
GOSPEL ADVOCATE SERIES

Annual Lesson Commentary

ON

IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES

OF

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS

1940

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NINETEENTH ANNUAL VOLUME

PRICE

Single copy, postpaid	95 cents
Five or more copies to same address, each, net	85 cents

ORDER FROM
GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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A FOREWORD

In penning the last word of this, the nineteenth volume of the Annual Lesson Commentary, the author realizes that it, like all human productions, has its imperfections; but he has labored to make it as helpful to Bible students as is humanly possible to do so. Its comments are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, for it is best for the student to do some investigation and thinking for himself.

At the close of each lesson will be found "Topics for Investigation and Discussion," which may be used with profit in midweek prayer meetings and in teachers' meetings. This will help to stir up interest in the lessons, and will give teachers a better background for their work; besides, every Bible student should do some research work for his own improvement.

Let the student pray, as did David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

R. L. WHITESIDE.

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BIBLE DICTIONARY OF PROPER NAMES

Arranged and Compiled by H. LEO BOLES

A

- Aaron** (bright or shining), Ex. 4: 14. Brother of Moses and first high priest.
Ab, Abba (father), Gal. 4: 6. Name given to God.
Abednego (servant of Nego), Dan. 1: 7. One of Daniel's companions.
Abel (breath, vanity), Gen. 4: 1. Second son of Adam.
Abiathar (father of abundance), 1 Sam. 23: 9. High priest and fourth in descent from Eli.
Abigail (father is joy), 1 Sam. 25: 14. Wife of Nabal; became David's wife.
Abihu (God is Father), Num. 3: 2. Son of Aaron.
Abimelech (Melech is father), Gen. 26: 1. King of Gerar in the time of Isaac.
Abishai (my father is Jesse), 1 Sam. 26: 6-9. The eldest of the three sons of Zeruiah, David's sister, and brother of Joab.
Abner (father is light), 1 Sam. 14: 50. King Solomon's captain.
Abraham, Abram (father of a multitude, exalted father), Gen. 12: 1. Founder of the Hebrews and father of the faithful.
Absalom (father is peace), 2 Sam. 15: 1. Third son of David.
Achaia (trouble), Acts 18: 12. A Roman province which included Greece.
Achan (trouble), Josh. 7: 19-26. Stole golden wedge, etc. Stoned by Joshua.
Adam (ruddy, one made or produced), Gen. 3: 15. Name of the first man.
Adonijah (my Lord is Jehovah), 2 Sam. 3: 4. Fourth son of David.
Aenon (springs), John 3: 23. A place near Salim.
Agabus, Acts 11: 27. A Christian prophet who came from Jerusalem.
Agag, 1 Sam. 15: 8. Title of the king of Amalek.
Agrippa, Acts 12: 20. One of the Herods.
Ahab (father's brother), 1 Kings 18: 19. Son of Omri, seventh king of Israel; very wicked.
Ahimelech (brother of Melech), 1 Sam. 22: 11. High priest of Nob; gave David the showbread to eat.
Ai (heap), John 7: 2. City lying east of Bethel, destroyed by Joshua.
Alexander, Mark 15: 21. Son of Simon, the Cyrenian.
Alexandria (from Alexander), Acts 18: 24. Capital of Egypt.
Alpha (first letter of Greek alphabet), Rev. 1: 8. It means the beginning.
Altar, Gen. 8: 20. Place for worship and sacrifice.
Amaziah (Jehovah is strong), 2 Kings 14: 1-20. Son of Joash.
Ambassador (messenger or agent), 2 Cor. 5: 20. A person commissioned.
Amen (true), Isa. 65: 16. Close of prayer.
Amos (burden), Amos 1: 1. Minor prophet.
Amphipolis (a city surrounded by the sea), Acts 17: 1. A city of Macedonia, through which Paul and Silas passed on their way from Philippi to Thessalonica.
Amram (an exalted people), Ex. 6: 18. Father of Moses.
Ananias (Jehovah hath been gracious), Acts 5: 1. Husband of Sapphira, smitten dead.
Anathema (cursed), Gal. 1: 9. A word used by Paul to show condemnation.
Anise (dill), Matt. 23: 23. A small garden plant.
Anna (grace), Luke 2: 36. A prophetess at Jerusalem.
Annas (humble), Acts 4: 6. The son of Seth; was appointed high priest A.D. 7.
Antichrist (opposed to Christ), 1 John 2: 18. Only John uses this word as applied to the enemies of Christianity.
Antioch (from Antiochus), Acts 11: 20. City in Syria, also in Pisidia.
Apollonia (belonging to Apollo), Acts 17: 1. A city in Macedonia.
Apostle (one sent forth), Matt. 10: 2-4; 2 Cor. 8: 23. The official name of the twelve disciples sent out by Jesus.
Apphia (fruitful), Phile. 2. A Christian woman addressed jointly with Philemon.
Aquila (an eagle), Acts 18: 2. A Jew whom Paul found at Corinth, husband of Priscilla.
Archelaus (prince of the people), Matt. 2: 22. Son of Herod the Great.
Archippus (master of the horse), Col. 4: 17. A Christian teacher in Colosse.
Areopagus (Mars Hill), Acts 17: 22. The rocky heights in Athens, opposite the western end of the Acropolis.
Arimathea (height), Matt. 27: 57. A city of Judea.
Aristarchus (the best ruler), Acts 20: 4. A companion of Paul on his third missionary journey.
Asa (physician, healer), 2 Chron. 14: 8. Third king of Judea; reigned forty years.
Ashpenaz (horse-nose), Dan. 1: 3. Master of eunuchs.
Asia (), Acts 19: 26. Continent, also Roman Province.
Athens (city of Athena), Acts 17: 21. The capital of Attica, and the chief city of Grecian learning.
Augustus (venerable), Luke 2: 1. The first Roman emperor.
Azotus (Ashdod, a stronghold), Acts 8: 40. City nearly midway between Gaza and Joppa.

B

- Baal** (owner or lord), Num. 22: 41. The male god of the Phenician and Canaanitish nations.
- Babel** (confusion), Gen. 10: 10; 11: 1-9. Tower built on the Plain of Shinar.
- Babylon** (from Babel), Jer. 24: 5. The land of the Chaldeans.
- Balaam** (from Baal), Num. 23: 19. A prophet of Midian who tried to curse Israel.
- Barabbas** (son of Abba), John 18: 40. The robber who was released at the trial of Jesus.
- Balak** (making waste), Num. 22: 24. King of Moabites.
- Baptist**, the (the baptizer), Matt. 3: 1. The same as John the Baptist.
- Barak** (lightning), Judges 4: 1-24. Defeats Sisera's army.
- Barbarian** (any one not a Greek), Rom. 1: 14. Applied to those who were not of the Greek nation.
- Bar-Jesus** (son of Jesus), Acts 13: 6. A false prophet.
- Barnabas** (son of consolation or exhortation), Acts 4: 36. An early disciple of Christ and traveling companion of Paul.
- Barsabbas** (son of Sabas or rest), Acts 1: 23. Voted on as an apostle to take Judas' place.
- Bath-sheba** (daughter of the oath), 2 Sam. 11: 3. Wife of Uriah; became David's wife.
- Beelzebub** (Lord of the House), Matt. 12: 24. Title of heathen god.
- Belial** (worthlessness), 2 Cor. 6: 15. An expression for lawlessness.
- Belshazzar** (may Bel protect the king), Dan. 5: 2. The last king of Babylon.
- Benjamin** (son of the right hand), Gen. 35: 16. The youngest son of Jacob.
- Berea** (well watered), Acts 17: 10. A city of Macedonia.
- Bernice** (bringing victory), Acts 25: 13. The eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I.
- Bethany** (house of dates), Mark 11: 1. A village situated near the Mount of Olives.
- Bethel** (the house of God), Gen. 12: 8; 28: 11-19. City about twelve miles north of Jerusalem.
- Bethesda** (house of mercy), John 5: 2. Market place near Jerusalem.
- Bethlehem** (house of bread), 1 Sam. 17: 12. City of David, birthplace of Christ.
- Bethphage** (house of figs), Luke 19: 29. Place on the Mount of Olives, on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem.
- Bethsaida** (house of fish), John 12: 21. The home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip.
- Bildad** (Bel hath loved, or, son of contention), Job 2: 11. The second of Job's three friends.
- Bilhah** (timid, bashful), Gen. 29: 29. Concubine of Jacob, and mother of Dan and Naphtali.
- Blasphemy** (speak against), Matt. 12: 32. Speaking evil against God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit.
- Blastus** (sprout), Acts 12: 20. The chamberlain of Herod Agrippa I.
- Boanerges** (sons of thunder), Mark 3: 17. Name given to the two sons of Zebedee.

C

- Caesar** (Latin name), John 19: 12. In the New Testament, always the Roman emperor.
- Calaphas** (depression), Matt. 26: 3. High priest of the Jews.
- Cain** (possession), Gen. 4: 1. Oldest son of Adam; killed his brother Abel.
- Caleb** (capable), Num. 13: 6. One of the faithful spies.
- Calvary** (see Golgotha).
- Cana** (place of reeds), John 2: 1. Place of Christ's first miracle.
- Canaan** (low, flat), Gen. 10: 6. Fourth son of Ham; name applied to Palestine.
- Candace** (name of dynasty), Acts 8: 27. Not the name of an individual, but of a dynasty of Ethiopian queens.
- Capernaum** (village of Nahum), Matt. 4: 13. Village located on the western shore of Galilee.
- Carpus** (wrist), 2 Tim. 4: 13. A Christian at Troas.
- Cesarea** (Kaisareia Caesar), Acts 8: 40. City on coast of Palestine.
- Cesarea Philippi** (from Caesar and Philip), Matt. 16: 13. City twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee.
- Chebar** (kēbār), Ezek. 1: 3. A river in the land of the Chaldeans.
- Chemosh** (subduer), Num. 21: 29. A god of the Moabites.
- Chinnereth** (flute, harp), Josh. 19: 35. Another name for the Sea of Galilee.
- Chorazin**, Matt. 11: 21. One of the cities in which Jesus did many mighty works.
- Christ** (anointed), 1 Tim. 1: 2. The same as Messiah.
- Chuzas** (the seer), Luke 8: 3. The house steward of Herod Antipas.

- Cilicia** (the land of Celiz), Acts 9: 30. A province in the southeast of Asia Minor.
- Circumcision** (cut around), Lev. 12: 3. A Jewish custom.
- Claudius** (lame), Acts 18: 2. Fourth Roman emperor; reigned from A.D. 41 to 54.
- Cleopas** (from Cleopatra), John 19: 25. One of the two disciples to whom Jesus talked on the way to Emmaus.
- Corban**, Matt. 15: 5. An offering to God.
- Colosse**, Col. 1: 2. A city of Phrygia in Asia Minor.
- Corinth**, Acts 18: 1-18. City of Greece, about forty miles west of Athens.
- Cornelius** (of a horn), Acts 10: 1. A Roman centurion of the Italian cohorts stationed in Caesarea.
- Crescens** (growing), 2 Tim. 4: 10. An assistant of Paul, said to have been one of the seventy disciples sent out by Christ.
- Crispus** (curled), Acts 18: 8. Ruler of Jewish synagogues at Corinth.
- Cummin**, Matt. 23: 23. Small plant with an aromatic flavor.
- Cyprus**, Acts 4: 36. An island in the Mediterranean Sea, about a hundred and forty miles long and sixty miles wide.
- Cyrene**, Acts 2: 10. The principal city of that part of Northern Africa which was anciently called Cyrenaica.
- Cyrus** (the son), 2 Chron. 36: 22. The founder of the Persian Empire.

D

- Damascus**, Acts 9: 11. One of the most ancient cities in the world, located in Syria.
- Daniel** (God is my judge), Dan. 1: 3. The fourth of "the greater prophets."
- Darius** (lord), Dan. 6: 1. The name of several kings of Media and Persia.
- David** (well beloved), 1 Sam. 16: 1. Youngest son of Jesse; second king of Israel.
- Deborah** (a bee), Gen. 35: 8; Judges 4: 5. Name of Rebekah's nurse; also a prophetess.
- Decapolis** (ten cities), Matt. 4: 25. A district east of the Jordan and south of the Sea of Galilee.
- Delilah** (languishing), Judges 16: 4-18. Delivered Samson to the Philistines.
- Demetrius** (belonging to Demeter), Acts 19: 24. A maker of silver shrines at Ephesus.
- Demas** (governor of the people), Col. 4: 14. Companion of Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome.
- Demoniac**, Matt. 12: 22. One possessing a demon.
- Denarius** (containing ten), Matt. 18: 28. A Roman silver coin, worth about sixteen cents.
- Derbe** (juniper), Acts 14: 20. City not far from Iconium.
- Deuteronomy** (the giving of the law the second time). Fifth book of the Bible.
- Diana** (Latin name), Acts 19: 24. The Ephesian goddess.
- Diotrephes** (nourished by Jove), 3 John 9. Nothing known of him.
- Dispersion** (scattered), James 1: 1. Applied to the Jews who lived out of Palestine.
- Dorcas** (gazelle), Acts 9: 36. A disciple raised from the dead by Peter at Joppa.
- Doubter**. One without faith.

E

- Easter** (passover), Acts 12: 4. Translated "Passover" in the Revised Version.
- Ebal** (stone), Deut. 11: 26-29. Mountain.
- Eden** (pleasure), Gen. 2: 8-14. The first residence of man.
- Edom** (red), Gen. 32: 3. Name given to Esau and his country.
- Egypt** (land of the Copts), Ex. 1: 14. Place where Israel was held in bondage.
- Egyptian** (native of Egypt), Acts 21: 38. An inhabitant of Egypt.
- Elder** (old man), Gen. 24: 2. Name applied to rulers of the city and officers of the church.
- Elijah** (Jehovah is my God), 1 Kings 17: 1. Prophet in the days of Ahab.
- Eliphaz** (God is his strength), Job 4: 1. The oldest and wisest of Job's friends.
- Elisabeth** (God is an oath), Luke 1: 36. Wife of Zacharias and mother of John the Baptist.
- Elisha** (God is my salvation), 1 Kings 19: 16. Prophet who succeeded Elijah.
- Elymas** (a wise man), Acts 13: 6. A sorcerer who opposed Paul.
- Endor** (fountain of Dor), 1 Sam. 28: 7. Home of the witch with whom Saul communed.
- Enoch** (dedicated), Gen. 4: 17. Walked with God and was translated.
- Epaphras** (lovely), Col. 1: 7. A fellow laborer and prisoner with Paul.
- Ephesus** (permission), Acts 19: 29. The capital of the Roman province of Asia.

Ephraim (double fruitfulness), Gen. 41: 50. Younger son of Joseph.
Epicureans (from Epicurus), Acts 17: 18. Those who believed in getting the greatest pleasure out of life.
Erastus (beloved), Acts 19: 22. One of Paul's attendants at Ephesus.
Esau (hairy), Gen. 25: 25. Twin brother of Jacob.
Esther (a star), Esth. 7: 3. Jewish wife of King Ahasuerus.
Etam (lair of wild beasts), Judges 15: 8. Place visited by Samson.
Ethiopia (burnt faces), Acts 8: 27. The country south of Egypt.
Eunuch (bed keeper), Acts 8: 34. A man deprived of his virility.
Eurodias (fragrance), Phil. 4: 2. Christian woman at Philippi.
Euraquilo, Acts 27: 14. Compounded from two words meaning east and north.
Eutychus (fortunate), Acts 20: 9. A youth of Troas who went to sleep and fell out the window. Paul restored him to life.
Eve (life), Gen. 2: 21. Name given to the first woman.
Exodus (a going out). Name given to the second book of the Bible.
Exorcist (casting out), Matt. 12: 27. One who pretended to cast out evil spirits.
Ezekiel (God is strong or God doth strengthen), Ezek. 1: 3. The third of the major prophets.
Ezra (help), Neh. 12: 1. Wrote the book which bears his name.

F

Felix (happy), Acts 24: 26. A Roman officer who held Paul in prison.
Festus (festival), Acts 24: 27. Roman officer who succeeded Felix.
First-born, Ex. 13: 12. First male born into the family, who inherited the name and property of the father.
First Fruits, Ex. 22: 29. First ripe fruit given to Jehovah.
Frankincense, Ex. 30: 34-36. A sacrificial fumigation.

G

Gabbatha (a platform), John 19: 13. Place where the judgment seat of Pilate was.
Gabriel (man of God), Luke 1: 19. The angel that appeared to Elisabeth and Mary.
Gadarenes (Gerasenes), Mark 5: 1. Place where Jesus healed two demoniacs.
Gaius (Latin name), Acts 19: 29. A Macedonian who accompanied Paul in his travels.
Galatia (land of the Gauls), Acts 18: 23. The central district of Asia Minor.
Galilean (an inhabitant of Galilee), Acts 2: 7. The people of the northern part of Palestine or province of Galilee.
Galilee (circuit), Luke 17: 11. The northern country of Palestine.
Gallio (Latin name), Acts 18: 12. The Roman proconsul of Achaia when Paul was at Corinth.
Gamaliel (recompense of God), Acts 5: 24. A noted teacher of the law in Jerusalem; Paul's teacher.
Gaza (the fortified), Acts 8: 26. One of the cities of the Philistines.
Gennesaret (garden of the princes), Matt. 14: 34. A name given to the fertile plains on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee.
Gentile (nation), Acts 11: 18. Any one who was not of the Jewish race.
Gergesenes (See Gadarenes).
Gethsemane (an oil press), Matt. 26: 36. Garden near Jerusalem.
Gerizim (cutter), Deut. 11: 26-29. Mountain in Ephraim.
Gibeah (a hill), Josh. 15: 57. Located in Benjamin.
Gideon (he that cuts down), Judges 6: 34. The fifth recorded judge.
Gilboa (a bubbling spring), 1 Sam. 28: 4. Mountain where Saul was killed.
Golgotha (skull), Matt. 27: 33. The Hebrew name of the spot where Christ was crucified.
Goliath (an exile), 1 Sam. 17: 4. The famous giant whom David killed.
Gomorrha (submersion), Gen. 14: 2-8. The city which was destroyed with fire from heaven.
Gospel (good message), Rom. 1: 16. Good tidings of joy.
Greece, Greeks, Grecians, Dan. 8: 21; Isa. 66: 19; Acts 20: 2. Names of the country and people who preceded the Roman Empire.

H

Habakkuk (embrace), Hab. 1: 1. Eighth in order of the minor prophets.
Hadad, Gen. 25: 15. An early king of Edom.
Hades (hell), Matt. 16: 18. Used in the revised version for "hell."
Hagar (flight), Gen. 16: 1. An Egyptian handmaid of Sarah, concubine to Abraham and the mother of Ishmael.
Ham (black), Gen. 14: 5. The name of one of the three sons of Noah.
Hannah (grace), 1 Sam. 1: 2. One of the wives of Elkanah, and mother of Samuel.

- Hazael** (whom God sees), 2 Kings 8: 7-15. A king of Damascus, anointed by Elisha.
- Heber** (alliance), Gen. 46: 17. Grandson of Asher.
- Hebrew** (from Eber, beyond, or on the other side), Gen. 14: 13. Posterity of Abraham.
- Hebron** (alliance), Josh. 15: 54. City about twenty miles south of Jerusalem.
- Hell** (Gehenna), Matt. 5: 22. Place of torment for the wicked.
- Hellenist** (Grecian), Acts 6: 1. Term applied to Greek-speaking Jews, or Grecian Jews.
- Herod** (hero like), Luke 3: 19. The Herod family were alien by race and Jewish in faith; Roman rulers over Palestine.
- Herodians** (from Herod), Matt. 22: 15. Party among the Jews who were supporters of the Herodian family.
- Herodias** (from Herod), Matt. 14: 8-11. Granddaughter of Herod the Great.
- Hezekiah** (Jehovah strengtheneth), 2 Kings 18: 5. Thirteenth king of Judah and son of Ahaz.
- Hierapolis** (holy city), Col. 4: 13. A city of Phrygia.
- Hiram**, 2 Sam. 5: 11. The king of Tyre, who sent workmen and material to help build the temple.
- Hittites** (descendants of Heth), Josh. 9: 1. One of the Canaanitish tribes.
- Hophni**, 1 Sam. 2: 12. One of the wicked sons of Eli.
- Horeb** (desert), Ex. 3: 1. A mountain. (See Sinai.)
- Hosanna** (save, pray), Matt. 21: 9. The cry of the multitude on Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem.
- Hosea** (salvation), 2 Kings 15: 30. One of the minor prophets.
- Hoshea** (salvation), Isa. 7: 16. Same as Hosea or Joshua.
- Hymeneus** (belonging to Hymen, the god of marriage), 1 Tim. 1: 20. He denied the true doctrine of the resurrection.

I

- Ichabod** (inglorious), 1 Sam. 4: 21. The son of Phineas and grandson of Eli.
- Iconium**, Acts 14: 1. Paul visited this city with Barnabas on his first missionary tour. Located north of Antioch, in Pisidia.
- Illyricum**, Rom. 15: 9. District lying along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea.
- Immanuel** (God with us), Matt. 1: 23. The name applied to Christ.
- Inn** (lodging place), Luke 2: 7. Similar to our rooming houses or hotels.
- Isaac** (laughter), Gen. 35: 27. The son of Sarah by Abraham.
- Isaiah** (Jehovah is salvation), Isa. 1: 1. One of the major prophets of the Old Testament.
- Ishmael** (may God hear), Gen. 16: 15. Son of Abraham by Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid.
- Israel** (persevere with God, prince of God), Gen. 32: 28. Name given to Jacob and the nation which came from the twelve tribes.
- Issachar** (there is a reward), Gen. 30: 18. The ninth son of Jacob; one of the twelve tribes.
- Italy**, Acts 18: 2. A well-known country.

J

- Jachin** (he doth establish), 1 Kings 7: 21. One of the two pillars which was set up in the porch of the temple.
- Jacob** (supplanter), Gen. 25: 26. Son of Isaac and Rebekah, twin brother of Esau.
- Jambres**, 2 Tim. 3: 8. One of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses.
- James** (the Greek form of "Jacob"), Matt. 10: 2. Son of Zebedee, brother of John, and one of the twelve apostles.
- Jannes**, 2 Tim. 3: 8. An Egyptian magician who joined Jambres in opposing Moses.
- Jason**, Acts 17: 5. Entertained Paul and Silas; attacked by Jewish mob.
- Jebusites** (from Jebus), Num. 13: 29. One of the Canaanitish tribes in Palestine.
- Jehoiada** (Jehovah knows), 2 Sam. 8: 18. High priest at one time.
- Jehoiakim** (Jehovah raises up), 2 Kings 24: 1, 2. Son of Josiah, king of Judah.
- Jehoshaphat** (Jehovah hath judged), 1 Kings 15: 24. Fourth king of Judah, son of Asa.
- Jehovah** (I Am, the Eternal Living One), Lev. 24: 15. One of the names given to God.
- Jehu** (Jehovah is he), 2 Kings 9: 2. Founder of the fifth dynasty of the kings of Israel.
- Jephunneh** (it will be prepared), Num. 13: 6. Father of Caleb, a good spy.
- Jeremiah** (whom Jehovah appoints), Jer. 1: 1. One of the major prophets.
- Jericho** (place of fragrance), Josh. 13: 16. First city destroyed by Joshua; its walls were thrown by faith.

- Jeroboam** (whose people are many), 1 Kings 11: 28. The first king of the divided kingdom of Israel.
- Jerusalem** (the city of peace), 2 Chron. 25: 23. The religious and political capital of the Israelites.
- Jesse** (wealthy), Ruth 4: 18-22. The father of David, and son of Obed, and the son of Boaz, by the Moabitess, Ruth.
- Jesus** (Jehovah is salvation), Matt. 1: 21. One of the names given to Christ, the Messiah.
- Jew** (a man of Judah), Mark 7: 3. A name applied to the members of the kingdom of Judah after the separation of the ten tribes; later applied to all Israelites.
- Joab** (Jehovah is father), 2 Sam. 14: 1-20. Nephew of David and captain of his hosts.
- Job**, Job 1: 1. Probably one of the patriarchs.
- Joel** (Jehovah is God), 1 Sam. 8: 2. One of the minor prophets.
- Johanna** (grace or gift of God), Luke 3: 27. The name of a woman.
- John the Baptist** (Jehovah's gift), Matt. 3: 1. A forerunner of Christ.
- John** (from Johanan), Luke 1: 11. Name given to son of Zacharias, later called "John the Baptist."
- Jonah** (dove), 2 Kings 14: 25. The fifth of the minor prophets.
- Joppa** (beauty), Acts 11: 5. A town on the southwest coast of Palestine.
- Jordan** (the descender), Josh. 2: 7. The river which bounds the eastern border of Palestine.
- Joseph** (may he add), Gen. 37: 2. The elder of the two sons of Jacob by Rachel.
- Joshua** (Jehovah is salvation), Ex. 17: 9. Moses' minister and successor as leader of the children of Israel.
- Jot** (the English form of the Greek iota, the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet), Matt. 5: 18. It was formed like an English comma (,).
- Jotham** (Jehovah is perfect), 2 Kings 15: 32. Son of King Uzziah.
- Jubilee** (joyful shout), Lev. 25: 11. Every fiftieth year was called the year of Jubilee.
- Judah** (praised), Gen. 37: 26. The fourth son of Jacob by Leah.
- Judas Iscariot** (Judas of Kerioth), John 6: 71. The name of the betrayer of Jesus.
- Julius** (fr. Greek), Acts 27: 1. A Roman centurion.
- Jupiter** (a father that helps), Acts 14: 12. The national god of the Hellenic race.
- Justus** (just), Acts 18: 7. A Christian at Corinth with whom Paul lodged.

K

- Kadesh**, **Kadesh-Barnea** (holy), Num. 13: 3. Place where Miriam died, and the farthest point reached in the wandering in the wilderness.
- Kidron**, or **Kedron** (turbid), Luke 22: 39. Name of brook or valley, southeast of Jerusalem.
- Kish** (a bow), 1 Chron. 23: 21. The father of Saul.
- Kohath** (assembly), Ex. 6: 16. One of the three sons of Levi.

L

- Laban** (white), Gen. 24: 10. Father of Leah and Rachel; father-in-law of Jacob.
- Laodicea** (justice of the people), Col. 4: 16. A town in the Roman province of Asia.
- Laodiceans**, Col. 4: 16; Rev. 3: 14. The inhabitants of Laodicea.
- Lazarus** (whom God helps), John 11: 1. Brother of Martha and Mary; lived at Bethany; raised from the dead by Jesus.
- Leah** (weary), Gen. 29: 16. Daughter of Laban, first wife of Jacob.
- Lebanon** (white), Deut. 1: 7. Mountain range north of Palestine.
- Lehi** (jawbone), Judges 15: 9. A place in Judah.
- Levi** (joined), Gen. 29: 34. Name of the third son of Jacob by Leah.
- Levite** (joined), Luke 10: 32. One of the tribe of Levi.
- Leviticus**. Third book of the Bible.
- Libertines** (from liberty), Acts 6: 9. Applied to Jews who had been taken prisoners and then set free.
- Lois** (agreeable), 2 Tim. 1: 5. The grandmother of Timothy.
- Lord's Day** (first day of the week), Rev. 1: 10. Corresponds to our Sunday.
- Lot** (veil, or covering), Gen. 11: 27. The son of Haran and nephew of Abraham.
- Lucius**, Acts 13: 1. One of the teachers of Antioch.
- Luke** (light-giving), Acts 13: 1; Col. 4: 14. Traveled with Paul and wrote the book that bears his name.
- Lycania** (landing of Lycanion, or wolf land), Acts 14: 11. A province in Asia Minor.

- Lydia** (strife), Acts 16: 14. First European convert at Philippi.
Lysias (fr. Greek), Acts 23: 26. A Roman officer.
Lystra, Acts 16: 1. One of the cities visited by Paul on his first and second missionary tours; home of Timothy.

M

- Macedonia** (extended land), 2 Cor. 8: 1. A province in Europe, north of Greece; Gospel first preached there by Paul.
Magdalene (inhabitant of Magadan), Matt. 27: 56. Mary Magdalene, present at crucifixion of Christ.
Magi (wise men), Matt. 2: 1-12. Those who visited the babe Jesus.
Malachi (my messenger), Author of the last book of the Old Testament.
Malchus (king, or kingdom), Matt. 26: 51. The name of the servant of the high priest whose right ear Peter cut off in the garden of Gethsemane.
Mammon (riches), Matt. 6: 24. Word used to personify wealth.
Manaen (comforter), Acts 13: 1. Foster brother of Herod and teacher and prophet in church at Antioch.
Manasseh (forgetting), Gen. 4: 51. The oldest son of Joseph.
Manna (What is this?), Ex. 16: 14-36. Food given the children of Israel in the wilderness.
Manoah (rest), Judges 13: 2. Father of Samson.
Mark, Acts 12: 12. One of the evangelists and writer of the book that bears his name.
Martha (a lady), Luke 10: 38. Sister of Lazarus and Mary.
Mary (a tear). A common name in the New Testament; mother of Jesus.
Matthew (gift of Jehovah), Matt. 10: 3. One of the twelve apostles and writer of the first book of the New Testament.
Matthias (gift of God), Acts 1: 26. The apostle elected to fill the place of the traitor, Judas.
Melchizedek (king of righteousness), Gen. 14: 18-20. King and priest of God; type of Christ as priest.
Melita (premeditate), Acts 28: 1. An island in the Mediterranean Sea.
Mercury (herald of the gods), Acts 14: 12. The god of commerce and bargains.
Meshach (guest of a king), Dan. 1: 4. One of Daniel's friends in captivity.
Mesopotamia (between the rivers), Deut. 23: 4. Country between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
Messiah (anointed), Matt. 20: 20. A prophetic name applied to Jesus.
Methuselah (man of the dart), Gen. 5: 25. The son of Enoch, and the oldest man recorded among the patriarchs.
Micah (who is like Jehovah), Judges 17: 5. The sixth in order of the minor prophets.
Midian (strife), Gen. 25: 2. A son of Abraham by Keturah.
Miletus, Acts 20: 15. City on the coast, thirty-six miles to the south of Ephesus.
Mint, Luke 11: 42. An herb which the Jews used as their tithe.
Mite, Mark 12: 41-44. A coin current in Palestine in the time of Jesus, worth about one-fifth of a cent.
Mizpah (a watchtower), Josh. 18: 26. A city in Benjamin.
Moab (of his father), Deut. 2: 11. Son of Lot by his eldest daughter.
Molech (king), Jer. 49: 1. The god of the Ammonites.
Moriah (chosen by Jehovah), Gen. 22: 2. The mount where Abraham offered Isaac.
Moses (drawn), Ex. 2: 5. The leader of God's people.
Myrrh, Ex. 30: 23. One of the ingredients of the oil of holy ointment.
Mysia (land of beech trees), Acts 16: 7. Region about the frontier of the provinces of Asia and Bithynia.

N

- Naaman** (pleasantness), 2 Kings 5: 18. Captain of the army of Syria; a leper, cleansed by Elisha.
Nabal (fool), 1 Sam. 25: 3. First husband of Abigail, one of David's wives.
Nadab (liberal), Num. 3: 2. Eldest son of Aaron.
Nain (beauty), Luke 7: 12. A village of Galilee.
Naomi (my delight), Ruth 1: 2. Wife of Elimelech and mother-in-law of Ruth.
Naphtali (wrestling), Gen. 30: 8. The fifth son of Jacob; son of Bilhah, one of Rachel's handmaids.
Nathan (a giver), 2 Sam. 7: 2. Name of the prophet who rebuked David.
Nathaniel (gift of God), John 1: 47. An early disciple of Jesus; some think the same as Bartholomew.
Nazarene (from Nazareth), Matt. 2: 23. A name sometimes given to Jesus.
Nazareth (the guarded one), Matt. 2: 23. A village in Galilee and home of Jesus.

- Nazarite (one separated), Num. 6: 1-21. Person who takes a peculiar vow to be set apart from others for the service of God. Sometimes spelled "Nazirite."
- Neapolis (new city), Acts 16: 11. First place Paul landed in Europe, about twelve miles from Philippi.
- Nebo (prophet), Num. 32: 3. Mountain on the east side of the Jordan.
- Nebuchadnezzar (may Nebo protect the crown), Jer. 46: 2-12. The most powerful of the Babylonian kings.
- Nehemiah (consolation of the Lord), Ez. 2: 2. One of the leaders of the first exposition from Babylon to Jerusalem.
- New Testament (new covenant). Name given to the Holy Scriptures after the advent of Christ.
- Nicodemus (conqueror of the people), John 3: 1. A Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews and teacher of Israel who visited Jesus at night.
- Nicolaitans (followers of Nicholas), Rev. 2: 6. A sect whose deeds were severely condemned.
- Niger (black), Acts 13: 1. One of the teachers and prophets in the church at Antioch.
- Nile (blue, dark), Gen. 15: 8. The principal river of Egypt.
- Nimrod (rebellion, or the valiant), Gen. 10: 8. A grandson of Ham.
- Nineveh (abode of Ninus), Gen. 10: 11. The capital of the ancient kingdom of Assyria.
- Ninevites, Luke 11: 30. The inhabitants of Nineveh, to whom Jonah preached.
- Numbers. The fourth book of the Old Testament.
- Nymphas (bridegroom), Col. 4: 15. A wealthy Christian in Laodicea.

