

Bible Lessons



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

—Psalm 48:2

Volume 56, No. 1
January • February • March
2024

Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 56

January • February • March

No. 1

Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Jan 7	The Gospel Day.....	1
Jan 14	Resurrected to a Continual Reign.....	6
Jan 21	Prophecy of a King Fulfilled	10
Jan 28	Christ, the Foundation of the Church	14
Feb 4	The Name of the Church	19
Feb 11	Entrance Into the Church	25
Feb 18	Restitution.....	30
Feb 25	Spirit-Filled Church	34
Mar 3	Gifts and Callings	40
Mar 10	Unity of Believers	45
Mar 17	Guide for Believers	50
Mar 24	Purpose and Meaning of Christian Baptism	53
Mar 31	Observing the Ordinances	59

*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.
In this issue, Reflections are contributed by: L. Busbee and M. Miles*

NOTICE

The Bible Lessons are published by CHURCH OF GOD TODAY
Phone: (859) 319-9721. (Please leave text or voice message.)
Lessons are available free of charge online at
<www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/bible-lessons/>
and can be downloaded for printing in booklet or other format.

If you would like printed copies mailed to you, please contact
Bro. Kevin Sorrell, 5722 S Sooner Rd, Guthrie, OK 73044

Phone (405)-414-8646

THEME FOR SECOND QUARTER

Due to circumstances, we felt a need to publish a re-run of past lessons. After looking at several past Sunday School quarterlies, this particular series of lessons stood out. Revisions to accommodate for space and our current format were made. I trust these lessons are a blessing and a reminder that Bible teaching presented fifty years ago is still true today! We are working on the second quarterly for next year and look forward to sharing that with you next April.

—Bro. Clifford Cole

THE CHURCH

Our lessons this quarter [*2nd quarter, 1974*] will be mainly on the church. Our first lesson begins with the fact that it was in prophecy in the Old Testament that a new time was dawning and that would be the gospel day. In that day Jesus was to come and establish His church and the Holy Spirit would fill it. It would be a time when the Gentiles also would see the light and flow into it with the believing Jews.

In A.D. 32 Christ said, "I will build my church." We also know that in A.D. 59 and some years afterward the apostles said, "Ye are God's building" and are "...built up a spiritual house." Of course, we know that John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples labored and many believed. They were the material gathered together for the Holy Spirit to fill on the day of Pentecost which set the church in operation.

Christ is the door of the church and no man can shut that door. The experience of salvation is the mode of induction into the church. God places the members in the church as it pleases Him. Some of the church members have gone on to heaven and others are here on earth waiting for that time when they will be called to leave this world. One of these days this world will pass away, and Jesus will deliver up the kingdom to the Father.

—Sis. Marie Miles

JANUARY 7, 2024
THE GOSPEL DAY

Isaiah 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isaiah 26:1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Zechariah 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

MEMORY VERSE: And in that day there shall be root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. —Isaiah 11:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We are now living in the gospel day and have the privilege to see fulfilled in our lives the glorious blessings prophesied by holy men of old.

WORD DEFINITION

Isaiah 11:10 Ensign: a flag, banner, or signal.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Peter tells us that the prophets inquired and searched diligently what the Spirit did signify "when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11). In our lesson we note the expression "in that day" and behold the glory that was to be upon God's people because of the sufferings of Christ. The prophet was looking for a better day that would mean the fulfillment of all of God's holy will. No doubt he had many sorrows and disappointments due to the age he lived in, but the Holy Spirit inspired his heart and moved him to foretell wonderful things to come in that future day, which to us now in New Testament salvation is a reality and an up-to-date experience.

DISCUSSION:

1. How was God's anger to be turned away?
2. What does it mean to draw water out of the wells of salvation?
3. The prophet said that it would be said, "this is our God," and "this is the Lord." Of whom was this to be spoken?
4. Who will be kept in perfect peace and why?
5. How can we be scripturally sure that these prophecies were fulfilled in the New Testament?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The prophet in our lesson foresees, by the Spirit, a great day. We must be persuaded by the Word of God that this great day dawned with the advent of Christ and the accomplishing of His work of grace in the earth. You will notice that our memory verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 15:12, and the text in Isaiah 52:7 is quoted in

Romans 10:15. It is a darkened heart indeed and unenlightened by the Holy Spirit that cannot behold these glorious truths fulfilled now in the fulness of God's grace and salvation.

I remember my visit to Crater Lake in Oregon one year. In the tops of the mountains was a most beautiful lake and a resort that attracted the interest and pleasure of many people every year; but that very place is declared to have once been an active volcano, a scene of terror and death, spewing with fire and molten rock that meant destruction to whomever came near. But once upon a time the volcano blew itself out and its gaping hole was filled with cool water that is bluer than the sky itself. This is a perfect likeness of God. Before Christ came and trod the winepress of the wrath of God to appease His holy displeasure with sinful man, God was too awful and fearful to approach. His anger would not permit man to approach into His awful presence. But now in Christ His anger is turned away, and we see Him as the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

Christ has come and swallowed up death in victory for us. We, too, shall stand one day in His resurrected likeness, and it will be brought to pass concerning us the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." We can and will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

Now is this song sung in our hearts. We do have a strong city with the walls of salvation shielding us from the onslaughts of the enemy. We are kept in perfect peace for our mind is stayed on Him, and we find in the Lord His unfailing strength.

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

How wonderful that we have found that precious fountain of cleansing for the soul! The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. The greatest message ever taken to men is proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What an honor and high calling to have a part in publishing the good news! What joy it is to our hearts to know that God reigns over all! We who have received this glorious vision do lift up our voices together and sing and proclaim the fulness of His grace, and we who are thus enlightened and anointed see eye-to-eye and are united in heart, soul, and mind.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Man was driven from the garden of Eden. He had been created in holiness and happiness, but sin entered his heart. Cherubims and a flaming sword prevented his return to the garden, a sad scene to behold. In sorrow he had to earn his support by labor. The ground was cursed for his sake. In sorrow he must eat of it all the days of his life. God looked down upon man's wretchedness and saw that his "wickedness was great in the earth" and "it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 3, also chapter 6:5-6). In man's sinful state he cried unto the Lord. God had mercy and promised him a Saviour to deliver him from his wretched state.

To the prophets of Israel, men who walked close to God, was given a vision in those prophetic days of the glorious dawning of a great day when man would be freed from the prison house of sin. Even in the vision they saw what would come to pass, and it caused them to break forth with gladness. The prophet Isaiah said, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. 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. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-2). When the prophet said that the Gentiles shall come to the light, then we know when that great day came to pass. We are in that great day. It came when Jesus was born and brought salvation, which means deliverance from sin to the people. Simeon, who was a devout man, looking for that great day to come, took the baby Jesus in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:25-32). He saw the dawning of a day of the fulfillment of all the prophetic wonders of salvation. We are living in that gospel day. Today is the day of salvation. Today we can have forgiveness of sins and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Today, let us rejoice and be glad for we can be purified and made holy by the cleansing Spirit of God. We are not looking for another day to come upon this world wherein we can have peace, because we can have it in our hearts today. Today we can, with joy, draw water out of the wells of salvation and say, "Praise the Lord"!

—M. Miles

JANUARY 14, 2024
RESURRECTED TO A CONTINUAL REIGN

Acts 2:29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Ephesians 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

MEMORY VERSE: In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. —1 Corinthians 15:52

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The prophecy of Christ to sit upon David's throne henceforth even forever "would have been nullified; but as

His body did not see corruption, He therefore continues to reign upon the throne of David!" (*The Kingdom of God*)

WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 2:29 **David** is called patriarch, as the founder of the royal family. He was buried on Mount Zion where most of the kings of Judah were buried (1 Kings 2:10); the tomb is still there today.

Acts 2:34 **The Lord said unto my Lord:** Thus distinguishing between himself and his Lord, who could be no other than the Messiah.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first part of our lesson in Acts is Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the church that gathered in the upper room. People from about seventeen nations heard the gospel story in their own language or tongue; this took place fifty days after Jesus arose from the grave and had ascended to heaven.

Verses in Ephesians were written in 61 A.D. by the Apostle Paul. He wanted the Gentiles to see the glory of Christ and partake of the blessings brought to them through His death, resurrection, and ascension.

The scriptures in Acts that speak about David's throne bring to our minds the prophecy fulfilled in Psalm 132:11, "The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." We then read in 2 Samuel 7:16 where the prophet Nathan speaks to David about the continuation of his kingdom, saying, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. Some false prophets admit that Christ is Lord, but deny that He is now a king and sitting upon David's throne. Yet, we declare by the Word of God that He is now King, and that the New Testament is the law He has given to His church, which is composed of the subjects in His spiritual kingdom on earth.

