger of being branded a fornicator and a wicked person. Oh, it was a disgrace to be with child and at the same time unmarried! Joseph was, no doubt, greatly disappointed and grieved about this matter when he was informed that Mary was with child. He loved Mary and had looked forward to taking her to himself for a wife, but now it looked as if the whole thing was to be called off, and Mary would be disgraced. He did not

want to have any part with the affair. As he was contemplating a secret annulment of the engagement, the Lord stepped in and made known what His plan was. Joseph did as the angel had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn son.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

Oh, Wonder of Wonders

The Wonder of Wonders, as she looked on his face,  
That this little boy spoke the worlds in their place;  
The stars and the moon shining brightly on them,  
The earth and the sun were created by Him.

The Wonder of Wonders, as she heard his small cry  
That this voice had thundered on Mount Sinai;  
The hand that she held so tenderly,  
Had made a dry path thru the mighty Red Sea.

The Wonder of Wonders, as she looked down and smiled,  
That He was her Maker as well as her child;  
He created the Womb that had given him birth,  
He was God incarnate come down to earth.

The Wonder of Wonders, as a Father looked on,  
In Eternity past, this was His Son.  
Had sent Him to die on Calvary's tree,  
And that is the Wonder of Wonders to me.

The Wonder of Wonders, Oh how could it be,  
That God became flesh and was given for me.  
The Almighty came down and walked among men,  
The Wonder of Wonders, He died for my sin.

—Charles B. Wycuff

—Bro. Bob Wilson

**DECEMBER 23, 2018**

**UNTO US A SAVIOUR IS BORN**

Luke 2:4 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.

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

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Amid the hardship and poverty of this earth the Savior of mankind was born, a tiny infant, causing rejoicing in heaven, bringing glory to God, and offering peace and good will toward men.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Luke 2:5 “Taxed”: enrolled; an assessment or census.

Luke 2:12 “Swaddling clothes”: strips of cloth.

Luke 2:19 “Pondered”: to weigh, consider, study, or meditate upon.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Joseph had taken Mary to be his wife. Mary was with child, and they both knew that this child was conceived of the Holy Spirit. There at Nazareth Joseph and Mary carried on the routine of life day by day. No doubt Mary pondered much over the recent events that had so changed their lives. She was not just a woman expecting her firstborn child, but she was fully aware that this child was a special child. Had not the angel said that He was to sit upon the throne of David, rule over the house of Jacob forever, and that His name was to be Jesus, and of His kingdom there would be no end? What did all of this mean? She remembered vividly the angel's visit and what was told her.

Joseph was also filled with weighty and serious thoughts as he remembered the angel of the Lord speaking to him concerning the child, quoting the prophetic Scripture about a virgin bringing forth a son.

Toward the final weeks of her time, there came a great

announcement of a decree from the ruler of the world, Augustus Caesar. Everyone in the Roman Empire was to be registered, and to do this, everyone must go to his native city. The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem was probably approximately seventy miles. That was a long, dangerous, and hard trip to make for an expectant mother. There were no fine cars or buses in those days. On foot or on a beast of burden the journey had to be made. There were no fine hotel suites awaiting the weary travelers, either. Because of the many others who had to come to the city of Bethlehem, there was no room in the inn. No doubt they felt themselves fortunate to be afforded shelter in the stable. There our blessed Redeemer was born.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Why did Joseph and Mary have to go to Bethlehem?
2. Why did God permit the hardship of the stable and the swaddling clothes?
3. Why did the birth of Jesus bring such rejoicing among the angels?
4. What does "peace, good will toward men" mean to you?
5. What joy was brought to us when Christ was born?
6. Where does Christ want to be born today?
7. Why do so many not have room for Christ in their hearts?
8. What kind of souls give Christ welcome?
9. What kind of effect does the birth of Christ have upon a redeemed soul?
10. What did Mary do with all of these things that had happened?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Christ must be given room. He will not force or push His way into any heart. He knocks, but in order to enter, the door must be opened of one's own free will. Christ could be born a thousand times as He was in Bethlehem, but if He is not born in our hearts, He does not profit us. He wants to live in our hearts. He wants to have His way in us, but we must offer it to Him willingly. Christ will not enter and be

born in the proud and scornful heart. The proud and scornful are empty and void of the grace of God. Jesus is hidden from their comprehension.

God passed over the high and lofty hearts and made known the coming of His Son to the lowly shepherds out on the hillside at night. Christ was not to be distinguished by special marks of worldly favor or prosperity. God chose to have Him born in a stable and laid in a manger, wrapped in the poverty rags of swaddling clothes. This was to identify Him.

What is the identification of the children of God today? It is not the worldly marks of covetousness and pride. It is the poverty of spirit, and the manner of conduct, dress, and conversation that marks a true Christian. If you were sent to pick up one of the children of God whom you had never seen or met before who was coming in on the bus or plane, would it be very hard to pick them out? What would you look for? You would look for a plain and modestly dressed individual, would you not? In the midst of the worldly crowd they would not be hard to distinguish. The manger and the swaddling clothes were the identification marks of the infant Jesus. Because of that, the Savior was found of the shepherds. Let us open our hearts to the Lord Jesus and make room for Him, being willing to bear His marks of identification.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

There is an expectation in society that we bear the responsibility for any child born to us, and rightfully so. It is our duty to love that child, care for and nurture it to full maturity.

Throughout the years there have been many men and women of renown; and all have entered this world as innocent children who had to be cared for as they developed into greatness. But none were so great as our Lord. It remains a marvel and a mystery that God entrusted the care of the Creator to the created.