O

- Old Testament. Name given to the Holy Scriptures before the advent of Christ.
- Olives, Mount of, 2 Sam. 15: 30; Acts 1: 12. Mount near Jerusalem.
- Omega, Rev. 1: 8. Last letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Onesimus (profitable, useful), Col. 4: 9. The name of the servant of Philemon.
- Ophir (abundance), 1 Chron. 29: 4. A seaport from which Solomon obtained gold for the temple.

P

- Padan-aram (tableland of Aram), Gen. 28: 2. Name applied to country which bordered on the Euphrates to distinguish it from the mountainous district.
- Palestine (land of strangers), Ex. 15: 14. One name for the land of Canaan.
- Palsy (contracted from paralysis), Matt. 12: 10-13. A disease which caused the loss of the power of motion.
- Pamphylia (of every tribe), Acts 13: 13. One of the provinces on the coast of Asia Minor.
- Paphos (boiling or hot), Acts 13: 6. City on Island of Cyprus, which Paul and Barnabas visited on first missionary journey.
- Parable (placed beside, a comparison), Matt. 24: 32. A form of teaching by comparison.
- Paradise (orchard of pleasure, pleasure ground), 2 Cor. 12: 4. A term applied figuratively to the celestial dwelling of the righteous.
- Parthians (from Parthia), Acts 2: 9. People who lived in Parthia.
- Passover (commemorating the death angel's passing over the houses of Israel in Egypt), Ex. 12: 1-51. The first of the three great annual feasts of the Jews, held on the fourteenth day of the first month.
- Patmos, Rev. 1: 9. Name of an island in the Aegean Sea, twenty miles south of Samos; place where John was banished.
- Patriarch (father of a tribe), Acts 7: 8. Name given to the head of a family or tribe in Old Testament times.
- Paul (small, little), Acts 23: 6. Name given to the apostle to the Gentiles.
- Pekah (open-eyed), 2 Kings 15: 20. Son of Remaliah.
- Peninnah (coral, or pearl), 1 Sam. 1: 2. One of Elkanah's wives.
- Pentateuch (five). Greek name given to the first five books of the Old Testament.
- Pentecost (fiftieth), Acts 2: 1. Feast which came fifty days after the Passover.
- Perea. A name of the country beyond the Jordan.
- Perga (fr. Greek), Acts 13: 13. A city in Pamphylia.
- Pergamos (height, elevation), Rev. 1: 11. A city of Mysia, about three miles to the north of the River Caicus.
- Pergamum, Rev. 1: 11. Same as Pergamos.
- Persia (pure, splendid), Ezek. 38: 5. Name given to an ancient empire.
- Peter (a rock or stone), John 1: 42. Name given to Simon, the brother of Andrew, one of the twelve apostles.
- Pharaoh, Ex. 1: 8. Common title of the kings of Egypt.
- Pharisees, Matt. 15: 7. A religious sect among the Jews. They believed in a resurrection of the dead.

- Philadelphia** (brotherly love), Rev. 3: 9. Town on the borders of Lydia and Phrygia.
- Philemon** (loving), Col. 4: 9. Name of Christian to whom Paul addressed his epistle in behalf of Onesimus.
- Philetus** (beloved), 2 Tim. 2: 17. Associated with Hymeneus.
- Philip** (lover of horses), John 1: 44. One of the twelve apostles.
- Philistines** (immigrants), Jer. 47: 4. One of the tribes that inhabited Caphtor, or Crete.
- Phinehas** (mouth of brass), 1 Sam. 1: 3. Son of Eli.
- Phebe** (radiant), Rom. 16: 1. The name of a Christian woman.
- Phoenicia** (land of palm trees), 2 Sam. 5: 11. Country on east coast of Mediterranean Sea.
- Phrygia** (dry, barren), Acts 16: 6. Name of a province in Asia Minor.
- Pilate** (armed with a spear), Luke 13: 1. Judge of Roman court who permitted Christ to be crucified.
- Pisgah** (peak), Num. 21: 20. Highest point of Mount Nebo.
- Pontus** (the sea), Acts 2: 9. Province of Asia Minor.
- Pretorium** (palace), Matt. 27: 27. Place where court was held.
- Priest**, Gen. 14: 18. One who officiated at the altar.
- Priscilla** (from Prisca, ancient), Acts 18: 26. Wife of Aquila.
- Prophet** (one who speaks for another), Ex. 15: 20. God's mouthpiece to the people.
- Proselyte** (a stranger, a newcomer), Matt. 23: 15. Name given by Jews to foreigners who accepted the Jewish religion.
- Proverbs** (a comparison), Num. 21: 27. Books supposed to have been compiled by Solomon.
- Psalm** (song, praise), Luke 20: 42. Song of praise.
- Publican** (Roman taxgatherer), Luke 3: 13. Name of one who gathered taxes for the Roman government.
- Pyrrhus**, Acts 20: 4. The father of Sopater of Berea.

Q

- Quartus** (fourth), Rom. 16: 23. A Christian of Corinth.
- Quaternion**, Acts 12: 4. A guard of four soldiers.

R

- Rabbi** (master), Matt. 23: 7. Title signifying "teacher."
- Raca** (fool), Matt. 5: 22. A term of reproach.
- Rachel** (ewe, or sheep), Gen. 29: 31. Younger daughter of Laban, and beloved wife of Jacob.
- Rahab** (fierceness, pride), Isa. 51: 9. A name sometimes given to Egypt.
- Rebekah** (ensnarer), Gen. 22: 33. Sister of Laban, wife of Isaac.
- Red Sea** (a seaweed resembling wool), Ex. 14: 2. Body of water crossed by Israelites.
- Rehoboam** (enlarger of the people), 1 Kings 14: 21. Son of Solomon and first king of Judah.
- Reign** (to rule), 2 Tim. 2: 12. To govern, to rule over.
- Reuben** (behold a son), Gen. 29: 32. Jacob's eldest son.
- Revelation**. Last book of the New Testament.
- Rhoda** (rose), Acts 12: 13. The name of a maid who announced Peter's arrival.
- Rome**, Rev. 17: 9. The name of a world empire.
- Rue**, Luke 11: 42. A garden plant titiable in the time of the Savior.
- Rufus** (red), Mark 15: 21. Name of an early Christian.
- Ruth** (a female friend), Ruth 1: 4. The Moabitess who became the wife of Boaz.

S

- Sabaoth** (armies), James 5: 4. Name applied to the Lord.
- Sabbath** (a day of rest), Ex. 16: 22. The seventh day of the week.
- Sabbath Day's Journey**, Acts 1: 12. About three-fourths of a mile.
- Sabbatical Year**, Ex. 23: 10. Each seventh year.
- Sadducees** (followers of Zadok), Matt. 3: 7. Religious sect opposed to the Pharisees.
- Salamis** (salt), Acts 13: 5. City in the eastern part of the Island of Cyprus.
- Salome** (peaceful), Matt. 27: 56. The wife of Zebedee.
- Samaria** (watch mountain), 1 Kings 16: 23. Name of a city thirty miles north of Jerusalem; also of the country surrounding it.
- Samaritan** (watch mountain, Samaria), Luke 10: 33. An inhabitant of Samaria.
- Samson** (like the sun), Judges 15: 20. One of the strongest men; one of the judges of Israel.
- Samuel** (asked of God), 1 Sam. 3: 1-18. The last judge of Israel.
- Sanhedrin** (a council chamber), Matt. 26: 57. The supreme court of the Jewish nation.

- Sapphira (bright color, beautiful), Acts 5: 1-11. Wife of Ananias.
 Sarah (princess), Gen. 20: 12. Wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac.
 Sarai (my princess), Gen. 11: 29. First name of Sarah.
 Sardis (red), Rev. 1: 11. A city of Asia Minor, and capital of Lydia.
 Satan (adversary), Matt. 16: 23. Name applied to the devil.
 Saul (desired), 2 Sam. 1: 23. Name of the first king of Israel; first name of the apostle Paul.
 Sceva (implement), Acts 19: 14. A Jew residing at Ephesus when Paul visited that city.
 Scribes (to write), 1 Kings 4: 3. Those who transcribed the law.
 Scythian, Col. 3: 11. Name applied to the people who lived north of the Black Sea.
 Septuagint (the seventy). The Greek Version of the Old Testament.
 Sergius Paulus, Acts 13: 7. Name of the proconsul of Cyprus.
 Sheba (an oath), 2 Sam. 20: 1-22. Name of queen who visited Solomon.
 Shechem (back or shoulders), Jno. 4: 5. A city of Samaria.
 Shem (name), Gen. 5: 32. The eldest son of Noah.
 Sheshbazzar, Ezra 1: 8, 11. Persian name given to Zerubbabel.
 Shiloh (place of rest), Judges 21: 19. A city of Ephraim.
 Shittim (the acacias), Num. 25: 1. Name of country opposite Jericho; also species of wood.
 Sidon (Zidon), Gen. 10: 15. The Greek form of the Phoenician name, Zidon.
 Silas (woody), Acts 15: 22. Traveling companion of Paul; same as Silvanus.
 Siloam (sent), John 9: 7. Name of pool in the days of Jesus.
 Simeon (heard), Gen. 29: 32. Second son of Jacob; common name among the Jews.
 Simon (hearing), Luke 4: 38. Another name for Peter.
 Sinai (thorny), Ex. 19: 1. Mountain where the law was given.
 Smyrna (myrrh), Rev. 2: 8-11. A city of Asia Minor, situated on Aegean Sea, forty miles north of Ephesus.
 Sodom (burning), Mark 6: 11. Ancient city of Syria, destroyed by fire.
 Solomon (peaceful), 2 Sam. 12: 24. David's son who succeeded him to the throne.
 Sopater (savior of his father), Acts 20: 4. One of the companions of Paul.
 Stephen (crown), Acts 6: 5. Name of one of the seven chosen at Jerusalem; the first Christian martyr.
 Susanna (a lily). One of the women who ministered to Jesus.
 Sycamore (mulberry), Amos 7: 14. A fruit tree in Palestine.
 Symeon (Simon), Acts 13: 1. A teacher and prophet in the church at Antioch.
 Synagogue (congregation), Matt. 13: 54. Place where the Jews met for worship.
 Syntyche (with fate), Phil. 4: 2. Female member of the church at Philippi.
 Syria, Judg. 10: 6. Name of country.
 Syrophenician, Mark 7: 26. A mixed race of people.

T

- Tabernacle (tent), Ex. 25: 9. Constructed by Moses as a place of worship.
 Tabitha (gazelle), Matt. 9: 25; Mark 5: 41. Also called "Dorcas."
 Tares (darnel), Matt. 13: 25. A weed similar to wheat in its early stages.
 Tarshish, Jonah 1: 3. South of Spain.
 Tarsus, Acts 9: 11. Chief town of Cilicia, home of Paul.
 Taverns, the Three (inn), Acts 28: 15. On the Appian road, where Paul lodged for a time.
 Temple, 1 Kings 7: 15-22. House built by Solomon for worship.
 Ten Commandments, Ex. 34: 28. The name given to the Decalogue.
 Tertullus (fr. Greek), Acts 24: 1. A Roman orator.
 Tetrarch, Matt. 14: 1. Name given to the governor of the fourth part of the country.
 Theophilus (friend of God), Luke 1: 3; Acts 1: 1. Person to whom Luke wrote his Gospel and Acts of Apostles.
 Thessalonica, Acts 17: 2. Town in Macedonia where Paul established a church; wrote two letters to the church.
 Thomas (twin), Matt. 13: 55. One of the apostles.
 Thyatira, Rev. 2: 20. A city on the borders of Mysia.
 Tiberias, John 6: 1. Another name given to the Sea of Galilee.
 Timnah (portion), Judges 14: 1. Concubine of Samson.
 Timothy (worshipping God), Acts 16: 1. Paul's companion. Paul wrote two letters to him.
 Titus (honorable), Gal. 2: 1. An early Christian to whom Paul wrote one letter.
 Transfiguration, Matt. 17: 1-13. The event in the earthly life of Christ which marked his glorified state.
 Troas, Acts 16: 8. A seaport of Asia Minor.
 Trogyllium, Acts 20: 15. A town in Asia Minor.

Trophimus (nutritious), Acts 21: 27. Accompanied Paul to Jerusalem.
Tychicus (fateful), Acts 20: 4. Companion of Paul on some of his journeys.
Tyrannus (sovereign), Acts 19: 9. Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus.
Tyre (a rock), Matt. 15: 21. City on the east coast of the Mediterranean.

U

Ur (light, or the moon city), Gen. 11: 28. The land of Abraham's nativity.
Uriah (light of Jehovah), 2 Sam. 23: 39. One of David's brave men.
Uzzah (strength), 2 Sam. 6: 6. Priest who touched the ark and died.

V

Version. A translation.
Vision, Luke 2: 25, 26. A revelation.
Vows, Gen. 28: 18-22. A solemn promise made to God to perform or to abstain from performing a certain thing.
Vulgate, The. The Latin version of the Bible.

W

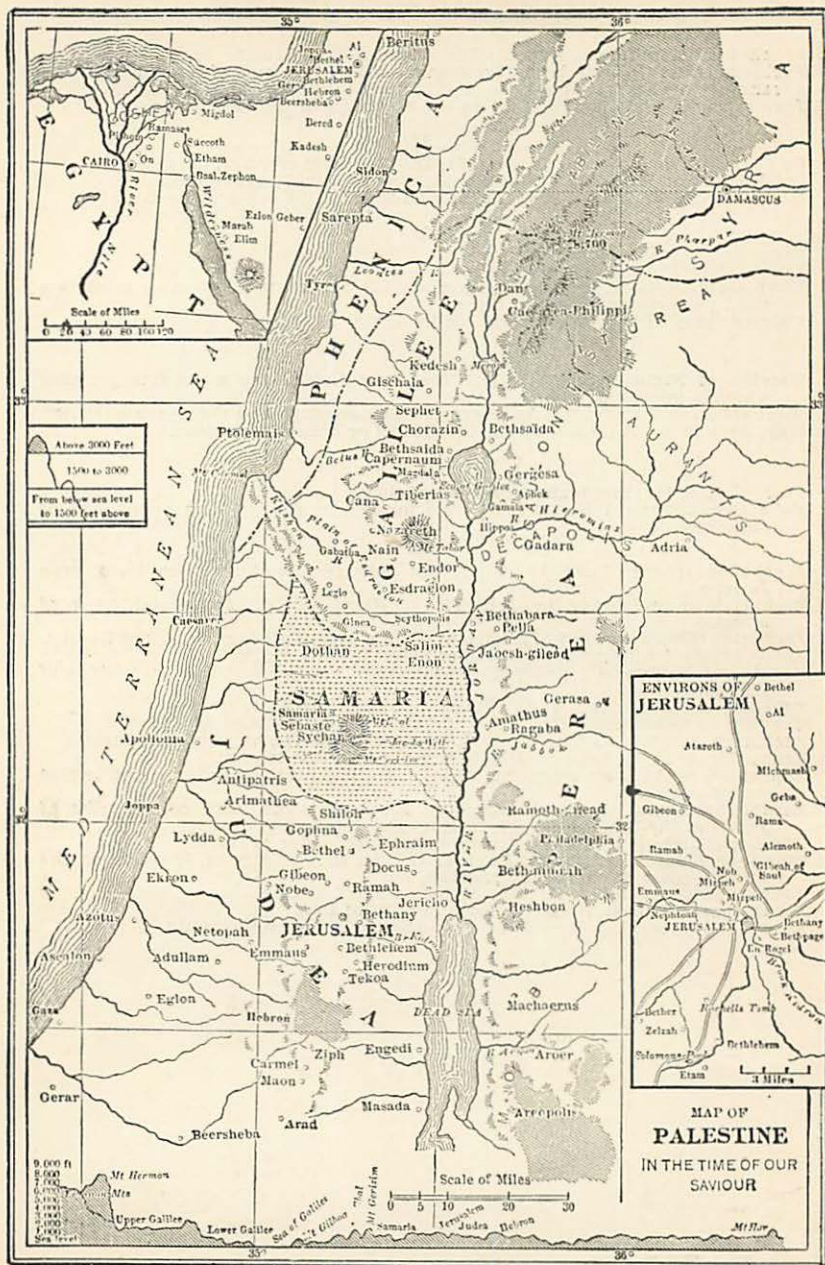
Watches of Night, 1 Sam. 11: 11. The Jews divided the night into military watches instead of hours.
Wave Offering, Ex. 29: 34. An offering which accompanied the peace offerings.
Way, Acts 19: 9. A term used for the Gospel or Plan of Salvation.

Y

Year, Gen. 1: 14. The highest division of time.
Yoke (subjection), 1 Kings 12: 4. An implement for working oxen; sign of authority.

Z

Zacchaeus (pure), Luke 19: 5. A tax collector, publican who lived near Jericho.
Zachariah (remembered by Jehovah), 2 Kings 10: 30. Fourteenth king of Israel.
Zacharias (Greek form of "Zachariah"), Luke 1: 5. Father of John the Baptist.
Zadok (just), 1 Chron. 24: 3. Name of priest in time of David.
Zebah and **Zalmunna** (deprived of protection), Judges 8: 5-21. Two kings of Midian.
Zebedee (my gift), Matt. 4: 21. Father of James and John.
Zebulun (a habitation), Gen. 30: 20. The tenth of the sons of Jacob.
Zechariah, Ex. 5: 1, 6. The eleventh in order of the twelve minor prophets.
Zenas, Tit. 3: 13. A believer who is described as "the lawyer."
Zephaniah (hidden by Jehovah), Zeph. 1: 1. The ninth in order of the twelve minor prophets.
Zerubbabel (born at Babel, Babylon), Ez. 6: 18. The head of the tribe of Judah at the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity.
Zeruiah (Balsam), 1 Sam. 26: 6. Mother of Joab, sister of David.
Zidon, or **Sidon**, Gen. 10: 15; Luke 6: 17. An ancient city of Phenicia on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.
Zophar (chirper), Job 2: 11. One of Job's three friends.
Zorah (hornet), Josh. 19: 41. A town in tribe of Dan.
Zuph (honeycomb), 1 Sam. 9: 5. A country in tribe of Benjamin.



FIRST QUARTER

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: STUDIES IN MATTHEW (Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

AIM: To learn from a study of the Gospel of Matthew the teachings of Jesus concerning the kingdom of heaven and to ascertain the significance of those teachings for the life of today, both in personal character and in social relationships.

Lesson I—January 7, 1940

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFESSION OF FAITH

Matt. 16: 13-24

13 Now when Jē'sūs came into the parts of Çæs-ā-rē-ā Phī-lip-pī, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?

14 And they said, Some say John the Bāp'tist; some, E-lī'jah; and others, Jēr-ē-mī'ah, or one of the prophets.

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

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

17 And Jē'sūs answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Sī'mōn Bār-Jō'nāh; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

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

19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

21 From that time began Jē'sūs to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jē-ru'sā-lēm, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

22 And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall never be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

24 Then said Jē'sūs unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."
(Matt. 16: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 53: 7-12.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

January 1.	M.....	The Christian's Confession (Matt. 16: 13-24)
January 2.	T.....	The Test of the Christian (1 John 2: 18-25)
January 3.	W.....	Confession unto Salvation (Rom. 10: 1-10)
January 4.	T.....	An Evidence of Unity with God (1 John 4: 7-15)
January 5.	F.....	The Confession of Peter and John (Acts 4: 7-12)
January 6.	S.....	The Cost of Confession (Matt. 16: 21-28)
January 7.	S.....	A Prophet's Confession (Isa. 53: 7-12)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably A.D. 30. As the writers of the Bible gave little attention to dates, we can give only approximate dates. Chronologists differ slightly, though not materially. Had it been necessary for us to know the exact dates, the writers of the Bible would have given them.

Place.—Near Cæsarea Philippi. This was a city of some importance, about one hundred and twenty miles north of Jerusalem. It had been known as Baniyas, or Paneas; but when Philip improved it, he changed its name to Cæsarea Philippi in honor of Cæsar and himself. It was situated near one of the sources of the Jordan. It is not, however, as some commentators state, the most northern point visited by our Savior; for he had visited the regions of Tyre, and passed through Sidon. (Matt. 15: 21-28; Mark 7: 24-31.) Sidon was about twenty miles farther north than Cæsarea Philippi, as may be seen by consulting the map.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples. We know not how many disciples were with him in his journeys; we know that others besides the apostles accompanied him in his journeys. (Acts 1: 21, 22.)

Lesson Links.—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written to acquaint us with the person, life, teaching, and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might so believe in him as to become his devoted servants. To know him is to love him, and to be willing to serve him. "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John 14: 21-24.) Hence, there are two classes of people—those who love the Lord, and therefore keep his commandments; and those who do not love him, and therefore do not keep his commandments.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Opinions of the People About Jesus (Verses 13, 14)

The teaching and the miracles of Jesus had given him great fame. He had stirred the people; they could not treat him with indifference—they could not dismiss him with a shrug of the shoulders. They were either for him or they were against him. Many who were favorable to him had no just conceptions as to who he was or what his mission was. Apparently Jesus made this visit up into the regions of Cæsarea Philippi to get away from the growing bitterness of the scribes and Pharisees, so that he could quietly teach his disciples some needed lessons. Jesus came into the world to save sinners; he could not do so unless they had the right attitude toward him. He could not be indifferent as to what the people thought about him. It was especially important that his apostles had formed a fixed idea as to who he was. To lead them up to a definite confession of their faith in him, he first inquired of them, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" The people had formed various opinions about him. "Some say John the Baptist." Herod had advanced that opinion. "At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist;

he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him." Perhaps others shared Herod's opinion. Others thought he was Elijah, or Jeremiah, or some other of the prophets. They were merely expressing their opinions. They knew that he was no ordinary man, but they did not believe that he was the Son of God. Their expressions compared with the confession of Peter, illustrates the difference between opinion and faith.

Faith Confessed (Verses 15, 16)

Jesus had been training his disciples for the great work of preaching the gospel to the whole world. They could not do this if they had no higher conception of him than did the masses of the people. They must have more than a favorable opinion of him; they must have an abiding faith in him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. He would test them with a question; their answer to the question would determine their fitness for the work for which he had so patiently trained them. They had told Jesus what the people said. "But who say ye that I am?" That question called for a definite answer. Peter, always ready for immediate action, answered for all: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was an intelligent expression of faith, and not of a mere opinion. The disciples had seen his mighty works, and had heard his matchless teaching, and they knew the goodness of his character. With open hearts they had weighed the evidence, and were fully persuaded that he was the Messiah; and they gladly confessed their faith in him. The truth that Peter confessed—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the central truth of the Bible, the foundation upon which the whole structure of Christianity rests. If Peter's confession is not true, the Bible is a meaningless book, and Christianity is a huge and baseless fabrication. An affirmative answer to the question, "Do you believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God?" means much. It is an avowal that one believes that Jesus is the Son of God in a special sense, and that he is the anointed prophet, priest, and king. He, in his own person, is the Christ. If, as some say, it takes Jesus and the church to constitute the Christ, then Jesus himself is not the Christ, and Peter's confession did not express the whole truth!

"I Will Build My Church" (Verses 17, 18)

While the Messiah had to come of the seed of Abraham, through the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, the mere fact that Jesus came in that way did not prove him to be the Christ, for many others had the same fleshly connection. There was need that God point him out, or reveal him, to be the Christ. This had been done in several ways—God had said at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John and all present had heard that voice. God had told John how he would know when he had baptized the Christ. John told the people about this, and added, "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1: 29-34.) The mighty miracles and signs which God did by him had been further testimony that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. As a result of these testimonies the disciples

believed that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And that great truth is the foundation on which Jesus said he would build his church. It is the only foundation on which a church of Jesus Christ can be built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3: 11.) That great truth is the foundation of the church, the foundation of all our hopes. Hence, the church was not built on Peter.

The Church then Future.—"I will build my church." The language shows clearly that the church had not then been built. It could not therefore have been built in the days of Abraham nor of John the Baptist. The foundation for the church had not yet been laid; for preaching Jesus as the Christ is laying the foundation, and they were not yet allowed to preach him as the Christ. (Matt. 16: 20; 1 Cor. 3: 10, 11.) The foundation was first laid in Jerusalem on Pentecost when Peter first declared that Jesus had been made both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2: 33-36.) There and then the church had its beginning. Against this church the gates of Hades would not prevail—never prevail against its foundation, nor its being built, nor its continuance. To prevail at either point would be the destruction of the church, and that would never be.

Keys of the Kingdom (Verses 19, 20)

Keys are a symbol of authority. Keys were not given to the apostles to enable them to open and to lock up something; they were the authority conferred upon the apostles to bind and to loose, as the language clearly shows: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." There is nothing in this to resemble locking and unlocking doors. The same authority was given to all the apostles. (John 20: 23.) Paul, though called much later, had as much authority as any other apostle. "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostle." (2 Cor. 11: 5.) "For in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles." (2 Cor. 12: 11.) And yet, in and of themselves, they had no authority. They were merely the mouthpieces for the Holy Spirit. (Luke 24: 46-49; Acts 1: 4-8; 2: 4.) The Holy Spirit in them did the talking—did the binding and the loosing. Hence, they, as inspired apostles, spoke with authority on all matters pertaining to the whole scheme of redemption. But they were not yet prepared to announce Jesus as the Christ, nor had the time come for that announcement. "Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ." That truth would be first announced when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection (Verse 21)

Previous to this Jesus had given some intimations of his approaching death, but it seems that the disciples did not understand him. (See Matt. 12: 38-40; Mark 2: 20; John 2: 19-22; 3: 14.) Now he tells them plainly. The elders, chief priests, and scribes constituted the ruling class in Jerusalem—of these he must suffer many things besides his death. They would persecute him, slander him, revile

him, abuse him, unjustly condemn him, and then deliver him up to Pilate to be crucified. "And the third day be raised up." Mark, in reporting this same speech, used the expression, "and after three days rise again." This shows that with the Jews "the third day," and "after three days" meant the same thing.

Peter Rebukes Jesus—Jesus Rebukes Peter (Verses 22, 23)

It seems that the disciples, with the other Jews, did not believe the Messiah would be killed, but that he would abide forever. (John 12: 32-34.) None of them had understood the prophecies concerning him. Peter, believing him to be the Messiah, and believing that the Messiah would not be killed, rebuked Jesus, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee." This shows that Peter's knowledge of the person, plans, and purposes of Jesus was still very imperfect. Had he fully grasped the significance of the confession he had just made, he would have known that nothing would happen to Jesus save as God had planned it, and that anything Jesus foretold would certainly come to pass.

Adversary.—"Get thee behind me, Satan." The word translated "Satan" means "accuser," "slanderer," or "adversary." For these reasons the name is applied to the devil, but in this place it likely means only that Peter was an adversary—he was putting himself in the way of the plans of Jesus. In opposing what Jesus said must come to pass in Jerusalem, he was a stumbling block, a hindrance, to Jesus. "For thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Peter's mind still ran along worldly lines. He thought the Messiah would triumph over his enemies without the suffering of death, and establish a great world empire. He minded the things of men—had in mind a kingdom like men have. For having such thoughts, Jesus rebuked him. In spite of that rebuke some today have the idea Peter had about the kingdom.

Coming After Christ (Verse 24)

"If any man would come after me." Hence, there must be first a willingness—a desire—to follow Christ. "Let him deny himself." From Mark we learn that Jesus was talking to the multitude as well as to his disciples. To deny one's self means more than to give up one's life of ease and comfort and self-indulgence. He must give up his own ways, his own notion of how to live, and make a complete surrender of himself to the Lord. Men like to have their own way about things, and herein is perhaps the hardest part of self-denial. "And take up his cross." It is said that the condemned man had to carry his own cross to the place of execution, suffering the taunts and jeers of the people along the way. The most hardened criminal must have felt the sting of it. So the cross is a symbol, not only of death, but of shame and reproach. The world persecutes the Christian and scoffs at him—that cross he must bear; he must not bear it grudgingly and rebelliously, nor even in despair, as did the condemned criminal, but voluntarily, willingly, even though it leads to death. "And follow me." Jesus left us an example to follow. (1 Pet. 2: 21.) And we must follow him in his teaching also. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." (1 John 2: 6.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

An opinion that Jesus was a great man and a great teacher is not enough; we must believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

There are difficulties to overcome in living the Christian life; and so there are in any worth-while undertaking. "The way of the cross leads home."

But does the way of the cross lead to death also? What of it. No matter into what channel you cast your lot in life, the end of that channel is death.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Faith and opinion.

What we must believe.

The establishment of the church.

The church and the kingdom.

Following Christ.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Discuss the lessons links.

Verses 13, 14

Discuss the opinions of the people.

Why could not the people be indifferent toward Jesus?

Verses 15, 16

Why must the disciples have more than a favorable opinion of Jesus?

Who did they say he was?

Discuss the meaning of the confession Peter made.

How had this truth been revealed to Peter?

What is the foundation of the church?

Verses 17, 18

Was the church then built?

When was the foundation first laid?

Would the church be destroyed?

Verses 19, 20

What do keys signify?

What shows that they here refer to authority?

Show that all the apostles had the same authority.

What enabled them to exercise authority?

What charge did he give the disciples?

Verse 21

What did Jesus then foretell?

Discuss verse 21.

Verses 22, 23

Why did Peter rebuke Jesus?

What rebuke did Jesus give Peter?

In what sense was Peter an adversary?

What was his idea of the Messiah and his kingdom?

Verse 24

Discuss each item in verse 24.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson II—January 14, 1940

THE PROBLEM OF FORGIVENESS

Matt. 18: 21-35

21 Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?

22 Je'sus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded

him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest.

29 So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due.

31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me:

33 Shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due.

35 So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."* (Matt. 6: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 32: 1-5.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

January 8.	M.	The Problem of Forgiveness (Matt. 18: 21-35)
January 9.	T.	God Forgives Us (Eph. 4: 25-32)
January 10.	W.	Forgiveness Enjoined (Mark 11: 20-25)
January 11.	T.	The Glory of the Christian (Prov. 19: 1-11)
January 12.	F.	Joseph Forgives His Brothers (Gen. 50: 15-21)
January 13.	S.	Stephen Forgives His Enemies (Acts 7: 54-60)
January 14.	S.	The Blessedness of Forgiveness (Psalm 32: 1-5)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably A.D. 30.

Place.—Capernaum, a city of some importance in its day. It was situated on the north or the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus was rejected at Nazareth he made his home at Capernaum. Here he did much teaching and performed many great miracles, but it seems that the people generally did not believe on him. Because of their unbelief and wickedness, Jesus said, "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. 11: 23, 24.) So complete was the destruction of Capernaum that its exact location has not been determined.

Persons.—Jesus and Peter. However, his use of the plural forms of the pronoun of the second person shows that he was addressing all the disciples who were present. (See verse 35.) The lesson applies to all Christians from that time on.

Lesson Links.—The present lesson grew out of some teaching Jesus had just delivered to his disciples. The student should read the first twenty verses of the chapter. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear

thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Verse 15.) This refers to a personal offense, and not to bad conduct in general. "If thy brother sin against thee"—if he does you a personal wrong. If you cannot in a private talk lead him to see that he has sinned against you, or cannot induce him to make amends, take two or three others with you, and try again. They may be able to influence the offender; if not, they are witnesses that you have tried and failed to save the brother from his error. The effort is to save the offender, and not merely to vindicate self. When your efforts have failed, tell it to the church. The church is then to make an effort to induce the offender to make amends, as this language shows: "If he refuse to hear the church also." In that case there is to be no further fellowship with him. In all cases of personal offense these directions should be followed; but let us not pervert this teaching by trying to make it apply to bad conduct in general, or to false teaching, when no personal offense has been given.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Peter's Question (Verse 21)

In the lesson concerning what an offended brother is to do when he is sinned against, it is clearly implied, that, if the offended brother can induce the other to make amends, he is to forgive the offender. Peter so understood the matter; hence the question: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" Peter seems to have thought that there should be a limit to the number of times this forgiveness should be given. It is stated that the Jewish Rabbins held that forgiveness must be extended to one who confessed his fault, but this was limited to three repetitions of the offense. Peter had an idea that the Savior's rule would insist on still greater forbearance.

"Until Seventy Times Seven" (Verse 22)

Seventy times seven is four hundred ninety. It is not likely that one person would sin so many times against another brother. The language shows that the forgiveness is to be repeated times without limit. Luke reports Jesus as saying, "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17: 3, 4.) Some sins are strictly between a man and his maker; we cannot forgive such sins—only God can do that. We can forgive personal offenses, if the offender repents. There can be no forgiveness without repentance. To forgive is to regard the person as free from guilt, and that cannot be done so long as the person is at heart guilty. God does not forgive the sinner unless he repents; and he does not require us to try to be better and more merciful than he is. But verses 15-17 show us that we are to seek to bring the offender to repentance. In so doing we are imitating God, for he seeks to bring all sinners to repentance, so that he can forgive them. We may overlook many things; but when the offense is of such a nature that we cannot ignore it, there can be no forgiveness without repentance. And if the offending party cannot be induced to repent, "let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican."

A Helpless Debtor (Verses 23-25)

In this parable the king is an absolute monarch; he has power to do what he will with his servants. He had a day of reckoning with his servants. These servants must have been the men he had placed in charge of the various provinces of his government; for a mere household servant would not become indebted to his lord to the extent of many millions of dollars. Among these servants was one that had to be brought before the king; he did not come willingly, for he owed the king a sum equal to many millions of dollars. If this servant had charge of a division of the kingdom, he might collect and squander taxes to that amount. But it was all gone now—he had nothing with which to pay. The parable represents the relation of the sinner and God. God is an absolute monarch; the debtor of the parable represents the helplessness of the sinner—he has nothing with which to satisfy the demands of divine justice. The king's command that the debtor and his family be sold and payment to be made is in harmony with the custom of the times. Even now a man's family must frequently suffer greatly for his sins.