—M. Miles

DISCUSSION:

1. What day of the week did Jesus arise from the grave?
2. Is Jesus a king; and upon whose throne is He reigning today? Who is His body today?
3. What kind of power will be "wrought" in "us-ward who believe"?
4. Where is Jesus reigning today and
5. When will Jesus come for His kingdom, and what will happen at that time?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The resurrection and exaltation of Christ, His name, origin, His throne and reign are all connected and must be in one dispensation—that is the present one. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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" (Luke 1: 31-32). These words were spoken to Mary by the angel, telling her of the birth of Jesus, etc. We do not have two dispensations presented here, but only one. In Amos 9:11-12 we read of the prophecy of David's throne. This same scripture is quoted by the Apostle James in Acts 15:15-17 where he rejoices to see the Gentiles chosen as a people for His name, in this dispensation. (Isaiah 16:5 says that the throne and tabernacle of David are identical.) Christ is now sitting upon David's throne in this dispensation. Christ is our king (Jer 80:9; Heb 4:7; Matt 21:1-9; John 18:36, 87). Christ acknowledged Himself as a king. He has a kingdom and His servants are His subjects. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. We are translated into the kingdom of His dear son (Col 1:13; Rom 14:17). His kingdom is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. After He reigns until He puts all enemies under His feet, the last enemy being death, then the end will come. Jesus will then deliver up the kingdom of God to the Father (1 Cor 15:22-24). Some false prophets teach that He will begin His reign just at the time when He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. But we know Christ is reigning now as king and over us, His children in this dispensation.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The power that God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead was generated for a divine and eternal purpose. It is to be used specifically for redeeming mankind from the fallen state of sin unto a new life of righteousness and victory over sin and death. In the world there are many different kinds of power, all of which are produced for special purposes; most of the power is produced or generated. The power of an endless life was produced and generated in the operation of God when He raised Christ from the dead. This great power works a force of holy living in the hearts and lives of all who turn from sin and its unholy ways and seek the heavenly way.

We must be aware of how exceeding great this power is. Its potential reaches to the uttermost and does a perfect work. It is the power of an endless life, a resurrected life. Man was enslaved in the chains of spiritual death, separated from God because of the error of his way. Sin and transgression held full control of his heart and mind. He was condemned and lost before a righteous decree of the judgment of God. A power was needed to restore man to his rightful place again. An energy or force enough to quicken the soul of man was required to enable him to live and serve God once again. And the only power that could accomplish all of this was found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. When Christ for sinners and the lost of the world became the sacrifice for their transgressions and sins, God was willing to look away from the guilt of man and to forgive him of all his offences. The suffering and death of Christ was sufficient to atone for all of God's grievances with His creation; it put the Son of God in a position for God Himself to exert the greatest power ever known in this world, the power of the resurrection, the power of an endless life.

How unaware Christ's followers were of what was taking place when they saw their Lord nailed to the tree! To them, all was lost. Each one of them went his way, disappointed and defeated. Their Master was laid away in the tomb with a guard of soldiers to see that He stayed there. Their weary and sad hearts were filled with despair and dread as they huddled behind closed doors for fear of the Jews.

But on that glorious morn of the first day of the week, the tomb was found empty. Christ was seen near Emmaus and in various other places, revealing Himself that He was alive. And they that saw Him

knew that He was the Son of God. The truth of this wonderful gospel inspires and warms the seeking soul now just as it did then; for the Spirit of truth accompanies it and makes the heart to know Him as the risen King of kings and Lord of lords. Yes, the power of His resurrection is still being exerted, and all who seek Him with the whole heart in response to the gospel can be saved forevermore.

—L. Busbee

JANUARY 21, 2024
PROPHECY OF A KING FULFILLED

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

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

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

10b And he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

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

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

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

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

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

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,
7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their
clothes, and they set him thereon.

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

Mark 11:9 And they that went before, and they that followed,
cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the
Lord:

10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in
the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We do not yet still look for Jesus Christ as
the Messiah and king, because He has already come. The
government is upon His shoulder. He is our king, reigning upon the
throne of David today.

WORD DEFINITION

Mark 11:9 **Hosanna:** Hebrew word signifying, “Save I beseech you.”
It is a form of acclamation, of blessing, or wishing one well.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God had commanded the kings of Israel not to multiply horses.
The kings who broke this command were miserable themselves and
scourgers to their people. Jesus came to fulfill the law. Had He, in His
title of King, ridden upon a horse, it would have been a breach of a
positive command of God; therefore, He rode upon donkey and thus
fulfilled the prophecy, keeping the precept unbroken. Judah had not
had a king since Zedekiah, and the prophecy of a king was now
fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (*See Clarke’s Commentary*) Only Jesus can
save from sin, satan, death, and hell. He is the righteous One and the
fountain of righteousness. Praise God for our king, Jesus Christ, who
is reigning on His throne today.

The prophecy of Zechariah of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on an donkey was written 587 years before Christ. It is a glorious fact that what God had said would come to pass did come to pass in His time. He told us precisely when our king would come and set up a kingdom, a prophecy which was fulfilled just as God said. We are not looking for Him to come and do it all over again as some believe.

—M. Miles

DISCUSSION:

1. What did Isaiah tell us Jesus would do when He was born?
2. What did Zechariah prophesy would come to pass during the time Jesus was here on earth?
3. Will we look for Jesus to come as king and fulfill Zechariah's prophecy during a thousand-year reign?
4. When was Zechariah's prophecy fulfilled? Does Matthew tell us when Jesus was made king?
5. What does Mark tell us in our lesson?
6. Discuss the memory verse.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Behold, Thy King cometh unto thee!" What a wonderful declaration to mankind. Oh, that men and women would behold Him, would but come and see! To behold Him as He really is in His grace and power will cause the heart to greatly rejoice. For we see Him "not in wrath or in terrors, but gentle as when in love and in meekness He moved among men. And the voice of His love is the same even now as at Bethany's tomb, or on Olivet's brow." We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor. We behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! And as Pilate declared: "Behold, the man!"

Thy king cometh! The Kingdom of God is near at hand. The Royal Majesty of the Heavens has approached. Our souls are blessed as we yield to His divine purpose and bow before His great majestic presence. As they of old spread their garments in the way and sang, "Hosanna in. the highest," so we prepare room for Him in our hearts,

believing and trusting in Him as our King. The blessed Son of God who holds the highest place of honor and reward of God-approaches and bids you come to Him, and He will give you rest. He is the King of Glory, declared in the 24th Psalm as the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty in battle. Behold the nail prints in His hands and feet and the scars of the thorn-crown. Hear Him speak, "I am he that liveth and was dead; behold I am alive forever more.

It is a wonderful theme, this truth concerning the King. Songs have been written, sermons have been preached, books have been published, and yet the half has not been told. We who believe in Him and have Him revealed to our hearts rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We are yearning for the day of His appearing. But even now He is dear to our hearts and we ever seek His favor. We want to walk in His blessed steps who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. In our hearts we crown Him King of our lives now, and look to His wisdom to guide us in this world. We want to be as the humble donkey and bear him forth to the world. Slow, sure-footed, and seemingly stubborn (to the world because we do not go along with them in their folly), we are happy to be chosen and blessed in Him. He is our king, the righteous Saviour, and He has spoken peace to our souls.

—L. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Much has been said and needs to be said about home religion. Religion in the home is an essential part of Christianity, and yet there is no part of practical religion so woefully disregarded. Family prayer and grace at meals are rare, even among those who are in church work. Is it not true that in few homes heads are bowed and thanks given at meals, and fewer still where the family gathers at morn or eve to hear the father read God's Word or lead in prayer?

No doubt the chief reason for family quarrels, wandering children, divorces, and domestic trouble in general is that there is so little practical religion in the home. The early Christians show us beautiful examples of home religion. The apostle wrote of "the church which is in thine house. "The relationship between parents and children grows pure and dear when they all bow together and

ask the peace of God to rest on their home. You may have come from a home where a family altar was maintained, and such homes were not uncommon years back. Remember how as a little child you often had to sit through a long reading in the morning when you were anxious to get out and play; or in the evening when your eyelids grew heavy, and often you did actually fall asleep regardless of the promptings of an affectionate, watchful parent?

The influence of a Christian home spreads throughout the whole community. The home itself is happier and more cheerful. These blessings radiate to others and bring sunshine into their lives. May the family altar be reinstated or established, as the case may be, so that the full measure of joy which the Savior has intended for us may be realized.

—Selected

JANUARY 28, 2024
CHRIST, THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

Matthew 16:16 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 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.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

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

—Isaiah 28:16

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Christ, in His power to save the soul, is made the foundation of the Church, which is His body and is a Rock for all men to build their experience with God upon.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 16:16 **Simon Bar-Jona:** Simon, son of Jona; this was his father's name.

1 Peter 2:6 **Elect:** Chosen or choice.

Colossians 1:12 **Meet:** Worthy, or answering to.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God is calling and seeking the souls of men and women from the world to come and be joined unto Him in a perpetual covenant. This gathering of holy people is to be to Him a special, precious treasure.

So many times in the prophecies we read of the foretelling of the building and operation of His Church. He does not dwell in temples made with hands, but rather He seeks habitation within the heart of man. He designs to fill man with His glory and lead him triumphantly in the way of peace all his mortal days and also to receive him in glory some blessed day. Such a structure will endure the fleeting ages of time and the endless age of eternity. He must lay a foundation that was choice and sure according to His pleasure. We see Him accomplishing this great cause, a habitation that will endure forever.

DISCUSSION:

1. According to Matthew 16:16-18, what would you say the rock was that He was to build His church upon?
2. What kind of stones are built up a spiritual house?
3. What is it that the disobedient stumble at?
4. How are we forgiven of our sins?
5. What is Jesus to have in all things?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus had just asked the disciples whom that men said that He was, and it was answered that the opinions of men to His identity were greatly mixed up. But to His question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter responded emphatically: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Jesus made it clear then that He had received this only from above by revelation of the Father. "Upon this rock," Jesus said, "I will build my church." And so it is even now. Christ's church yet stands triumphant upon the rock of His own power and grace to save and deliver from sin and reveal His glory to the soul of men. A revelation of Christ to the humble heart becomes a solid rock beneath one's feet in this world of sin and strife.

In coming to Him, we must remember that He is a living stone. He is not a dead, cold fact stranded on the shores of the oblivious years. He is ever living, a present reality; But in so being, He becomes a stumbling block, as well as a rock upon which to build. What is it that people stumble at in Christ? It is His commandments, His Word, and His doctrine.

