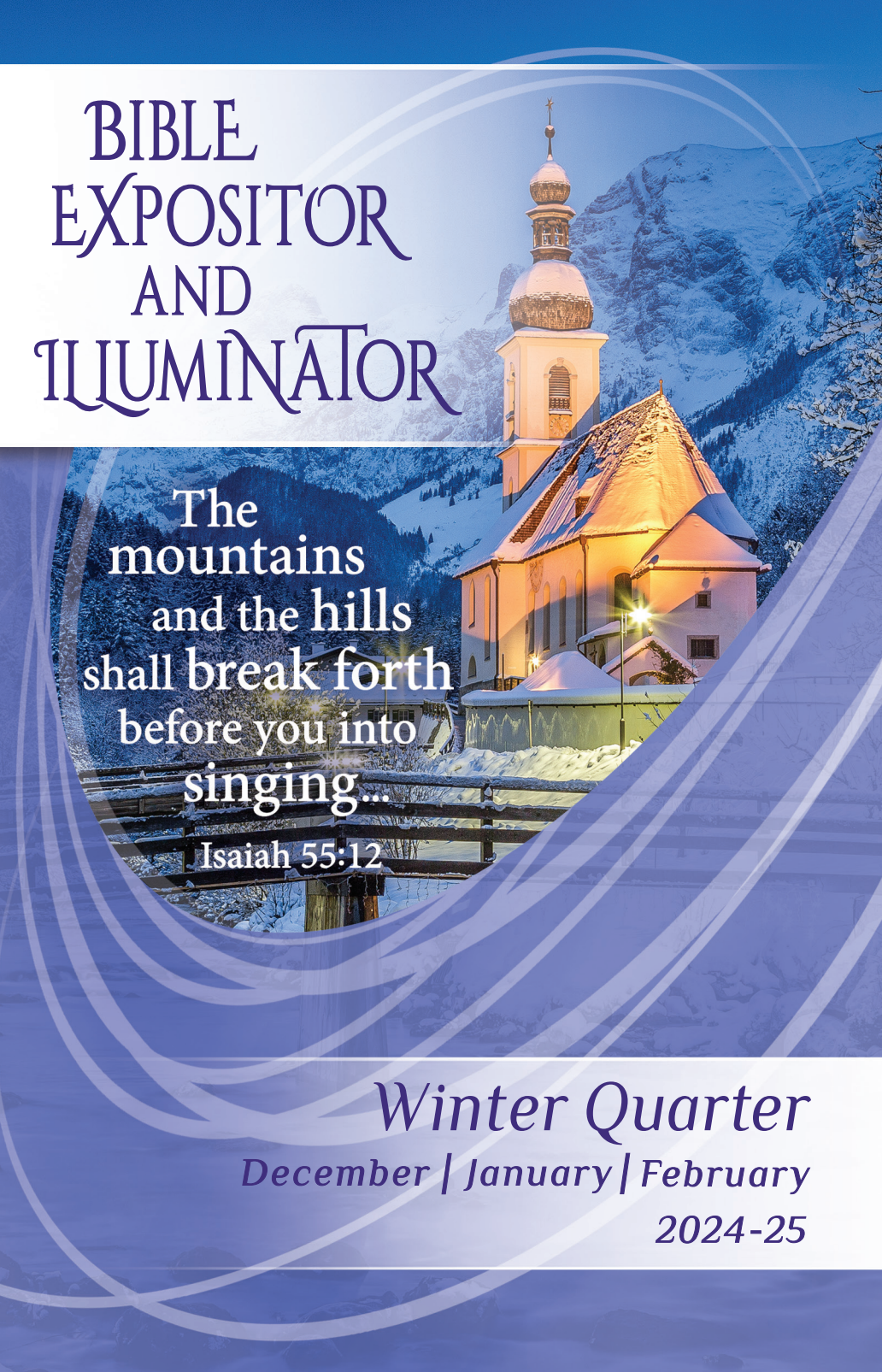


BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR



The
mountains
and the hills
shall break forth
before you into
singing...

Isaiah 55:12

Winter Quarter

December | January | February

2024-25

Bible Expositor and Illuminator

WINTER QUARTER

December 2024, January, February 2025

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LOOKING AHEAD

Have you ever seen genuine self-sacrificial love that wasn't expressed in actions?

This quarter's lessons focus on the theme of love in action. The first unit begins with God's love. The first lesson discusses Isaiah 40, which shows the Lord comforting His conquered and captive nation Israel. In lesson 2 we see God's promise of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. God would send the Servant not only for the deliverance of Israel but also for the forgiveness of the sins of humanity.

When the time was ripe, God informed Mary of His plans for her (lesson 3; Luke 1:39-56). Joseph, shocked at Mary's unexpected pregnancy, received an angelic visitor to set his mind at ease (lesson 4; Matt. 1:18-25). In lesson 5 we find Jesus' first trip to the temple, where two faithful servants eagerly awaited His appearance (Luke 2:25-38).