The King Forgives the Servant (Verses 26, 27)

The debtor servant's case seemed hopeless. He felt helpless and humble. According to the customs of that time and country, he fell down before the king to make his plea for mercy. He knew that the king could do with him as he pleased. It was not a time for him to speak idly. He must have really felt that he could in time pay back all he owed the king, though it is not likely that he could have done so. His earnest plea touched the heart of the king. "And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." If the Lord were not full of compassion toward the helpless sinner, if he did not extend mercy to the condemned sinner, there would be no hope for any of us; but "the Lord is full of pity, and merciful." (James 5: 11.)

The Forgiven Servant Shows no Mercy (Verses 28-30)

Many people are prone to be exacting of others, even after they have needed and obtained great mercy. The servant of this parable is a fair example of this human weakness. A fellow servant owed him an amount equal to about seventeen dollars. He hunted up this fellow servant, and took him by the throat—throttled him—saying, "Pay what thou owest." This fellow servant made the same plea which he himself had made to the king, but he who had obtained so much mercy now showed no mercy. It seems that one who knew so well what it was to need mercy would have gladly showed mercy, but he was coldhearted and exacting. He cast the debtor into prison, "till he should pay that which was due." And that act looked like spite work, for what chance did the man have in prison to earn money with which to pay a debt? It is evident that it gave this unmerciful man more satisfaction to punish a fellow servant than to collect the small debt.

A Sad Ending (Verses 31-34)

Though men are not always as fair and square in their dealings with others as they should be, they dislike to see a grasping scoundrel oppress another man. When the other servants of the king saw what this man had done, "they were exceeding sorry." Doubtless they all knew that the king had showed him great mercy in forgiving him of a vast debt. They were so stirred up about the matter, that they told the king what had been done. The wrath of the king was stirred up. He called this servant to him, and called him a wicked servant. He then gave expression to a sentiment, or principle, that should influence all men in their dealings with their fellow men: "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?" This servant was acting within his legal rights, and yet he was wicked in so doing—having received great mercy, he was not willing to show mercy to others. And as he had sown, so would he reap. "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due." This amounted to a life sentence, for in the hands of the tormentors he would never be able to pay. The student should not lose sight of the fact that Jesus gave this lesson to show us how necessary it is that we forgive any penitent brother who has sinned against us.

The Conclusion (Verse 35)

In this instance Jesus makes his own application of the parable. On this verse and the lesson of the parable, McGarvey has this to say: "The comparison has reference only to the last act of the king, that of delivering the unforgiving servant to the tormentors. The heavenly Father will so deliver all his disciples who do not from their hearts forgive their offending brethren. This is the chief lesson of the parable; but in order to reach this lesson the Savior had depicted to his hearers, by the conduct of the king and that of the unforgiving servant, God's forbearance toward us and our severity toward one another. Our sins against God, for which we can make no reparation, and which are freely forgiven us, are like the ten thousand talents, while sins committed against us, which we are so unwilling to forgive, are like the fifteen dollars. This is a truthful representation of human habits, and at the same time a cutting satire on Peter's idea of forgiveness.

"We are not to infer, from the fact that the king retracted the forgiveness first granted, that God will do so with us. Our sins, once forgiven, are remembered no more. (Heb. 8: 12.) This, then is not a significant part of the parable, but it is introduced because it is what a heathen king under such circumstances would be likely to do, and Jesus paints the picture true to life. It is nevertheless true, that if a man once delivered from sin, turn back to it again, his condition is made worse than if his former sins had not been forgiven. (2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) The man who has been forgiven becomes a sinner again when he refuses to forgive another. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6: 5.) "For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment."

(James 2: 13.) "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt 5: 7.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

Much is said about the duty of forgiveness, and rightly so; but there is much to be said about the person who needs forgiveness. Since it is your duty to forgive a brother, it is his duty to make it as easy as possible for you to forgive him.

Few people are willing, or know how, to make an apology, or how to ask to be forgiven. They know they have done a brother wrong, but are too stubborn to acknowledge it and to ask for forgiveness. And frequently a supposed apology is more of an effort at self-justification than an apology.

And sometimes when a person makes an humble apology, and does all he can to right a wrong, the offended person professes to forgive, but does it in such a way as to show that he does not really forgive. Such pretended forgiveness is an insult to God and man. Were it not so serious, a pretended apology followed by a pretended forgiveness would be comical.

It is not well to cultivate a sensitive spirit. Try to look on the favorable side of what the other person says or does. Perhaps the other person had no thought of injuring you or hurting your feelings. To put the worst construction on everything other people do and say is to be at the boiling point all the time. A big hearted person does not see evil in everything other people say and do.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

What forgiveness means.

Is forgiveness conditional?

How alien sinners obtain forgiveness.

How erring Christians obtain forgiveness.

What God has done to save man.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Give a description of Capernaum and its fate.

What evidence that others besides Jesus and Peter were present?

Give directions as to how to settle personal difficulties.

Verse 21

Why would Peter ask the question about forgiveness?

What plan did the Jewish Rabbins have about forgiveness?

Verse 22

How often did Jesus say an offended person must forgive the offender? On what condition was forgiveness to be granted?

What is forgiveness?

Can there be forgiveness where there is no repentance?

What is the duty of the offended toward the offender?

Verses 23-25

Discuss verses 23-25.

Verses 26, 27

What effect did the king's decree have on the servant?

What is the condition of the sinner in the sight of God?

What plea did the servant make to the king?

How did it affect the king?

Verses 28-30

Discuss verses 28-30.

Verses 31-34

What effect did the servant's conduct have on the other servants?

What did the king then do?

Verse 35

Discuss verse 35.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson III—January 21, 1940

A NEW STANDARD OF GREATNESS

Matt. 20: 17-28

17 And as Jē'sūs was going up to Jē-ru'sā-lēm, he took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way he said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Jē-ru'sā-lēm; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death,

19 And shall deliver him unto the Gēn'tiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify; and the third day he shall be raised up.

20 Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zēb'ē-dēe with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wouldst thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom.

22 But Jē'sūs answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, We are able.

23 He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren.

25 But Jē'sūs called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gēn'tiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

26 Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister;

27 And whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 5: 1-8.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

January 15.	M.	True Greatness (Matt. 20: 17-28)
January 16.	T.	Humility in Prayer (Luke 18: 9-14)
January 17.	W.	Humility in Service (1 Pet. 5: 1-7)
January 18.	T.	A Parable of Humility (Luke 14: 7-11)
January 19.	F.	"The Reward of Humility" (Prov. 22: 1-9)
January 20.	S.	Christ Our Example (John 13: 12-20)
January 21.	S.	The Mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-11)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31.

Place.—Perea, the country along the east side of the river Jordan.

Persons.—Jesus, Salome, James and John, and the other apostles.

Lesson Links.—Jesus with his disciples had left Galilee to be at Jerusalem at the time of the gathering of the Jews for the Feast of the Passover. He was journeying down on the east side of the Jordan River, the route usually traveled by the Jews of Galilee in going up to Jerusalem. He must have traveled slowly, for he did much teaching along the way, and also performed many miracles. The beginning of this journey is recorded in Matt. 19: 1. So far as the record shows, the most striking lessons taught on this journey, previous to our present lesson are: (1) his lesson on divorce and remarriage (19: 3-12); (2) the lesson on riches (19: 16-29); (3) the parable of the vineyard (20: 1-16).

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jesus Again Foretells His Death (Verses 17-19)

Vast crowds attended the annual feasts of the Jews. Naturally kinsmen and friends would go in groups for company and for protection against the numerous bands of robbers that infested the country. As the people who lived farthest away from Jerusalem would have to begin their journey earlier than those living nearer, it can be easily seen that these groups would be augmented along the way. In such crowds Jesus would have no opportunity to talk to his disciples about matters that the public was not prepared to hear. The apostles must be prepared as far as possible for what was in store for him at Jerusalem. So, along the way Jesus took the twelve disciples apart, and told them what would occur in Jerusalem. "The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes." That would be the work of Judas Iscariot, and yet it is not likely that Judas had at this time formed that purpose. These chief priests and scribes would condemn him to death. They were the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews. They would condemn him to death, but under Roman law they could not execute the sentence of death. "And shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify." The record of the betrayal, trials, and crucifixion shows the exact fulfillment of this remarkable prophecy of Jesus. But there was also a brighter note in what Jesus said: "and the third day he shall be raised up." And this statement was also fulfilled. Though Jesus had spoken so plainly, it seems that what he said made no special impression on the minds of the apostles. Plain truth has little, or no effect, on those who have their minds fully set along other lines.

An Ambitious Request (Verses 20, 21)

The mother of the sons of Zebedee was Salome. (Compare Matt. 27: 56 and Mark 15: 40.) Her sons were James and John; with them she came to Jesus, "worshipping him"—bowing down before him. The parallel passage in Mark says, "And there came near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee." Salome did the talking; James and John were making the request through their mother. No doubt she was ambitious for her sons—most mothers are—and was willing to do what she could to promote what she considered their interests. The request was made in a childish way; they thought they could inveigle Jesus into promising to give them anything they wanted and then they would tell him what it was. They wanted him to sign a blank check, so to speak, and then they would fill in what they wanted. Had they known Jesus, as it seems to us that they should have known him, they would have known that they could not catch him in such a trap as that. Their method of seeking to gain what they wanted was no credit to their estimate of Jesus. But Jesus did not directly rebuke them for their low estimate of him, but merely asked what was wanted. Salome promptly answered, "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom." In a kingdom a seat at the right hand of the

king was the place of highest honor, a seat at the king's left hand was the next place of highest honor. Hence, James and John wanted the chief places of honor in the kingdom. They thought of his kingdom as a kingdom of the world, a material kingdom, after the fashion of other kingdoms. They wanted to push themselves in ahead of the other apostles. It is hard to understand how John has come to be pictured as a quiet and meek sort of person. John did write much about love; and it may be that people, mistaking what love really is, have thought of John as an amiable sort of person without much spirit; but there must have been a lot of vim and fire about him and James, or Jesus would never have named them "Sons of thunder," nor would they have wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans of a certain village, who would not receive Jesus. (Luke 9: 51-55.) John possessed a warm heart, and Jesus therefore loved him.

"We Are Able" (Verses 22, 23)

"Ye know not what you ask." Their request had grown out of ignorance and selfish ambition. They wanted places of power in a kingdom of their own imagination. They thought they knew the kind of kingdom that was to be, but they did not. Had they known the nature of the kingdom and what was before them, they would not have made such a request. But with a full revelation of God's plan before us, and with all these years to learn it, many of us show as much ignorance in our prayers as did James and John. And apparently some are as ignorant today in their ambitions as were James and John. No man who really knows what Christianity is wants to rule things in the church. And yet many churches are injured, and some are ruined, by the unholy ambition of some to rule. They want the chief places—they want to direct things. Preachers are not always blameless in the matter; this is true when one wants to be looked up to as a leading preacher.

A Searching Question.—Jesus raised a question that they certainly were not expecting: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" In this figurative use of the word "cup" it refers to one's portion in life. It sometimes means blessings, as when David said, "My cup runneth over"; it sometimes means sorrow, suffering, and tragedy, as Jesus here used it. Jesus referred to the suffering of death. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed that this cup might pass from him. The same question in another form, as reported by Mark: "Or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Jesus here refers to his trial and crucifixion as a baptism, because in them he would be completely overwhelmed; the figure is employed because in real baptism a person is completely overwhelmed. If baptism had been only the sprinkling of a little water on a person's head, Jesus would never have referred to the awful suffering he was about to undergo as a baptism; for it was not a mere sprinkling of suffering—he was completely overwhelmed with suffering—even to the most agonizing death. Are you, James and John, able to undergo all this? "We are able." They, of course, did not know how much suffering Jesus would pass through. If they were a little rash and overconfident in their avowal, too many today are lacking in confidence. One grows weary of hearing, "we are not

able," "it cannot be done," etc. Jesus assured James and John that sufferings similar to his awaited them, but that places in the kingdom were for those for whom they were prepared.

The Other Apostles Were Indignant (Verse 24)

The indignation felt by the other apostles was natural; they felt that James and John were trying in an unfair way to get an advantage over them. Men banded together on an equal footing in any enterprise become indignant if some of their number begin to scheme for an advantage. James and John, losing sight of the fact that they should conduct themselves in such a way as to promote good fellowship, tried to gain an advantage over the others, and the others resented it. Such scheming sometimes takes place in the church, and always results in an injury to the spirit of good fellowship that should prevail in churches. The man who, like Diotrephes, loves to have the pre-eminence among the brethren is a menace to a church.

Greatness Through Service (Verses 25-27)

If there be those who think that the words in the latter part of verse 23 imply that there would be places of high honor and authority in the kingdom of Christ, the contents of the verses now under consideration should dispel that thought. There were such places of honor and authority in the kingdoms of the Gentiles, and those holding such positions exercised authority over the people. What Jesus said about the conditions that prevailed in the Gentile kingdoms was a reminder to James and John that what they wanted was just such things as the heathens practiced; and that reminder would help to prepare them the better to accept what he was about to say about the conditions that would prevail in his kingdom. His kingdom would not be like the kingdoms of the heathen nations. "Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister." A "minister" is a "waiting man" or "woman"—one who serves. People have obscured the meaning of the word minister by drifting into the habit of thinking that a minister is a preacher. A preacher should be a minister, a servant; but too often he is a ruler—too often he manages the affairs of the church. Too often he outlines the plans and calls on others to carry them out. The other members thus become his ministers. All of the children of God should be ministers. "And whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant"—your bond servant. "First" here does not refer to time, but to rank or importance. The most important person is the one who renders the best service. That is a universal truth, though it is not generally so regarded by men. The washerwoman, the scrubwoman, and the garbage man are more important in any town or city than the society butterfly or the ranking clubwoman or the man who lives off the income of money gained by his parents. In all the affairs of men, service is the important thing, whether we recognize it or not. And certainly that principle holds good in the kingdom of heaven. And service can be rendered in so many ways, that no one needs to complain that he has nothing to do. There are sick people that need attention, the poor that need food and clothing, and ignorant people that need teaching. Do such service as is needed

in the name of Christ, and great will be the reward in heaven. The kind of service we render determines whose servants we are. "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6: 16.) "Through love be servants one to another." (Gal. 5: 13.) "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (1 Pet. 5: 5.) "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." (Luke 17: 10.) Nothing we do brings any profit to the Lord—the profit all comes to us.

Jesus a Minister and a Ransom (Verse 28)

Jesus came to minister to our needs—to render man a service that he could not do for himself. While he was here, he went about doing good. By his death and resurrection he prepared a plan of salvation for us, and then revealed it to us through his inspired men. He died to redeem us from sin; hence, he is our ransom. A ransom is a price paid to release one from servitude or captivity. Man had been captured by the devil, and was in servitude to him. Jesus gave his life for us. Hence, he is both our ransom and our redeemer.

SOME REFLECTIONS

So often we want things that we do not need—things that would merely gratify our pride, and things that would not be good for us. Frequently we want positions or offices for which we are not fitted. If people understand their limitations and their real needs, it would save a lot of trouble.

Were you ever a candidate against a brother in Christ for any position or office? If so read the following, and ponder: "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another." (Rom. 12: 10.) "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good." (1 Cor. 10: 24.) When a number of preachers are seeking a call to preach for a certain church, are they thinking of these scriptures?

We are told that the church needs efficient leaders. Is not that plea a little overworked? Do we not rather need faithful followers—not followers of men, but of Christ? If all members of the church were wide-awake, and each one faithfully serving the Lord, there would not be that feeling of need for leaders.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The evils of selfish ambition.
The greatness of faithful service.
Our redeemer and ransom.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Name some of the lessons Jesus

taught as he journeyed to Jerusalem.

Verses 17-19

Why would Jesus have little opportunity to teach his apostles on this journey?

Why would some lessons not then be suitable to publish abroad?

What did he say to his disciples apart from the multitudes?

Discuss the things he said would be done in Jerusalem.

Verses 20, 21

Who was the mother of James and John?

What request did they make through her?

What was childish about that request?

What idea did they have about the kingdom?

What of the characters of James and John?

Verses 22, 23

In what sense did they not know what they asked?

How do Christians now sometimes manifest the same ambitious spirit? What did Jesus ask them, and what did they answer?

What is the significance of the figurative use of the word "cup"?

Verse 24

How did the ten feel toward James and John?

How may such scheming injure a church?

Verses 25-27

What did Jesus say about Gentiles? What did he say about the conditions that would prevail in his kingdom?

Discuss these points in their application to us today.

Why are those who serve the greatest?

Quote some passages about service.

Verse 28

What did Jesus say of himself?

In what way is Jesus both a ransom and a redeemer?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IV—January 28, 1940

JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP PROCLAIMED

Matt. 21: 1-16

1 And when they drew nigh unto Jê-ru'sâ-lêm, and came unto Bêth'phâ-gê, unto the mount of Ol'ives, then Jê'sûs sent two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village that is 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 one say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4 Now this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Zî'ôn,
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,
Meek, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt the foal of an ass.

6 And the disciples went, and did even as Jê'sûs appointed them,

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon.

8 And the most part of the multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut branches from the trees, and spread them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before him, and that followed, cried, saying, Hô-sân'nâ to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hô-sân'nâ in the highest.

10 And when he was come into Jê-ru'sâ-lêm, all the city was stirred, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitudes said, This is the prophet, Jê'sûs, from Nâz'â-rêth of Gâl'i-lêe.

12 And Jê'sûs entered into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves;

13 And he saith unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hô-sân'nâ to the son of David; they were moved with indignation,

16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these are saying? And Jē'sūs saith unto them, Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee." (Matt. 21: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 11: 1-5.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

January 22.	M.	The Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21: 1-11)
January 23.	T.	The Children's Praise (Matt. 21: 12-17)
January 24.	W.	The Eternal Throne (Psalm 45: 6-11)
January 25.	T.	The King of Glory (Psalm 24: 1-10)
January 26.	F.	The Righteous Kingdom (Jer. 23: 1-8)
January 27.	S.	The King Recognized (Luke 2: 25-32)
January 28.	S.	The Reign of the Messiah (Psalm 2: 1-12)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31.

Places.—Bethphage, Bethany, the Mount of Olives, and Jerusalem. Bethphage was a village, and must have been located on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, near Bethany. Bethany, as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom Jesus often visited, is the better known village. The Mount of Olives is described as "a ridge of rather more than a mile in length, running in a general direction north and south, covering the whole eastern side of the city. At its northern end the ridge bends round to the west, so as to form an enclosure to the city on that side also."

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes. The multitudes who so loudly acclaimed him king as he neared Jerusalem were doubtless, for the most part, the people from Galilee and those who had joined the company along the way. It was a great multitude as they passed through Jericho. (Matt. 19: 1, 2; 20: 29; Mark 10: 46.)

Lesson Links.—In our last lesson it seems that Jesus had not yet crossed the river Jordan, but was still in Perea. He would cross the Jordan at the ford east of Jericho. At Jericho two blind men acclaimed him the son of David, and begged that he would open their eyes. When he did so, they followed him. Here he lodged with Zacchaeus, a rich publican. What Jesus said to Zacchaeus that impressed him so we know not, but Zacchaeus said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold." Jesus replied, "To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19: 1-10.) The people who journeyed with Jesus supposed that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. Evidently they thought that he would enter Jerusalem, and take the reins of government in his hands. To discourage that idea he spoke a parable. (Luke 19: 11-27.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Commission to Two Disciples (Verses 1-3)

Bethphage and Bethany were both on the Jerusalem-Jericho road, about two miles from Jerusalem. Bethphage seems to have been a little farther out than Bethany; hence, Jesus and the multitude

following him would reach Bethphage first. Here he said to two of his disciples, "Go into the village that is over against you." This village would be Bethany, the village where Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. The people of that village therefore knew him. In giving the two disciples directions as to how to find the ass and her colt, Jesus shows his power to know things which were beyond the vision of the natural eye. His directions were exact and explicit—they would find the ass tied and her colt with her just inside the village. The disciples so often failed to comprehend his powers, that we wonder if they discussed, as they went, how he would know what he was talking about, or whether he really did know. They were to proceed to loose the animals without asking the owner anything about the matter. If the owner asked them why they were doing it, they were simply to say, "The Lord hath need of them." The owner must have been a disciple of the Lord; at least, he would know who was wanting them. The disciples were also to inform the owner that the Lord would soon return them to him. And that is a good plan for borrowers to follow. Some professed followers of Christ are not very good at returning borrowed things.

A Prophecy to Be Fulfilled (Verses 4, 5)

It is generally understood that Matthew wrote especially for Jewish readers. He dwelt on those things that would be most likely to convince a Jew. Hence, he frequently mentioned the fact that certain events fulfilled certain prophecies—that would be more convincing to a Jew than to a Gentile, for Jews were acquainted with the prophets. He quotes Zech. 9: 9 as being fulfilled in the manner in which Jesus would enter Jerusalem. In the quotation, "Zion" refers to Jerusalem, and not just that part that is sometimes called Zion. He would be proclaimed as king. Up to that time he had kept his followers and admirers from making any demonstration. When they would have acclaimed him king, he sought refuge in more quiet places. When the apostles had confessed him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, he charged them to tell no man who he was. He would not allow Peter, James, and John to tell about the transfiguration. He did not want to stir up his enemies more than was necessary, for they would do more to hinder his work. But now his work is about finished, and he is not only to allow a great demonstration, but seems to be deliberately planning for one. He will allow his friends and disciples to enjoy one glad hour before the shadows of the cross envelop them in the darkness of despair. And he will demonstrate to all Jerusalem and to the Jews gathered from every quarter that he is not organizing and equipping a great army, and that he comes not on a horse, the symbol of war and of kingly pride, but on an ass, the symbol of peace, labor, and toil. And the people would see with their own eyes the fulfillment of Zech. 9: 9. After that his enemies could do their worst.

The Great Demonstration (Verses 6-11)

The student should be sure to read carefully the parallel passages—Mark 11: 1-18; Luke 19: 29-46. The two disciples found the animals as Jesus said they would; and, as Jesus had foreseen, "certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing

the colt?" "The Lord hath need of them." This was enough for the owner—he gladly yielded to what the Lord wanted. To give up promptly what the master asks, whether it be money, time, or ability, is the proper spirit of Christian service. When the animals were brought to Jesus, and he was properly mounted, he was ready for the great demonstration, or what some call the triumphal entry. Jesus must have spent the sabbath in Bethany. It is now the first day of the week, six days before the Passover. Jesus was the topic of conversation in Jerusalem among the crowds that had gathered early to purify themselves for the Passover. They were wondering whether Jesus, on account of the growing hostility of the rulers, would dare come to Jerusalem to the feast. "Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment, that, if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him." (John 11: 57.) Well, he would not sneak in, as these rulers evidently thought he might; he himself would show them where he was, and they could then form their own plans. In going from Bethany to Jerusalem, he must have gone the shorter route over the Mount of Olives, for Luke informs us that the shouting and praising began "at the descent of the mount of Olives." At that point they were in full view of the city, for the Mount of Olives rises about two hundred feet above the temple area. The combined shouting of the great throng would be heard in the city. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds. "And many spread their garments upon the way; and others branches, which they had cut from the fields." They were paying him honor as their king. They waved palm leaves, and cried, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Mark gives this additional acclaim: "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David." They were expecting the immediate inauguration of a kingdom like the kingdom of David, which would spread over all the earth, and bring universal peace. Jesus did not in so many words tell the multitudes that they were wrong, and yet he did tell them. Notice this carefully: "And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke 19: 41-44.) What a picture! The Son of God in the midst of such demonstrations weeping over the beloved but doomed city. Instead of giving them a national government, such as they expected, he pronounced their national doom. But of course the people were too full of excitement and enthusiasm to pay any attention to anything save what they had in mind.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (Verses 12, 13)

This cleansing of the temple should not be confused with another cleansing which occurred soon after he began his public ministry, as recorded in John 2: 13-17. Matthew does not say that Jesus cleansed the temple the same day he entered Jerusalem. We have

this in Mark: "And he entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve." On the next day he cleansed the temple. (Mark 11: 11-17.) A useful thing may be done in a sinful way. People coming a long distance would not find it convenient to bring animals for the necessary sacrifices. To be able to buy such animals on arriving in Jerusalem was an accommodation to them; but those who sold these animals were doing it in the temple, that is, in one of the courts of the temple. There would have been no wrong in their trade had they carried on an honest business in the proper places. No Jew would think of using foreign money as gifts for the treasury; and every Jew, rich and poor alike, had to pay a half shekel into the treasury. This had to be money of the Jews. Hence, Jews coming from foreign countries would have to have their money changed into temple money. To change this money would have been a legitimate business, had it been done honestly in the proper place. But the business furnished opportunity for fraud and for charging exorbitant rates of exchange. But the traders and the exchangers were not only carrying on their business where they should not, but they were robbing the people. The temple was a house of prayer, a place of worship; but it had been made into a den of robbers. A den of robbers was a place of refuge, a place of security, for them. These traders, these robbers, were so entrenched behind priestly authority, that it was a place of security for them. Perhaps the priests themselves were carrying on the business; if not, they would reap their share of the profits in high rentals, for they had charge of the temple. But Jesus routed them out of their den, and broke up their robberies. When a religious man begins to disregard the sacredness of that which belongs to God, he soon becomes unreliable in his words and in his dealings. A man who will sacrifice his religious principles for profit will also sacrifice his honesty for profit. It will be noticed that Jesus drove both the seller and the buyer out of the temple. Both were guilty parties to the unholy traffic. Had there been no buyers there would have been no sellers. This cleansing the temple further enraged the scribes and priests, so much so that they "sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multitude was astonished at his teaching." (Mark 11: 18.)

The Chief Priests and Scribes Protest (Verses 14-16)

While Jesus would not allow trading and trafficking in the temple, he gladly performed acts of mercy to the helpless and needy. He healed the blind and the lame in the temple. And this further worried the chief priests and the scribes. And much against their will they were compelled to hear the children crying in the temple, saying, "Hosanna to the son of David." They wanted Jesus to put a stop to it; but Jesus merely asked them, "Did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

SOME REFLECTIONS

The temple took the place of the tabernacle. Jesus spoke of the temple as his Father's house. It had been dedicated to the worship of God; but the priests had lost sight of its sacredness, and had

allowed it to be converted into a place of business and dishonest dealings.

Reverence and respect for that which belongs to God has always been a prime requirement. David would not lay violent hands on degenerate King Saul, because Saul was the Lord's anointed. The church is a divine institution, purchased with the blood of Christ. No man of reverence will speak lightly of it or do anything to injure it.

Perhaps nothing else is so blinding as a false theory in religion. The Jewish leaders had a theory about the expected Messiah, but Jesus did not fit that theory. Though they knew he healed the sick and the lame, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead, they would not believe in him because he did not fit their theory. The more he did to prove that he was the Christ the more they hated him. They did not even believe the prophets whom they professed to believe. "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5: 46, 47.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The "triumphal entry."

The sacredness of the tabernacle and temple.

The sin of disrespecting holy things.

The evils of false theories in religion.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.

Give location of Bethphage and Bethany.

What gave Bethany distinction?

Give some incidents that occurred as they passed through Jericho.

What were the people with Jesus expecting?

Verses 1-3

Show how the incidents of these verses prove the divine knowledge of Jesus.

Verses 4, 5

Discuss the prophecy that would be fulfilled.

Verses 6-11

What were the crowds in Jerusalem discussing and asking?

What order had the authorities in Jerusalem given?

Tell how, in his entry, he showed them where he was.

Describe the actions of the multitudes.

Discuss Luke 19: 41-44.

Verses 12, 13

Tell about his cleansing the temple.

What was wrong about the buying and selling, and money changing?

How had the temple become a den of robbers?

What effect did this cleansing have on the scribes and priests?

Verses 14-16

What did Jesus do in the temple?

What further enraged the authorities?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson V—February 4, 1940

HOLDING LIFE SACRED

Gen. 1: 27-31; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; 2 Cor. 6: 16 to 7: 1

27 And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food:

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so.

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

19 Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own;

20 For ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.

16 And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore

Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,

And touch no unclean thing;

And I will receive you,

18

And will be to you a Father,

And ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

1 Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.” (1 Cor. 6: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 9: 35-38.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

January 29.	M.	.....	The Goodness of Creation (Gen. 1: 27-31)
January 30.	T.	.....	The Corruption of Mankind (Gen. 6: 9-20)
January 31.	W.	.....	Daniel's Principle Tested (Dan. 1: 8-16)
February 1.	T.	.....	Daniel's Principle Succeeds (Dan. 1: 17-21)
February 2.	F.	.....	Alcohol the Defiler (Prov. 23: 29-35)
February 3.	S.	.....	Alcohol the Destroyer (Isa. 28: 1-8)
February 4.	S.	.....	The Sanctuary of God (2 Cor. 6: 16 to 7: 1)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—For Genesis, according to Usher, 4004 B.C.; according to Hales, 5411 B.C. Perhaps neither of them is anywhere near the correct date. First Corinthians was written about A.D. 56; Second Corinthians, about A.D. 57

Places.—The place where the human race began is not known. First Corinthians was written at Ephesus; Second Corinthians at some point in Macedonia.

Persons.—God, Adam, Paul, and the Corinthian Christians.

Lesson Links.—The book of Genesis (origin, beginning) is, as its name indicates, a record of origins, or beginnings. In it we have a

record of the beginning, or origin, of the heavens and the earth, of all plant and animal life, of man and the family, of sin and death, of sacrifice in worship, of language, of rewards and punishment, of human governments, and of the Hebrew race.

But our present lesson has to do with the use we make of our body, that is, in at least one respect. Our responsibility as to the use and care of our bodies has not been properly appreciated. Some old theological ideas have been, in part, at least, the cause of this underrating the human body. In the creeds, from the pulpit, and in the press it has been persistently urged, that there is born in man what they describe as "original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil;" that in regeneration this state of corruption is not removed. It is also taught that the spirit is regenerated and cleansed, and that all the sins a regenerate man commits are sins of the flesh, and not of the spirit, and that the spirit remains pure, though the flesh follows its lusts and passions. This makes the body of no special importance. This belittles the body, and causes people to be careless of the uses they make of their bodies. That notion is hurtful; it is also in plain conflict with the scriptures. Our bodies are instruments through which the spirit acts either in sin or in righteousness. The deeds of the body originate in the purposes of the heart—"for from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7: 21-23.) Paul makes us responsible for what the body does: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness." (Rom. 6: 12, 13.) The use we make of our bodies determines whose servants we are. (Rom. 6: 16.) "Glorify God therefore in your body." We have no right to abuse our bodies. They are God-given.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

God Created Man (Verse 27)

What is said concerning the creation of man begins in verse 26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." The origin of man is here put beyond the realm of theory and speculation—"God created man." It is good for man to know that God created him, and that he is not the accidental product of blind forces acting upon dead matter in a way that no one understands. To know that God created us gives us a feeling of dependence upon him, and instills in us reverence for him and respect for all his appointments. In creating man God did for him that which he did for no other created thing—"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." This elevates man to a high state of dignity and importance. It has been thought that David, in Psalm 8, speaks disparagingly of man, but careful attention to what he said shows that he speaks of the exalted state of man: "When I

consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God [marginal reading, Or, the angels], and crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." What is man? God was so mindful of him as to exalt him to a position next to himself, giving him dominion over all things of earth. No man therefore should abuse himself, as if he were a being of no importance, nor should he trespass on the person or rights of his fellow man. Human life is sacred.

Man's Dominion and Food Supply (Verses 28-31)

There was order in creation. Nothing was created till that upon which it depended for life was first created—vegetation, then the beasts and the birds, then man. It is a singular thing that man is at once the most independent and the most dependent of all of God's creation. He is dependent on all that was created before him, and yet God has given him "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, . . . and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." All the lower orders of life were thus placed under the jurisdiction of man; and yet man was not, and is not, capable of directing his own way. "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10: 23.) Only two human beings were created—a male and a female, one wife for one man. "And God blessed them." And one of the greatest blessings that God conferred upon them was, that he revealed to them the right way to live. This right way is found in his commands, and now also in the examples he set before us. The first two were commanded to multiply and replenish the earth. The earth would bring forth for them a plentiful supply of food. Some have concluded that they were not at first allowed to eat flesh, but that conclusion seems not to be well founded. In what sense would they have dominion over fish, if not for food; and so with some animals. There is no sort of proof that the sin of Adam made the death of animals possible, or that an herb eating animal suddenly became carnivorous. But we need not spend any time worrying about such matters. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." The term "good," as here used does not refer to moral qualities, or to righteousness in any sense; for it was applied to all creation—to the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, and all things on the earth. Man was good in the sense that all things else were good—they were perfectly adapted to the purpose God had in view when he created them. Nothing could be added to anything, or taken from it, to make it better suited to the purpose it was to serve. Everything was very good. "O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works. In wisdom hast thou made them all." (Psalm 104: 24.) "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." It is generally understood that the Jews counted the day as ending and the new day as beginning at sunset, or about six o'clock; but it seems that the original counting must have begun at noon. Only two divisions are here mentioned—evening and morning. When the morning ended a new day began. Hence, the day began at noon,

unless Moses counted the whole daylight period as morning; and that does not seem reasonable.