If there were no standard to conform to, no cross to bear, no yoke to put on, no discipline to be engaged, I guess about everyone who hears of Him would accept His free grace readily. But, no, there is some submission and humbling down to be done, which not very many souls are willing to do. What is He going to be to us? Will He be a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, or a foundation upon which to build our lives?

If and after we humble our hearts and receive the blessing of His love, we are enraptured with great joy. We praise God for His wonderful deliverance from sin and its seductive snares. We flee the kingdom of darkness and find a transforming power to open up a place for us in the kingdom of God's beloved Son. For this we always give thanks and praise.

We recognize that His body is His Church in this world. We see Him in full authority and control, the leading King that goes before us and helps us win the battle for His sake. Praise the Lord for His wonderful grace and power.

-L. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

When Jesus began to preach repentance to the people and many began to believe and entered into the kingdom, then they constituted material for the church. They gathered together on the day of Pentecost and were filled with the Holy Spirit, thus the church was set in motion, and was fully organized.

The apostles are foundation stones, and of course Peter was one of them. If we were held to apply that the "rock" in Matthew 16:18 meant Peter, that still would not conflict with the scriptures since he was one of the apostles. But we know that Jesus was speaking to Peter, and his name was Cephas which means a stone. In Revelation 21:14, we read about the twelve being the foundation. But Christ is the "chief corner stone" and the all-underlying foundation. We know that the apostles were chosen to give to us the teachings that Jesus gave to them through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thus they were a connection between Christ the Rock and the rest of the building. Each one that is "born again and comes into the church through the door, which is Christ, becomes a lively stone in the building. What does he mean by lively stones? Have we not been quickened and made alive after being dead in trespasses and sins?

Surely, we then are lively stones and are busy for the Lord. We have been given the gospel message and have been sent forth to tell others about Jesus' great love. We have our hearts filled with praises and thanksgiving to the Lord. We have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. What a glorious position each one has in the building of God. Let us be humble and let Jesus shine our through our lives by carefully obeying His words, thus making attractive the ways of the Lord.

—M. Miles

DOME ROCK

While spending my second summer in Palmer Lake, Colorado, I decided to hike to Dome Rock, but instead of going the usual way, which had been traversed so successfully many times before, I had an impulse to try reaching it from behind.

This formation is of solid stone and seems to look disdainfully down from a height of about 280 feet on the miniature trees as they try in vain to rear their heads above it. While below, the trees do look majestic as they wave softly in the breeze above our heads, and their shade is cool and inviting. However, after climbing the path, which is well worn and leads us quickly and surely to the top, but which is very treacherous if we sidestep, how insignificant those trees look. One no longer sees cool shade, but a tangled web.

I had been warned that I might not reach the top that way, but I wished to reach the goal by following my own path. The one I took was very good at first—wide enough for a firm foothold, and very little slant to it, and was well marked. However, as I pushed farther up the mountain, it became narrow, crooked, and in many places entirely lost in tangled masses of vines. Slippery pine needles made a safe footing nearly impossible. As I toiled up the path, it became so steep it was necessary to climb at an angle which was practically at right angles to the base of the mountain.

About noon, overcome with weariness, I at last saw large boulders ahead of me, and directly behind them Dome Rock towered. After resting for several minutes, I scrambled over the boulders, eager to begin the last lap of my hike—that of climbing the remaining 280 feet to my goal. Stark terror gripped me as, looking over the last rock to find a good stepping place, I saw a sheer drop of

several hundred feet. Across the narrow chasm Dome Rock gleamed in the afternoon sun. There was no way to reach it but to go back and take the well-worn, yet sure way to the top, which I had refused to do.

My comparison is clear to you, I'm sure. I had used all my energy to go a direction I felt was right. Weren't things going my way? I was getting to the top—so I thought. Life is so much the same. God has a well-marked path for us to take. We use all our time, talents and heart to work things our way. We may have more money, better homes, better clothes, and "better times" than the others—surely things are working for the best! But analyze these "good times," use of money and time. Are they not used often to bring glory to or satisfy ourselves? Think of all the souls we could bring to Christ by using our influence, time, and money for the Saviour.

You and I have also to think of our reaction when, on coming to the end of our path, we see hell opening at our feet, Will I be awakened in time? will you? The road back through Christ is open to us always. Let us pray that it will not take death to show us our mistake—too late.

May God open our eyes so that we will be able through Him to make others see the great danger in living a life outside of His glorious plan which leads to an eternal life at the top!

—D. McAdams

FEBRUARY 4, 2024
THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God.

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Timothy 3:5 For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

MEMORY VERSE: The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

—Proverbs 18:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Since Jesus prayed that we be kept in His Father's name, and since the family of God must go in His name, the name of the Church is scripturally called the church of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Church: translated from the Greek word "*ekklesia*" which means a calling out, a religious congregation or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both; an assembly.

Name: The English word "name" is derived from the Greek word "*onoma*" which has a root in the Greek word "*ginosko*" from which the English word "know" is derived. We are led to believe that in olden times a person's name lay much closer to their person and character than it does today. A person's name represented their character and authority and was a vital link in one's knowledge of them.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In this lesson we seek to establish the truth of the Bible name for the church. We quote from Jesus' prayer to the Father that His disciples be kept in His name, and from Paul's statement concerning the family of God. We have also brought in the different places in the epistles where the church was so called in the name of God. Let us also consider the power and authority of the Father's name, and also the inheritance that is given to those who are kept in His name. Let us remember that it is not the name God spelled G-O-D, but what the name stands for and the personage back of it.

DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Jesus manifest the Father's name to His disciples, and why did He pray that they be kept in His Father's name?
2. What does a person's name have to do with the person himself?
3. Why do we need names?
4. What were the overseers charged to do for the church of God?
5. The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of what?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the Saviour's main burdens in His prayer to the Father was the preserving of His disciples in this evil world after He was to leave them. He knew that many things evil and destructive would face the church as long as time would last. He was looking down through the dark ages and perilous years of the march of time. He was commending them to the greatest power of all, the power of His Father and praying that they would be kept in His almighty name. He

designed that they be as one as He, the Son, and the Father in heaven were one. As the song says, "Only one church of God, kept in His name." Yes, even as a child is kept in his or her father's name as he goes out into life, so the children of God in one family take the name of their Father, God. In that name there is safety and great inheritance. Whatever has our name inscribed to it can be easily identified and associated with us. If our name can be taken from it, all claim to our ownership is in jeopardy. Things of value like an automobile, home, business, or money must surely have our name affixed thereto. And so it is with the church of God. We are in His name for our identification to Him, and also we are in His name for eternal seal and protection in that great day of wrath. Only those who have the Father's name in their foreheads will be permitted to enter the gates of the celestial city. (Revelation 22:4)

The way that the New Testament writers referred to the Church of God assures us that it is God's acceptable way of naming the Church. They did not say, The Baptist Church, or the Episcopalian Church, or the Christian Church, but they called it the church of God. The congregation or assembly of believers who are born of God and are in the Father's name make up what is really the church of God. I believe it is proper to be diligent to make that little word "of" sound out. I have heard some say "Church-a-God." I know what they mean, but they are leaving out an important word when they fail to sound that little word, "of." What a wonderful privilege to be kept in the Father's name!

One of the greatest and most striking likenesses of the church is the term, "family." A family goes by the father's name. The whole family in heaven and earth is named of God. Although it is in the Saviour's name that we have access to God and find forgiveness for sins and all the blessings of God, yet it is in the Father's name that we are kept and assured of the final triumph of the Church. So let it not be just a name, but let us comprehend the real value and meaning of the name and live according to its standard.

-L. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

God was dealing with a man as he drove along. He had seen an accident and several had gone into eternity. This caused him to be very much stirred. He knew that he would have to leave this world some day and where would he go? As he came to a town, he saw a church building. The thought came to him that he needed to go to church. He saw another church building and then another. The man was confused. "Which church shall I go to?" he said aloud. "Which one is right?" Would we be able to help this man to know what to do about this state of confusion?

The prophecy of what was to come in the gospel day is noted in Isaiah 4:1. We see it being fulfilled today. It reads thus: "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." Many groups today are calling themselves the Church of God. People have read the Bible, seen the name, and are using the name, but they are not living by God's Word. They are like the women who wanted to take the man's name, but they wanted to "eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel." In other words, they wanted to live like they wanted to, but they wanted the name of God. Oh, how sad this is! To truly be God's people, we must take all of God's Word and live by it. We must be "born again" and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit and the Word agree. God does have a church of God, and it is pure and holy. God keeps the record and only sin will put one out. If one of God's people is in the cage of sectism, he needs to come out and be freed from man's bondage.

—M. Miles

WHICH CHURCH SAVES?

Must we become Protestants in order to be saved?

Not at all, my friend. I wouldn't waste any time trying to convert you to Protestantism.

But do you not believe that either the Roman or the Greek Catholic Church can save, do you?

Certainly not!

Well then, I am a Roman Catholic and my friend here is a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, neither of which, you say, can save. And you, you are a Protestant. Do you not want us also to turn Protestant?

I do not. I have never asked any Catholic, Greek or Roman to turn Protestant.

You haven't? I don't understand! Do you not believe that Protestantism can save?

No, I do not.

You don't? I am amazed! What then?

Protestantism has no more power to save than has Catholicism, my friends.

What then-how can a man be saved? There are only the three great Christian Churches, are there not?

I repeat, my friends, that neither the Roman Catholic, the Greek Orthodox, nor the Protestant church can in any way save your souls. Wait a minute. No church can save, but-JESUS CHRIST can!

JESUS!

Yes, my friends, you are saved, not by the church, either Catholic or Protestant, but through a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.

Can it be possible? And to think that we have never heard this before!