Christ the Savior was born. He was not introduced into this world as a fully functioning adult but as a babe born in a manger—a child that required care and nurturing. He was our Savior from His birth, though the world failed to recognize His greatness.

God, by his Spirit, plants the seed of the gospel in all of mankind

and for those of us who embrace it, Christ is born in our hearts. God entrusts to our care the most precious thing ever known to man—His only begotten Son. And from this point we become responsible. It is now our duty to see that this Christ-child reaches adulthood.

As it is with the natural process, so it is with the spiritual. His life in us flourishes and thrives if we take diligent care. It languishes and dies if we do not. There are grave and eternal consequences if we fail and there are blessings beyond our comprehension when we succeed. The choice is ever before us. Will we allow Him to live and grow in our hearts or will we, like others, crucify Him somewhere along the way?

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**DECEMBER 30, 2018**

**WISE MEN STILL SEEK THE KING OF GLORY**

Matthew 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the



star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. —Isaiah 55:7

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** In seeking to find God, we must beware of hindrances and misleadings of people and the devices of Satan, which are intent upon keeping us from finding Him.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

There was probably a lapse of time between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the wise men from the east. In that period of time, according to Luke's account, they had taken the infant Jesus to Jerusalem to be consecrated to the Lord, as all firstborn males were. They had returned to Bethlehem, and, for some reason, had tarried there longer than probably they had expected.

In the meantime, far to the east (probably in the land of Persia) some astrologers, while studying the heavens, were excited to

behold a new and wondrous star. There are many fanciful and exciting tales that could be imagined about these men. It is generally supposed that there were three; however, the Scripture does not give a number. It does not say that the star led them to Jerusalem. It was revealed to them by the appearance of the star that the King of the Jews had been born, so they no doubt supposed that in Jerusalem they would find Him since Jerusalem was the capital of Israel.

Great was their surprise when they saw that their tidings were troubling the city and the ruler, King Herod. They were probably very unaware of Herod's inner feelings which were full of anger and resentment at the thought of another King. Innocently they took the king's advice and turned their way toward Bethlehem to continue their search for the infant. It was then that they saw the star again, this time going before them and guiding them to the very spot where the young child was. They fell down and worshipped Him, giving Him gifts from their treasures.

So ought we to recognize the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and bow down before Him in worship and homage today! Let us open the treasures of our hearts: our love, affection, devotion, servitude, and honor.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. Why did the wise men come to Jerusalem?
2. What was their real purpose on their journey?
3. Why should we worship and serve the King of kings, and Lord of lords?
4. In what treasures of our hearts would this great King be interested?
5. Why was the small city of Bethlehem not the least among the princes of Judah?
6. Why did Herod want to locate the child?
7. How did the wise men feel when they saw the star going before them to Bethlehem?
8. What power would seek to destroy Jesus out of our lives today, and how can we keep this from happening?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The men from the east came a long way to pay homage and worship to Him who was to be the King of glory. The queen of Sheba came a long distance to behold the wisdom of Solomon. "...Behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). People today need to be enlightened to the great importance, value, and worth of Jesus Christ who came from glory to the manger. When they hear the gospel and the story of Jesus, men and women need to go to seeking to find this One who is so wonderful and great!

But, sad to say, there are so many indifferent and disinterested people in the world. Jesus spoke about the men of His generation being like children sitting in the marketplace, not responding to any kind of suggestion for sport that their fellows offered. It did not matter what was suggested, they did not want to go along with it; like small children when they are cross and irritable. Nothing appeases or satisfies them.

God knows that people are prone to be that way. He has brought forth His Son in such a way that will appeal to the open-minded and honest of heart, but there will always be those who will have closed hearts and minds to the message from heaven.

Wise people still seek the King of kings and Lord of lords. They come from afar—from the deep and dark pits of sin and ignorance. They recognize the great power and benefit that Christ affords. How thankful we are that we responded to the gospel call and began to pray and seek the Lord! Surely we have found Him precious and dear to our souls and He is becoming more dear every day. We give Him our all, opening our hearts to His love and giving our best to the Master.

The light of the gospel is that star divine today, guiding us away from the vanities of this present world to the blessed reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and His wonderful grace.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

## REFLECTIONS

People around the world have always been fascinated with royalty, and that is still true today, even in our modern cultures. Here in the 21st century, many nations are no longer ruled by kings or queens. Yet in America, for instance, the tabloids are full of gossip and rumors regarding various royal families, and tickets to exclusive royal events in other nations are cherished by celebrities the world over. I have even heard of people who are willing to part with huge sums of money and travel halfway around the world just to be on the outskirts of some big royal event, even though they aren't invited guests, all to catch a glimpse of some king, queen, prince, or princess that lasts for just a few seconds. Imagine if all that energy to rub shoulders with the "somebodies" of the world was instead expended in coming to know, and then bowing to worship, the King of kings!

I am impressed by the diligence with which the wise men looked for this "King of the Jews." Perhaps they had access to the prophecies in scripture, such as those in Daniel, which spoke to the arising of this kingdom. Whether they were intentionally seeking for this King or not, when God revealed to them a new star that would lead them to the Daystar, they were willing to go to great lengths to find and worship Him, and bestow Him with as much of their treasure as they could carry.

The good news is those in today's world that are still willing to seek the King of Glory will still find Him! And the even better news is as we present ourselves—our hearts, our bodies, our all—to Him, He bestows on us the power to reign as kings and priests with Him! As we enter a new year, may we continue to seek Him, and in doing so continue to reign with Him. After all, what attraction is there to earthly royalty when we ourselves are chosen royalty of the Kingdom of Heaven!

—Bro. Fari Matthews