The Body a Blood-Bought Temple of God (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20)

The student should read carefully verses 12-20. People like to try to justify what they do. Corinth was a corrupt city, devoted to the gratification of the appetites and passions of the body. In their philosophy the appetites and passions were lawful, and therefore it was proper to gratify them to the full. This made them gluttons and moral degenerates. Paul seeks to show them that they were making a wrong and sinful use of their bodies. It was necessary to eat, but it was wrong to become a slave to food. "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord." They should, therefore, be used in his service. As they are members of Christ, they should not be joined to a harlot; for to be joined with a harlot is to become one with the harlot. "Flee fornication." Depart rapidly from such practices. Sin is sin, no matter what form it may take. Some sins that a person commits do not directly affect the health of the body. A drunkard sins against his body, and so does the fornicator. The plans and purposes originate in the mind—"without the body"; "but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." And many immoral wretches know that to their sorrow. In 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17, the church at Corinth is called "a temple of God"; but in the verses of our lesson the individual Christian is the temple. "Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God?" This is an additional reason, and a very strong reason, for keeping the body pure. God's temple, in which he dwells through the Holy Spirit, is a sacred place, and must not be polluted. Certainly the Holy Spirit will not dwell in a polluted temple. To live a pure life the heart must be kept pure. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4: 23.) "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he." (Prov. 23: 7.) The things we think about and meditate upon determine our course of life. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4: 8.) We are not our own; we have been bought with a price, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; we are, therefore, servants of Christ. The servant cannot do as he pleases. He must serve his master, and also keep himself fit for service. "Keep thyself pure." The only way you can serve God is through the instrumentality of the body; "glorify God therefore in your body."

"Be Not Unequally Yoked with Unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6: 16)

The lesson really begins with verse 14. The student should therefore read carefully verses 14 and 15, else he will not see the full significance of what is said in the verses assigned for this section of our lesson. The command, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," is a figure of speech drawn from the practice of yoking together two animals for plowing or drawing loads. It does not mean that we are to have no sort of dealings or social connections with those who are not Christians; "for then must ye needs go out

of the world." (1 Cor. 5: 10.) Two animals yoked together had a common task to perform—they worked together to the same end. This fact should give us a clear idea as to the sort of connections Paul prohibited. The Christian and the unbeliever are yoked together when they combine to form a business firm. It would seem also that the language prohibits a Christian from marrying an unbeliever, for in no other relationship are people so closely and permanently yoked together. Faith and unbelief cannot very well unite. Whether Paul meant that the individual Christian, or the church, is a temple of God, the lesson is the same. The temple of God can have no agreement with idols. God and idols cannot dwell in the same temple. Paul's language shows how close the relationship is between the Christian and God, "We are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." He is our God, and we are his people. We must not therefore connect ourselves with anything that opposes him. There must be a clear line of separation between the church and all things of the world.

Exhortations and Promises (Verses 17 to 7: 1)

Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian brethren to come out from evil associates, and be separate from them, shows that they were mixed up in some things that were wrong. Even today the church is too worldly-minded and too much mixed up in things that are hurtful. The promises that God will be our Father, and we shall be his sons and daughters, hinge on our separating ourselves from all unclean and sinful practices. Any sin defiles the spirit, and immoral practices defile the flesh. To obtain these promises we must cleanse ourselves of all sin, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

SOME REFLECTIONS

The Son of God was the active agent in creation. (John 1: 1-3, 10; Col. 1: 16, 17; Heb. 1: 1, 2.) We are therefore his by creation, and also by redemption, and by his conquering us by his love and making us his willing servants. Our services therefore belong to him.

We are made partakers of the divine nature through the promises of God. (2 Pet 1: 4.) The promises make us partakers of the divine nature, because we have to quit sin and live righteously in order to obtain them. Unconditional promises would not make people better.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Man in the image of God.

The Christian a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Keeping ourselves pure.

Partakers of the divine nature.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.

Give meaning of the word genesis.

What beginnings are found in the book of Genesis?

Verse 27

What theory belittles the importance of the body?

Show that we serve God through the instrumentality of the body.

What determines whose servants we are?

Verses 28-31

Give the order of creation.
Over what was man given dominion?
Who has dominion over man?
In what sense was all created things good?

1 Cor. 6: 19, 20

What is said of the morals of Corinth?
Why should our bodies not be polluted by sin?
Discuss verses 19 and 20.
Why must our thoughts be kept pure?

2 Cor. 6: 16

Discuss verses 14 and 15.
What does Paul say about the temple of God?
What is the main lesson we get out of these verses?

Verses 17 to 7: 1

What exhortation does Paul give?
What promises does he mention?
Repeat 7: 1.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VI—February 11, 1940

THE PERILS OF REJECTING CHRIST

Matt. 21: 28-43

28 But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard.

29 And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jē'sūs saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him.

33 Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

34 And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner.

37 But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance.

39 And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.

40 When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jē'sūs saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,

The stone which the builders rejected,

The same was made the head of the corner;

This was from the Lord,

And it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 22: 1-14.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

February 5. M.....The Peril of Unbelief (Matt. 21: 28-32)

February 6. T.....The Peril of Rejection (Matt. 21: 33-43)

February 7.	W.	The Rejection of Nazareth (Mark 6: 1-6)
February 8.	T.	Israel Rejects God (1 Sam. 8: 1-9)
February 9.	F.	Rejection and Judgment (John 12: 44-50)
February 10.	S.	Rejection and Destruction (Isa. 30: 8-14)
February 11.	S.	Restoration through Christ (Eph. 2: 11-18)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; Tuesday of the week of the crucifixion.

Place.—Jerusalem, in the temple.

Persons.—Jesus, the chief priests, and the elders. David divided the priests into twenty-four courses, or groups. (1 Chron. 24.) By this arrangement only one group, or course, had to be in Jerusalem at a time. The head of each course was a chief. The elders were the rulers of the people.

Lesson Links.—It does not seem that the priests had formerly been very active in opposing Jesus. The last cleansing of the temple had stirred their wrath. They had control of the temple; and yet Jesus had taken matters in hand, and had cleansed the temple of the unholy traffic which they had been fostering. They now become aggressive persecutors of Jesus. While he was teaching in the temple, they joined the elders in asking him: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" "What authority to cast out the traders, as he had done on the previous day, to teach, and to allow himself to be called the Son of David? As he was neither a priest nor a civil ruler, and had not been commissioned either by Caesar or the Sanhedrin, they denied that he had rightful claim to the authority which he exercised."—*McGarvey*. Jesus knew that they would not make a proper use of any information he might give them; so he asked them a question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" "It was absurd and impertinent to ask him for his authority when his miracles had given an unmistakable answer; consequently his reply was not an attempt to enlighten them, but to expose their folly. They had often tried to place him in a dilemma, and had never succeeded; he sometimes tried the same with them, and never failed. He does on this occasion by asking them the source of authority for John's baptism."—*McGarvey*. Jesus did not mean, as some seem to think, that he received his authority from John's baptism, but that he received his authority from the same source John received his authority to baptize. They knew very well that John did not receive his authority to baptize from anybody in Jerusalem; neither did they care whence it came. They were in a dilemma. Aside they held a consultation, and reasoned among themselves. If they said, "From heaven," they confessed that they had openly rebelled against heaven in not being baptized and in refusing to believe what John said about Jesus. They were afraid to say, "From men," for that would endanger them with the people. "And they answered Jesus, and said, We know not. He also said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." This shows clearly that he did not tell them that he received his authority from John's baptism.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Parable of the Two Sons Stated (Verses 28-30)

It is not said that this is a parable, but it evidently is; for a parable is a statement of material facts to illustrate spiritual truths.

Among the Jews there were two outstanding classes, namely, those who pretended to be very religious, and those who were regarded as sinners. Jesus was talking to those who regarded themselves as very religious. They claimed to be right toward everything that came from God. They needed to see themselves in their true light. In the parable neither of the sons was as obedient as he should have been. When the father asked the first son to go and work in the vineyard, he disrespectfully said, "I will not." On reflection, he regretted that he had so spoken—"he repented himself, and went." At first he rebelled, and then submitted. The second son openly avowed his willingness to obey his father, but continued in his own way—he went not. He was like many people of our time, for they profess great respect for God and his will, but set at naught his commands at their pleasure.

The Application of the Parable (Verses 31, 32)

The chief priests and elders readily admitted that the first son did the will of his father. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." This does not mean that these characters had actually entered into the kingdom at that time. John had been engaged in preparing people for the kingdom. The publicans and harlots had obeyed John's preaching, had accepted his testimony concerning the Messiah, and were, therefore, on the way into the kingdom. The chief priests and elders had rejected his preaching. On another occasion, in speaking of John and his preaching, Jesus said, "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him." (Luke 7: 29, 30.) It should be noticed that, in our lesson, Jesus was talking about the attitude of the people toward John's preaching, and not of their attitude toward himself. Before John came the publicans and harlots—the sinners—made no pretense at serving God, but when John came preaching, they regretted their course, and believed him. They were like the first son. The leaders in Jerusalem would not believe John, even though they had sent a delegation of priests and Levites to interview John. And when they saw that the publicans and harlots believed John, they did not regret their course and believe him. "And ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe." The word repent here and in verse 29 is not from the word usually translated repent. It has more to do with the feelings than with the purpose—"to rue, regret." The same word is used with reference to the course of Judas. (Matt. 27: 3.) He regretted what he had done, but did not really repent. Many people reject all testimony, and, like the chief priests and elders, suffer no remorse of conscience; others, like Judas, regret what they have done, but make no effort to amend their ways.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Verses 33-39)

"Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-

press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country." He made good preparation for his renters. The hedge served as a fence. As most of the grapes were then made into wine, the wine press was an essential part of a vineyard. The wine press proper was a pit about six feet by eight, hewn out of the solid rock, or dug in the earth and walled up with masonry. Another pit was made on a lower level. Grapes were put in the upper pit, and men with their naked feet trod out the grapes, and the juice flowed through a hole into the lower pit. As people then lived in the towns and cities, the tower in the vineyard served as a place for the owners to stay during harvest, and for the guards at other times. In this case it required more than one man to operate the vineyard—the householder let it out to husbandmen. It is not supposed that everything in the parable has some application—the parts the men played are the essential things of the parable. Evidently the householder had not rented his land for money, but for a part of the harvest; for at the proper season he sent his servants to the husbandmen for his part of the fruits. These husbandmen did not intend to pay anything; for they beat one servant, killed another, and stoned another. He then sent other servants, and they were treated the same way. As a last resort, he sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." But he did not know the depth of depravity to which these husbandmen had sunk. In character and methods of operation they were very like our bandits and racketeers of today. No crime was too great for them to commit, if they could see profit in so doing. So they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him." They killed him for the part of the rent which they owed. Perhaps they thought they could dispose of the entire harvest, and be gone before the householder had time to do anything about it. Besides the sin of it, all criminals take great risk, and many pay the penalty.

The Application of the Parable (Verses 40-43)

The chief priests and the elders did not at first see that they were the wicked husbandmen of the parable. Hence, in answering the question of Jesus as to what the householder would do with those husbandmen, they pronounced their own sentence—"He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons." In Luke's account (20: 9-18) he represents Jesus as pronouncing the sentence. Evidently the priests and elders first pronounced the sentence, and then Jesus repeated it in such a way that they saw he was aiming it at them; they then said, "God forbid." The Jewish nation was the vineyard; God was the householder; and the leaders of the Jews, the priests and elders, were the husbandmen. They were supposed to guide the destinies of the nation, but had been miserable criminals. On the same point Stephen pointedly said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murder-

ers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." (Acts 7: 51-53.) The son whom the wicked husbandmen killed represented the Son of God.

The Rejected Cornerstone.—In verse 42 Jesus abruptly introduces the figure of the rejected cornerstone, and then in the next verse makes the application of the parable of the wicked husbandmen. Bloomfield observes that "both the Jewish and Christian dispensations are often designated by the figure of a building; and of the latter Christ is represented as the cornerstone, and, by its importance in sustaining and defending the building, the headstone." McGarvey remarks, "In the figure of the rejected cornerstone, the chief priests and Pharisees are represented as trying to build the walls of a house, but unable to fit the stones at the corner because they rejected the only stone that was cut for that place. They were guilty of this folly in rejecting Jesus while trying to construct a conception of the kingdom of God." They could not fit Jesus into their ideas of the kingdom, and this shows as conclusively as anything can, that they had the wrong idea as to what the kingdom would be. That Jesus was not talking about the Old Testament kingdom should be plain to anyone, for he was not the cornerstone of that structure. He is the cornerstone of the new structure which he was about to build.

Another Nation.—The Jews had been God's chosen people. He was their rightful king, even when they rejected him for a kingdom of their own. Because of their wickedness they would no longer be his chosen people; his rule and reign would be over another nation, the church. There would be a complete change. The Jewish economy would be destroyed—the old law would be abolished, that a new order might be ushered in. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7: 4.) The law acted as a barrier between Jews and Gentiles; both could not be brought together in one body so long as the law lasted. Between them there could be no peace. "For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace." (Eph. 2: 14, 15.) This new man is the church, the new nation, to which the reign of God has been given.

SOME REFLECTIONS

The prophecies foretold the coming of John and his mission; yet the leaders, those who professed to be teachers of the law and the prophets, rejected his preaching and his baptism, and also the testimony he gave of Jesus. His denouncing their sins enraged them.

These same leaders rejected Jesus as the Christ, and crucified him. He rejected their tradition, disregarded their religious and social distinctions, and condemned them as the worst of sinners; that enraged them beyond measure. Besides, they had their ideas as to the Messiah and his kingdom, and they could not fit Jesus and his teaching into their scheme of things.

The priests and Pharisees had become fanatical; they felt superior

to others both in knowledge and righteousness. They therefore considered any man a criminal who criticized or rebuked them; and they sought for grounds on which they might have him put to death.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

John's baptism.
The chief priests and elders.
The Pharisees.
The new nation.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
What appears to have stirred up the chief priests against Jesus?
Why should this so stir them?
What did they ask Jesus?
How did he reply?
Why should they have known that he had authority?
How did they dispose of his question?

Verses 28-30

Recite the parable of the two sons.
Discuss what each one said.

Verses 31, 32

Quote the application Jesus made of the parable.
Quote Luke 7: 29, 30.

Verses 33-39

Recite the parable of the wicked husbandmen.
Discuss the methods of grape culture and wine making of that time.
How had this householder rented his vineyard?
How did he seek to collect his rents, and with what success?

Verses 40-43

How did the chief priests and elders pronounce their own condemnation?
Quote and discuss what Stephen said to these leaders of the Jews.
Discuss the rejected cornerstone.
Discuss verse 43.
What is this other nation?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VII—February 18, 1940

GOOD CITIZENS AND GOOD NEIGHBORS

Matt. 22: 15-22, 34-40

15 Then went the Phār'i-sēes, and took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk.

16 And they send to him their disciples, with the Hē-rō-dī-āns, saying, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæ'sār, or not?

18 But Jē'sus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites?

19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a denarius.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?
21 They say unto him, Cæ'sār's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæ'sār the things that are Cæ'sār's; and unto God the things that are God's.

22 And when they heard it, they marvelled, and left him, and went away.

34 But the Phār'i-sēes, when they heard that he had put the Sād'dū-ġees to silence, gathered themselves together.

35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him:

36 Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?

37 And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the great and first commandment.

39 And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

40 On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22: 39.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 13: 8-14.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

February 12.	M.	A Good Citizen (Matt. 22: 15-22)
February 13.	T.	A Good Neighbor (Matt. 22: 34-40)
February 14.	W.	A Beneficent God (Deut. 8: 11-18)
February 15.	T.	Mutual Helpfulness (Rom. 12: 10-21)
February 16.	F.	A True Neighbor (James 2: 1-8)
February 17.	S.	Heavenly Citizenship (Phil. 3: 17-21)
February 18.	S.	Love Fulfills the Law (Rom. 13: 8-14)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; Tuesday of the crucifixion week.

Place.—Jerusalem, in the temple.

Persons.—Jesus, the Pharisees, the disciples of the Pharisees, the Herodians, and a lawyer. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians were sects of the Jews. Paul says that the Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews. (Acts 26: 5.) "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." (Acts 23: 8.) The Sadducees were materialists. It is worthy of note that, on the points of controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees, Paul classes himself with the Pharisees. (Acts 23: 6.) The Herodians were partisans of the family of the Herods; they were therefore a political, rather than a religious, party.

Lesson Links.—Opposition was growing in intensity. The leaders of all sects of the Jews were arrayed against Jesus. Seemingly the Pharisees and the priests were the most bitter against him. The parables of our last lesson were aimed at the Pharisees and chief priests. "And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them." This so enraged them that they would have laid hold on him, had they not feared the people, who "took him for a prophet." Then Jesus spoke the parable of the king's marriage feast for his son. (Matt. 22: 1-14.) Certain ones had been bidden to the feast. When the feast was ready, the king sent his servants to call those who had been bidden. "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them. But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city." The king then commanded his servants to go "unto the parting of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast." This parable applies to conditions after the kingdom was established, for Jesus begins it by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king." The Jews had been bidden by the prophets and by John and Jesus. On Pentecost and thereafter the apostles and other preachers announced that all things were ready, and invited people into the kingdom. The cup of iniquity of the Jews, already about full, was filled to overflowing by their treatment of the servants of the king, who were calling them to the marriage feast. The Lord sent the armies of Rome against them, "and destroyed those murderers, and burned

their city." Those who were called last to the feast were the Gentiles. It is not clear as to why the man without a wedding garment is introduced into the parable, unless he is meant to represent those who think they are entitled to the blessings of salvation while disregarding our king's demands.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Question of Tribute (Verses 15-17)

Almost from the very beginning of his ministry the scribes and Pharisees antagonized Jesus. They found fault with him for eating with sinners, charged him with violating the Sabbath, said that he cast out demons by the prince of demons, and denounced him for violating the tradition of the elders; but they could not deny the reality of his miracles. He successfully met all their arguments and complaints. They had planned to seize him on this trip to Jerusalem, but the great demonstration that took place on his entrance made them afraid to attempt anything. His cleansing the temple and his showing them up in his parables infuriated them more. They knew not what to do; so they held a council to see if they could formulate some plan of action. They believed they fell on a plan that would get him into trouble. The Herodians had been called into this council. They and the Pharisees were enemies, but political schemers can easily patch up their differences, or disregard them, for an emergency. They "took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk." The disciples of the Pharisees were young men who were in training under teachers among the Pharisees. These and Herodians were sent to question Jesus. They would not send the seasoned opponents of Jesus. Of course, they thought he would not be suspicious of the young men and the Herodians, who had not been active in opposing Jesus. Luke says, "And they watched him, and sent forth spies, who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor." Here are some men that needed teaching, but did not know it. They had the opportunity to sit at the feet of the greatest teacher that ever walked the earth, the teacher who alone had the words of life; but the only interest they had in questioning him was to induce him, if possible, to say something that would enable them to make a charge of treason against him before the Roman governor. They were trying new tactics. Instead of coming to him bristling for a fight, they pretended to be very righteous, and to have a very high regard for him, and to be anxious to have his settle a disputed question, the Pharisees representing one side, the Herodians the other. They came to Jesus with the most complimentary speech they could think up. Had they been sincere, their speech would have been a good speech, but on their hypocritical lips it was the basest of lies—they meant not a word of what they said. They would have him believe it was a confidential conference, and that they were sincerely desirous of knowing what was right in the matter; and they hoped by their flattering speech to wheedle him into coming out strong in his answer to their question. Only men of base hearts would take advantage of a person's known integrity and courage to get him to say something that they could use to his hurt. But there was no

sincerity in these bitter enemies of Jesus. "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" By "lawful," they meant, "according to the law of Moses." Although the Jews had for many years been under the Roman government, the most of them had never become reconciled by paying the tribute exacted by the Roman government. If Jesus said that it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, he would, of course, lose influence with the Jewish people. If he said, "It is not lawful," then he would be delivered up to the governor on a charge of treason against Cæsar. In their mind they had him in a dilemma from which there was no escape. They had never hatched up a shrewder scheme to get Jesus into trouble.

Jesus' Answer Astonishes Them (Verses 18-22)

Evidently these enemies of Jesus thought they had deceived him with their flattery, but he knew their hearts—"perceived their wickedness." His first words showed them how they had underestimated him—"Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites?" It must have been mortifying to them to find that, after all their scheming and flattery, they had not for a moment deceived Jesus; and, while they might have greatly disliked his calling them hypocrites, they knew they were. Having shown them that he knew their designs, he asked for a piece of the tribute money. They brought him a denarius, a Roman coin worth about seventeen cents, which was then the pay for a day's labor. "Whose is this image and superscription?" The denarius bore the image of the emperor under whose reign it was coined, together with his title in abbreviated words. The question of Jesus implied, "Who issued this money? whose coin is it?" "Cæsar's." Without their realizing it, they had put themselves in a dilemma. They had Cæsar's money, and were making use of it in their affairs; would they return it when he called for it? Jesus so advised: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." They had Cæsar's money; they had his protection; and they used the roads he built. To use these things and not bear their part of the expense would be dishonest. A Christian will not avoid the payment of his taxes. The coin bore the image of Cæsar; we bear the image of God. Give Cæsar his coin—it belongs to him; give yourselves to God—you belong to him. Pay your taxes; obey the laws of the country so long as they do not interfere with your duty as a Christian. "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well." (1 Pet. 2: 13, 14.)

The Two Great Commandments (Verses 34-40)

After Jesus successfully met the test on the tribute question, the Sadducees thought to try their skill with him. They thought they had an argument against the resurrection that could not be answered. Likely they had confused the Pharisees many times with that argument. Seven brothers, one after another, married the same woman, each one having died childless. "In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her." Jesus showed

them that their pet argument grew out of their ignorance. His successfully meeting the Sadducees pleased the Pharisees. They held a consultation, and sent one to question him. This man was a lawyer. (Mark 12: 28.) With them a lawyer was a man skilled in the law of Moses, and not an attorney, as with us. So far they had failed in every debate they had had with Jesus. They now wanted to put him through a grilling to see how much he knew about the law. He had not been trained under their great teachers, and they felt sure that no one without such training could know much about the law. They hoped this skilled lawyer would be able to show the ignorance of Jesus, and thus hold him up to ridicule before the people. Such exposure would lessen his influence. A thing may be greatest, not so much because it is most important, but because it includes the most. The lawyer asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" meaning, of course, the law of Moses. Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment." Mark adds, "and with all thy strength." Heart, soul, mind, strength—that includes all there is in man. Heart and mind are sometimes used interchangeably; but heart distinguished from the mind, as in this place, would mean the emotions—affections, reverence, fear, and so on; mind would refer to the intellectual powers. We are to love God with our intellectual powers as well as with our emotions. Our religion is not what it should be unless we think. Emotional religion, without thinking, leads to superstition; for superstition is ignorant reverence. Intelligence without emotion—without reverence—leads to formalism and rationalism; for rationalism is intelligence without reverence. But what is it to love God? A person who does not keep God's commands does not love him? "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commands: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5: 3.) "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John 14: 21.) Hence, the commandment to love God with all the mind, heart, soul, and strength is the greatest commandment, because it includes the doing of all that God commands. To claim to love God while setting aside, or disobeying, any of his commands, is an absurd claim. Love is a practical thing; it is not merely an emotion. It is rather a matter of attitude. No one can have the same emotions toward all people, but he can love everybody. If a man loves his neighbor as himself, he will not defraud his neighbor, nor steal from him, nor bear false witness against him, nor covet what he has, but will treat him right, and be merciful and forbearing toward him. Without love to God and neighbor, no duty to God or neighbor will be properly fulfilled. Mark records that the lawyer was pleased with the answer Jesus gave, and made the remark that the fulfilling of these two commandments was "much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." He had the right attitude of heart. We wonder about the after life of this man, for a person may be not far from the kingdom and yet be lost.

"Not far, not far, from the kingdom,
Where voices whisper and wait;
Too timid to enter in boldly,
So perish outside the gate."

SOME REFLECTIONS

Flattery is insincere praise. Just praise is commendable; but flattery is abominable, for all flatterers are liars and hypocrites.

In all righteous things the Christian should be an example. He should be the most law-abiding person in his community. His not liking a law is no reason for his disregarding its requirements.

Love does not so much seek the present pleasure as the ultimate good of the person loved. Jesus loved men, and therefore fought that which would injure men. Following his example, Paul fought a good fight. If you do not oppose evil and false doctrine, you do not love men.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

To what extent must we obey the laws of our government?
The evils of flattery.
To what does real love lead?
Who is a neighbor?
"Not far from the kingdom."

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Discuss the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
Who were the Herodians?
Why were the Pharisees and priests so bitter against Jesus?
Give the facts of the parable of the marriage feast; also its application.
What judgment did the leaders unwittingly pronounce on themselves?
How was the sentence executed?

Verses 15-17

Name some of the things for which the leaders opposed Jesus.
Describe the move they now made to ensnare Jesus in his talk.

What was their object?
How did they approach Jesus, and what was their question?

Verses 18-22

Give his first words to them.
Tell how he answered their question.
Discuss our duty to the government.

Verses 34-40

What argument had the Sadducees tried on Jesus?
What scheme did the Pharisees then try?
Repeat the two great commandments.
In what sense are they greatest?
What is it to love God?
How may we love our neighbor as ourselves?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VIII—February 25, 1940

STEWARDS IN THE KINGDOM

Matt. 25: 14-27

14 For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey.

16 Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents.

17 In like manner he also that received the two gained other two.

18 But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them.

20 And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter;

25 And I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own.

26 But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter;

27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Matt. 25: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 97: 1-6.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

February 19.	M.	Stewardship Approved (Matt. 25: 14-23)
February 20.	T.	Stewardship Rejected (Matt. 25: 24-30)
February 21.	W.	Stewardship of Life (1 Cor. 6: 12-20)
February 22.	T.	Stewardship of Prayer (1 Sam. 12: 19-25)
February 23.	F.	Stewardship of Service (John 21: 15-23)
February 24.	S.	Stewards of Possessions (Mal. 3: 7-12)
February 25.	S.	Stewards of Citizenship (Rom. 13: 1-10)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; Tuesday of the week of the crucifixion.

Place.—The Mount of Olives; at least, so it seems. The lesson seems to be a part of the speech which Jesus made in answer to a question asked by the disciples. (See Matt. 24: 3, 4.)

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples. None but Jesus and his disciples were present.

Lesson Links.—It must have been a sad hour with Jesus. He had spent the day in teaching in the temple and arguing with the Jews. He found them hopeless, and closed his public teaching with these words: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matt. 23: 37-39.) Hence, as he left the temple, he said to his disciples, “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” On the Mount of Olives, in answer to a question, he told the disciples something as to how this destruction would be brought about, the sufferings that would accompany that destruction,

and the signs by which the disciples would know that it was time for them to get out of the city. It seems that the most general and persistent sin of God's people is the sin of neglect. That sin plays an important part in each of the three divisions of the chapter from which our lesson is taken. It is seen in the parable of the ten virgins. Five of the ten were foolish, for they did not provide themselves with an extra supply of oil. For this neglect, they failed to be admitted to the marriage feast—they arrived too late. In our lesson one of the servants neglected to use properly the talent committed to him, and with sad results. In the judgment scene described in verses 31-46 many failed of the Lord's blessings, and received punishment instead, because they neglected the numerous opportunities for helping those who were in need. "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard." (Heb. 2: 2, 3.) How shall we escape, if we neglect? But the three divisions of our chapter show also how abundantly blessed are those who do not neglect, but attend faithfully to their duties and obligations.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Man Leaves His Business with His Servants (Verses 14, 15)

There are some points of similarity between this parable and the one recorded in Luke 19: 11-27, but they are not the same. The parable in Luke was spoken when "he was nigh to Jerusalem." The parable of our lesson was spoken four or five days later. We are not told whether the talents of our lesson were talents of silver or of gold. In Jewish money there was a great difference between a talent of silver and a talent of gold. A talent of silver is said to have been worth \$1,642.50; a talent of gold, \$26,280.00. If silver, the eight talents he left with his servants equaled \$11,150.00; if gold, \$210,240.00. According to Webster, gold talent, \$32,640; silver, \$2,176. The servants were not hired servants, but slaves. The man owned them. Often in those days when men were reduced to slavery by the fortunes of war, men of great ability became slaves. The man of our lesson had confidence in the integrity of the slaves mentioned, else he would not have entrusted to them the management of his finances. He did not deliver into the hands of each servant the same amount of money. This man knew the ability of his servants, and gave "to each according to his several ability." The master, of course, represents the Lord; the servants represent Christians; what do the talents represent? "The word 'talent' which is the Greek word 'talanton' anglicized, and means a certain amount of money, has acquired in English the sense of intellectual endowments from its use in this parable."—*McGarvey*. The man did not give his servants intellectual powers, or business ability; he gave them money according to their intellectual endowments, or business ability. They already had their intellectual endowments, and he gave each an amount of money corresponding to his ability to use it. But to the one who had ability to use five talents, the Lord gave five talents, and so on—to each according to his ability. But what are the talents the Lord gives his servants? Not intellectual endowments, for they

had these before they became his servants. He gives his servants the blessings of the gospel and opportunities to use them to advance his business while he is away. These will be increased along as we properly use them. Our natural abilities are not equal, and therefore we cannot all have the same opportunities for service, but we can all be faithful with what we have.

How the Servants Used Their Lord's Talents (Verses 16-18)

These servants belonged to their master; he had bought them. It was the master's duty to furnish them with food and clothing, and a place to stay; but all the products of their labors were his. Two of the servants were faithful to their lord. They used the talents committed to them in trading—buying and selling—so as to make gain for their master. Each of these doubled the amount given him. But the servant with the least ability, to whom his master had therefore given only one talent, hid his lord's money in the earth. Perhaps he thought, like some Christians of today, that since he could not do as great things as the others, he would do nothing. Or, like others, he may have been so afraid that he would do the wrong thing, that he would not do anything. This servant failed to take into consideration the fact, that the person with little ability and few opportunities, can be just as faithful in the use of what he has, as the person with great ability and many opportunities, and that the reward for such service is just as sure. Our Lord is away. He has left us a great treasure, the gospel, with all that it means and includes. We are to use that to advance his business of saving the world. We have the ability to do so. Paul's charge to Timothy should find lodgment in the heart of every Christian: "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 16.)

A Day of Reckoning Came (Verses 19-27)

"Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them." This represents the second coming of the Lord of heaven and earth. "After a long time"—that expression seems to have escaped the attention of those who claim that the early Christians were taught to look for the Lord's return any day after he went away. Two of the servants had doubled the amount given them. They brought both the principle and the increase to their lord. It was his, for they belonged to him. The same thing is true respecting our relations with the Lord. We have been bought with a price. It is true that our entrance into his service was voluntary, for we could have refused to recognize his ownership. But we are his, and all that we have and are belong to him; and the only way we can discharge our duty and receive a reward is to recognize that ownership, and enter into his service. To each of the profitable servants their lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The exercise of whatever ability these servants had, in trading with the talents committed to them, developed greater ability, so that their lord could entrust them with greater things. It is a law of nature that the exercise of any power increases it. It fits a person for greater things.

And if we are faithful now, we will reap joys after awhile. The greatness of these joys will not be fully known till we awake in his likeness, and are admitted into his presence forevermore. The man with the one talent was slothful. His ease and comfort at the moment was all that interested him. His lord was feeding and clothing him, and furnishing him lodging; why should he worry about anything else? His lord's interest was no concern of his; hence, in his lord's absence he would take things easy. Besides, if he tried to do anything, it might be the wrong thing. He did not see that it would be to his interests to make anything by trading, for it would all go to his lord anyway. He represents a class in the church. There are many slothful members of the church. And there are some who are so afraid of doing the wrong thing that they will not do anything. It is proper and right to be careful, but excessive care may become a vice. We should be careful to know what the Lord wants us to do, and then do that without fear. We should be afraid not to do anything. It seems that the slothful servant thought he was doing well with the talent committed to him. He had not lost any of his lord's money; he had not wasted any of it on himself. He brought to his lord the same talent that he had received. And he had an excuse; and his excuse, like all excuses, was a falsehood, and fooled no one but himself. "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man." His master was not a hard man, save to the servant who was worthless; for he had shown great confidence in his servants, and was also supplying them with the necessities of life. The master adopts the estimate of the slothful servant for purposes of making reply. Since the servant regarded him as such a hard master, demanding and taking more than he had any right to take, it was all the more a good reason why this servant should have been diligent so as to save himself. He was kind and generous to his faithful servants, but he would be hard on this servant who did not serve. He first denounced him as a wicked and slothful servant. The student should read verses 28-30, which says, "Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." In the treatment of these servants we see both the generosity and harshness of their master. And the character portrayed for him fairly represents, as the narrative was intended to do, God's kindness toward the faithful, and his severity toward the wicked. "Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Rom. 11: 22.) This helps us to see the point in these two statements: "God is love"; "Our God is a consuming fire." It is easy to get a one-sided view of things, even of God. The ones represented by the slothful servant, think of God as harsh and tyrannical. Others take an extreme view of the other side of God's character. It seems hard for some to think of him as both love and a consuming fire; but so he is, and it would be to our interest to so recognize him.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Ability is the power to perform; the talents were the means with which these servants performed.

To have a trust betrayed is a great disappointment. The servant who received the one talent betrayed his master's trust. It was wicked to do so.

Wherein God invites us to trust him, he will not betray us. To doubt him is sin. He is not slack concerning his promises. He rewards abundantly those who put their trust in him—those who love and serve him.