It would do you no good to become Protestants, for there are thousands of Protestants who are not saved, thousands who have embraced Christianity who have never accepted the Christ of Christianity.

Is that why we have not found peace? Is there no peace in Catholicism?

No, friend, and none in Protestantism, either. Peace is found only in Jesus. Religion cannot save, but Christ can.

But, are you sure of this, Sir?

Neither is there salvation in any other [Protestantism or Catholic]. God says: "For there is none other name [Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

"Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He [not the Catholic priest nor the Protestant minister, but He-[Jesus Christ] shall save His

people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

What, then, must we do?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, "for" as many as received HIM to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (Acts 16:31 and John 1:12).

And will He receive us?

"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

He loves you. Yea, He died for you. Your sins He bore as He hung on Calvary. Then come, accept Him; trust His atoning death. Take Him now as your-Saviour, for He will "have mercy" and "abundantly pardon."

We thought we were saved because we were good Catholics; but you have opened our eyes, and we know now that Jesus is the only Saviour, and the only One who can forgive sins.

–Selected

FEBRUARY 11, 2024

ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH

John 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

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

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

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

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

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Psalm 87:5 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.

MEMORY VERSE: Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

—Luke 13:24

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There is only one way to get into heaven and that is through Christ. He is the door to the church.

WORD DEFINITION

Luke 13:24 **Strait:** Narrow, difficult, or strict."

LESSON BACKGROUND

We notice in the first two verses that Jesus calls Himself the *door* and then changes the thought and calls Himself the *good shepherd*. Only through His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God could He be the door and also be the good shepherd. Only because Jesus gave His life for us and then became the good shepherd for us can we be ready to enter that place prepared for the faithful few. Jesus is the good shepherd who is standing with outstretched hands saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Notice that godly sorrow will bring repentance when the Father, through the Holy Spirit, draws us to Jesus. When we come through the door—or are born again—and become a new creature in Christ, we are then in the church of God. Our names are written in heaven's book.

—M. Miles

DISCUSSION:

1. Who is the door and the good shepherd?
2. Who draws us to Jesus to be saved?
3. Does Holy Spirit conviction give us power to quit our sins?
4. What does it mean to be born again?
5. Can we be saved without having godly sorrow, and what is the difference between godly sorry and just being sorry about wrongdoing?
6. Who keeps the record of all who are in the church?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In reading the Bible we notice that the devil tries to counterfeit everything that God has or does. We read about the good shepherd, but we are right away reminded about the hireling or the false shepherd in John 10:12. Surely, we need to be watchful whom we follow. We then notice that Jesus says, "I am the door," and our memory verse speaks about the strait gate.

Jesus also warned about the gate that is wide and broad, telling us that it is the way that leadeth to destruction. The devil is opposing everything God has done or tries to do to help people find the right way, which leads to heaven. We need to be aware of the many false teachers and prophets that are in the world which "come as angels of light" to deceive souls. Some false prophets speak a lot of truth, but mixed in there may be deception.

Thank God, if we are honest and will read the Word of God with an eye singled to find truth, we will be led by His Spirit into all truth. Praise God for that faithful Spirit of God that deals with honest souls in the world today. The Father, God, through the Holy Spirit deals with a sinner. As they listen and yield to that Spirit, He points them to Christ. There, they see Christ standing with outstretched arms saying, "Come unto me." Your sins are many and they have become a great load upon your mind, conscience and body. You need deliverance. The Holy Spirit has convinced you of this, so as you look to Jesus, you see Him as the Saviour from your sins. You see Him as the One who died on the cross and bore the punishment for your sins. Then He arose from the grave and today He is sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for you. The Holy Spirit has brought you to the

door, which is Christ. He is the door into the Church. There you repent of your sins with godly sorrow. Jesus forgives you and you are 'born again. You become a new creature in Christ Jesus. You forsake your sins and turn with all your heart to the Lord. As God looks down upon your broken and contrite spirit and sees your godly sorrow, He forgives you of your sins. How wonderful this is! What a glorious privilege it is to have our sins blotted out. They are cast from us as far as the east is from the west; they are remembered against us no more; we are free from them.

God keeps the record of everyone that is born into the church of God. He writes your name down in that big book. Only if you sin again will your name be blotted out; but God has grace to keep us from sinning as we go on and are filled with the Holy Spirit, who gives us power. (Read Exodus 32:32, 33.) When God's book is opened in that last day we want your name to be there. John saw a vision of this books being opened and He said, "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). Oh, how important it is that we are born into the church of God and have our names written in the book of life when the final judgment comes! Jesus told His disciples to "rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

—M. Miles

REFLECTIONS

Any structure, place, or thing of any value is most honorably entered by way of a door, gate, or entrance. To enter our houses we pass through a doorway, which was built along with the house. To enter our automobiles, we open the door. To enter this world we are born by a natural birth. To enter a country or nation, one must pass through the customs gateway. Honorable entrance is gained through being allowed to enter by way of the door or gateway.

The church of God can only be entered by passing through the door. Our lesson clearly explains what this door is. Christ Jesus is that door whereby we enter through repentance from sin and faith in His blood and being born again by the Spirit of God. This is the only true and just way of entering into the house of the Lord. In this life there are structures and places one can enter illegally and perhaps escape detection and arrest. But not so with the kingdom of God. "The

kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it." You and I must enter in through the door if we desire entrance into the favor of God.

The ark that Noah built had a door. Through this door Noah and his family entered the ark. Think what a sad and serious time it was for the people outside the ark when the waters were rising and they were not permitted to gain the safety of the ark because "the Lord had shut him in."

Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia that He had the key of David, and that it was He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. Because of their faithfulness to Him, He set before them an open door, and no man could shut it. Oh, may this be true with every one of us. This is serious. If we refuse to obey Him and fail to follow Him, He will close us out. We cannot enter except through the door, and the door is now standing open for all who will seek the gracious way according to His Word.

—L. Busbee

CHRISTIAN ENTERING THE NARROW GATE

Christian got up to the gate. Now, over the gate there was written, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He knocked, therefore, more than once or twice, saying:

"May I now enter here? Will He within open to sorry me, though I have been an undeserving rebel? Then shall I not fail to sing His lasting praise on high."

At last there came a grave person to the gate named Goodwill, who asked who was there, and whence he came, and what he would have?

Christian: Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the city of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion that I may be delivered from the wrath to come; I would, therefore, sir, since I am informed that by this gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in.

Goodwill: I am willing with all my heart, said he; and, with that, he opened the gate.

So, when Christian was stepping in, the other gave him a pull. Then said Christian, "What means that?" The other told him, "A little distance from this gate there is erected a strong castle, of which

Beelzebub is the captain; from whence both he and they that are with him shoot arrows at those that come up to this gate, if haply they may die before they can enter in." Then said Christian, "I rejoice and tremble." So when he was got in, the man of the gate asked him who directed him thither.

Christian: Evangelist bid me come hither and knock, as I did; and he said that you, sir, would tell me what I must do.

Goodwill: An open door is set before thee, and no man can shut it.

—Pilgrim's Progress

FEBRUARY 18, 2024 RESTITUTION OF BELIEVERS

Luke 19:1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Ezekiel 33:15 If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

2 Corinthians 7:11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves.

Hebrews 12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

MEMORY VERSE: He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

—Proverbs 28:13

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord forgives us of our sins, but wherein we have wronged another or taken something that did not belong to us, we are duty bound to clear it with them as we did with God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 19:3 **The press:** The crowd.

Luke 19:4 **Sycamore tree:** A tree with short trunk and wide lateral branches.

LESSON BACKGROUND

"Jericho, the city of palm-trees (Deut. 34:3) is about six miles from the Jordan and fifteen miles from Jerusalem... In later times Jericho became a great and wealthy town, being fertilized by its abundant springs (2 Kings 2:21) and enriched by its palms and balsams....The trade in balsam was extensive, and Zaccheus was evidently superintendent of the tax-collectors who had oversight of the revenue derived from that article" (*Hom. Commentary*).

The time of the winning of Zaccheus was just a few days before Jesus went to Calvary to die for our sins. It is touching to know that even though our Lord knew His time had almost come to die, yet He was seeking out the lost. As far we know, Zaccheus was the last convert before the cross. The penitent thief who was on the cross next to Him was the last one.

—M. Miles

DISCUSSION:

1. Do we know anyone today that is like Zaccheus before he was saved?
2. Will Jesus go where He is not wanted, and will He stay with a person who does not want Him?
3. What does real Bible salvation cause a person to want to do?
4. What about restoring something you have stolen when the person is dead?
5. Is a person generally thought more of after they correct something they have done than before?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We never know what is in the heart of people. Sometimes we look at a rich, elegantly dressed person, who seems to have an air about himself of shrewdness and self-complacency and think that surely he never takes time to think about God. Or, we might see the deeds (which are wicked) of a person seemingly having no regard for honesty, and think that he is too deep in sin for God to reach. But let us remember that God's Word tells us that the "grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11. Underneath all that front that people display, the Spirit of God has access to their heart. He is able to plant a seed of desire to see Jesus. Zaccheus felt that desire and a stirring within his heart that he probably hated to acknowledge at first, even to himself. But the fame of Jesus being a friend of the publicans had reached his ears, and we find him yielding to the desire that had grown within him. As he came to the place where Jesus was to pass, he could not see this friend because of the great multitude. Being short, he climbed up into a tree. His desire caused him to lose his worldly dignity. He was so anxious to see Jesus that he forgot about those who might laugh at him.