Unit 2 gives examples of the loving acts of Jesus. Lesson 6 shows Jesus reaching out to a despised member of the Israelite community, the tax collector Levi (Mark 2:13-17). In Luke 19:1-10 we find Jesus seeking another tax collector, Zacchaeus (lesson 7). Jesus' transforming love had a remarkable effect on Zacchaeus.

Lesson 8 continues to focus on Jesus' outreach to the sick and despised members of society. In Luke 17:11-19 Jesus healed ten people with leprosy, but only one of them, a Samaritan, returned to thank Him due to his new-found faith and transformed heart.

Close friends need expressions of love, too. In John 21:15-25 (lesson 9) we hear about Jesus restoring Peter to service after Peter's betrayal of Christ.

A man born blind found his sight in lesson 10 (John 9:1-17). That miracle resulted in his faith in Christ and an investigation by the Jewish leaders.

The third unit, lessons 11—13, describes various acts of love performed by followers of Christ. In Acts 2 and 4 we see how the early church expressed love toward one another (lesson 11). Lesson 12 shows how salvation results in hospitality shown to strangers (Acts 18). Finally, in lesson 13 we find Priscilla and Aquila compassionately teaching a zealous new convert named Apollos.

As we study these powerful texts, may we abound in love toward others!

—Glenn Weaver

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of LifeStone Ministries, Union Gospel Press Division. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and willingness to submit to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Love Results in Action

GLENN WEAVER

Love takes many forms. Often it means little more than liking something, such as “I love apple pie!” Commonly it refers to two people who have “fallen in love.”

God's love for His people goes far beyond those simple feelings. A person can eat too much pie and no longer want it. Unless the initial attraction that brought two people together deepens over time, they may drift apart.

But God's love is unchanging, and His love always results in action. His expressions of mercy, blessings, and even discipline result from His love. Love does not stand idly by. It takes action.

Consider God's relationship with Israel. God is love (I John 4:8, 16) and chose to love Israel (Deut. 7:7-8). That love prompted Him to act for His exiled people in Babylon, restoring blessings upon Israel once the punishment for their sins was complete (Isa. 40:2). He would shepherd His people and give them strength (vss. 29-31).

Israel strayed from the Lord and fell into sin's clutches. Without a solution to this problem, Israel (along with all of humanity) was separated from God. But God, in His abundant love, devised a plan to pay for humanity's sin. The price He would pay was high, requiring the sacrificial death of the Messiah. God's sheep had strayed, but the Messiah would suffer the penalty for their sins (Isa. 53:6).

At the proper time, God sent the

Messiah to be born to a humble Jewish girl in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and his descendants (Luke 1:55). The birth was unique, for Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). No one before or since was conceived in this way.

Up until that time, with rare exceptions, God had offered His gracious promises specifically to Israel. The Gentiles had experienced His general care for His creation but not all His promises—until the birth of Jesus. The Lord revealed to Simeon that the child presented before him in the temple would bring salvation not only to Jews but also to Gentiles (Luke 2:25-30).

God's love is not limited to those who are lovable or follow His commands. Jesus had a meal at the house of Levi, a tax collector! Other sinners were also present (Mark 2:15). The religious leaders thought only those who lived pure lives were worth their attention. But Jesus knew true love, the kind of love that leads one to sacrifice oneself for another. He explained that He offers to heal those who need the cure for sinfulness (vss. 16-17). The religious leaders could not offer such a cure. Their antidote for sin was to live according to the Old Testament law and offer sacrifices in the temple. As good as these practices were, they could not cure the sinfulness of the human heart. Only Jesus could.

The crowd had the same response to Zacchaeus that the religious lead-

(Editorials continued on page 186)

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ISA. 40:1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he* is strong in power; not one faileth.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

NOTES

Comfort for God's People

Lesson Text: Isaiah 40:1-5, 25-26, 29-31

Related Scriptures: Leviticus 26:40-45; I Chronicles 16:23-33;
Lamentations 1:1-22; Matthew 3:1-8

TIME: about 700-695 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT—"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29).

Introduction

Isaiah was a prophet who lived about seven hundred years before Christ. It was during the reign of King Uzziah that Isaiah saw the Lord seated upon His throne and received his prophetic call (Isa. 6).

During this critical time in Judah's history, God wanted someone to take His word to a rebellious nation.

Despite Isaiah's faithful preaching of God's word to the people of Judah, they would refuse to repent. Hearing God's message would harden the hearts of many (vss. 9-10). Nevertheless, Isaiah proclaimed the word of the Lord to the bitter end, after which the people would finally be carried

away as captives (vs. 11).

The first half of Isaiah (chaps. 1—39) foretells God's judgment upon Judah because of their sins. The latter half (chaps. 40—66), however, offers a message of comfort and hope. God would restore them to the land and send His Servant, the Messiah, to atone for sin (chap. 53).

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. **GOD, OUR COMFORTER**—
Isa. 40:1-5
- II. **GOD, OUR CREATOR**—
Isa. 40:25-26
- III. **GOD, OUR CONFIDENCE**—
Isa. 40:29-31

Exposition: Verse by Verse

GOD, OUR COMFORTER

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