Let us not presume on his love and goodness. If he did not hate sin and punish the sinner, he could not be called good. He will faithfully keep his promises and reward the righteous, but he will in nowise clear the guilty. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. Some one said, "God is as just, as if he were not merciful; and he is as merciful, as if he were not just." Think on this.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Luke 16: 1-13.

Luke 19: 11-27.

What God has trusted us with.

How Paul was faithful to his trust.

How we should use our money and time.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

With what words did Jesus close his public teaching?

What did he say to his disciples as he left the temple?

What seems to be the most general and persistent sin of God's people?

Give illustrations of this sin.

Verses 14, 15

Give the estimated values of talents.

How came it that men of great ability were sometimes slaves?

How did this man distribute his money, and on what basis?

Verses 16-18

Tell how these servants used the talents committed to them.

What lesson is it to us?

Verses 19-27

When their lord returned, what did these servants do?

What did he say to the first two?

What excuse did the man with one talent give for his conduct?

Was it a valid excuse?

What did his lord say to him?

How do Christians of today sometimes imitate him?

What was done with this servant?

How do we sometimes mistake the character of God?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IX—March 3, 1940

IN THE UPPER ROOM

Matt. 26: 17-30

17 Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jē'sūs, saying, Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the passover?
18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Teacher saith, My time is at hand; I keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jē'sūs appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

20 Now when even was come, he was sitting at meat with the twelve disciples;

21 And as they were eating, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began to say unto him every one, Is it I, Lord?

23 And he answered and said, He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born.

25 And Jūdās, who betrayed him, answered and said, Is it I, Rāb'bī? He saith unto him, Thou hast said.

26 And as they were eating, Jē'sūs took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins.

29 But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Ol'ives.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This do in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 73: 24-28.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

February 26.	M.	.....	The Lord's Supper Instituted (Matt. 26: 17-30)
February 27.	T.	.....	Jesus the Bread of Life (John 6: 41-51)
February 28.	W.	.....	Strength from Jesus (John 6: 52-59)
February 29.	T.	.....	A Communion Service (1 Cor. 10: 14-22)
March 1.	F.	.....	The Sacredness of the Supper (1 Cor. 11: 20-28)
March 2.	S.	.....	The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 4-10)
March 3.	S.	.....	Comforting Words (John 14: 1-9)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; generally understood to be Thursday night of the week of the crucifixion.

Place.—An upper room in Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples. It is a matter of dispute as to whether or not Judas Iscariot was present when the Lord's Supper was established, and yet it is a matter of no importance to us. It is likely that many a hypocrite has eaten the Lord's Supper since then.

Lesson Links.—When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, it was a stunning blow to his critics and opponents. Because of the miracle, so many believed on Jesus that the chief priests and Pharisees decided they would have to take radical measures. They held a council, and said, "What do we?" or, What shall we do? "for this man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him." "So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death." (John 11: 47-53.) "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews." He went away with his disciples for a time. When the time of the Passover drew near, "many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves. They sought therefore for Jesus, and spake one with another, as they stood in the temple, What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?" On account of the determination of the leaders to kill Jesus, these people thought he might stay away from Jerusalem. "Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment, that, if any man knew where he was, he should show it,

that they might take him." (John 11: 54-57.) But Jesus did not secretly enter the city as these enemies thought he might. The great demonstration accompanying his entrance so astounded them that they said, "Behold how ye prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after him." (John 12: 19.) But his cleansing the temple, and his scathing denunciation of them (chapter 23), so enraged them that they became more determined than ever to put him to death. They were afraid to do anything in the open. "And they took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people." (Matt. 26: 4, 5.) In some way Judas Iscariot knew of their perplexity, and resolved to profit by it. "And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went away, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might deliver him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he consented, and sought opportunity to deliver him unto them in the absence of the multitude." (Luke 22: 3-6.) He thought he could carry out his part without Jesus and the eleven apostles knowing anything about it. This shows that he yet did not know the powers of his master.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Making Ready for the Passover (Verses 17-19)

The feast of unleavened bread came in connection with the Feast of the Passover. They were required to eat unleavened bread seven days, beginning on the day in which the passover lamb was slain. "Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread." (Ex. 12: 19, 20.) In preparing this lesson the student should read Ex. 12: 1-28; Num. 9: 1-14; Deut. 16: 1-17. The Passover was one of three annual feasts of the Jews. On the occasion of our lesson the disciples volunteered their services in preparing the Passover Feast. "Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the passover?" The form of the question indicates that they understood that he had arranged for a room, but they knew not where. It is said, however, that any spare room in Jerusalem was free to those attending the feast from the country. Mark's account is a little fuller. "And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover, his disciples say unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and make ready that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him; and wheresoever he shall enter in, say to the master of the house, The Teacher, saith, Where is my guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will himself show you a large upper room furnished and ready: and there make ready for us." (Mark 14: 12-15.) When these two disciples found everything just as Jesus said they would, even to meeting the man bearing a pitcher of water, it must have strengthened their faith in his supernatural powers. These two disciples were Peter and John. (Luke 22: 8.) After preparing the

Passover, these two disciples returned to Bethany, for Mark says, "And when it was evening he cometh with the twelve." Jesus had been spending the nights in Bethany. Possibly he was not in Jerusalem at all on Wednesday, and it seems that he did not come in on Thursday till the close of the day.

Conversation About the Betrayal (Verses 20-25)

"Sitting at meat." The marginal reading has, "Or, reclined at table." In giving directions for the eating of the first Passover, the Lord said, "And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is Jehovah's passover." This arrangement was necessary, so that they might be ready to depart on a moment's notice. This would not be necessary at subsequent observances; it seems to have been directions for only that one night. Hence, in reclining at the table Jesus and his disciples were not going contrary to the law. Perhaps nothing Jesus ever said to his disciples astonished them more than his saying, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." It filled the eleven with sorrow, and of course Judas Iscariot had to pretend that he was filled with sorrow. The eleven had no idea that he meant that the betraying was to be done that night. Of course, neither of them could know what another might do in the distant future. Neither of them could feel sure what he might do in the future; hence, each one said, "Is it I, Lord?" In reality Judas had already betrayed him, and was then seeking a suitable opportunity to deliver him into the hands of his enemies. "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." A sort of bitter sauce was a part of the Passover Feast. Three or four dishes of this would be necessary for a group of thirteen, to enable each one to reach a dish. The statement of Jesus limited the possible betrayer to one of the number using the same dish he used. Jesus makes the significant expression that it would have been good for the betrayer, had he never been born. This could not have been said, had the doctrine of universal salvation been true; but as he was to be eternally punished for his sins, it would have been good for him, if he had never been born. "And Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, Is it I, Rabbi? He saith unto him, Thou hast said." "The object of this conversation was both to show the foreknowledge of Jesus and to give Judas a solemn warning in reference to the crime which he was about to commit. If it had been the purpose of Jesus to overwhelm the guilty wretch with fear and dismay, and thereby compel him to desist from his horrible undertaking, we cannot conceive words better adapted to this purpose. Yet so utterly calloused had the conscience of Judas become, that with brazen effrontery he asks, 'Master, is it I?' Such hardihood in crime is a more convincing evidence of deep depravity than his previous covenant with the chief priests."—McGarvey.

The Lord's Supper Instituted (Verses 26-30)

"Jesus took bread." This was unleavened bread, bread without any yeast or anything to make it rise; for that was the only bread allowed at the Passover and for seven days thereafter. No leaven was allowed even in their homes. "Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your

habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread." Loving care and skill should be put into the making of the bread for the Lord's Supper. "And blessed." There is no "it" in the original Greek, nor is there in the American Standard Version. Jesus did not bless the bread; as some old-timers were wont to say, he said the blessing. Both Luke and Paul say, "When he had given thanks." To bless and to give thanks therefore are merely different expressions for the same thing. When brethren, ministering at the Lord's table, say, "We cannot bless the bread as Jesus did, but we can give thanks for it," they show that they have thought very little about what they are saying. And when brethren, still more thoughtlessly, pray for the Lord to "bless the bread or the wine to its intended use," they, like the superstitious Catholic, evidently expect the Lord to work some mystical change in the bread or wine. Such a prayer is worse than foolish. "He brake it." Some disciples, even in a small congregation where only one plate is used, would not think of passing the bread till they had broken it into at least two pieces. Is that what Jesus did? Adam Clark, in his Commentary, takes for granted that Jesus broke the bread into fragments for each communicant, and argues that it should be so done now. Is that what Jesus did? There would at least be some service for the communicants in that performance, but no useful service is rendered by breaking the bread into two pieces. Nor could such a service have any symbolic meaning, for the body was not broken into pieces, whether two or many. The statement has no reference to such ideas. To break bread with a person is to eat with him. "Breaking bread at home" (Acts 2: 46) was eating their food at home. The disciples at Troas came together to break bread, that is, to eat the Lord's Supper. (Acts 20: 7.) Hence Jesus took bread, ate some of it, and passed it to the others. He set them an example, and they followed the example. "This is my body." Not his literal body, for his literal body was still alive and sitting before them, and he was holding the bread in his hand. Such expressions are common. In the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis we have these expressions: "Judah is a lion's whelp"; "Issachar is a strong ass"; "Dan shall be a serpent in the way"; "Naphtali is a hind let loose"; "Joseph is a fruitful bow." And this: "Ephraim is a cake not turned." (Hos. 7: 8.) No one understands such expressions as literal. Concerning the wine Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." (1 Cor. 11: 25.) No one understands that the cup, or the wine, was the actual new covenant. Why should we understand that the bread was his real body? In First Corinthians 11 we have these expressions: "As often as ye eat this bread," "who-soever shall eat the bread," "so let him eat of the bread." Hence, it is bread we eat, and not the real body of the Lord. The Lord's Supper is not complete without the fruit of the vine. It is a symbol of his blood, "which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." Jesus did not shed his blood on his own account—his blood was not shed for any crime he had done. The law of God had been violated by man—by all men who have lived, and who will yet live. Justice has been outraged. Some one must pay the penalty—or all men would be lost. Jesus, having no sins for which to die, could die for others. Now by accepting the sacrifice he made, all men may be saved. Verse 29 shows that it was the fruit of the vine which Jesus drank, and not his own blood; he would not drink of the fruit of

the vine any more till he drank it the new way in his kingdom—commune with his disciples. After singing a hymn they went out of the city to the Mount of Olives.

SOME REFLECTIONS

In selling Jesus to the Jewish leaders, Judas sold himself to the devil. The deal brought him only trouble.

The disciples were eating the Passover with their Lord; he was their host at this feast. Yet one of them was so base, that, after deliberately selling his Lord, he had accepted his Lord's hospitality, and was then anxiously waiting for the time to come when he could complete his part of the bargain. The love of money had so corroded his heart as to destroy every instinct of a gentleman.

The Lord's Supper is to be observed on the Lord's day—the two go together. In a sense every day belongs to the Lord, and yet there is a day that is his in a peculiar sense. On that day he arose from the dead. Also, in a general sense every supper belongs to the Lord; but there is one supper that is specially devoted to him. The early church ate this Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, the Lord's day.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Isa. 53: 1-3.

Isa. 53: 4-6.

The Lord's Supper a memorial institution.

What the Lord's Supper means to me.

When and how often should it be eaten?

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What effect did the resurrection of Lazarus have on the enemies of Jesus?

What did they say about him?

What did they decide to do about it?

What did the early arrivals at the feast say?

What commandment had the leaders given?

What upset their plans?

Who helped them out, and how?

Verses 17-19

Tell about the Feast of the Passover and of unleavened bread.

Tell about the arrangements for the last Passover Jesus ate.

In the meantime, where was Jesus?

Verses 20-25

Tell what you can about ancient manners at the table, posture at table, etc.

What special requirement was made for the first Passover?

During Jesus' last Passover, what astonishing thing did he say?

Tell something about the reactions of the disciples.

Tell about Judas.

Verses 26-30

Give an account of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

What sort of bread was used?

Discuss "blessed" and "gave thanks." Discuss the meaning of "this is my body."

Discuss the significance of "breaking bread."

Give as full discussion of the Lord's Supper as you can.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson X—March 10, 1940

GETHSEMANE: TRIUMPH THROUGH SURRENDER

Matt. 26: 36-46

36 Then cometh Jē'sūs with them unto a place called Gēth-sēm'ā-nē, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zēb'ē-dēe, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42 Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words.

45 Then cometh he to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matt. 26: 39.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 42: 1-5.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

March 4.	M.	Triumph Through Surrender (Matt. 26: 36-46)
March 5.	T.	Perfect Through Suffering (Heb. 2: 5-12)
March 6.	W.	Exaltation Through Suffering (Rom. 8: 18-25)
March 7.	T.	Paul's Triumphant Surrender (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
March 8.	F.	Heroes of Faith (Heb. 11: 32-40)
March 9.	S.	“An Eternal Weight of Glory” (2 Cor. 4: 11-18)
March 10.	S.	Turning to God in Trouble (Psalm 42: 1-5)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; Thursday night of the crucifixion week.

Place.—Gethsemane. “Gethsemane” means “a place of oilpresses.” This indicates that it gained its name from the fact that it had once been a place where oil was pressed out of olives. It was at this time a garden.

Persons.—Jesus and eleven apostles.

Lesson Links.—While John does not directly mention the establishment of the Lord's Supper, he gives more of what occurred that night than do the other writers. It seems certain that the speech recorded in chapters 14, 15, and 16, together with the prayer in the seventeenth chapter, was made after the supper was instituted. This speech and prayer are mentioned only by John. At what stage in the proceedings they sang a hymn, the record does not say. Luke mentions some matters not mentioned by the others. (Luke 22: 24-38.) Even before they left the room, the disciples engaged in a controversy about who was accounted the greatest. Had they known the full import of the Lord's Supper, and could have foreseen what was just ahead of them, ambition for places of greatness in the kingdom would have been farthest from their hearts. After the

proceedings were all over in the upper room, Jesus came out of the city, "and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him." Often at the close of the Lord's day worship some one remarks, "After the supper they sang a hymn, and went out," thus butchering that scripture in a shameful way. They went out of the city, not simply out of the house. On the way, Jesus said to the disciples, "All ye shall be offended in me this night." "Offend" is used in the Bible in the sense of "cause to stumble"; that is the sense of the Greek. "Stumble in me"; that which would happen to him would be the cause of their stumbling. They had expected him to be their mighty king; and to see him meekly submit to his enemies would cause them to doubt, to lose hope. They had not learned from the prophets that thus it must be. Zechariah (13: 7) had written, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." That is a forceful figure of speech, and it sets forth in a striking way, what happened to the disciples when Jesus was seized on that night by his enemies, and led away to his death. Peter affirmed that he would not stumble, even if all the rest did. Mark adds, "And in like manner also said they all." Jesus said to Peter, "Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter then affirmed even more confidently, that he would not deny Jesus: "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." And had Peter been allowed to fight in the garden, as he started in to do, he would, no doubt, have fought till he died. It is not good to be too sure of our steadfastness. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10: 12.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jesus Sorrowful and Sore Troubled (Verses 36-38)

At the time of our lesson Gethsemane must have been larger than what is now known as Gethsemane. The present Gethsemane may be the same garden made smaller. It appears to have been a quiet place for rest and relaxation; "for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples." On this occasion Jesus had come there for prayer—for communion with his Father in heaven. He left eight of the apostles, perhaps near the entrance, saying to them, "Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray." He took Peter, James, and John deeper into the garden. They could not know the heaviness of his heart, yet they could see that he had begun to be sorrowful and sore troubled. To these three he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." That, of course, was no exaggeration. Being of a finer feeling than we who have been more or less hardened by sin, he felt more keenly and deeply than we do. "He felt as if he could not survive the pressure that was upon his soul, and the utter helplessness into which he had sunk, is seen in the request to the chosen three, 'Tarry ye here, and watch with me.' He who had been their comforter in every hour of trouble and danger, now calls on them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would give him in the hour of his agony. Wonderful sight! The Son of God longing for the sympathy of human hearts, and leaning in a time of weakness on the arm of human friendship! Leaning, too, as so many sufferers have done, on a broken reed."—*McGarvey*. How little the disciples

knew of the significance of that hour, and of the burdens resting so heavily on their master's heart!

A Prayer, a Gentle Rebuke, an Admonition (Verses 39-41)

Jesus went a little way from Peter, James, and John—"about a stone's cast," according to Luke. He wanted his beloved disciples near, and yet he wanted to be alone with his Father. Luke says he kneeled down and prayed. Matthew says that he fell on his face. Evidently he kneeled at first, and, growing more earnest, fell prostrate on his face. Many people have passed through experiences that will enable them to know why Jesus would, after kneeling, fall prostrate on his face. Gethsemane, the garden of wine presses, had become the Garden of Sorrows and of Resignation. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Jesus was human as well as divine; he would dread the suffering of death—especially the cruel and shameful death on the cross—as would any sensitive and innocent person. Even then the shadow of the cross was casting its gloom across his heart. He knew the tragedy of death as none other could. He could see, as none other could, that death was the result of sin, and in it he could see the wreck and ruin that sin had brought into the world. He could read the hatred and malice of those who had determined his death, and could see his own apostle, whom he had so patiently taught and guided, working to deliver him over to death, and all the others scattered and bewildered; and he could feel the burden of the world's sins resting upon him, and know that it was these sins that had brought him to this hour. And yet he would not have it otherwise than what was necessary and what was the Father's will. The Father's will would be carried out. In that prayer there was earnest desire, trust, and resignation. When he returned to Peter, James, and John, he found them, not watching, but sleeping. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" The days just past had been days of excitement and of uncertainty. Now, in the quiet of that garden, they found relaxation, and were overcome by sleep. There was no severe rebuke in the words of Jesus. But they did need to be awake and praying. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Had they known what was just before them they could not have slept, and they certainly would have seen the need of watching and praying. And when Jesus said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," was he not uttering a general truth, applicable to himself as well as to them? In the very nature of things he would dread the sufferings and the shame of the cross, even though the joy of redeemed man was set before him, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 2.)

Jesus Prays a Second and a Third Time (Verses 42-44)

Again he went away from the three, and prayed as he had before. "My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done." Again he came to the three disciples. It seems that in that awful hour he longed for the sympathy and companionship of these beloved disciples, but again he found them sleeping, "for their eyes were heavy." "And he left them again, and went away, and prayed

a third time, saying again the same words." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Matt. 6: 7.) In praying the same prayer three times in rapid succession, Jesus was not violating his own precept. A vain repetition is an empty repetition. If a prayer is empty when repeated, it was empty the first time. An earnest, sincere prayer is never a vain prayer. One who is in great agony of soul, as was Jesus, will pray again and again as Jesus did. In all of this hour of agony and prayer, Jesus was submissive to his Father's will. On some things the Lord's will has been expressed in plain terms. If we pray for the Lord to forgive a penitent child of God, there is no need that we add the phrase, "if it be thy will." There are matters, however, concerning which we do not know that it is the Lord's will to grant what we ask. In such matters we should always add the qualifying clause, "if it be thy will."

Jesus Delivered Up (Verses 45-56)

Our printed text stops with verse 46, but the lesson in reality continues through verse 56. When Jesus returned to his disciples after the third prayer, he found them still sleeping, and said to them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." There must have then been a period of quietness; for Jesus would hardly tell them to sleep on and take their rest, and then, in the next breath, say, "Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me." At this moment Judas and a multitude appeared. Luke says that Judas went before them. He would not want it to appear to Jesus and the disciples that he was one of that bloodthirsty mob. To avoid the necessity of speaking out and telling the mob which one to take, he had given the leaders of the mob a sign, saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he: take him." It seems incredible, after what happened only a few hours ago at the supper, that, by going before the mob and greeting Jesus with a kiss, he could think of trying to deceive Jesus into thinking he was merely coming to take his place in the company of the disciples; and yet it seems that he thought so. And so we have "the traitor's kiss" as a sort of byword or proverb. With a kiss, the token of love, Judas revealed the depths of his depravity. But the spirit of Judas may be present when there is no kiss. If a person manifests friendliness or engages in flattery so that he may put people off their guard and be able to use them for his own advantages, he is a Judas. And flattery is never used for any other purpose. Luke reports: "And when they that were about him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And a certain one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye them thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him." John reports: "Simon Peter therefore having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. Now the servant's name was Malchus." Matthew quotes these words of Jesus: "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Jesus did not have to rely on Peter for protection. God could have protected him with a host of angels had it been God's plan. Then Jesus taunted the mob

with biting sarcasm: "Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." "Then all the disciples left him, and fled."

SOME REFLECTIONS

Singing a part of a song on the Lord's day just before the benediction has become a ritual in nearly all the churches. The pity of it is, they imagine they are quoting scripture when they say, "After supper they sang a hymn, and went out." In the passage thus perverted there is not even a comma where they stop. When a part of the worship becomes a mere ritual it ceases to be worship.

Jesus suffered in the garden almost to the point of death; yet he triumphed over the things that weighed so heavily upon him. He went away from that garden thoroughly resigned to his Father's will. One wonders if that was what the writer of the letter to the Hebrews had in mind when he said, "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. 5: 7, 8.) We cannot fully comprehend how the Son of God learned obedience by the things which he suffered.

In the light of what Jesus suffered in anticipation of death, how can we think of death as an experience to be sought. Death is an enemy, an uncompromising enemy; if observation did not so teach us, then we should give heed to what inspiration says—"The last enemy that shall be abolished is death." How then can we sing, "Death Is Only a Dream"? When we stand by the lifeless form of a loved one, we know then that death is no dream, but an awful reality—an enemy that has robbed us of our dearest treasure.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The danger of being overly confident.

How we should pray.

Submission to God's will.

Judas Iscariot.

Heb. 5: 7, 8.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Where is Gethsemane?
Give some incidents connected with the institution of the Lord's Supper.
What was the point of contention among the disciples?
Discuss the misuse of Matt. 26: 30.
Discuss verses 31-35.

Verses 36-38

What gives the Garden of Gethsemane its fame?
Why would Jesus resort thither?
How did he arrange his disciples on this night?
What did he say to Peter, James, and John?

Does it seem strange that he should have sought comfort from these men?

Verses 39-41

Repeat the prayer of Jesus.
Why should he dread the things that were coming upon him?
Discuss how Jesus could see death as none had ever done.
Returning, what did he say to the three?

Verses 42-44

What did Jesus say about vain repetition in prayer?
Why was not his prayers vain repetitions?

Verses 45-56

Discuss the remaining incidents that occurred in Gethsemane that night.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XI—March 17, 1940

CALVARY: TRIUMPH THROUGH SACRIFICE

Matt. 27: 33-50

33 And when they were come unto a place called Gōl'gō-thā, that is to say, The place of a skull,

34 They gave him wine to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted it, he would not drink.

35 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments among them, casting lots;

36 And they sat and watched him there.

37 And they set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JĒ'SŪS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38 Then are there crucified with him two robbers, one on the right hand and one on the left.

39 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads.

40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 In like manner also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. He is the King of Is'rā-ēl; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him.

43 He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour Jē'sūs cried with a loud voice, saying Ē'lī, Ē'lī, lā'mā sā-bāch-thā'nī? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47 And some of them that stood there, when they heard it, said, This man calleth Ē-lī'jāh.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

49 And the rest said, Let be; let us see whether Ē-lī'jāh cometh to save him.

50 And Jē'sūs cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isa. 53: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 22: 1-8.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

March 11.	M.	Jesus on the Cross (Matt. 27: 33-44)
March 12.	T.	Triumph Through Sacrifice (Matt. 27: 45-56)
March 13.	W.	Enduring the Cross (Heb. 12: 1-6)
March 14.	T.	A Cry on Anguish (Psalm 22: 1-8)
March 15.	F.	Redemption Through the Cross (1 Pet. 1: 13-20)
March 16.	S.	The Cross in Discipleship (Luke 14: 25-35)
March 17.	S.	The Cross, the Power of God (1 Cor. 1: 18-25)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; Friday, as generally understood.

Place.—Golgotha, or the Skull; the Latin name is Calvary. The place was just outside the city of Jerusalem; its exact location is not now definitely known.

Persons.—Jesus, some Roman soldiers, and a multitude of people. Two robbers were also crucified. "And Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross." Likely he did not in person put this title on the cross. Certain women were present, "among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother

of the sons of Zebedee." Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there, as was also John.

Lesson Links.—We can be sure that the leaders in Jerusalem did not sleep during the night in which Jesus was seized in the garden. There was too much excitement and expectation; by the help of Judas Iscariot they hoped to have Jesus in their hands before morning. When Jesus was seized, he was carried first to Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. The Romans had a way of meddling with the Jewish priesthood. Annas had once been the high priest, having been appointed to that office by Quirinus, the Roman governor of Syria, A.D. 7. About A.D. 14 the Roman procurator of Judea forced him out in favor of Ishmael. About A.D. 25 Joseph Caiaphas became high priest. It seems, that, at the time of our lesson, the Jews regarded both Caiaphas and Annas as high priests. Annas was older and more experienced; it was natural therefore for the Jews to take Jesus to him first. After some questioning, Annas led Jesus to the house of Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews, assembled, and carried Jesus through a mock trial. Before they ever laid hands on Jesus, they had determined that he should be put to death. Any trial they might appear to give him was a mere formality. The majority of the court were prosecutors, and not judges. They condemned him on a charge of blasphemy, but they knew that Pilate would take no notice of that charge. They had to hunt up something else. "Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death; and they found it not." (Matt. 26: 59.) Here was a group of men supposed to be, and pretending to be, a court of justice, but were working every possible scheme to bring about the death of an innocent person. After a morning session of the Sanhedrin they brought Jesus to the court of Pilate, the Roman governor. Here they sought to make it appear that Jesus was guilty of treason in claiming to be king. After much confusion Pilate reversed his own judgment and signed the death warrant. He was then led away to be crucified.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jesus Nailed to the Cross (Verses 33-36)

Had the Jews been allowed to put Jesus to death, they would have stoned him. The Romans did not crucify their own citizens. The cross, the instrument of crucifixion was of two types; one with an upright beam with a crossbar at the top, the other had two beams crossed like the letter X. The hands and feet were either tied or nailed to the cross. The Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross. No one can conceive of the suffering attending the crashing of rough spikes through the hands and feet. Think of what the victim suffered, when, after he was nailed to the cross, the cross was elevated and let drop into the hole prepared for it. And even greater pains, if possible, would come during the long hours of hanging on the cross, when much of the weight of the body must be held up by the nail-pierced hands growing more tender and painful as inflammation increased. To add to the humiliation and shame of the cross, they crucified Jesus between two thieves. Though the Jews brought about his death, the Roman soldiers nailed him to the cross. Jesus said to Pilate, "He that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin." (John

19: 11.) And Peter said to the Jews on Pentecost, "Him . . . ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay." (Acts 2: 23.) Lawless men were men not under the law of Moses; such were the Romans. Hence, by the hand of the Romans the Jews crucified Jesus. Before they nailed Jesus to the cross they offered him wine to drink mingled with gall. Mark speaks of it as wine mingled with myrrh. Perhaps the plant Mark calls myrrh was bitter, and Matthew therefore speaks of it as gall. It was given to the victim to render him less sensitive to pain. When Jesus tasted it, he found that it was not a drink to quench the thirst, but to lessen the pain, and therefore would not drink it. In addition to making the pain less, it would have clouded his mind. He would taste the bitter cup of death to the full limit, and in the full possession of his faculties. Matthew's statement that they divided his garments among them, casting lots, is a little confusing. If they divided his garments among them, why cast lots? John's statement clears the matter up: "The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be." (John 19: 23, 24.) And then the soldiers sat down to watch, that is, to guard the victims, so that no one would rescue them from the cross.

"His Accusation" (Verse 37)

We are told that "it was a common custom to affix a label to the cross, giving a statement of the crime for which the person suffered." Matthew does not say that Pilate wrote a statement of the crime for which Jesus was crucified; he calls it his accusation—the thing he was accused of. The statement was not true in the sense in which it was viewed. Jesus was not a king in any sense that would render him guilty of treason against the Roman government. But the statement as Pilate wrote it would make it appear that he was justified in crucifying Jesus; by that statement he could also get some revenge on the clamorous Jews. The chief priests did not like the superscription, and insisted that Pilate change it; but he answered, "What I have written I have written." This we learn from John. The accusation was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

Jesus Reviled and Mocked (Verses 38-44)

"They that passed by railled on him." How empty were those wagging heads! How little they knew of what it all meant! Their remark shows how little they knew of what Jesus had said. Early in his ministry Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2: 19.) The Jews thought he referred to the temple in Jerusalem; but John adds, "But he spake of the temple of his body." Their perversion was used against him in the mock trial. (Matt. 26: 60, 61.) Now the people taunt him with their perversion of what he said. "If thou art the Son of God"—this reminds one of the same statement made by the devil when he was tempting Jesus. Jesus had done so many miracles that these people may have thought for awhile that Jesus would not allow himself to be crucified; but now that he was securely nailed to the

cross and suffering great pain, they felt that he was a helpless man, and not the Son of God. Apparently they were so unfeeling that they took delight in seeing him suffer. Likewise the chief priests and scribes mocked him. When they said, "He saved others," they spoke what they knew to be true. They knew of his raising Lazarus from the dead, and of his giving sight to a man who had been born blind, and of many other miracles; but they were utterly ignorant of his power when they said, "Himself he cannot save." Had it not been the will of God that he should die, no power on earth could have crucified him. In mockery they said, "He is the King of Israel." After all the miracles they had seen and known of, they had the impudence to say, "Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him." They would not have believed on him, had he come down from the cross; for even after he arose from the dead this same group of men "gave much money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." (Matt. 28: 12, 13.) Their unbelief was not due to a lack of evidence—they had evidence in plenty; they did not deal honestly with the evidence they had. They were too full of hatred of Jesus to believe anything good of him. They crucified Jesus in ignorance, but they were ignorant because they would not be enlightened. They were willfully ignorant. But it does seem that the members of the Jewish high court would have been too judicious, conservative, and dignified to join the hoodlums in such vile gloating over the sufferings of a victim on the cross. Nothing was more apparent than the fact that Jesus fully trusted God; and yet these judges of the high court of the Jews made that an occasion of taunting him. We should not lose sight of the fact that this crime of crucifying the Son of God was not as if one man had murdered another. It was not an individual murder, but a national murder. The Jewish nation murdered him; it was a national crime. It is said that the robbers who were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach. This must have been near the beginning of the time Jesus suffered, for it seems from Luke's account that one of them relented and rebuked the other. Perhaps the unnatural darkness that settled down over the land caused him to see that God's hand was in the matter.

Jesus Yielded Up His Spirit (Verses 45-50)

From the sixth hour—the noon hour—to three o'clock after the noon hour there was darkness over the land. It seems that God was piling evidence upon evidence so as to give these hardened Jews no sort of excuse for their unbelief. In addition to all his miracles and teachings this darkness came, and then, when Jesus died, "the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the tombs were opened, etc." The heathen centurion and the soldiers that watched with him were not so blinded as were the Jews. "Now the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." (Verse 54.) When Jesus, about the ninth hour, cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" some thought he was calling for Elijah. John reports Jesus as saying also, "I thirst." One man, more sympathetic than the others, "ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed,

and gave him to drink." He drank this, for it was not the stupefying drink which they had offered him at the first. But what is the significance of the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that awful hour even the Father withdrew his presence, and left Jesus to tread the wine press alone; but why? We may not know the significance of that act on the part of the Father, but it seems that the sacrifice Jesus was making had to be complete. The sinner is separated from God; and God, for the moment, withdrew his presence from Jesus as if he were a sinner. That, at least, is what occurred, even though we may not know the significance of the act. Of course, neither of the writers record everything Jesus said on the cross. Putting the words recorded by Luke and John, the last words of Jesus would be something like this: "Father, it is finished; into thy hands I commend my spirit." The purpose for which he came had been accomplished, and he yielded up his spirit. "And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." (Isa. 53: 9.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

A tragedy, to have any unity of action when played on the stage, must be planned and written by one person—at least, under the direction of one person. Imagine, if you can, a play written by several men, neither of whom knew what the other was writing, or that he was writing at all. Yet the tragedy of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus was so written by the prophets. And then the play—none of the actors in the drama, save Jesus, knew that the part he was playing had been written, yet each played his part according to the record. God knew what would be done, and had the prophets to write it down.

We think of Judas as a traitor, and rightly so; and yet he did show remorse of conscience; but we have no record that the leaders of the Jews ever showed any regrets as to what they did. Pilate signed the death warrant of one he knew to be innocent. We are told that he, like Judas Iscariot, ended his own life. The leaders of the nation made no sort of amends, but added to their guilt by trying to destroy the church. As the crucifixion of Jesus and the effort to destroy the church were national crimes, that is, crimes committed by the heads of the nation, the nation itself was destroyed.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The character and fate of Judas Iscariot.

The character and fate of the members of the Sanhedrin.

The character and fate of Pilate.

A study of the thief on the cross.

How to be saved like an honest man.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Give outline of the various trials of Jesus.

Verses 33-36

What was the Jews' method of execution?

How were people crucified?

Who caused the crucifixion of Jesus?

What drink did they offer Jesus?

Tell what the soldiers did with his garments.

Verse 37

What was placed on the cross above Jesus?

Why was this done?

To what did the Jews object?

Verses 38-44

With what perverted words of Jesus did the people taunt him?

What did the chief priests, scribes, and elders say?

Discuss what they said.

What evidence is there that they would not have believed?

Why did they not believe?

In what way was the crucifixion of Jesus a crime of the nation?

What is said of the robbers?