Oh, that people today would become so anxious to seek after Jesus that they would forget what their worldly friends might say or think of them! Only those who humble themselves will find Jesus. Be assured that when humble people start seeking after Jesus, He is seeking after them. Jesus has come to seek those who are lost. And be sure, if He is wanted, He will be there. The result of Zaccheus seeking after Jesus brought salvation to his heart and into his home.

He was so overjoyed at having Jesus with him that he willingly said that "half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

The love of Jesus melted his heart. It touched his pocketbook, and it ran back into his life and pointed out where he had wronged Jesus by taking from others that which did not belong to him. Oh, to be like Jesus, was the cry of his heart. He saw something sweeter than the money or things he had stolen from others.

If we love Jesus as we ought, we won't have to be told to give Him our all and take back that which we have robbed. We will want to clear up our life and keep it clear. The true spring of self-sacrifice is the reception of Christ's love. Now Zaccheus was truly a son of Abraham. He was already a Jew, but this was a greater blessing. He was now of a true spiritual descent. A Jew or Gentile becomes a "son of Abraham" when he is born again.

Restitution was taught under the law of God given to Moses. Exodus 22:1 reads, "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." Those who do not clear up their past lives will not prosper in the Lord.

—M. Miles

REFLECTIONS

One minister presented the picture of restitution in a man's life in this way: He drew a series of crooked turns and humps which suddenly changed and straightened out into a straight line. Our life straightens out, he said, when we come to the Lord and are saved. But what about all the people caught in those turns and humps? They have to be seen about too. And surely this is true. The Bible plan for us to be saved is a perfect plan. It covers every essential point, and making restitution is one of those essential points. If we are truly sorry for our sins when we come to the Lord for forgiveness, it will not seem unjust or too hard to ask forgiveness of our fellowman or give back something that we took by fraud. We want our life clear. We will love the souls of our fellowmen and will not want one thing standing in their way. Oh, how we will want to make up for all the grief and sorrow we have caused our neighbor, our loved one, or our brother! Sin not only blots our lives, but also it

affects others, and we owe to others a recompense of any wrong and harm that we have caused. It glorifies God for us to go to the person we have wronged and in an humble manner beg their forgiveness and explain to them what made the change in our life. It is a great testimony. There is no price too great for a clear conscience.

I have been told that in Washington there is a fund or depository for money sent by individuals across this land of ours who want to clear up something in their life and know not how to do it except to send some payment to the government. I was in a certain store and saw a dollar bill framed with a writing attached. It was a letter from a man who sent the dollar paying back for something he stole in that store many years prior. The owners were so struck with such-honesty that they deemed it worthy of being framed and placed for all the public to behold.

One great mark of a Christian is honesty in the sight of God and in the sight of men. If you are ever in a store and find that the clerk short-changed himself, the Lord wants you to go back to the store and correct it. I remember the time that I paid a car repair bill for a little over \$30.00 and later I found the \$30.00 in my wallet. It bothered me, but I felt certain that I had paid the bill. However, to be sure, I went to the garage and asked about it and found out that somehow I had absentmindedly put the money back into my wallet after taking it out and laying it down on the counter. The clerk was so overjoyed that he took me in to see the big boss, and I had the opportunity of witnessing for the Lord to him. It surely pays to straighten our life and keep it straight as we go.

—L. Busbee

FEBRURARY 25, 2024
SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH

Malachi 3:1b And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:47b And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

MEMORY VERSE: What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? —I Corinthians 6:19

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The work of the Holy Spirit is to cleanse the church (Eph. 5:25-26), and to fill each member in the church, which is the body of Christ, with His presence to be their guide.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Malachi 3:1b **Sit as a refiner:** Alludes to a refiner of metals who sits by the fire and increases the heat when he sees it necessary and watches the progress of his work. When, by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we are purged of sin, there is yet a continual process upon our souls as we face life with its new perplexities.

Acts 2:47 **Church:** The Bible definition of “church” is the body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Acts 4:31 **Filled:** To take up the whole of; occupy; to put as much as possible into.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The prophecy in Malachi speaks of Jesus' coming and the "refiner's fire" which is the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 8:11, John the Baptist notes that those who believe on Jesus shall be baptized "with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Fire purifies metal and the dross is skimmed off. the top and thrown away. This was a prophecy over four hundred years before Christ's coming. On the day of Pentecost, there were 120 assembled together, waiting to be filled with the Holy Spirit; this was fifty days after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

We will not be confused if we will think of the word “tongues” used in the New Testament as languages. In 1 Corinthians 14 when the word "unknown" is used, it is printed in italics. "Italics" is a differently shaped design of type and means that the translators supplied the word; it was not in the original. When we read it as "languages" it will be understandable according to truth.

DISCUSSION:

1. What is a Spirit-filled church? If the Holy Spirit is in each person and each one is letting Him be their guide, what kind of a service will we have when we meet together?
2. What was the spiritual condition of those who were together on the day of Pentecost waiting for the infilling of the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the definition of sanctification?
4. In a congregation where everyone speaks the English language, do we heed the gift of tongues, or languages, manifested?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How wonderful it is to know that in the great plan of God He never left one thing undone that we needed. God knew that we would need more than just our volitional sins forgiven. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and his work is compared to the cleansing of anything by fire. He is spoken of as the "fire burning" in one's heart. When we have that fire burning in our very souls, then those things that touch our lives will be burned up by the Holy Spirit and we will have power to face them. Any ill feeling that the devil would try to bring to us from an injustice will be burned up by the Holy Spirit, and we will be able to forgive and commit that person to God.

Jesus' work, when here, was to gather together those who would be ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit; a Holy Spirit that would fill the church and cleanse it. We read in Ephesians 5:25-26, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The word sanctify means to "set apart" and also "to purify." So we are thankful that on that day when the 120 were assembled, they were "set apart" as God's special possession. They were given power to witness for God. We remember how Peter sinned because he didn't have power to stand by Christ when He was brought to trial. Peter denied that he even knew Him. (Matthew 26:69-75.) After Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, we find him on that day boldly declaring that they had crucified the Holy One. He was bold through the working of the Holy Spirit power within him. We find that the Spirit-filled church went forth and through the anointing of the Spirit upon them many souls were born into the church, and God added daily to the church "such as should be saved." Thank God for the Spirit-filled church today that is in operation.

—M. Miles

REFLECTIONS

For a church to be a Spirit-filled church, all the members, each one of them, must be Spirit-filled. This comes down to each individual. God designs that each and every member of His body be

filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit with the exception of the newborn babes that have just recently been converted. But even to them the message is given not to tarry but go forth toward the Spirit-filled and perfected life in God. To draw back from this will mean spiritual ruin and defeat. He does not want a soul to go for years and years before it begins to seek the Lord for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. But rather the justified soul should early begin to seek the Lord, consecrating his or her life, all on the altar for God and His cause. We should seek for this with all our heart, making living for God the number one thing in our lives. Being filled with the Holy Ghost and being sanctified are one and the same thing, no matter how mixed-up people with darkened hearts will argue to the contrary. Much confusion exists in the minds of many people on the subject of Bible sanctification, but it need not be so. The scriptures are so plain when we view them in their true setting. Jesus, praying for the disciples before He was taken from them, said to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself that they all might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17, 19). Oh, one cannot read and behold the recorded life of Christ and truly deny that His followers are all willed to be filled with the Spirit.

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, the devil surely hates this one. He knows that once a soul gets light on sanctification, seeks it, and obtains the experience, he, as the adversary of men's souls, is defeated. If he can keep it veiled in mystery or have doctrines floating around to confuse the mind, he is very glad, for many hearts are hindered from entering into the blessed Canaan rest of sanctification and being filled with the Spirit. Other souls that this particular person might be a blessing to through being sanctified will be hindered also. But praise the Lord for those who will press their way through all the confusion, whom the Lord will lead unerringly to the blessed land of promise and full salvation! They will bear the splendid fruits of the Canaan land and rejoice in its grace, year in and year out, day in and day out. We must seek for this experience with a thirsting quest that will take nothing short of complete victory for an answer. This is God's plan and purpose, the mystery that has been from the ages past and is now revealed to His servants to be preached and experienced.

—L. Busbee

If you can hear the whispering about you
And never yield to deal in whispers, too;
If you can bravely smile when loved ones doubt you
And never doubt, in turn, what loved ones do;
If you can keep a sweet and gentle spirit
In spite of fame or fortune, rank or place,
And though you win your goal or only near it,
Can win with poise or lose with equal grace;

If you can meet with unbelief, believing,
And hallow in your heart a simple creed;
If you can meet deception undeceiving,
And learn to look to God for all you need;
If you can be to fathers and to mothers
Chums in joys and comrades in distress;
And be unto others as you'd have the others
Be unto you—no more, and yet no less;

If you can keep within your heart the power
To say that firm, unconquerable "No";
If you can brave a present shadowed hour
Rather than yield to build a future woe;
If you can love, yet not let loving master,
But keep yourself within your own self's clasp,
And not let dreaming lead you to disaster,
Nor pity's fascination loose your grasp;

If you can lock your heart on confidences
Nor ever needlessly in turn confide;
If you can put behind you all pretenses
Of mock humility or foolish pride;
If you can keep the simple homely virtue
Of walking right with God—then have no fear,
That anything in all the world can hurt you—
And, you'll be a man—you'll be a woman, dear.

—Selected

MARCH 3, 2024
GIFTS AND CALLINGS

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing as he will.

MEMORY VERSE: But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. —1 Corinthians 12:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The body of Christ is one, but all the members do not have the same office; for it is the Holy Spirit that distributes to every man the gift and calling that is pleasing to God and beneficial to the church.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Ephesians 4:11 **Apostle**: Delegate, ambassador of the gospel; a commissioner of Christ with miraculous powers.