Verses 45-50

Discuss the events recorded in these verses.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XII—March 24, 1940

THE SEPULCHRE: TRIUMPH OVER DEATH

Matt. 27: 57 to 28: 6

57 And when even was come, there came a rich man from Ār-ī-mā-thā'ā, named Joseph, who also himself was Jē'sūs' disciple:

58 This man went to Pī'lāte, and asked for the body of Jē'sūs. Then Pī'lāte commanded it to be given up.

59 And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed.

61 And Mary Māg-dā-lē'nē was there, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

62 Now on the morrow, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Phār'ī-sēes were gathered together unto Pī'lāte,

63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again.

64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first.

65 Pī'lāte said unto them, Ye have a guard: go, make it as sure as ye can.

66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them.

1 Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Māg-dā-lē'nē and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it.

3 His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jē'sūs, who hath been crucified.

6 He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep.” (1 Cor. 15: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 15: 20-28.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

March 18.	M.	The Sepulcher Sealed (Matt. 27: 57-66)
March 19.	T.	The Triumph Over Death (Matt. 28: 1-10)
March 20.	W.	The Resurrection Gospel (1 Cor. 15: 1-11)
March 21.	T.	The Resurrection Hope (1 Cor. 15: 12-19)
March 22.	F.	The Resurrection Joy (Psalm 118: 14-24)
March 23.	S.	Enduring Through Christ (2 Tim. 2: 1-12)
March 24.	S.	Conquering Through Christ (Rom. 8: 31-39)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31. It is generally understood that Jesus was buried on Friday. He was raised from the dead on the first day of the week.

Places.—Jerusalem, and the garden of Joseph near Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus, Joseph of Arimathaea, the chief priests and the Pharisees, Pilate, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, a guard of soldiers, and an angel of the Lord. Luke mentions two angels.

Lesson Links.—After recording the incidents of the crucifixion John gives us these additional facts, which are not recorded by the other writers: "The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him: but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water." (John 19: 31-34.) John further informs us that he himself saw these things. When the Jewish authorities had accomplished their long-cherished plan to put Jesus to death, they, of course, felt that there would be no longer any need to worry about him and his claims. But over the hearts of the disciples there settled the darkest despair, so dense that they could not see one ray of hope. But it all clearly shows that neither the leaders nor the disciples had any just conception of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. It is not likely that any group of men ever studied the prophecies more carefully than had these Jewish authorities, and yet they utterly failed to understand the prophecies concerning themselves and the Messiah. Perhaps this should not be surprising to us, for the prophets themselves failed to comprehend their own prophecies, though they searched dilligently to find out "what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them." (1 Pet. 1: 10, 11.) The trouble with both the friends and the foes of Jesus was, that they had figured out in their own minds the manner of the time that would be ushered in at the coming of the Messiah. None of them had things planned out correctly. Their mistake should admonish us not to build theories on our interpretation of prophecies. Yet many today are more interested in fantastic theories built on misapplied prophecies than they are in the plainly revealed plan of salvation or in the church which Jesus purchased with his own blood.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Burial of Jesus (Verses 57-61)

"And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." (Isa. 53: 9.) Joseph of Arimathaea was a rich man; he was a disciple of Jesus, "but secretly for fear of the Jews." (John 19: 38.) He was a good and righteous man, and a member of the Sanhedrin, though he had not consented to what the high court had done. (Luke 23: 50, 51.) Mark describes Joseph of

Arimathaea as "a councillor of honorable estate, who also himself was looking for the kingdom of God." Though Joseph had been a disciple of Jesus secretly for fear of the Jews, when Jesus had been crucified "he boldly went in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he learned it of the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph." (See Mark 15: 42-45.) It is worthy of note that those who crucified Jesus pronounced him dead. No one therefore could charge that his disciples took him down before he died, pretending that he was dead, and then showed him alive later to make folks believe he arose from the dead. Here the enemies of Jesus made it impossible that any such fraud was practiced. Joseph had a new tomb hewn out in the rock in a garden, near the place of the crucifixion. A man of his wealth and station would have servants to assist him in taking the body down from the cross, carrying it to the tomb, and rolling the stone before the tomb. But as he started in to perform this sad task, he was joined by Nicodemus, another ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus brought about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes. These they wound up with the body, using a winding sheet of linen. (John 19: 38-40.) The two faithful Marys sat watching the burial.

The Tomb Sealed, a Guard Set (Verses 62-66)

One other matter disturbed the minds of the chief priests and the Pharisees: What would be the result, if the disciples stole the body of Jesus, and then made the folks believe that he had been raised from the dead? They remembered the words of Jesus, that he would rise after three days. They took the problem to Pilate, and asked that he so arrange matters that the disciples could not steal his body away. They did this on the morrow; but the Jewish day ended at sunset, and another day began. Their anxiety was so great that they would not think of letting a night go by without guarding against the possibility of his body's being stolen. "The morrow," therefore, must have been after sunset. Pilate granted them a guard of soldiers, and the tomb was also sealed. A string would be stretched across the front of the tomb, and fastened with wax to the wall on either side, so that the tomb could not be opened without breaking the seal. The guards would keep the disciples from stealing the body, and the seal would keep the soldiers from being bribed to let the disciples take the body away. Human ingenuity was exhausted in this effort to prevent the body of Jesus from disappearing; by their efforts they made it impossible for the body to disappear except by divine intervention. To establish his claims to be the Son of God and the Messiah, Jesus had to be raised from the dead. To make it sure that all honest hearts would have to believe he arose, it was necessary that matters be so arranged that his body could not disappear, except by a resurrection. Hence, these wicked men in their plotting were doing a real service to Christianity, though they thought they were helping their own cause. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." It is not likely that Pilate had heard that Jesus had said he would rise after three days, till the chief priests and Pharisees told him what Jesus had said. The darkness over the land while Jesus was on the cross, the earthquake, and the rending

of the veil of the temple when Jesus died, was enough to make Pilate think there might be some truth in what Jesus said. Was there not a little irony in what he said to the chief priests and Pharisees, "Ye have a guard: go, make it as sure as ye can"—as sure as you know how. Is there not an implication that you may do your best and then fail? It is a pity that preachers sometimes take these words of that reprobate as a text for a sermon.

Women Come to the Sepulchre (Matt. 28: 1)

Mark identifies the other Mary who came to the sepulchre with Mary Magdalene, as Mary the mother of James and Salome. Mark says they came when the sabbath was past. Luke says they came on the first day of the week, at early dawn. From John it would seem that they started on their journey while it was yet dark. One thing is clear—they did not come to the sepulchre till the morning of the first day of the week. On Matt. 28: 1, McGarvey has this to say: "The English version is here self-contradictory: for if the event mentioned occurred 'in the end of the sabbath,' it could not have occurred 'as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.' The word rendered 'in the end' (*opse*), usually means late, and is sometimes translated 'in the evening.' (Mark 11: 19; 13: 35.) But it is sometimes used in the genitive in the sense of after (see Robinson's New Testament Lexicon), and must be its meaning here: 'after the sabbath, as it began to dawn,' etc." The American Standard Version did not exist when McGarvey wrote, but there is no material difference between "in the end of the sabbath," and "late on the sabbath." Bloomfield sustains McGarvey. Clark has, "after the end of the week." These women certainly would not have come before the sabbath ended. They had prepared some spices on the day before the sabbath; "and on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment." (Luke 23: 56.) This shows that they did not come late on the sabbath, as the translators make Matthew say. These women brought spices, that they might anoint the body of Jesus. They did not know that the door of the tomb had upon it the governor's seal; for their only concern was as to who would roll away the stone, so that they could get to the body of Jesus.

The Empty Tomb (Verses 2-6)

We are not informed as to the purpose of the earthquake. It would, at least, impress the guards. An angel of the Lord rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. It must have been the angel's face that was as lightning, for his clothing is said to have been as white as snow. "And for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men." The sight was more than these soldiers could stand, these soldiers who had been trained to face dangers. Evidently the guards had fled away before the women arrived, for it seems that they saw none but the angel. The angel said to them, "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place, where the body lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead." Luke makes a little fuller report than does Matthew. He tells us that there were two men, two angels, in dazzling apparel, and that the women were affrighted and bowed down their faces

to the earth. It seems that people cannot stand calm and serene in the presence of heavenly beings. Yes, these women had come seeking Jesus. They had no idea that they would not find his body in the tomb. Luke further tells us that the angel said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words." It is singular that these disciples had their minds so set on other things for the Lord that his words about being crucified had never made any impression on them. This fact should admonish disciples now to be more patient in their efforts to teach those who are slow to learn certain things taught in the Bible. Any thoughtful reader of the record concerning the resurrection of Jesus will be impressed with the matter-of-fact way in which the incidents are related. The greatest event in history is told in a few simple words. An uninspired man, filled with his theme, could not have recorded such an event in such plain language, and with so few words. It is not so much that he would not have done so; he just simply could not have done so. The whole scheme of human redemption rested on the resurrection of Jesus. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." (1 Cor. 15: 14.) "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep." (1 Cor. 15: 20.) Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead. (Rom. 1: 4.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

Had not Jesus been raised from the dead, the whole structure of Christianity would have had no foundation; it would have been false. It would have been the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on the human race. Yet the religion of Christ has reformed all sorts of characters, and made useful men and women of them. Now a baseless lie could not make good people out of bad ones. Only the religion of Christ can redeem men and women from sinful lives; therefore only the religion of Christ is of heavenly origin.

The women found the tomb empty. They had expected to find in it the body of Jesus. It was gone. Pilate and the Jews had made it impossible for his body to be stolen away. The guards knew that it had not been stolen. Jesus arose from the dead; there is no other sensible explanation.

The prophecies relating to Christ were so varied that no impostor could have made any show of fulfilling them. The questions asked John the Baptist show that the leaders in Jerusalem thought the prophet foretold by Moses and the Christ would be two persons. (John 1: 19-28.) The Jews could not figure out how the Messiah could establish an everlasting kingdom, and yet suffer death at the hands of his enemies. Yet all these seemingly irreconcilable prophecies, and many others, blended perfectly in the person and mission of Jesus. He was, therefore, what he claimed to be.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How God uses wicked men to accomplish his purposes.
Christ in prophecy.

The fruits of the religion of Christ.
What the religion of Christ means to me.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
Discuss John 19: 31-34.
What shows that the Jews misunderstood the prophecies concerning Christ?
What was their main trouble?
Discuss 1 Pet. 1: 10, 11.

Verses 57-61

What did Isaiah prophesy about the burial of Jesus?
Give what information you can about Joseph of Arimathea.
How did Pilate ascertain that Jesus was dead?
Who assisted Joseph?

What custom did they follow?
Who watched the burial?

Verses 62-66

What did the Jews fear might happen to the body of Jesus?
Discuss what was done to prevent this.
How did that work to the advantage of Christianity?

Matt. 28: 1

Who came early to the tomb, and why?
On what day did they come?

Verses 2-6

Tell about the miraculous demonstrations.
Tell what the women saw.
What did the angel say to them?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XIII—March 31, 1940

THE COMMISSION

Matt. 28: 16-20

16 But the eleven disciples went into Gāl'ī-lēe, unto the mountain where Jē'sūs had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

18 And Jē'sūs came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 116: 1-9.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

March 25.	M.	The Continuing Task (Matt. 28: 16-20)
March 26.	T.	Christ's Program for His Church (Acts 1: 1-8)
March 27.	W.	Our Task in Evangelism (John 1: 35-42)
March 28.	T.	Our Task in Teaching (Deut. 6: 4-9)
March 29.	F.	Our Christian Example (1 Pet. 2: 11-17)
March 30.	S.	Supporting the Church (2 Cor. 8: 1-8)
March 31.	S.	The Universal Call to Worship (Psalm 96: 1-13)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31; the forty days between the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension.

Place.—A mountain in Galilee; which mountain is not known.

Persons.—Jesus and his apostles. Also, this meeting must have been the time in which Jesus was seen of above five hundred

brethren. There had to be some definite appointment for so many to be gathered at once.

Lesson Links.—Some of the soldiers who were guarding the body of Jesus, so soon as they sufficiently recovered from their fright, went into the city, "and told unto the chief priests all the things that were come to pass. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave much money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continueth until this day." (Matt. 28: 11-15.) Here were the members of the Sanhedrin paying the soldiers to tell a lie that was too flimsy for any sensible person to believe. If some one thinks Matthew might have invented this story, he should remember that Matthew wrote while many of the persons concerned were still living. If Matthew had fabricated that story, these enemies of Christ would have gloried in disproving it; yet none of them did so. In a very few words Luke sums up the activities of Jesus between his resurrection and his ascension: "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1: 1-5.) We are too prone to think that Jesus at one of the meetings during the forty days announced the great commission in the few words recorded, and said no more about it; but that is not reasonable, for he was preparing them for the greatest work ever committed to man. Besides, the record says that he was, at these various meetings, speaking to them the things concerning the kingdom of God. The writers give a condensed report of what was said, and each one records what was said on a different occasion. Matthew records what he said on the mountain in Galilee; Mark and Luke report what he said on different occasions in Jerusalem. To get the commission in full we must study all the records.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Meeting in Galilee (Verses 16, 17)

The night in which Jesus was betrayed he said, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." (Matt. 26: 32.) There had to be appointed a definite time and place for this meeting, else no one would have known where to go nor when to be there. So far as the records show this is the only meeting Jesus appointed during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, though he may have appointed others. If this is the only appointed meeting, then it is certain that it is the meeting in which Jesus was seen by above five hundred brethren at one time. (1 Cor. 15: 6.) But Jesus

had appeared to different ones in Jerusalem before he went to Galilee for this meeting. They would remain in Jerusalem till the days of unleavened bread were ended. They were evidently yet in Jerusalem when Thomas first saw him a week after he arose from the dead. It seems certain that Peter and some of the other disciples went down into Galilee some days before time for the appointed meeting. Not wanting to be idle, and perhaps needing some funds, Peter proposed to go fishing. Others went with him. It is singular that it has often been said that when Jesus was crucified, Peter gave up hope and went fishing. Peter had seen the risen Lord twice before he went fishing, as the record shows. Jesus appeared to them on this fishing trip; and John immediately adds, "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." (See John 21: 1-14.) And yet some, when he appeared to them at the appointed meeting, doubted. It could not have been that any of those who had been seeing the Lord on these different occasions still doubted. But there was a great crowd at that meeting who had not seen him since his resurrection. We can well believe that their doubts were soon dispelled.

The Authority of Jesus the Christ (Verse 18)

Jesus was about to issue an order that was to be world-wide and age-lasting. At least world-wide and age-lasting authority would be necessary to enable one to give such an order. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." He therefore had all the authority necessary for giving any sort of an order. None could question what he said or did. This authority was recognized by the early disciples, and reaffirmed by the writers of the New Testament. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2: 36.) "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3: 22, 23.) When God raised Jesus from the dead, he "made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." (Eph. 1: 19-23.) Only the Father himself was not put under the authority of Christ. (1 Cor. 15: 25-27.) Such he is now, and as such we adore him.

The Requirements and Promises of the Commission (Verses 19, 20)

The commission that we are now studying is, by common consent, called the Great Commission, in contrast with the more limited commission given the apostles during the personal ministry of Jesus. This great commission is reported in varying words by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This variation is due to the fact that no two of them give a condensed report of the same speech. The careful student will notice that each report emphasizes a different phase of

the commission. To get all these matters before us, and to get the commission in full, we will have to consider each report.

Matthew's Report.—Matthew's report is in the printed text, which see. Notice the items in his report: Go—make disciples of (teach) all the nations—baptizing—into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—teaching them—I am with you. The teaching is first; the taught are then to be baptized. No others are to be baptized. We have been so in the habit of thinking of Matthew's record as a mere formula to be used in baptizing, that we have overlooked the force of the expression, "baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In being baptized the person passes into this blessed name, and into communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which relationship all spiritual blessings are found. Hence, baptism brings us into salvation with all its attendant blessings. And Jesus promised to be with them, to sustain and help them. And that promise was to hold good to the end of the world.

Mark's Report.—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Note the items: Go—preach—believeth—baptized—saved. In preaching the gospel they would teach the people what to do to be saved. Preaching comes first, as it does in Matthew. Believe comes next—faith comes by hearing the gospel. The believers were to be baptized. Salvation comes after baptism.

Luke's Record.—"And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." Note the items: Preach—repentance—remission of sins—in his name—beginning at Jerusalem—when the Holy Spirit comes. According to all three of these records the whole world is the field of operations. These things were to begin to be done in the name of Christ at Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came.

John's Record.—"As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." They would forgive sins by inducing people to do the things necessary to the forgiveness of sins; the sins of others would be retained. The authority to bind and loose, as in Matt. 16: 19, is here given to all the apostles. They did not have that power till the Holy Spirit came upon them, and then only as the Holy Spirit spoke through them.

The Commission in Full.—To render a just verdict a jury must put together the testimony of all the witnesses, so as to get a complete chain of evidence. To get the commission in full, we must put together the items given by the witnesses we have examined; and we must arrange these items in such way as not to change the order in which either writer places them. We cannot put baptism first, for neither of the writers does that. We cannot put salvation before baptism, for that would change Mark's order. This therefore would

be the correct arrangement: Preach, or teach—belief (faith)—repentance—baptism—salvation, or remission of sins. If the apostles followed this order, we know it is correct. Compare the events when on Pentecost the first sermon was preached under this commission. Peter preached—faith was demanded and exercised—then, repent—be baptized—remission of sins.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Some would have us believe that Christ now has all authority, but is not exercising it; they would have us believe that his powers now lie dormant. Those who so believe do not honor and adore him as they should. But no such idea is hinted at in the Bible. The word “therefore” in Matthew shows that his command to the apostles was based on his having all authority.

Like any wise ruler, Jesus the Christ exercises only so much power at any given time as is necessary to the carrying out of his plans. He has been doing this ever since he was crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Things began to be done in his name at Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after his resurrection from the dead. This shows that he then began to exercise his authority as king.

The commission is not the constitution of the kingdom of Christ; neither is the New Testament. Christ is absolute monarch, and an absolute monarchy has no constitution. The New Testament in its entirety is the decree, the edict, of Christ, the absolute monarch. The kingdom of Christ is not a limited monarchy.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The appearances of Christ after his resurrection.

The authority of Christ.

Summing up the commission.

The first sermon under the commission.

QUESTIONS

Where is the lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Tell about the soldiers' report to the chief priests, and what was done. Discuss Acts 1: 1-5.

What evidence that Jesus outlined different phases of the commission on different occasions?

Verses 16, 17

What meeting had Jesus appointed? Name some of his appearances before he went to Galilee.

What did some of the apostles do while waiting for this meeting?

Did that indicate that they had given up hope?

Verse 18

What did Jesus say about authority? Give other passages showing his absolute authority.

Verses 19, 20

What writers report the Great Commission?

Why is there differences in their reports?

Repeat Matthew's report of the commission.

Discuss the items in this report.

Let different students do the same with other reports.

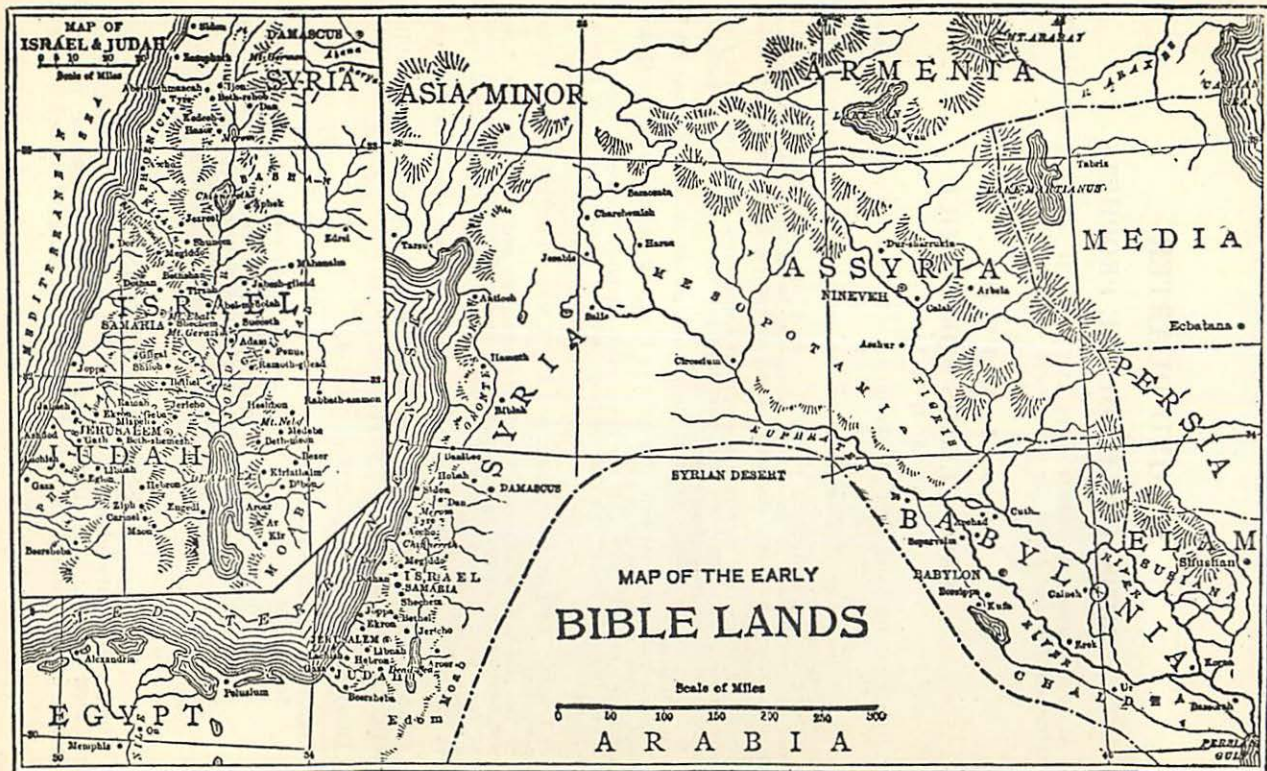
According to Luke, when and where were they to begin operating under this commission?

How might the apostles remit or retain sins?

Sum up the items of the commission.

Show how Peter followed this arrangement.

Discuss the reflections.



SECOND QUARTER

MESSAGES FROM THE PROPHETS

AIM: To study messages from the prophets in order to discover their meaning and value for our times.

Lesson I—April 7, 1940

AMOS PLEADS FOR JUSTICE

Amos 5: 1, 10-15, 21-24

1 Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Is'rā-ēl.

10 They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

11 Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

12 For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins—ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their right.

13 Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jê-hô'vâh, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jê-hô'vâh, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

22 Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.

23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

24 But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate."* (Amos 5: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Sam. 23: 1-4.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

April 1.	M.	Penalty of Injustice (Amos 5: 1, 10-13)
April 2.	T.	Plea for Justice (Amos 5: 14, 15, 21-24)
April 3.	W.	The Plumbline of the Lord (Amos 7: 7-9)
April 4.	T.	Dealing Fairly with Our Fellow Men (Lev. 19: 13-18)
April 5.	F.	Fulfilling the Royal Law (James 2: 1-9)
April 6.	S.	Learn to Do Well (Isa. 1: 16-20)
April 7.	S.	Reign of the Righteous King (Psalm 72: 1-8)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably about 800 B.C. The exact date cannot be determined further than that Amos prophesied during the reign of Uzziah king of Judah and of Jeroboam II king of Israel. (Amos 1: 1.)

Place.—Bethel. (See Amos 7: 10-13.)

Persons.—Amos and the people of the kingdom of Israel. Of himself Amos said, "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." (Amos 7: 14, 15.)

Lesson Links.—In pomp and splendor and all outside appearances the reign of Solomon stands out as the most glorious period of Hebrew history; but the people paid for the show, and begged Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor, to make their burdens lighter. Instead of doing so, he threatened to make their burdens heavier. Ten tribes revolted, and set up another kingdom with Jeroboam as their king. This kingdom became known as the kingdom of Israel, or simply Israel. It was sometimes referred to as Ephraim, because Ephraim was the dominant tribe of the ten. Jeroboam sacrificed the true worship of Jehovah for politics. Fearing that his people would forsake him, if they continued to go to Jerusalem to worship, he selected two places within the borders of his own kingdom for worship centers. He made two golden calves for gods, and set up one at Dan and one at Bethel. (1 Kings 12: 26-33.) None of the kings that followed him on the throne of Israel ever brought about a reformation. Corruption increased. At the time Amos prophesied Jeroboam II was king. "And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin." (2 Kings 14: 24.) He was an energetic and forceful king, but no better morally and religiously than those before him. At the time Amos came to Bethel to prophesy, Amaziah was priest there. He became enraged at what Amos said about Israel, and sent word to Jeroboam, charging Amos with conspiracy against the king. Apparently Jeroboam paid no attention to the charge, and left Amaziah to wrestle with the problem himself; for we next find Amaziah telling Amos to go to Judah to do his prophesying. Evidently Amos took his own time to go. It seems probable that he wrote down his speeches after he returned to Tekoa in Judah.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Amos Exhorts Israel to Hear His Word (Verse 1)

Amos gave a general rebuke to the nations around Israel before he turned his attention directly to Israel. He begins his remarks about Israel in the sixth verse of chapter two. His opening words to them show the state of deep depravity to which they had descended: "Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes—they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father go unto the same maiden, to profane my holy name: and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined." Amos, as did other prophets, sometimes spoke of future events as though they had already happened. He does this in chapter 4: 6-11. These calamities were then future, as is seen by

reading verse 12, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God." People must meet God; they must meet him in reconciliation and peace, or in the judgments that he will visit upon the rebellious. And it seems that Amos had little hopes that Israel would be brought back in obedience to Jehovah. Hence, he takes up a lamentation over them. He would speak in sorrow, and not in anger; but he must tell them of their wickedness and corruption.

"They Hate Him That Reproveth" (Verse 10)

"Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish." (Prov. 12: 1.) "Reprove not a scoffer, lest he hate thee: reprove a wise man, and he will love thee." (Prov. 9: 8.) It is a singular thing, that the farther into sin a man goes, the more he hates those who reprove him. The people of Israel not only hated the one who reproved them, but they had become so full of wickedness that they abhorred a righteous man. If the statement of Amos seems strong, then remember how even the leaders among the Jews hated and abhorred Jesus. And it seems that the more wrong people are in religion the more bitter they are toward those who call in question their faith and practice. It was so then; it is so now. "They abhor him that speaketh uprightly." They shun the person who insists on doing just what the Lord says.

They Oppress the Poor and Pervert Justice (Verses 11-13)

"Trample upon the poor." The poor were not in position to help themselves. The rich and powerful therefore disregarded their rights, and used them to further their own interests. They exacted from the poor in rents and taxes more than was just. If for any reason the poor man was brought before the courts, his rights were disregarded. Court decisions were for sale, and the poor had nothing with which to bribe the judge. The just man fared no better, for he would not seek to pervert justice by bribing the court. Yet their law said, "Thou shalt not wrest the justice due to thy poor in his cause. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no bribe: for a bribe blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth the words of the righteous." (Ex. 23: 6-8.) "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, according to thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. Thou shalt not wrest justice: thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe; for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee." (Deut. 16: 18-20.) Amos describes those in authority in the kingdom of Israel at the time he prophesied as "ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate." As the needy had no money, their cause was not even considered—they were turned aside. "Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time." To be prudent is to be practically wise. While such conditions prevailed in Israel, the man who voiced a protest would only bring down on himself the

wrath of those who were in power and authority. If protesting made a man's condition worse, it was the part of prudence to say nothing. But prudence may be prompted by selfishness, as when a man keeps silence for his own good while others are being robbed, or led astray by false teaching. However, the servant of God must not exercise prudence for his own profit or pleasure. Prudence, for that reason, is treason against God. He is commanded to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching, even with the prospect of persecution and the loss of all things for doing so. Now, as in the days of Amos, there are manifold transgressions and mighty sins to be combatted.

"Hate the Evil, and Love the Good" (Verses 14, 15)

Someone once said, "Love is of God; hate is of the devil." But that is a one-sided view of the matter. When men love the evil and hate the good, that love and hate are both of the devil. If a man hates the good, he will love the evil; and if a man loves the good, he will hate the evil. If a man does not hate the evil, he does not love the good. "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." (Psalm 119: 104.) "O ye that love Jehovah, hate evil." (Psalm 97: 10.) "The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil." (Prov. 8: 13.) "A righteous man hateth lying." (Prov. 13: 5.) "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." (Rom. 12: 9.) If we love God supremely, we will diligently strive to do his will; if we love our neighbor as we love self, we will do him all the good we can. If we love good, we will seek to advance the good. It is strange that men of intelligence will love that which is evil, which, they should know, will lead to ruin. Amos was the best friend Israel had, and yet Amaziah deemed him a pest. His program was their only hope: "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

Their Worship Despised and Rejected (Verses 21-24)

The people of the kingdom of Israel worshiped according to the plan established by Jeroboam at the beginning of the kingdom; Jeroboam had established the plan for political reasons. When a government undertakes to establish a form of religion for a nation, or seeks to control a form of religion already adopted by the people, it, by so doing, eliminates God. The state becomes the head of whatever form of religion it controls. Religion is then subservient to the state, and those in authority will use religion for political purposes. A government-controlled religion is bound to degenerate. Besides, it would not be pleasing to God, no matter how near right it might be in its outward forms. So far as gaining the favor of God is concerned, all money and all efforts put into such religion are worse than wasted; the whole thing is displeasing to God. Hence, Jehovah said to Israel, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies." It is not enough therefore for people to be religious and to have meetings for worship. And their offerings were of their own choosing and offered in their own way; hence, God did not accept them, no matter how costly their offerings may have been. There could be no acceptable worship, no

acceptable sacrifices, so long as they disregarded the will of God. Besides, these people were so corrupt in their lives that God would not accept any worship from them, even if it had been correct in its outward form. "Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isa. 59: 1, 2.) "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." (Psalm 66: 18.) A corrupt life therefore makes acceptable worship impossible. And so with false doctrine. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15: 9.) Their songs were no more acceptable than their sacrifices; to Jehovah their songs were a mere noise. And so is any song if the heart is not in it—if the singer does not mean what he sings. "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." Their songs were as empty of sentiment as a tune on an instrument. A song should express scriptural truth, and the singer should express what is in his heart.

A Call for Justice.—Amos is rich in illustrations and figures of speech. Notice how expressive is this: "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." When water is turned loose it flows naturally and without effort; so should it be with justice. There is something wrong with a man when he has to make a decided effort to deal justly. Righteousness should sweep evil away, as a mighty stream sweeps away things in its path. Let justice flood the land; let righteousness sweep away every obstruction. "Cursed be he that wresteth the justice due to the sojourner, fatherless, and widow." (Deut. 27: 19.) Injustice is the offspring of disregard for the law of God and the rights of others.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Perhaps Amos saved a few people of the kingdom of Israel from the corruption into which they had fallen, but he did not save the nation. Right living is an individual matter.

A nation is far gone when its courts are open to bribery, so that the poor and the righteous cannot get justice. It is not much better when court proceedings are so costly that a poor man cannot maintain his cause. Frequently that is the case.

Corrupt men seek to gain positions where they can gain money by underhand schemes. Some public offices furnish such men with opportunities for a rich harvest. And such men will pose as great reformers and friends of the people in order to get into office.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

When and why the kingdom was divided.
The reign of Jeroboam II.
Amos the prophet.
The need of just dealings.
Righteousness exalteth a nation.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
What does Amos say of himself?

What is the golden period in Hebrew history?

What did such splendor bring on the people?

Describe the dividing of the kingdom.

Tell what Jeroboam did as a political move.

Tell about Amaziah and Amos.

Verse 1

Give some of the sins mentioned by Amos in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Repeat the first verse of our lesson.

Verse 10

Repeat and discuss verse 10.

Give some other scriptures along the same line.

Who generally resents most any reproof?

Verses 11-13

How did they treat the poor?

What did the law say on that point?

Is it always right to be prudent?

Verses 14, 15

Repeat these two verses.

Give some references on what servants of God should hate.

Discuss hating evil and loving good.

Verses 21-24

What plans of worship had Jeroboam established at the beginning of the kingdom of Israel?

Discuss the state control of religion.

What was the Lord's attitude toward their assemblies?

Why did he reject their sacrifices?

What separates from God?

When are songs acceptable?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson II—April 14, 1940

HOSEA TELLS OF GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE

Hos. 6: 1-7; 14: 4-9

1 Come, and let us return unto Jê-hô'vâh; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.

3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Jê-hô'vâh: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

4 O Ê'phrâ-îm, what shall I do unto thee? O Jû'dâh, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away.

5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.

6 For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

7 But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew unto Is'ra-êl; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lëb'â-nôn.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lëb'â-nôn.

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lëb'â-nôn.

8 Ê'phrâ-îm shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

9 Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jê-hô'vâh are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 1: 16-20.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

April 8.	M.	God Desires Goodness (Hos. 6: 1-7)
April 9.	T.	God Forgives Sin (Hos. 14: 4-9)
April 10.	W.	God Loves Sinners (Hos. 11: 8-11)
April 11.	T.	God Gave His Son (John 3: 16-21)
April 12.	F.	God Is Faithful and Righteous (1 John 1: 5-9)
April 13.	S.	Prayer for Forgiveness (Psalm 51: 1-10)
April 14.	S.	Blessedness of the Forgiven (Psalm 85: 1-13)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Hosea did not begin to prophesy much later, if any, than 775 B.C. He prophesied over a long period of time, for he began during the reign of Uzziah king of Judah, who died about 758 B.C. He prophesied till the reign of Hezekiah, and his reign began about 726 B.C.