Ephesians 4:11 **Prophet**: Foreteller, or an inspired speaker.

Ephesians 4:11 **Evangelist**: Announcer of good news.

Ephesians 4:11 **Pastor**: Shepherd, or one who feeds and cares for the flock.

Ephesians 4:11 **Teacher**: Instructor.

Romans 12: 8 **Exhortation**: Solace, consolation, a calling near and inviting.

I Corinthians 12:11 **Severally**: Individually.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God is gracious, as well as wise, to plan and ordain gifts and callings for men who are redeemed and called by His holy purpose. In the beginning, man was placed in the garden to dress and to keep it. Here was responsibility and faithfulness. In the New Testament church, through the avenue of the Holy Spirit, is given to the children of God various functions, offices, and gifts. It is important that we be not ignorant of the spiritual gifts and the function of each in the body of Christ and the work of the Lord. God looks down into man's heart and weighs his capabilities and what he can handle, and distributes to each accordingly. With each one working in the capacity that God has called and given, the work progresses and souls are blessed in the body and in the world. In this lesson consider the different gifts and callings of God, and count it a privilege and an honor to be chosen to be in the body of Christ, regardless of what the Lord may bestow upon us.

DISCUSSION:

1. Unto what is the church likened unto in this lesson?
2. Are we privileged to choose in what capacity we will serve the Lord?
3. Who is it that bestows the gifts in their proper places ?
4. How is this done?

5. What is the attitude that one should hold who is endowed with a spiritual gift?
6. Can you take each gift and visualize the benefit and profit of each one?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Not everyone is gifted and anointed in the same manner with the same thing. There are diversities of gifts and callings. When Christ arose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, He received of the Father gifts to be distributed by the avenue of the Holy Spirit to His own. It rests solely in the wisdom of the Father as to whom the gifts are given and what gift is given to each individual. There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one God. We are called in one hope. But to everyone is given the portion of grace that the gift of Christ measures or distributes. This clearly illustrates the personal contact and knowledge that the Saviour has of all His own. He knows their downsitting and their uprising, their capabilities and their inabilities. According to what He knows they can properly and successfully handle will He bestow divine gifts.

Each function of the members of the natural body is different, but altogether they cooperate to make life and health possible. So it is with Christ's body, the church of God. God sets the members in the body as seemeth good in His sight, and we know His ways are best. He had a work to give Paul to do, a work that He saw that Paul would be able to handle. Perhaps Ananias, when he was instructed to go and pray for Saul to be healed and go forth for Christ, might have been tempted to think, "Well, Lord, why could you not send me on that kind of mission?" I do not think that he entertained such a thought. He knew that God was running His own business.

Every function in the church is there, not because of human talent or esteem or ability, but is placed as a divine gift upon the faithful heart and life of the respective child of God. There is nothing to glory in as far as the human is concerned. It is of God and God alone. It is given not for praise or exaltation of the individual, but rather that it might profit the entire body. In enjoying, using, and being thankful for the gifts, we must not lose sight of the giver. Much is said in these days of the gifts, and many get carried away with these things. But Jesus warned us not to rejoice because of the devils

being made subject to us (or for any other divine power), but rather that our names are written in heaven.

We are exhorted in our lesson to wait on the gifts and prophesy and to exercise ourselves according to the proportion of faith that has been distributed unto us. The word of wisdom is much needed in our time and so is the word of knowledge. Notice how these two are mentioned first. Could it be that this means that they are just that much more important? We surely need much wisdom, counsel, and solace, do we not? And the most wonderful thing is that God tempers the body together so that all these gifts, though different, worketh for the one and self-same purpose of glorifying God and benefiting the souls of men.

—L. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

There are a number of gifts in the body of Christ. Each one has its place and is very important. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is then given a gift. Many times the devil will be right there to push a person ahead of God's plan for him, and that person many times becomes discouraged.

Zeal without knowledge is a hindrance to souls. The Bible says, "For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). Yet, on the other hand, we do not want to dampen zeal. I am afraid that not very many have enough zeal, but zeal is a beautiful work and very profitable when it is according to knowledge. God will give that knowledge, but one must wait in prayer upon the Lord to have it. We notice in the life of the Apostle Paul that after his conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit that he went into Arabia and spent three years before he went up to Jerusalem. Then he spent fifteen days with Peter and also conferred with the other apostles. God was preparing him for a work. Many times we have seen in the lives of others how God was preparing them for a work that was not known to them, but as they moved on they moved right into greater responsibilities and a greater work for God as they kept humble.

There are many gifts that are not mentioned in the Bible, but there is a work for all.

—M. Miles

DOES YOUR LIFE RING TRUE?

You may testify in public that you love the Lord,
You may sing aloud His praises and proclaim His Word;
You may tell of sins forgiven just as others do;
But the question comes, my brother: Does your life ring true?

How about your daily conduct as you come and go?
Are you careless in your dealings? Does your grocer know
He can trust you for the payment when your bill comes due?
True religion bears this testing: Does your life ring true?

Are you kind to those who hate you, helping when you can?
Are you patient and forgiving towards your fellow-man?
Are you doing unto others as you'd have them do
Were they in your stead, my brother, Does your life ring true?

People see as well as hear you: more than words and deeds;
When your life and lips speak discord, who respects your creeds?
'Tis-the faithful, daily witness of the blood-washed, who
Give to God the glory due Him, for their lives ring true.

—Author unknown

MARCH 10, 2024 UNITY OF BELIEVERS

John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Acts 4:2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:

Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

1 Corinthians 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Ephesians 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

MEMORY VERSE: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

—Psalm 133:1

CENTRAL THOUGHT There is no true and perfect unity without heart-purity, and there is no true heart-purity without Bible unity and there is no true Bible holiness without both.

WORD DEFINITION

Ephesians 4:3 **Unity:** To make into one; to become one; consolidate; unite.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our first verses were part of the prayer of Jesus to His Father for His disciples and all that believed on His name through their labors, which would be us today.

The part of scripture in Acts was written by Luke and is an account of the early church being persecuted. Some of the disciples were put in prison because a man was healed who had been born a cripple. It stirred the rulers because it was told that through the name of Jesus the man had been healed. After they were threatened they went back to their company who, with one accord, prayed for them. When they heard how God had delivered the disciples from the rulers they rejoiced. There was unity among them. They were of "one heart and of one soul."

The other scriptures we have chosen were written by the Apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians 12:11-27, the Apostle Paul uses an example of the human body to show the unity of the body of Christ.

—M. Miles

DISCUSSION:

1. What is the difference between the bringing together of many human organizations or churches and real Bible unity?
2. What did Jesus say in His prayer that would make perfect unity among believers?
3. What are we commanded to do to keep the unity of Spirit?
4. Did the disciples go to their homes and worldly friends when they were released from prison?
5. What is the mortar that holds the "lively stones" together in God's building?
6. What are we to do with those who cause division?
(Romans 16:17)

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our subject is so great that only a few scriptures could be chosen to study. We thank God for the wonderful unity of the saints of God. Even though two people might be strangers, if both have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, it won't be long after they meet that they have

a fellowship and a bond of love that makes them flow together. There is nothing like it in this world of social mixing. One person got on a train. He wondered if anyone else on the train was saved and loved the Lord. He said out loud, "Praise God," and way in the back of the train someone said, "Amen." They made their way to each other and had a good time talking about the good things of the Lord. They were not strangers in the Lord. They both knew the same God. They both were filled with the same Spirit, and they both were interested in the same thing, and that was to please the Lord. What a glorious truth this is, and only God can make it so!

In some of the last hours of our Lord's time here on earth, He thought about His disciples and all of those who would believe on Him down through the years to come. His prayer to His Father was "that they all may be one." Jesus had told the Father that the disciples and believers had believed on Him; that they were not of this world and had been kept in His name, but He still prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth...that they all may be one" (John 17:19, 22). Heart purity will bring oneness. Paul, in writing to the brethren in Corinth, mentioned their strife and preacher-preference and attributed it to the fact that they were still "carnal." They needed that carnality to be destroyed so they could be of "one mind and one soul."

Love is like the mortar that holds the blocks in the building together. So we need perfect love to have perfect unity. In our lesson the disciples wanted the first thing to go to their company and those who believed on Jesus Christ. They were their people. They were knit together with love and were of "one heart and of one soul."

Does the human body have disunion and inharmony? Of course this is impossible. The Apostle Paul compares the unity of believers with the unity in the natural body. We are all members of the one body of Christ. This represents a perfect picture of true unity among the members of Christ.

—M. Miles

REFLECTIONS

Two of the things that Jesus prayed to the Father for concerning His disciples in John 17 was for them to be sanctified and for them to

be one. In Hebrews 2:11, we read that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." It is impossible for anyone to scripturally deny that all who are truly saved and sanctified and who are being led by the Spirit are one. Paul rebuked divisions and strife in his day and branded them as fruits of carnality. It is the design of the New Testament plan of salvation for carnality to be destroyed out of the heart and the Holy Spirit in all His fruits and workings enthroned. This alone will bring the unity that Christ prayed for. Men suppose today that they must legislate and organize to bring about this unity, but their efforts are vain.

Humility is a vital ingredient in the recipe of unity. Any element of pride and self-esteem will keep the heart from flowing together with another. There must be a disposition in the soul that esteems the other better than himself. This involves having the mind of Christ, who humbled Himself to such depths of humiliation. This brings us to another ingredient: self-denial and the cross. Strife comes through efforts of carnal self-preservation or self-exaltation. When this element is destroyed from the soul, all cause of division is gone. Another ingredient is love, divine love. If we really love our neighbor and our brother as we should, we will pursue peace with him or her. Charity, as our lesson declares, is the bond of perfectness, and Peter stated that it would cover a multitude of sins. Another ingredient is the peace of God which is to rule in our hearts. To this we are called in one body. We are to pursue peace and endeavor to live in peace with all men, especially so with our brethren.