Place.—Hosea prophesied within the borders of the kingdom of Israel, but we are not told where he lived and prophesied.

Persons.—Hosea and the people of the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Hosea was the son of Beeri, but nothing is known of him, save what may be learned from the prophecy that bears his name. His speeches were directed mostly to the people of the kingdom of Israel.

Lesson Links.—The period in which Hosea prophesied was overlapped by the periods in which Amos and Micah prophesied. Jonah perhaps was a little earlier. It was a time of great corruption. Judah was fast decaying, and the kingdom of Israel was worse. Hosea begins his first direct address to the people of the kingdom of Israel with these words: "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." Individuals or nations are in a bad way when Jehovah has a controversy with them. They cannot keep up that controversy—they must fail; their only hope is to surrender to him, and stop the controversy. They began the controversy; their moral and spiritual condition was deplorable—destitute of truth, goodness, and the knowledge of God. The phrase "the knowledge of God" means the knowledge people have of God, or the knowledge that is revealed about him and his will. The people of Israel had been so long in idolatry and sin that all knowledge of God had vanished from them. They did not know God—did not know his will. Such ignorance of God, such indifference to his will, leads to all sorts of corruption and sin. Hence the next verse says, "There is sought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood." (Hos. 4: 1, 2.) Again, verse 6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." In verses 14 and 15 of the fifth chapter the Lord tells what he will do to Israel: "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." In all their history they forgot the Lord in their prosperity; in their adversity they turned to him.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Hosea Calls for Reformation (Verses 1-3)

Whether Hosea was here inviting Israel to return to Jehovah, or whether he was stating what they must do to gain Jehovah's favor, or whether he was reporting what some of the people of Israel were saying, the lesson is the same. It was necessary for them to return to Jehovah to avert the calamities threatened in the last verses of the preceding chapter. The Lord had threatened to tear them as would a lion. If now they would return to Jehovah he would heal wherein he had torn; he would bind up their wounds; he would make them whole again. The Lord has always been gracious to forgive those who, having gone astray, turn to him again with all their heart. If this were not so, humanity's doom would be certain; that is, all rational beings would be doomed. Verse 2 shows how rapidly they would recover from their calamities, if they would return to the Lord.

Knowing Jehovah.—There is no permanent reformation without a knowledge of Jehovah. In their idolatry, Israel had lost sight of God and his law. "I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted as a strange thing." (Hos. 8: 12.) They had become more ignorant of the source of their blessings than the dumb brute. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isa. 1: 3.) Their law said, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. 6: 6, 7.) For nearly three hundred years, since the ten tribes followed Jeroboam in establishing the kingdom of Israel, the great majority of that kingdom had forsaken the law of Jehovah for various forms of idolatry. They had therefore failed for generations to teach the law to their children. They could not teach the law to their children, for they themselves knew it not. Hence, the admonition, "Let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah." They would have to know something of him and his law before they could begin to do his will. Having learned enough to begin to serve him, they could then follow on to know more of him. Men who follow up knowledge with faithful service can come to know more of God and his will than it is possible for disobedient men to know, be they ever so studious. When they thus learned of him, he would come to them as the rain.

The Instability of Judah and Israel (Verses 4, 5)

Because Ephraim was the dominant tribe of the ten that followed Jeroboam, the kingdom of the ten tribes was sometimes called Ephraim. Their fickleness is portrayed here in a striking figure of speech. Neither in Judah nor in Israel was any reformation lasting; their goodness was as a morning cloud, or as dew that soon disappeared. This had been true of them ever since they settled in Canaan. They never continued faithful to Jehovah over any long period of time. Their history is a history of reformations and backslidings. But it could not be said that the kingdom of the ten tribes ever had any real reformation. However, not all the people of these

tribes were spoiled by Jeroboam. Even during the reign of the wicked Ahab and Jezebel there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. (1 Kings 19: 18.) And during all the years of their existence the Lord had sent prophet after prophet to teach, warn, and exhort them. Verse 5 expresses by strong figures of speech how the Lord had sought to correct them through the words of his prophets. "Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their back, and slew thy prophets that testified against them to turn them again unto thee, and they wrought great provocations." (Neh. 9: 26.)

Sacrifice with Transgression Not Acceptable (Verses 6, 7)

When king Saul disobeyed the Lord, and then attempted to make sacrifices to Jehovah with the things he had gained by disobedience, the prophet Samuel said to him, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15: 22.) And here were these men of Israel who had been for generations offering sacrifices to their false gods—making sacrifices that profited them nothing. Even a sacrifice offered to Jehovah, and not in the way he directs, is vain. Cain's sacrifice is proof of that. "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice." This is another way of saying that goodness is more important than sacrifice. God commanded sacrifice, but such treatment as they were giving one another made their sacrifices not desirable at all. "And the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." It is easy to see that the phrase "the knowledge of God" does not mean what God himself knows, for it would not be said that God desired his own knowledge; he desired that the people know him and his will—know the things revealed in his law. The knowledge of God is the knowledge that God has revealed. God desired that these people know what he had revealed to them. "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant." Adam had violated a positive law of God; he had deliberately made his choice against doing as God commanded. The kingdom of Israel had done as he had done. "There have they dealt treacherously against me."

Blessings Promised to Israel (Hos. 14: 4-8)

The printed text of this section of our lesson gives a one-sided view of matters. Here the Lord promises to heal their backslidings and to love them freely, but why? Will he do so in all their sins? Verses 1-3 give the conditions on which he will be gracious to them: "O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offerings of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." If they would come to Jehovah with these pledges of fidelity, he would do the things mentioned in the verses of our lesson. They had gone away from the Lord; they must return to him. They had broken the covenant; they must renew their pledges of faithfulness to it. The Lord loves freely those who come to him in faith and humility. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm

51: 17.) "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isa. 57: 15.) "Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66: 1, 2.) The foregoing verses show the kind of spirit the Lord bestows his blessings upon. For them his branches spread and his beauty is as the olive tree. Such dwell under his protecting care. When Ephraim would vow to have no more to do with idols, Jehovah would answer his prayers and regard him as his own.

"The Ways of Jehovah Are Right" (Verse 9)

"As for God, his way is perfect." (Psalm 18: 30.) "The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice: a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he." (Deut. 32: 4.) His law also is perfect. (Psalm 19: 7.) No fault therefore can be justly charged to him. Only because of ignorance would any man charge God with mistakes. But who was wise enough in Israel to understand the ways of Jehovah? Who among them could understand the simple rules of justice and right, so long had they been corrupt and sinful? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11: 33-36.) "For the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein." Here are set forth in few words the principle of God's dealings with man. In the concluding words of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus sets forth the same principle: "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." (Matt. 7: 24-27.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

Common sense should have taught the Hebrews at the beginning of their career that it would be better to follow God's will; their own experience should have soon taught them the folly of following their own ways; but their conduct shows that they learned very little from any source.

The sure way to happiness is to live by faith, for faith is taking

God at his word, and doing what he says. Instead of walking by faith in all things, Solomon tried to learn by experience to "see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their life." (Eccl. 2: 3.) After a varied experience he gave his conclusion, a conclusion which he should have known at the beginning: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccl. 12: 13, 14.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The fickleness of Judah and Israel.

What they should have learned by experience.

A discussion of Hos. 6: 5.

Some lessons we learn from Hosea's prophecy.

A discussion of Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 11.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What other prophets prophesied about the time of Hosea?

What was the condition of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah?

Repeat some of the charges Hosea makes against the people.

What would the Lord do with them?

Verses 1-3

How could they avert the threatened calamities?

What is said about knowing Jehovah?

How does Isaiah describe the ignorance of the people?

Why was there such general ignorance?

How may a person know more and more of Jehovah?

Verses 4, 5

Why was the kingdom of the ten tribes sometimes called Ephraim? Give Hosea's description of their lack of stability.

How had the Lord sought to reform them?

Verses 6, 7

What did Samuel say to disobedient Saul?

What does the Lord desire most?

Hos. 14: 4-8

On what condition would the Lord be gracious to them? Give proof.

Give references showing whom the Lord favors.

Verses 9

Discuss the thought in this verse.

Repeat Matt. 7: 24-27.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson III—April 21, 1940

MICAH'S VISION OF PEACE

Mic. 4: 1-5; 5: 2-5

1 But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jê-hô'vâh's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it.

2 And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jê-hô'vâh, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zî'ôn shall go forth the law, and the word of Jê-hô'vâh from Jê-ru'sâ-lêm;

3 And he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jê-hô'vâh of hosts hath spoken it.

5 For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jê-hô'vâh our God for ever and ever.

2 But thou, Bêth'-lê-hêm Eph'râ-thâh, which art little to be among the thousands of Jû'dâh, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Is'râ-êl; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Is'râ-êl.

4 And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jê-hô'vâh, in the majesty of the name of Jê-hô'vâh his God: and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

5 And this man shall be our peace.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."* (Mic. 4: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 11: 6-10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

April 15.	M.	The Vision of Peace (Mic. 4: 1-5)
April 16.	T.	The Prince of Peace (Mic. 5: 2-5)
April 17.	W.	The Security of Peace (Isa. 11: 6-10)
April 18.	T.	Peacemakers (Matt. 5: 9-16)
April 19.	F.	The Way to Peace (Isa. 2: 1-4)
April 20.	S.	The Kingdom of Peace (Psalm 72: 11-19)
April 21.	S.	Kept in Perfect Peace (Isa. 26: 1-4)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Micah began to prophesy during the reign of Jotham, which, according to Hales, began 757 B.C. He continued to prophesy till some time during the reign of Hezekiah, which began 725 B.C. At what time during the reign of Jotham he began to prophesy we are not told. But his prophesying did not continue many years into the reign of Hezekiah, for he prophesied against the kingdom of Israel, and it fell 719 B.C., six years after Hezekiah began to reign.

Place.—Micah was of Moresheth-gath. But it is not likely that he did his prophesying at this place. He must have traveled through both kingdoms in his efforts at reformation.

Persons.—Micah and the people of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Lesson Links.—When Micah began to prophesy, Isaiah had been prophesying for some years in Jerusalem, and Hosea had been for a longer period prophesying against the sins and corruptions of Israel and Judah, but mostly against the sins and corruptions of Israel. It seems that Micah addressed most of his remarks to Israel. It is not to be supposed that all the speeches he made over a period of many years have been recorded in the small book bearing his name. Apparently Israel had about reached the bottom in moral and religious corruption, and must soon reach the end. Hosea and Micah were faithfully working as God's messengers to reform them, and thus to save the nation from destruction. Micah, as did Hosea, shows the corruption of the rulers, as well as of the people: "And I said, Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: is it not for you to know justice? ye who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones,

and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." (Mic. 3: 1-3.) In this passage the prophet uses some strong figures of speech to show the thoroughness with which the rulers were robbing the people. He makes this thrust at the false prophets: "Thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that make my people to err; that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and whoso putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him." Neither the rulers nor their prophets had any regard for the people; and the people had no regard for one another. Jeremiah later expressed matters thus: "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5: 30, 31.) And this concerns the rulers in Jerusalem: "They build up Zion with blood. . . . The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money. . . . Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest."

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Another Order to Be Established (Verse 1)

This same prophecy is found in Isa. 2: 2-4. Sometimes by a figure of speech a kingdom is called a mountain, as in Jer. 51: 25; Dan. 2: 35; Zech. 4: 7. "The latter days" were the days that would follow the Jewish age. It would come to pass after the Jewish age, that the mountain of Jehovah's house would be established "on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills." The house of the Lord is now the church. "These things write I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.) That it was to be established on the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills shows its exalted position; it overtops everything else. The temple of Solomon was glorious, but it had no glory in comparison with the church of the living God. "And peoples shall flow unto it." They shall come in as a continuous stream, and it would be from all nations. The temple at Jerusalem was for the Hebrews, but there would be no such limitations in respect to this house foretold by Isaiah and Micah. The gospel and the church, the house of the Lord, are for all people. The prophecy refers to this house. All nations were to be brought into it, for Jesus commanded his apostles to make disciples of all nations—to preach among all the nations.

"The Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem" (Verse 2)

This mountain of the Lord's house, this kingdom of God, would be such as to attract many people. They would flow unto it, saying to others, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob." This language shows that the going up to this house of God would be voluntary; no one would be forced to go. This house of God would be attractive to thoughtful people, for it would be a glorious house. Paul sets forth this truth: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,

and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5: 25-27.) The church that is what God designed it to be, attracts people; it has something to offer. They come to it that God may through it teach them of his ways, so that they may be able to walk in his paths. Through the church, God is now teaching people. The prophet states the reason why the people would go up to the house of God to be taught, "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." Zion was originally a strongly fortified portion of Jerusalem which was held by the Jebusites for a long time after the Israelites settled in Canaan. When David was king he drove out the Jebusites, and that portion of the city was thereafter sometimes called the city of David. (2 Sam. 5: 6-9; 1 Chron. 11: 4-7.) But the name Zion was sometimes applied to the whole city of Jerusalem; Micah seems so to apply it. The law that was to go forth from Zion, and the word of Jehovah that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the same thing, the thought being repeated for emphasis. And the language shows conclusively that the new law would be first proclaimed at Jerusalem. The gospel was first preached in its fullness at a certain place and at a certain time. Jesus must have had in mind the prophecies of Isa. 2: 2-4 and Mic. 4: 1-3 when he said to the apostles, "Thus it is written, . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Jesus then charged them not to depart from Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. The apostles were to begin preaching this new law at Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This occurred a few days later in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ; they then began preaching repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ. (Acts 2.) That was the law that was to go forth from Jerusalem, and that is the law that is to continue to the end of the world. Nothing is said about any later law.

The Peaceful Effects of the Kingdom and Its Law (Verses 3-5)

As people pass under the peaceful reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace, they lose the spirit of carnal war. They are not interested in war, nor the implements of war. They convert the implements of war into implements used in peaceful pursuits. No man can stir up the shedding of blood in the name of Christ. His mission was, and is, a mission of peace. His first work of peace is to make peace between God and man, and to bring those who are made at peace with God into one government—into one body. There was enmity between Jew and Gentile; the cause of that enmity was the law of Moses. Therefore before there could be peace between Jew and Gentile, the cause of the enmity had to be taken away. On this point Paul says, "For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man,

so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. 2: 14-16.) All people who are brought into peace with God are thereby brought into peace with one another. It could not be otherwise, and that is the only peace the New Testament is intended to promote. That Micah was not talking of a time when all people would voluntarily come under the reign of our King, is shown by what is said in verse 5, "For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever." Here then would be some people still worshipping idols.

The Ruler to Be Born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5: 2)

Bethlehem, a small city about five miles south of Jerusalem, existed as far back as the days of Jacob. (Gen. 35: 19.) It occupied a rather prominent place in Bible history since the days of Ruth and Boaz. Here David, son of Jesse, was born; and here as a lad he watched over his father's sheep. It could not have been a very large place in the days of Micah, for he speaks of it as little. Its chief claim to fame is the fact that it was the birthplace of David and of Jesus. As it has had a continued existence all down the ages, there is no doubt as to the location of the city in which David and Jesus were born. When the Magi asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Herod asked the chief priests and the scribes where the Christ should be born. They referred him to this prophecy of Micah. This prophecy states plainly where the coming ruler would be born, but gave no hint as to the time of his coming. The pre-existence of this person that was to be born ruler in Israel is affirmed in these words: "Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." On this point the New Testament speaks plainly. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." (John 1: 1-3.) "And he is before all things, and in him all things consist." (Col. 1: 17.) Read the connecting verses, and then read Heb. 1: 1, 2.

The Ruler Would Be a Shepherd King (Verses 3-5)

In ancient times the good king, because he looked after the welfare of the people over whom he ruled, was sometimes called a shepherd. But because of the sins of the people of Israel and Judah, the Lord would give them up for a time. For a long period no prophet was sent to them. The Lord gave them up to their own ways and devices, "until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth," that is, until the coming of this ruler. Then he would as a shepherd feed his flock. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." (John 10: 11.) Peter refers to him as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. (1 Pet. 2: 25.) He not only looks after the welfare of his sheep here and now, but has yet greater things for them. "And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. 5: 4.) In the day of judgment, after having separated the sheep from the goats, he will put his sheep on his right hand, and say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25: 31-34.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

Jesus is said to be our peace, because he is the source of peace between God and man. Those who are at peace with God are at peace with one another. It could not be otherwise. Our chief effort should therefore be to make and to maintain peace with God. To seek to make peace with men on terms that will bring us into controversy with God is a fatal mistake.

Jesus is our peace; yet he himself said, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. 10: 34-36.) He came to start a war against everything that is evil, and to bring sinful man to peace with God.

It should be plain to any who read Isa. 2: 2, 3 and Mic. 4: 1, 2, that the establishment of the kingdom, and the going forth of the law from Jerusalem, are closely connected events. A kingdom must have law. When the kingdom should be established its law would be announced and become operative; and the things of the kingdom would begin to be done in the name of its king. Jesus told his apostles that they were to begin operating in his name at Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came upon them. (Luke 24: 45-49; Acts 1: 6-8; Acts 2.) This was the beginning. (Acts 11: 15.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The establishment of the kingdom.

The going forth of the law from Jerusalem.

Jesus and the peace he brings.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Who prophesied along with Micah?

To whom did Micah mostly prophesy?

Give what Micah said as to the corruption of Israel.

Verse 1

Who else uttered this same prophecy?

What is meant by "the mountain of Jehovah's house"?

What is the difference between this house and the temple in Jerusalem?

Verse 2

Why would people be attracted to this house?

What would go out of Zion and Jerusalem?

What was Zion?

When did this going forth of the law and the word occur?

Verses 3-5

Discuss the peaceful effects of the reign of Christ.

Would this peace be universal?

Mic. 5: 2

Discuss the contents of this verse.

Verses 3-5

What sort of kings were called shepherds?

Discuss verse 3.

Why is Jesus called the good shepherd?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IV—April 28, 1940

ISAIAH COMFORTS AN AFFLICTED PEOPLE

Isa. 40: 1-11

- 1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jê-ru'sâ-lêm; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jê-hô'vâh's hand double for all her sins.
 3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jê-hô'vâh; make level 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 uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain:
 5 And the glory of Jê-hô'vâh shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jê-hô'vâh hath spoken it.
 6 The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.
 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jê-hô'vâh bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.
 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.
 9 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zî'ôn, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jê-ru'sâ-lêm, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Jû'dâh, Behold, your God!
 10 Behold, the Lord Jê-hô'vâh will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.
 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 1: 3-7.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

April 22.	M.	A Message of Comfort (Isa. 40: 1-5)
April 23.	T.	The Messenger of Comfort (Isa. 40: 6-11)
April 24.	W.	God's Care for a Nation (Deut. 8: 1-6.)
April 25.	T.	God Encourages a Church (Rev. 2: 8-11)
April 26.	F.	The Lord Sustains the Individual (Psalm 27: 1-6)
April 27.	S.	The God of All Comfort (2 Cor. 1: 3-7)
April 28.	S.	The Benediction of Comfort (2 Thess. 2: 16, 17)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—The exact date of the prophecy of our lesson cannot be determined. Isaiah prophesied during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. (Isa. 1: 1.) But Uzziah began to reign about 810 B.C., and Hezekiah died about 696 B.C. Evidently Isaiah did not prophesy during all of this period of more than a hundred years. It must have been near the close of Uzziah's reign of fifty-two years that Isaiah began to prophesy. It is possible that he died during the last fifteen years of the reign of Hezekiah.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Isaiah, and Jehovah's people.

Lesson Links.—Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah were counted as good kings, but Ahaz was wicked, and did abominable things. The history of these kings is written in 2 Kings 14: 21 to the close of chapter 20, and in Second Chronicles, chapters 26 to close of chapter 32. But though the good kings sought to reform the people, the

majority of them were so steeped in sin that nothing more than surface reformatations were accomplished. This is proved to be true by what was done during the reign of Ahaz. Jehovah through Isaiah tells of the low moral and spiritual condition of the people: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward. Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." (Isa. 1: 2-6.) Isaiah denounces their sins on many occasions, and made frequent calls for them to repent. He also told of better things to come.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

"Comfort Ye My People" (Verses 1, 2)

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." The exhortation is repeated for emphasis. Was this comfort to be extended to the people then living, or did it apply to a time then future? We know that the people were then steeped in sin, and we know that God commands no one to comfort people whose hearts are set on sin and rebellion. It would therefore be wrong for anyone to try to do so. The grounds on which these sinful people could receive comfort is clearly marked out by Isaiah: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword." (Isa. 1: 16-20.) There was some reformation in the reign of Hezekiah; but it was mostly a surface reformation, for under the reign of his son the people plunged deeper into sin. (2 Chron. 33: 1-9.) The comfort was not for the people then living in rebellion to Jehovah; the comfort would come to people living at the time foretold in the verses that follow. It was a prophecy for a time then future. But there is always comfort, real comfort, joy, peace, and happiness, in walking with God. But even in such a life we sometimes become discouraged, and need words of comfort. Sorrow comes, and we need comfort. Before Jesus came many were weighed down with a sense of guilt; what could be done? "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." Or, as it is in the margin and in Leeser's translation, "Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem." You can give no comfort to people who hear only with their ears; to comfort others, your words must reach the heart. It is not the ears that mourn, and sorrow, and sigh; it is the heart. Speak to the heart that is torn with grief, to the heart that is being crushed with the burdens

of life. "And cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished." Matters of prophecy are sometimes spoken of as if they were already accomplished. It seems that this statement referred to some time then future, for Jerusalem had much war after that was written. It must refer to the time when people, having become Christians, do not make war. "That her iniquity is pardoned." In view of the prevailing corrupt condition of Israel, could this apply to them at that time? "She hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins." This cannot mean that Jehovah had punished Jerusalem twice as much as justice demanded; Jehovah does not do such things. This, too, likely refers to the future, when the Jews, having been captured by the Romans, would be experiencing a double calamity of that sort, having been earlier carried away by Babylon.

John the Baptist and His Work Foretold (Verses 3-5)

When God himself points out the fulfillment of a prophecy, the matter is settled. There is therefore no need for trouble in locating the fulfillment of the matters mentioned in verses 3-5; for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John show that they had their fulfillment in John the Baptist and his work. Matthew (3: 1-3) is very specific: "And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (See also Mark 1: 2-4; Luke 3: 1-6.) John the Baptist also applied this prophecy to himself. When the authorities in Jerusalem sent a committee to inquire of him who he was, he replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet." (John 1: 19-23.) We shall therefore study these verses of our lesson in the light of the application made of them by these inspired men, bearing in mind that the imagery is drawn from the building of highways through a country of hills and valleys. "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah." As we have seen, John the Baptist applied this prophecy to himself. He was preparing the way for the coming of the mighty King of kings and Lord of lords. Ever since man sinned, preparation for the coming of the Lord had been going on; but John was sent to do the final work preparatory to the coming of the Lord. This "way of Jehovah" must be made level, not left rough and uneven. "Every valley shall be exalted." John was not constructing a literal road; he was not filling up real valleys and digging down real hills and mountains; he was dealing with people, making them ready for the coming of Christ. But something in his work answered to the filling of valleys and the digging down of hills and mountains. Exalting, or filling up, the valley was lifting up the lowly, the discouraged, the downtrodden, the outcast, and exalting them to the high plane of faith and hope and service. There were many religious and social outcasts in John's day, whom the religious leaders considered as not worthy of attention; these heard John, and the power of his preaching lifted them out of despair and filled them with hope. "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." (Luke 7: 29.) "And every mountain and hill shall be brought low." The proud, the

high-minded, the self-righteous, the bigot, had to humble themselves, repent of their sins, and bow to the authority of Jehovah. John's preaching was a great leveler, as is also the gospel of Christ. It humbled the proud and self-righteous, and lifted up the lowly and the discouraged; so does the gospel of Christ. "But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate; and the rich, in that he is made low." (James 1: 9.) "And the uneven shall be made level." Or, as Luke quotes it, "And the crooked shall become straight." We speak of crooked people, crooked business, and crooked ways; some may not be aware that the word is used in the same sense in the Bible. "They are a perverse and crooked generation." (Deut. 32: 5.) Solomon speaks of those "who are crooked in their ways." (Prov. 2: 15.) There are many other similar statements. The crook is a liar, a fraud, a cheat, a swindler. All such must be straightened out in order to be fit for the kingdom. John called men to repentance, and demanded that they live so as to show that they had repented. The glory of Jehovah was revealed in and through Christ. In quoting verse 5, Luke quotes the meaning rather than the words: "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Jesus is our salvation and the revelation of the Father's glory. His life, teaching, works, death, resurrection, and ascension, together with his church and his glorious gospel, are the greatest manifestations of God's glory that the world has ever seen.

"Cry. . . . All Flesh Is Grass" (Verses 6-8)

For "cry" Leaser has "proclaim." Thus the brevity of life is set forth in this striking figure of speech. How frail is man! how short his life, and how easily is the thread of life snapped! Grass is here used for vegetation in general. A man's life may become as beautiful as the flowers, but the flower faileth. In other places the brevity of life is set forth in this figure. Peter quotes this prophecy to show the abiding quality of God's word in contrast with the brevity of man's life. This word, he says, by which we are begotten, and which abides for ever, "is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you." (1 Pet. 1: 22-25.) This abiding word is the glorious gospel of Christ.

Telling the Good Tidings (Verses 9, 10)

Telling the good tidings is preaching the gospel of Christ. "Get thee up on a high mountain . . . lift up thy voice with strength." Publish the glad news, as from the top of a mountain, so that people from afar can hear; and preach it with strength, so as to convince those who hear. To preach with strength does not necessarily mean to preach with a loud voice. There might not be much strength in that sort of preaching. Do not temporize; do not compromise. Preach with assurance; preach so that people will be convinced. "Be not afraid." People are cowards; if one is not a physical coward, he may be a moral coward. A person may refrain from preaching to his neighbor through fear that his neighbor may not like him so well. Of course, you are not afraid that your neighbor will do you physical harm, and yet frequently you are afraid to urge upon him the commands of God. Are you afraid of losing business if you come out strong for the gospel? Are you afraid of losing popularity in your

profession? Are you a preacher? Are you afraid to come out strong on all that God says? Or do you select such subjects as you know will be generally acceptable to the brethren, and leave off some things that you feel might not be so pleasing to them? If so, do you not feel like a coward? "Be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!" The people do not know God; introduce him to them. Bring to the hearts of the people a conviction of the reality of God, so that he will no longer seem as a dream to them, or a god afar off. The people have lost God; and because of that, are themselves lost. Bring them back to God; acquaint them with him. He comes as the mighty one, and the ruler of all. The government is his.

He Is the Good Shepherd (Verse 11)

He feeds his flock like a good shepherd. To see the tender care with which the Lord looks after his flock, read the twenty-third Psalm. Read also John 10: 1-16. The good shepherd not only feeds his flock, but will lay down his life for them. So tenderly does he care for his sheep, that he gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. He looks after the young and tender lambs, but does not bestow all his care upon them. He does not forget those who are more advanced in years. "And will gently lead those that have their young." Sometimes we get so wrapped up in caring for the young, and in such a hurry to move along, we forget those who are older. Not so with our good shepherd. He is not in such a hurry that he cannot linger along with "those that have their young." A wonderful shepherd is he.

SOME REFLECTIONS

If we turn aside from the gospel of Christ, there is nothing then with which we can comfort people. Science and philosophy may serve us, but they cannot comfort us in our grief and sorrows.

The character of John the Baptist, as well as his mission and work, is worthy of careful study. He was neither a moral nor a physical coward.

Our lesson shows that John the Baptist would come to prepare a way for the Lord. Then it adds that the Lord would come as a mighty one, and that "his arm will rule for him." He would therefore be a mighty ruler.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How may we comfort people?

How John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord.

The need of Christian courage.

Jesus the good shepherd.

Jesus as our ruler.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Discuss the kings and the condition of the people in Isaiah's time.

Verses 1, 2

Whom are we exhorted to comfort?

If not sinners, why?

Discuss these verses, and show where comfort may be found.

Verses 3-5

Show the application of verses 3 and 4 to John the Baptist.

Show how he prepared the way, and how the language applies to people. How was the glory of Jehovah revealed?

Verses 6-8

How does the prophet express the brevity of life?
What abides?

Verses 9, 10

What is it to tell the good tidings?
How should they tell these good tidings?

Why might people be afraid to preach the gospel in full?

Verse 11

Discuss verse 11.
Discuss Jesus as the good shepherd.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson V—May 5, 1940

ISAIAH GIVES GOD'S INVITATION

Isa. 55: 1-11

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jê-hô'vâh thy God, and for the Holy One of Is'ra-êl; for he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye Jê-hô'vâh while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jê-hô'vâh, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jê-hô'vâh.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.” (Isa. 55: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 11: 25-30.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

April 29.	M.	.....	The Invitation Given (Isa. 55: 1-5)
April 30.	T.	.....	The Invitation Accepted (Isa. 55: 6-11)
May 1.	W.	.....	The Invitation Slighted (Luke 14: 15-24)
May 2.	T.	.....	Come to Christ for Salvation (Rom. 10: 8-13)
May 3.	F.	.....	Come to Christ for Service (Matt. 9: 9-13)
May 4.	S.	.....	Come to Christ for Eternal Life (John 6: 35-40)
May 5.	S.	.....	“Come unto Me” (Matt. 11: 27-30)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—See the preceding lesson.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Isaiah, and the people in general. The language of the prophecy shows that the Jews were not the only people included in the prophecy.

Lesson Links.—Isaiah lived in stirring times. During his life "Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him." (2 Kings 16: 5.) Isaiah speaks of this siege. (Isa. 7: 1-9.) Also during his life the king of Assyria conquered the kingdom of Israel, and carried all the people into captivity. In the latter part of his prophecy he foretold the return of the Jews from captivity, which was yet to come upon them. He spoke much of the coming of the one who would redeem the people from sin. There are too many of these prophecies to discuss here. However, in connection with this lesson, the student should be sure to read the fifty-third chapter.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Buying Without Money—Spending Without Profit (Verses 1, 2)

By a figure of speech God's blessings are here, as in some other places, spoken of as wine and milk. Sometimes they are called milk and honey. In this verse they are also called waters. Nothing else so satisfies the thirst as cold water. There is something in the blessings that God offers that answers to water. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." (John 4: 14.) But more than water is needed. "Come ye, buy, and eat." In this verse God speaks as a man in a market place, vending his wares. But his offering his blessings for sale, and calling on people to buy, does not fit some theories as to how God's blessings are obtained. A thing that is given without any consideration is not a sale; there is no buying in that sort of thing. But we buy without money and without price. However, we must come and buy. There is something that we must do—something that we must give. The second verse shows that we must hearken diligently to him, that is, we must attend to what he says—must obey him. But instead of this, we spend our money for that which is not bread; we put out our money, and receive no profit. We buy things that give us no lasting satisfaction. Perhaps the Lord here has reference to their expenditures in religion—what they spend to keep up their worship of idols; the contrast seems to show plainly that he referred to what they spent on their false religions. There is no bread, no satisfying spiritual food, in any system of false religion. Look about you, and make some estimate of the amount of money that is spent on false religions in this country, and how much labor is expended in the interest of these false religions. Their efforts at shows, entertainments, and features to draw crowds, show that their religion itself does not satisfy. Christianity, the plain New Testament religion without any frills, when understood and wholeheartedly embraced, satisfies. Nothing else fully satisfies. "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6: 35.) So Jehovah says, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Here, then, is how we buy this food and drink without money and without price—by submitting to the Lord's will.

"The Sure Mercies of David" (Verses 3, 4)

"Incline your ear"—be willing listeners to what I say; not only be willing hearers, but accurate hearers. It is remarkable how few people really hear accurately what is being said in a conversation, or in an order that is given them. This inattention to what is being said accounts for many misrepresentations of what was said, and for many blunders in carrying out orders. Cultivate an attentive ear; be sure to hear accurately what God says, for your spiritual and eternal life depends on it. Our coming to the Lord depends on our willingness to come, and our knowing how to come. "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life," said Jesus. (John 5: 40.) And in no other way may we have life. For more details of this everlasting covenant which the Lord would make, the reader is referred to Jer. 31: 31-34 and Heb. 8: 1-13. Here Isaiah identifies it with the sure mercies of David. God had made this promise to David: "When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. . . . And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." (2 Sam. 7: 12-16.) In speaking in the Jewish synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, after mentioning David, Paul said, "Of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." (Acts 13: 23.) Hence, the Holy Spirit through Paul shows that the promise to David referred to the raising up of his seed a Savior. But how could he do that, when God had promised his seed a throne and a kingdom? The mission of Jesus was primarily to save men—to be a Savior; his being king was only one of the features of his plan to save. The language farther on in Paul's speech is further proof that the sure mercies of David referred to salvation from sin. He quotes this prophecy of Isaiah, together with Psalm 2: 7 and Psalm 16: 10, and draws this conclusion from them, "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins." The sure mercies of David do not therefore refer to something yet future, but are fulfilled in Jesus as Savior. As a part of his work of saving men, Jesus was to be a leader, or prince, and commander to all peoples, not merely to the people of Israel. As king he leads and commands, but he does this as a part of his work of saving men. He is primarily the Savior; he is king that he may save. Hence, the angel in announcing his birth to the shepherds said, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10, 11.)

Another Nation (Verse 5)

Jehovah seems here to address the one who was to lead and command. It can hardly be that he was addressing the Jewish nation, for they would not call another nation. Jesus would call people out of sin into holiness of life, and this group thus called would be a new nation. It is difficult to determine just what the verse does mean.