It has been brought out that there are three phases of unity. There is unity of the Spirit, unity of the faith, and the unity of cooperation. Yes, there is a practical side to this. We might be united in heart by the Holy Ghost, but if we do not watch, we can fail to work together as we should in the work of the Lord. Paul and Barnabas were in the unity of the faith and the unity of the Spirit, but the contention became sharp between them as to whether they should take John Mark with them on their journey. I am not going to say just who was at fault here, but it is to be noted that John Mark was some fleshly kin to Barnabas. How easily things like this can cause us to fall short of the unity of cooperation.

—L. Busbee

ONE LITTLE HOUR

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

One little hour for watching with the Master,
Eternal years to walk with Him in white;
One little hour to bravely meet disaster,
Eternal years to reign with Him in light;
One little hour to suffer scorn and losses,
Eternal years beyond earth's cruel frowns;
One little hour to carry heavy crosses,
Eternal years to wear unfading crowns;
One little hour for weary toils and trials,
Eternal years for calm and peaceful rest;
One little hour for patient self-denials,
Eternal years of life where life is best;
Then, souls, be brave and watch until the morrow,
Awake, arise, your lamps of purpose trim;
Your Savior speaks across the night of sorrow,
Can you not watch one little hour with Him?
—Selected

MARCH 17, 2024 GUIDE FOR BELIEVERS

John 6:63 [Jesus said to His disciples] It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Mark 13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Acts 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Bible is our guide. It should be read slowly, frequently, and prayerfully, because it is to us as our compass, or map, to show us the way to heaven.

WORD DEFINITION

Acts 17:11 **Searched:** To examine carefully; probe; to look through in order to find what God requires of us so we can please Him and be ready when He calls us to leave this world.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first verses of our lesson in John, as well as Mark, were spoken by Jesus to a number of His disciples. The verses in 2 Timothy were instructions given to the young convert, Timothy. The verses in Acts were written by Luke, which are an account of the visit of Paul and Silas to Berea, a Gentile city.

DISCUSSION:

1. What is the Word of God to us?
2. Who tells us how to have eternal life?
3. Why is it so important that we study the scriptures?
4. What did Paul tell Timothy the scriptures were given for?
5. Discuss some false teachings that are given out today by false teachers.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

If there is any one thing that we should treasure the most, it is the Bible and the privilege we have to read and learn of the grace and the love of God. I once heard a story about a father who gave his son a choice of two things that was to be given him. The choice was between a ten-dollar bill, and a Bible. The son gave it some serious thought. He thought of the many things he could buy for himself with the money and how he would enjoy it. But he thought of the value of the Bible and how it would teach him how to live and be ready to meet the Lord in death or at the last day. He finally decided to take the Bible, much to his father's delight. He joyfully presented his son with the Bible and watched him take it and sit down to read and look therein. As the boy was leafing through the Bible, reading here and there, he came upon a ten-dollar bill inserted in the pages. He went on further and found another, and another. How true this is! If we will seek the way of life over and above the material things, the Lord will take care of the temporal things also.

I have been much inspired with some of Robert Pollock's speaking of the Bible. He was but a young man when he wrote these lines: "They had the Bible. Hast thou ever heard of such a book? The author, God Himself; The subject, God and man, salvation, life and death—eternal life, eternal death—dread words! whose meaning has no end, no bounds—Most wondrous Book! Bright candle of the Lord! Star of eternity! the only star by which the bark of man could navigate the sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss securely; only star which rose on Time, and, on its dark and troubled billows, still, as generation, drifting swiftly by, succeeded generation, threw a ray of heaven's light, and to the hills of God, the everlasting hills, pointed the sinner's eye. Evangelists, apostles, men inspired and by the Holy

Ghost anointed, set apart, and consecrated to declare to earth the counsels of the Eternal One. This book—this holy book, on every line marked with the seal of high divinity, on every leaf bedewed with drops of love divine, and with the eternal heraldry and signature of God Almighty stamped from first to last. This ray of sacred light, this lamp, from off the everlasting throne, Mercy took down, and in the night of time stood, casting on the dark her gracious bow; and evermore beseeching men, with tears and earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live.

And many to her voice gave ear, and read, believed, obeyed; and now, as the Amen, True, faithful Witness swore, with snowy robes and branchy palms surround the fount of life, and drink the streams of immortality, forever happy, and forever young.”

—L. Busbee

THE BIBLE-YET IT LIVES

Generations follow generations—yet it lives.

Nations rise and fall—yet it lives.

Kings, dictators, presidents come and go—yet it lives.

Torn, condemned, burned—yet it lives.

Doubted, suspected, criticized—yet it lives.

Damned by atheists—yet it lives.

Scoffed at by scorners—yet it lives.

Exaggerated by fanatics—yet it lives.

Misconstrued and misstated—yet it lives.

Ranted and raved about—yet it lives.

Its inspiration denied—yet it lives.

Yet it lives—as a lamp to our feet.

Yet it lives—as a light to our paths.

Yet it lives—as a gate to heaven.

Yet it lives—as a standard for childhood.

Yet it lives—as a guide for youth.

Yet it lives—as an inspiration for the matured.

Yet it lives—as a comfort for the aged.

Yet it lives—as food for the hungry,

Yet it lives—as water for the thirsty.

Yet it lives—as rest for the weary.

Yet it lives—as light for the heathen.

Yet it lives—as salvation for the sinner.
Yet it lives-as grace—for the Christian.
To know it is to love it.
To love it is to accept it.
To accept it means life eternal.
—Willard L. Johnson

MARCH 24, 2024
PURPOSE AND MEANING OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 28:19 [Jesus said to His disciples] Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Acts 8:36b And the [Ethiopian] eunuch said [to Philip], See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Colossians 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Colossians 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

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

21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

—Romans 6:4

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Baptism by immersion into water is a figure of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, testifying that we who are thus baptized are partakers of the risen life of Christ both now and forever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 3:13 **Baptized:** Greek word which means to completely overwhelm or submerge, to dip or immerse.

1 Peter 3:21 **Figure:** The word figure in our lesson in the Greek is our word "anti-type" which means "corresponding to" that is, a representation or counterpart. Noah's passing safely through the flood was a type of which baptism is the corresponding fulfillment.

LESSON BACKGROUND

As our lesson reveals, baptism goes way back to Noah. He and his family were saved (*carried safely through*—Greek) by water. Psalm 24:2 tells us that God founded the earth upon the floods and established it upon the seas. In the creation, He divided the waters from the waters. The world that then was (because of sin) being overflowed with water, perished. It is a very worthy comparison, our deliverance from death and being saved from drowning in water.

Baptism illustrates this: Moses, to be spared from death, was placed in the river at the mercy of God. The Egyptian princess who found and saved him called him Moses, which means “drawn out of water.” Paul said in 1 Co 10:2 that Israel “were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Look at how God miraculously helped them to cross the angry depths of the sea unharmed!

Jesus said that the only sign to be given to the wicked generation was the sign of the prophet Jonas. He likened His death and burial to the ordeal and miraculous delivery of Jonah from the deep and the whale's belly. Jonah said, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me."

The entire theme of baptism points to the death, burial, and glorious resurrection of our blessed King of glory. When we are taken down into the watery grave and put beneath the water, it means that we are turning our backs on sin and the world and are looking forward to a new life for Him in this world and a life in glory with Christ when we leave this world.

—L. Busbee

DISCUSSION:

1. What was John's reason for not wanting to baptize Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus command to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?
3. What is the prescribed method of baptism: sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? Why?
4. When should a person be baptized?
5. Does baptism literally wash away your sins?
6. Just how does baptism save us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is a sacred scene to behold in the account of the baptism of our Saviour. It was needful and right for Him to fulfill the Father's law. He is our example of humility, meekness, and obedience. The baptism of John for the remission of sins pointed toward the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. And Jesus came to be baptized of John with this in mind. It was the Father's great will to purchase and redeem the souls of men from the pit of darkness and sin, and lift them from the waters of sorrow and death. It was through Jesus that this was

to be accomplished, and it was accomplished through His death on the cross, and His glorious resurrection from the tomb.

We should not only be willing to submit to baptism, but we should desire it even as the Ethiopian eunuch desired it. "What doth hinder me from being baptized?" How eager we should be to fulfill the Father's will also.

Baptism in water is not washing away our sins, but it does have something to do with remission of sins. Were it not for the essence of baptism there would be no remission. Being baptized should not be just a form or a ritual. It should be carried out with great meaning and serious and sacred thought. Ananias told Paul when he came to pray for him: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). So many take that scripture and assuredly gather that you wash away your sins when you are baptized. But careful and prayerful consideration of the setting of this reveals something else. The Greek says, "Wash away your sins, having called on the name of the Lord." It was a command to Saul to leave his sins for the blood to cover and launch out in the life of a Christian.

Thus we see that baptism is yet a part of the soul's progress with the Saviour. When we get a clear picture of its meaning, it becomes a joy to us to follow the Lord in this sacred ordinance. Just as Noah was carried safely through and delivered from the waters of the flood, even so we shall be saved from the wrath of God that will be poured out upon us in the last day. This is done through the power of His resurrection. We are living this new life in Christ now.

—L. Busbee

A LESSON FROM TWO FATHERS

One of my earliest interests was my father's bookcase with all its delightful volumes. Daddy often read aloud to his family, but I looked forward to the day when I would be old enough to go to school and learn to read, so that I might better share in his pleasure in the books.

No doubt Daddy was just as eager for that day of more complete sharing as he let me look at the pictures and illustrations in some of the books, somehow trusting my childish fingers to use the necessary care for proper handling. Of course, I was taught that certain rules

went with this privilege and that I must abide by them.

One of my favorites was a book that was profusely illustrated by a then well-known artist whose drawing even a child could enjoy. I looked through this book often.

A pencil was another thing that I needed to make life complete. I needed one to make endless scribbling and to try to balance it over an ear as I had seen Daddy do. Again my parents granted my wish and gave me a tiny stub of a pencil—and necessary rules to protect the walls and other things from my "literary" efforts.

All went well for some time, and then one day while looking at my favorite book, I was overcome by temptation and I marked on several of the illustrations and even on some of the text.

My act was immediately discovered and the book was taken away. Daddy took the pencil from my guilty fingers and said sadly, "Pearl is just not old enough to know how to use a pencil properly."

He tossed the poor little stub into the fire and it was consumed before my eyes. I did not know that on a recent trip to town he had purchased a new pencil especially for me. At that very moment it reposed in a compartment of his desk, waiting for the moment when he could present it to me. But this was certainly not the time.

Like Cain, I thought my punishment was more than I could bear. But even greater than the loss of the book and of my cherished pencil was the knowledge that I had broken my father's rules and betrayed his trust in me.

At my first opportunity I got the book down from the shelf again and tried to erase the marks that I had made. I had no eraser but used a dampened fingertip to rub the spots. I succeeded in removing some of the marks—along with the print and even some of the paper. My mother rescued the book at this point and explained that the marks must remain just as I had made them, lest I do even greater damage.

Only a few days later Daddy seated himself at his desk and opened it to reveal all the fascinating pigeonholes, nooks, and crevices that so enticed me. As usual, I gravitated toward this center of interest and he had only to speak to have me up in his lap. He asked if I had learned my lesson and I assured him that I had. Then he gave me the new pencil that he had so desired to give me all that time. Perhaps his joy was even greater than mine, but my joy seemed

complete. I had been restored to Daddy's confidence, for he had demonstrated his forgiveness by trusting me again with his books and a pencil of my very own.

A few years ago when it became necessary to divide the household things after the death of our parents, you may be sure that one thing I really cherished was that battered old book. Today those pages still bear the scars of my disobedience but also call back the memories of a loving and forgiving father. What a picture, in a small way, of our loving Heavenly Father! He too is eager for the day when He can share the blessings of His heavenly kingdom with His children. He grants us daily previews of some of those blessings while we are not able yet to grasp the whole of them. He has provided the Unspeakable Gift for us and eagerly awaits the time when He can bestow it on our penitent hearts.

How useless it is for us to try to erase our own sins! Though some scars may remain as reminders to us, our Heavenly Father forgives and forgets them and restores us to His confidence and trust. All praise to His matchless name! And a special thank-you for the Christian fathers in this world who help us to better understand the love of the Heavenly Father!

—Selected by H. P. Huskey

MARCH 31, 2024 OBSERVING THE ORDINANCES

Matthew 28:20 [Jesus said] Teaching them [believers] to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

John 13:4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded.

John 13:12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also

ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I [Paul] have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

MEMORY VERSE: Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

–1 Corinthians 11:2

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The gospel, which is the grandest of all institutions, has not left us without its memorial days and observances.

WORD DEFINITIONS

John 13:14 **Ought:** To be held or bound in duty or moral obligation. Opheilo—"To owe; to be indebted; to be bound to the performance of some duty; to be obliged; to be under obligation" (*Greenfield*).

John 13:15 **Example:** A person or thing to be imitated; model.

John 13:15 **Should:** Obligation or duty.

I Corinthians 11:2 **Ordinance:** An observance commanded.

I Corinthians 11:24 **Remembrance:** Keeping in mind; recollection; memorial, token.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Family, national, or universal customs and observances are optional because they are non-essentials. But all ordinances of God are established either by positive precept or by example. Thus, we find that feet-washing and The Lord's Supper are essential to keep. To disregard them would be to disobey a commandment.

The ordinance of feet washing recorded in the 13th chapter of John was a new institution. There is positively no identity between it and anything else ever practiced before. People washed their feet for cleanliness before entering a tent or house, but this was different.

In all the Christian nations religion has established its memorial days. "The Lord's Day" is the greatest memorial day of the gospel, in honor of the resurrection of our glorious Lord. "The Lord's Supper" is in commemoration of His solemn death.

Our lesson in 1 Corinthians was written 26 years after the old Passover service had ended. The early church was still commanded to keep this ordinance. The four gospel writers have delivered to us accounts of the Lord's supper being instituted. Matthew was an eyewitness, while Mark and Luke were apostolic men and received the account from the apostles themselves. Paul declared that he received this ordinance direct from the Lord.

—M. Miles

DISCUSSION:

1. Are we to only do part of the things that Jesus commanded us to do?
2. What ordinances does the church keep today that Jesus instituted?
3. What blessing is derived from observing the ordinance of feet washing?
4. What is the blessing derived from the ordinance of the Lord's supper?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our first verse tells us to "observe all things" that Jesus commanded us to do. Observing feet washing is one of those "all things." The command was, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet." (Notice our word definition of ought.) We obey the command that "men ought always to pray" Luke 18:1, but many feel that this "ought" is a nonessential. We are sure that our Lord and Saviour would not have any part in a nonessential act when He was nearing the solemn hour of His death. He knew that on that very night He was to be betrayed into the hands of sinners and be soon put to death.

In the early church, we read about the qualification of widows in the church that were to be cared for and one of them was, "if she have washed the saints' feet." Many duties are to be done to care for others, but this is a command for one saint to wash another saint's feet. If they were not referring to the ordinance of feet-washing they would not have just mentioned that it should be saints' feet.

Jesus knew man's frailty and that with the cares of life they might forget. In His wisdom He left us the memorial of the Lord's supper so that we would take time to reflect and remember what Jesus did for us. As we partake of the Lord's Supper we think of Gethsemane and hear His groans and pleadings that the cup of death would pass and then we hear Him saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." As He is put on the cross and in our mind's eye we see them drive the nails into His hands and feet, our hearts melt with love for such love shown to us. He took our punishment. He was innocent, but we were guilty. How we do love Him when we think of the great cost and sacrifice that He paid for our salvation! Together the saints send up their praises unto that lovely Saviour to whom all praise and honor are due. It brings such humility and draws the saints together into one bond of fellowship as they do this "in remembrance" of our Lord.

—M. Miles

REFLECTIONS

It is very necessary concerning the Bible teachings on ordinances (as well as concerning any other Bible doctrine) to be careful not to be unbalanced in either direction. A man uninspired by the Spirit of

God can easily drift to the right hand or to the left. There have been those who, in their effort to steer clear of formality and rituals, have rejected all ordinances. Then there are those whose religion is chiefly made up of the observance of ordinances such as these in our lesson, who are void of the real essence of what they stand for. Let us be balanced and know that these ordinances are instituted of God for the saints of God to keep faithfully, but let us also know that the keeping of these ordinances without the Spirit and purpose of the Maker who gave them will not avail to give the intended blessing to the soul.

The brazen serpent was fashioned by Moses in obedience to God for use in a time when the children of Israel were being bitten by serpents. It was good to be used in its time, but later when Israel found this serpent and began to worship it, God was sorely displeased. Hezekiah destroyed this brazen serpent and pointed the people to the one true worship of God. When God was dealing with Israel as a literal nation, He instituted various ordinances that they were to keep, such as the Feast of the Passover, Tabernacles, Pentecost, and others. But when Christ came and fulfilled all these things by His death and resurrection from the dead, they were no longer needed. From then on, the saints were given new and better ordinances to remember and keep.

But in keeping these new ordinances, we must endeavor to keep in mind their true purpose and the spirit back of their giving. In foot-washing, the truth manifested in carrying it out has to do with true brotherhood and humility one to another. This brotherly attitude is the very nature of the Spirit that Christ possessed. It must reign in the human heart toward all men, even toward enemies and those who are not right. In considering the setting of the foot-washing ordinance, it is very likely that Judas Iscariot was there, and it is also very likely that Jesus washed his feet. It seems rather that Judas made his exit before the Lord instituted the Lord's supper, however. Be that as it may, and be what the other person may be in his own heart, the instruction is for us: Let a man examine himself. It is not for me to say you are unworthy, or for another to make such a judgment on me. We are for our own profit counseled to judge ourselves. It is very evident that if we partake of these ordinances without the real experiences that they call for in our very heart and

life, we are doing it to our own damnation. We are thus guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, for we have not allowed His Spirit to work these graces into our souls.

—L. Busbee

CROWNED OR CRUCIFIED?

I stood alone at the bar of God,
In the hush of the twilight dim,
And faced the question that pierced my heart:
What will you do with Him?
Crowned or crucified? Which shall it be?'

I looked on the face so marred with tears
That were shed in His agony,
The look in His kind eyes broke my heart,
Twas full of love for me.
The crown or the cross it seemed to say;
For or against me—choose thou today.

He held out His loving hands to me,
While He pleadingly said, Obey!
Make Me thy choice, for I love thee so,
And I could not tell Him, Nay.
Crowned, not crucified—this must it be;
No other way was open to me.

I knelt in tears at the feet of Christ,
In the hush of the twilight dim,
And all that I was, or hoped, or sought,
Surrendered unto Him.
Crowned, not crucified—my heart shall know,
No King but Christ who loved me so."

—Florence E. Johnson

Special Note:

To recycle your Sunday School quarterlies to be shipped overseas,
package and mail to:

Love Packages
220 Union Street
Butler, Illinois 62015