Mercy and Pardon Offered (Verses 6, 7)

"Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found." We seek that which we have lost, or that which we wish to obtain. Seeking requires an effort; we cannot seek, if we cannot do anything. In many periods of their history, the Jews lost Jehovah, and were therefore themselves lost. When they sought him, or sought to please him, they had to do so according to the ordinance. (1 Chron. 15: 13.) God was not seeking these sinners; he knew exactly where they were and what they were. He called on them to seek him, and informed them that he was near. If God seeks the sinner and finds him, and saves him with no effort on the part of the sinner, how then can such a one seek Jehovah? The child that is lost does not seek the parents after they have found him and brought him safely back home. If the lost person cannot do anything till God finds him and saves him, then there is no seeking left for him to do. The language shows that those who are lost must seek Jehovah, and they must call upon him. But how is this seeking done? The prophet answers: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Turning comes before pardon, and forsaking sin and sinful thoughts is what the lost person must do. The thoughts and purposes of the heart respecting sin must be changed before there can be any effective turning to Jehovah. And evil must be abandoned in thought and deed before there can be any pardon. There can be no such thing as forgiving a man so long as he is at heart guilty. Later Israel said, "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?" and the Lord answered, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." (Ezek. 33: 10, 11.) "But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezek. 18: 21.) Those who seek the Lord now must seek him according to the directions laid down in the New Testament.

God's Thoughts and Ways Higher Than Ours (Verses 8, 9)

In material things men must do their own thinking, and, from observation and experience, learn the best way to do things. Experimenting and observing would not do him any good even in material things, if he could not see the results of his work while he lived. In spiritual affairs he cannot afford to experiment; for he could not know that a certain way failed to take him to heaven, till it was too late to correct his mistake. In this matter God's way is above our way, for it is the only way. As he is infinite in wisdom, his thoughts are as far above our thoughts as he is above us. The prophet stated these facts as the reason why we should turn from our way to God and his way. We cannot inform God; we cannot give him any thoughts. Things we find to be true he has always known. With him there is nothing new under the sun. Our thoughts and our ways are not his thoughts and ways. A man lives out in his life what he thinks. Thought controls life. Hence, there is power in a thought. But human thoughts cannot uplift people, for human thoughts cannot be higher than those who think them. But God's

thoughts are higher than anything man can think. Fill your mind—fill your heart with them. If you want to live as God would have you live, fill your heart and mind with God's thoughts.

The Power of God's Word (Verses 10, 11)

The rain accomplishes the purpose God has in sending it. It "watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater." It is one of God's arrangements for the good of his creatures. And so the word of God accomplishes his purposes; "it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." God sends out his word to lead men to quit sin and lead holy lives. To thus transform men God's power is in his word. Paul affirms that it is God's power to save. It shows men that they are sinners, tells them what to do, and sets motives before them to induce them to do the things required. Though it accomplishes the thing whereto God sends it, there are people whom it does not convert from sin. But God never intended that his word should convert men who love sin more than they love to do right. Some people are so hardened in sin, or set in their own ways, that they do not want to hear anything that God says. His word was never intended to do anything for a person like that. "Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66: 1, 2.) See also 2 Thess. 2: 8-12; Matt. 13: 15, and many other passages of like import.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Some people are neither hungry nor thirsty for the right. If they were, they would find it. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5: 6.)

"Seek, and ye shall find." Are you seeking salvation? It is useless to seek anything where it is not. Salvation is in Christ; why seek it anywhere else? And why seek it in the dark? "The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Psalm 119: 130.)

"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isa. 59: 2.) These sins that separate us from God must be put away before we can return to him.

When we follow the thoughts of men in religion, we are allowing the blind to lead the blind. None but the blind will allow the blind to lead him; and surely he would not, if he knew that the leader was blind. The same doom awaits both.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The food and drink that satisfies.

The useless expenditure of money in religion.

The everlasting covenant.

Jesus as leader and commander.

God's thoughts and ways.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
At what period did Isaiah live?
Name some of the stirring events of his time.

Verses 1, 2

Repeat verse 1.
Repeat what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria about water.
How buy without money and without price?
How do people spend money in religion for things that do not profit?
What did Jesus say about the true bread?

Verses 3, 4

Discuss the results of inattentive hearing.
What is necessary in coming to the Lord?
Discuss the everlasting covenant.
Discuss "the sure mercies of David."

Verse 5

Why did Jesus come to earth?
Why is he king?

Verses 6, 7

Repeat and discuss verse 6.
How is the lost person recovered?

Verses 8, 9

Discuss the difference between following our own ways in worldly matters and in spiritual matters.
Why and when should we follow God's thoughts?

Verses 10, 11

Discuss what the prophet says about the rain.
What will God's word accomplish?
What proof that it has power?
God sent his word forth to benefit what characters?
Why will not some hear the word?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VI—May 12, 1940

HABAKKUK FIGHTS THROUGH DOUBT TO FAITH

Hab. 1: 12 to 2: 4

12 Art not thou from everlasting, O Jê-hô'vâh my God, my Holy One? we shall not die. O Jê-hô'vâh, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction.

13 Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he;

14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?

15 He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad.

16 Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous.

17 Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations continually?

1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint.

2 And Jê-hô'vâh answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.

4 Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The righteous shall live by his faith." (Hab. 2: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Hab. 3: 1-4, 17-19.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

May 6.	M.	The Struggle with Doubt (Hab. 1: 12-17)
May 7.	T.	Living by Faith (Hab. 2: 1-4)
May 8.	W.	Faith Pleases God (Hab. 11: 1-6)
May 9.	T.	Christ's Cure for Doubt (Matt. 11: 2-11)
May 10.	F.	From Doubt to Faith (John 20: 24-29)
May 11.	S.	A Prayer for Revival (Hab. 3: 1-4)
May 12.	S.	Rejoicing in God (Hab. 3: 17-19)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—About 610 B.C.; probably early in the reign of Jehoiakim. It was not many years till the captivity, as we shall later see.

Place.—Probably Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Habakkuk, and the people of Judah.

Lesson Links.—"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see." Habakkuk was a prophet of God. A prophet is one who speaks for another; that is, he delivers the words that another has given him to deliver. A false prophet pretends to speak for another, but merely speaks his own notions. God's prophet speaks the words God has given him to speak; God speaks through him. "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1: 21.) So, if Habakkuk was not moved by the Holy Spirit when he began to prophesy, he spoke a deceit of his own heart. (Jer. 23: 26.) It stands to reason that he was a man of faith, a man of God, when he began to prophesy, else God would not have called him and inspired him to be his prophet. The heading to our lesson represents him as being a doubter at the first, but as continuing to prophesy till he reached the point where faith took the place of doubt. That cannot be correct. The words of a prophet sometimes represent the sentiments of the people, not his own. Our lesson will be much clearer, if we notice the contents of the preceding verses, and also acquaint ourselves with some of the conditions surrounding Habakkuk. It was a time of great corruption; the cup of iniquity of the people of Judah was full to overflowing. Read the last three chapters of Second Kings and the last chapter of Second Chronicles. Jeremiah was living at that time, and was doing all he could to reform the people. "And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans. (2 Chron. 36: 15-17.) Yet before this destruction came upon them, they were told by all the prophets that such would be their fate, but they did not believe. Habakkuk said to the people before these calamities came, or rather, Jehovah said through him, "I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you." That is, they would not believe that any trouble would come to them. Then he adds: "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs." The Chaldeans were then spreading out and conquering nations as they came to them; and when they reached Jerusalem, Jehovah would use them to punish the Jews for their wickedness. It is interesting to note how God uses one nation to punish another.

On this point read Isa. 10: 5-14; Jer. 25: 8-13; 2 Kings 24: 1-4. Read carefully what Habakkuk says about these Chaldeans in the verses preceding our lesson.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

"We Shall Not Die" (Verse 12)

In this verse Habakkuk shows that he has a just appreciation of the majesty and glory of Jehovah. He recognized that God had ordained the Chaldeans to punish the kingdom of Judah for their crimes, but he would not utterly destroy them as a people. In verse 9 he says, "They gather captives as the sand." In chapter 2, verse 5, he describes Nebuchadnezzar as one "who enlargeth his desire as Sheol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples." Though God would use the Chaldeans to punish his own rebellious people, he would in turn also punish the Chaldeans. "Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein." (Hab. 2: 8.) Jeremiah whose prophesying covered this whole period said, concerning both the kingdom of Judah and Nebuchadnezzar, "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate for ever." (Jer. 25: 11, 12.) The Jews would then be returned to their own land. Hence, the language of Habakkuk; "We shall not die." Habakkuk tells in this verse the purpose of this Chaldean invasion: "O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction." And yet a prophet did not always understand the full import of what he said; for he was not uttering his own words, but the words of God.

Why This Punishment of God's People? (Verses 13, 14)

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness." This does not mean that God cannot see such evils, nor does it mean that he shuts his eyes to it, and lets it go on. He cannot look on such things with indifference, nor even with tolerance. That is why he had ordained the Chaldeans for judgment and for correction. But why should he use the more wicked to punish those who were better than they? Of course there were some righteous people among the people of Judah, but the vast majority of the nation was such that the Lord could not use them any more, till they were corrected. If Habakkuk was voicing his own complaint, then he was not at the time speaking by inspiration, for God does not inspire people to complain at his way of doing things. But he was giving voice to what would be the average person's thoughts. Judah had no competent leaders; the people were like fishes of the sea, the smaller being destroyed by the larger; they were like creeping things, to be trampled on by every one passing along. Men like Jeremiah and Habakkuk, who could have led them

in the way of righteousness and peace, could not so much as get a favorable hearing. The people scoffed at them and persecuted them.

Nebuchadnezzar Gathers Nations as Fish (Verses 15-17)

Nebuchadnezzar was having great success in gathering in nations. He caught them as helpless fish, with his angle, his net, and his drag. He rejoiced at his success. Verse 11 says of him, "Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, even he whose might is his god." With that view, to him might was right. And his success puffed him up: "The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee." (Dan. 4: 30, 31.) He had gathered the wealth of nations and brought these riches to Babylon. He knew not that God was using him for his own purposes, and giving him these victories, but thought he was doing it all by his own wisdom and skill. Power was his god, and he trusted in his equipment for war. In this he was as if a fisherman should worship his nets because by them he made a living or grew wealthy. God was giving him success, but he thought it was his own power and equipment. Through Jeremiah Jehovah said, "And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant. . . . And all the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come; and then many nations and great kings shall make him their bondman." (Jer. 27: 6, 7.) And Nebuchadnezzar would not open his net, nor spare the nations, so long as he had power to plunder and oppress. But when Babylon served God's purposes with reference to it, it would come to an end. "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isa. 13: 19.) It would be cast away as a worn-out net.

Habakkuk as a Watchman (Hab. 2: 1)

In ancient times armies fought at close quarters. To capture a walled city the attacking armies had to break through the walls or contrive some means of climbing over the walls. Watchmen on the walls therefore served a useful purpose; he would announce the approach of the enemy so that every man might get to his post of duty. The watchman must not sleep on duty, and he must not fail to sound the alarm, if the enemy approached. From this practice a prophet was called a watchman. To the prophet Ezekiel the Lord said, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock

before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou has delivered thy soul." (Ezek. 3: 17-21.) The same principle is set forth in Ezek. 33: 1-9. The same principle holds good in the New Testament. "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 16.) Habakkuk would voice no more complaints, but would take his place as a watchman, and look forth to see what the Lord would say to him, that he might know what answer to give to the complaints he had voiced.

"Write the Vision" (Verses 2, 3)

As a prophet Habakkuk saw what was coming—that was a vision. Use your concordance, and see that "vision" refers to some revelation that God makes to people, and not to the plans and purposes of uninspired men. "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint." (Prov. 29: 18.) That passage has been terribly perverted. People do not have visions now; churches do not have visions. Habakkuk had a vision, and was commanded to write it down, "that he may run that readeth it." "The vision is yet for the appointed time." The Chaldeans were still the topic of discourse. They were then smashing nation after nation. But their time would come. Nebuchadnezzar was having his own way then. Kings, princes, and strongholds were as nothing to him. (Hab. 1: 10.) "He is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples." (Hab. 2: 5.) He was oppressing too many peoples; he was making too many enemies. "Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges!" (Hab. 2: 6.) They would plunder him, and he would be booty for them. And for that, God had his own set time. "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay."

"His Soul Is Puffed Up" (Verse 4)

It is a pity that any man who has ability to do things will become so puffed up over success that he becomes a nuisance. A man filled with pride over success becomes arrogant and cruel. There were elements of greatness about Nebuchadnezzar, but his success made him little and mean. He lived by might, and not by faith in God, though, at times, he praised Jehovah. "But the righteous shall live by his faith." That is the only way a righteous man can maintain his righteousness. He believes in the goodness and wisdom of God to the extent that he follows God's way in preference to any other way.

SOME REFLECTIONS

In some way the Lord will use even the ungodly to carry out his purposes. He used Pharaoh, the wicked nations around Canaan, the Assyrians, Nebuchadnezzar, Judas Iscariot, and the Roman government.

The Christian is a watchman. Like a careful driver on the highway, the Christian must look out for himself and the other fellow, too.

Whether or not we understand all of God's plans and works, we should know that they all work out for good to them that love him. Not everything, but all of God's plans work out for good to them that love him.

It was the watchman's business to report accurately what he saw. It is the duty of God's watchman to report accurately what God says. He is not at liberty to change any of it to suit the taste of the people.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Nabuchadnezzar.

How God uses the ungodly to accomplish his purposes.

How success spoils some people.

God's watchman.

Walking by faith.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What is a prophet?

By what power did God's prophets speak?

Discuss Hab. 1: 5-11.

Verse 12

Repeat and discuss verse 12.

Discuss Jer. 25: 11, 12.

Verses 13, 14

What is the meaning of verse 13?

What is the application of verse 14?

Verses 15-17

Give some idea of the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar.

Give what is said of him in Dan. 4: 30, 31.

What is said in Jer. 27: 6, 7? Also in Isa. 13: 19?

Hab. 2: 1

Why were watchmen anciently used?

Read and discuss Ezek. 3: 17-21.

What are we now required to do to carry out that principle?

Verses 2, 3

Discuss visions.

What would bring about the downfall of Babylon?

Verse 4

Discuss verse 4.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VII—May 19, 1940

JEREMIAH DENOUNCES FALSE PROPHETS

Jer. 23: 21-32

21 I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

23 Am I a God at hand, saith Jê-hô'vâh, and not a God afar off?

24 Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? saith Jê-hô'vâh. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jê-hô'vâh.

25 I have heard what the prophets have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, even the prophets of the deceit of their own heart?

27 That think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgot my name for Bâ'âl.

28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the straw to the wheat? saith Jê-hô'vâh.

29 Is not my word like fire? saith Jê-hô'vâh; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jê-hô'vâh, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.

31 Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jê-hô'vâh, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

32 Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jê-hô'vâh, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jê-hô'vâh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*
(1 Thess. 5: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezek. 34: 7-10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

May 13.	M.	False Prophets Exposed (Jer. 23: 21-25)
May 14.	T.	False Prophets Denounced (Jer. 23: 26-32)
May 15.	W.	"Beware of False Prophets" (Matt. 7: 15-23)
May 16.	T.	Unfaithful Shepherds (Ezek. 34: 7-10)
May 17.	F.	The Spirit of Error (1 John 4: 1-6)
May 18.	S.	Destructive Heresies (2 Pet. 2: 1-3)
May 19.	S.	Contending for the Faith (Jude 3, 4, 17-21)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—625-580 B.C. Jeremiah began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of the reign of the good king Josiah, and continued to prophesy till after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. (Jer. 1: 1-3.) The contents of some of his prophecies show when they were delivered, but nothing in our lesson indicates when it was spoken.

Place.—Jerusalem. Jeremiah began to prophesy in his home town of Anathoth, but apparently did most of his prophesying in Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jeremiah and the people of Judah. From his first recorded words we learn that Jeremiah was of a priestly family.

Lesson Links.—The word of the Lord first came to Jeremiah when he was very young. (Jer. 1: 6.) Because he denounced their sins, the men of Anathoth told him that he must quit prophesying in the name of Jehovah, else he would die by their hands. (Jer. 11: 18-23.) For years before Josiah became king, the law of God had been so neglected that the copy of the law at the temple had been covered up under rubbish in the temple, and was found by Hilkiah the high priest in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, three years after Jeremiah began to prophesy. (2 Kings 22: 3-8; Jer. 1: 1, 2.) This book of the law would, of course, have a powerful influence over the young prophet. While Josiah suppresses idol worship, the people were so steeped in sin that very little reformation in character was effected; for after the death of Josiah they plunged into sin more than ever. During the reign of Jehoiakim Jeremiah told the people plainly that the temple and Jerusalem would be destroyed, unless they repented. The priests and the false prophets determined that he should be put to death, but they could not persuade the princes to have him put to death. (Verse 26.) As the end of the nation drew nearer, these persecutions increased. Our lesson really includes all of the twenty-third chapter. We lose some of the force of the printed text if we do not begin with the first verse. The shepherds

of Judah were mainly the priests and false prophets; both classes were ignorant of the law of God, and were bitterly opposed to anyone who tried to teach them God's law. "Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! . . . Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away." They had driven them away by making them so corrupt that the Lord sent them into captivity, from which the Lord would gather them. It seems that the righteous Branch of verses 5 and 6 can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone salvation could finally come to Judah. The false prophets strengthened the hands of evildoers by encouraging them in their evil practices, "so that none doth turn from his wickedness." They and the people together had become to Jehovah as Sodom and Gomorrah. These false prophets said to the people, "Jehovah hath said, Ye shall have peace." "And they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jer. 8: 11.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

False Prophets and Their Failure (Verses 21, 22)

These prophets were not God's prophets; he had not sent them. He had not given them any word to deliver to the people; yet they pretended to be Jehovah's spokesmen. They spoke a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. (Verse 16.) The only kind of a vision any uninspired man can have is a vision of his own heart. And yet some preachers today are so ill-informed as to what they are talking about that they exhort churches to have a vision! These false prophets had turned aside from the only thing that could have done the fast-decaying nation any good. "But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." These false prophets were numerous, and they had the endorsement and support of the priests and the whole ruling class. This gave them greater influence with the people than true prophets had. Besides, these prophets prophesied what the people wanted to hear. The Lord had commanded Isaiah to make a permanent record of this trait of the people. "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever. For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." (Isa. 30: 8-10.) Under such conditions Jeremiah and the other true prophets could not influence a great many people. False teachers of today keep many people in the dark, and satisfied with error. Paul had much trouble with the teachers of false doctrines, and such teachers have been hindering the true gospel all along down the ages. As time goes on, they multiply, until there are now more false theories taught than was ever heard of before. False teachers and false teaching are as hurtful now as they ever were; to clear ourselves of guilt we must expose them.

They Cannot Hide from God (Verses 23-25)

Jehovah is a God afar off, as well as a God at hand. They cannot get so far away from him that he does not know what they say and what they do. There is no secret place in which people can hide, and do their false teaching and their wicked deeds. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? . . . If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, and the light about me shall be night; even the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." (Psalm 139: 7-12.) "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah." Where then can evil men go to hide from him? Hence, God had heard what all these false prophets had said; he had heard their lying prophecies; he had heard the dreams that they had told, dreams that they had likely studied up while they were awake. God had revealed some things in dreams, but he never revealed anything to any man in a dream that contradicted the teaching of one of his chosen prophets. These men were contradicting Jeremiah and the other true prophets; hence, their pretended dreams were false. If any man taught anything that contradicted the plain teaching of a true prophet, people should know that such contradictory teaching was false. If any man teaches anything today that is not taught in the Bible, and yet claims that God teaches it, we should know that such teaching is false.

"Let Him Speak My Word Faithfully" (Verses 26-28)

It is astonishing how warped in character some people can become; how a sane man can get the consent of his mind to deliberately deceive people is a mystery; yet it is so. "Prophets that prophesy lies"—"prophets of the deceit of their own heart." They can deceive men, but not God. Some of them might have been self-deceived, thinking they were getting revelations from God while they were only listening to the wild imaginings of their own hearts. With others their intentions are plainly stated—"that think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers forget my name for Baal." But if a man has nothing but a dream to tell, let him tell it; but the people should know that it was only a dream, and of no force. "And he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Any messenger for anybody should deliver the message given him; it is not his right to change it in any sense. The prophet should be especially careful to speak God's word faithfully, for the destiny of men depend on it. While it is true that the preacher today is not a prophet, it is his duty to preach faithfully what is written. He has no more right to add his opinions and notions to what is written, than a prophet had to change the message God had given him to deliver. Man's opinions—his dreams—are only straw as compared with the word of God. But why do people prefer straw instead of wheat? There would be very little of such preaching if people did not want it, and would not have it.

God's Word Compared to Fire and a Hammer (Verse 29)

"Is not my word like fire?" Fire is the greatest purifying agent known. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to

the truth." (1 Pet. 1: 22.) The word of God as fire energizes. David said, "The fire burned: then spake I with my tongue." (Psalm 39: 3.) And Jeremiah said, "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain." (Jer. 20: 9.) When we all become filled with the word of God, we will speak that word faithfully; for we must speak what is in our hearts. "And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The heart is sometimes spoken of as hard, sometimes as stony. Because God's word subdues the hard and rebellious heart, it is spoken of as "a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." As a fire the word of God melts and separates the pure metal from the dross. It is, therefore, a separating agent and a pulverizing agent. Let no one therefore say that, because the heart is hard and corrupt, something beside the word of God is essential in the conversion of sinners. To doubt the power and efficacy of God's word is to doubt the plain statements of God himself.

God Is Against False Prophets (Verses 30-32)

"Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor." Some commentators think this means that the false prophets had adopted some of the expressions of the true prophets, and thus were stealing the words of God from their neighbors. Is that what is meant? Is that all the harm a false prophet did? Is that the way he stole the word of God from the people? It sounds foolish to say so. A man steals from another when he takes from another that which rightfully belongs to the other, or withholds from another that which the other is entitled to. The false prophet stole the word of God by taking the truth from the people and slipping in his own opinions as a substitute; and he also stole the word from them by withholding it from them, for they were entitled to the pure word of God. Hence, every false teacher is a thief, a robber; for by deception he takes the word from some that have it, and withholds it from others who have a right to it. The pity of it is, he does this, and is still regarded as a respectable citizen. But Jehovah is against all such false prophets and false teachers. He is against those who say, "He saith," or, "The Bible teaches," when nothing of the kind has been said. They are only propagating some of their lying dreams, and the Lord is against all such. But even so, they cause many people to "err by their lies, and by their vain boasting." If people were not so ignorant of what God says, they would not be so easily led astray. A person who can see will not allow a blind man to lead him. Ignorance of God's word is a great curse. If people knew the word of God, the vast majority of those professing to preach the word of God would not get a hearing. The blind are leading the blind. Many of those who preach false doctrine today claim that the Lord called and sent them. "Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah." False teaching, no matter how polished may be the teacher, cannot benefit anyone. One of the most useful attainments is to be able to detect false teaching, and no one is safe from being deceived till he so learns the truth that he can discern between truth and error.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Jeremiah has been unjustly called the "weeping prophet," as if he were a sort of weakling; whereas, there was never a more heroic soul. Nothing turned him aside from his duty. If he wept, it was because he loved his nation, and his heart was torn with the knowledge of what was coming to his people. He would have been cold-blooded, had he not wept.

If you become a little squeamish about denouncing false teachers, read Jeremiah. If you begin to wonder whether it is necessary to deliver the word of God just as it is written, read Jeremiah. If you think people are so hardened in sin that they hate you for preaching the word, read Jeremiah. A careful reading of Jeremiah is a good tonic for anyone, especially for a preacher.

Notice the importance that the book of Jeremiah places on the word of God. It is God's word, and should be spoken faithfully. The man who keeps back some of that word, though he speaks some of it as it is written, is a thief. The man who puts in some of his opinions as the word of God, is defrauding the people.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The duty of a prophet.

The duty of a preacher today.

The power of the word of God.

Different ways of stealing the word of God from the people.

Jeremiah as a servant of God.

His treatment at the hands of those he tried to benefit.

The captivity of Judah.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Discuss the conditions under which Jeremiah began to prophesy.

Tell about Josiah, and the book of the law of God.

Outline the contents of chapter 23, verses 1-20.

Verses 21, 22

What was a false prophet?

How might they have benefited the people?

Discuss Isa. 30: 8-10.

How do false teachers do harm?

Verses 23-25

Discuss these verses.

Verses 26-28

What did God say of these false prophets?

What did they think to do by their false prophesying?

How should God's word be spoken?

Discuss any other point you see in these verses.

Verse 29

What comparisons are here made?

How is God's word a fire; also a hammer?

Verses 30-32

Why would God be against false prophets?

Are false teachers today any better?

Discuss any other point in these verses.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VIII—May 26, 1940

JEREMIAH ANNOUNCES THE NEW COVENANT

Jer. 31: 31-37

31 Behold, the days come, saith Jê-hô'vâh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Is'ra-êl, and with the house of Jû'dâh:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of E'gypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jê-hô'vâh.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Is'ra-êl after those days, saith Jê-hô'vâh: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jê-hô'vâh; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jê-hô'vâh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

35 Thus saith Jê-hô'vâh, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jê-hô'vâh of hosts is his name:

36 If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jê-hô'vâh, then the seed of Is'ra-êl also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith Jê-hô'vâh: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Is'ra-êl for all that they have done, saith Jê-hô'vâh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. 31: 33.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 22: 14-20.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

May 20.	M.	A New Covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34)
May 21.	T.	A Sure Covenant (Jer. 31: 35-37)
May 22.	W.	Keeping Covenant with God (2 Chron. 7: 14-20)
May 23.	T.	The Promise in the Rainbow (Gen. 9: 8-17)
May 24.	F.	The Covenant of the Supper (Luke 22: 14-20)
May 25.	S.	The Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9: 11-15)
May 26.	S.	God's Law in the Heart (Mark 12: 28-34)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Between 625 and 580 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem; at least it seems that Jeremiah did the greater part of his prophesying in Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Jeremiah, and the new Israel of God.

Lesson Links.—God made promises to Abraham when he called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. (Gen. 12: 1-3.) These promises were renewed when Abraham offered up Isaac: "By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22: 16-18.) These promises were renewed to Isaac and to Jacob, thus restricting them to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. The promises related to two things; namely, the making of a great nation out of Abraham's descendants, and the blessing of the world through his seed. For his descendants to become a great

nation, they had to have a country of their own in which to develop. They could not become a great nation without law and religion. Hence, God gave them the land of Canaan, and a system of laws and a religion. And while he was fulfilling the first promise in making of them a great nation, he was preparing the way for the fulfilling of the second promise—the promise to bless all nations through Abraham's seed. In the law, there were types and shadows pointing forward to something better. Any thoughtful person who reads the Old Testament can see that it was not intended that the whole world should be embraced in the Jewish economy, nor that the law of Moses was to be God's final revelation to man. Everything pointed forward to something better; and this better something was the fulfilling of the second promise; and we are not left to guess as to the fulfilling of that promise. "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3: 16.) Out of this promise grew a new nation, the spiritual children of Abraham, the new Israel of God. The old order passed away; the new order took its place. Nothing is more plainly taught, than that the old order, having served its purpose, passed away, and that a new order was brought into existence. The principles on which the old covenant was established, made it impossible for it to be a religion for all nations. Neither could a religion for all nations be established so long as the law of Moses stood as a separating wall between the Jews and all others. "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. 2: 13-16.) "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us; and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." (Col. 2: 14.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A New Covenant Promised (Verse 31)

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes the prophecy of this lesson, and, of course, makes the proper use of it. (Heb. 8.) He leads up to the quotation by first showing that we now have a new high priest. (Heb. 7: 11-28; 8: 1-5.) A change in the priesthood made it necessary to change the law governing the priesthood. None but the tribe of Levi could minister about the tabernacle or temple; and none of that tribe except the family, or descendants, of Aaron could be priests. Now Jesus our high priest was of the tribe of Judah, and could not therefore exercise the priest's office under the law of Moses. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests." (Heb. 7: 12-14.) Hence, Jesus was not made a high

priest by the law of Moses. "For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore." (Heb. 7: 28.) Hence, this Son was not made a high priest till after the law—till after it ceased to be God's law concerning the priests. "Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law." (Heb. 8: 4.) The establishing of this new covenant was not the result of a sudden impulse on the part of the Lord, nor was it an emergency measure to meet the demands of unforeseen developments. The writer of Hebrews settles that point, for he shows that this covenant which we now have in Christ is the covenant foretold by Jeremiah. In our lesson the Lord said he would make a new covenant, and the writer of Hebrews quotes this prophecy as finding its fulfillment in this new order of things. Hence, this new covenant foretold by Jeremiah is now in operation. Let no man deceive himself; if we would enjoy its blessings, we must not break the covenant.

The New Covenant Not Like the Old (Verse 32)

"In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai." (Ex. 19: 1.) Here God said to them through Moses, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." To this the people answered, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." (Ex. 19: 5-8.) Then God through Moses announced to them the terms of the covenant, which was sometimes called the law of Moses. This new covenant foretold by Jeremiah was not to be like the old covenant, the covenant made at Sinai. That covenant was made with a nation of fleshly descendants of Abraham. Its goal was Canaan; its sanctuary, or tabernacle, was of this world; its priesthood was composed of men having infirmity; and it was dedicated, or sanctified, by the blood of animals. (Heb. 9: 1-10, 18-20.) It made nothing perfect; "for the law made nothing perfect." (Heb. 7: 19.) "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offered continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. . . . For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10: 1-4.) The new covenant would not have these defects.

Israel Broke the Covenant.—Times without number Israel forfeited any covenant rights they had; yet when they returned penitent to Jehovah, he took them back into his favor. But they reached the climax of their crimes when they murdered the Son of God, and tried to destroy his church. They knew not that God was overruling their wickedness to carry out his purposes; they knew not that the nails with which they were fastening Jesus to the cross, God was using to nail the broken covenant to that same cross. In fact, there was a triple crucifixion: Jesus was nailed to the cross, the broken covenant was nailed to the cross, and their being God's chosen people was nailed to the cross. Jesus was brought to life again; the other two were not. Instead, a new covenant was made, and a new nation

was born. The old covenant was no longer binding, and the Jews were no longer God's special people.

Characteristics of the New Covenant (Verses 33, 34)

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes this entire new covenant prophecy, but prefaces his quotation with these remarks: "But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second." (Heb. 8: 6, 7.) From this we learn that Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant, and that it has been enacted upon better promises. Some of these better promises we shall discover as we proceed. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it." This means more than that the people will memorize the words of the new covenant. The new covenant reaches the heart; it has a greater appeal to the best that is in man. The love displayed in the death of the Son of God on the cross for the world's redemption from sin and death, has a mighty appeal to the heart of man, as also does the hope of eternal life. To write the new covenant in the heart is, in part, to cause a person to understand its requirements; but it means much more than that. It is also to make one feel its importance, its power, and his personal responsibility in the matter of fulfilling its requirements; it is to so enlist his understanding, his emotions, and his will, as to stir him up to give himself wholeheartedly into the service of God. Hence, it is to bring the whole heart into submission to this law of Christ; "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10: 5.) "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is no place in the new covenant for false gods. The one God has called us out of sin, and we are his people. Having been bought with the blood of Christ from the bondage of sin, we are his property, his servants. And having been born again, we are the children of God. Under the old covenant every child born of Hebrew parents was a member of the covenant, and every heathen bought with Hebrew money was also a member. (Gen. 17: 12, 13, 27; Ex. 12: 44.) These infants born into the covenant, and the heathen bought into it, had to be taught as members of the covenant to know Jehovah, but now one has to be taught to know the Lord before he can enter the covenant. As no one in the covenant is taught to know the Lord, it is evident that infants and untaught heathen are not in the covenant. The Lord plainly says of those in the covenant, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." They must be taught their duties as members of the covenant, but they must know Jehovah and how to enter the covenant before they enter. Entrance into this covenant is an individual matter, a matter that each one must decide for himself. He could not enter into covenant relations with God, unless he knew enough of God to cause him to enter into such a covenant. Teach, baptize, teach, is the order. When we enter the covenant, all our sins are forgiven. These sins are then forever gone; they are remembered no more. This is a precious promise to one who realizes

his guilt. It is a blessedness not enjoyed under the old covenant. "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10: 3, 4.) But if the forgiven man in the new covenant is ever condemned, it will be for sins he later commits, and of which he does not repent.

Jehovah's Faithfulness (Verses 35-37)

Fleshly Israel ceased to be God's people. They were broken off from his favor because of their unbelief, and were cast away. (Rom. 11: 11-24.) No new covenant was made with that nation. The Jew that God now regards is not a Jew after the flesh. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter." (Rom. 2: 28, 29.) "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." (Gal. 3: 29.) "Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham." (Gal. 3: 7.) These are the children of promise, and now constitute the Israel of God. (Rom. 9: 6-8.) This is the nation to which the kingdom was given. (Matt. 21: 43.) This is the Israel with which the new covenant was made—the Israel that the Lord would not cast off. It could not be fleshly Israel that he would not cast off, for he did cast them off. (Rom. 11: 12-24; Gal. 4: 21-31.) To this spiritual Israel—this new nation of Israel—God pledges his faithfulness forever.

SOME REFLECTIONS

It requires at least two parties to make a covenant, but either party can break a covenant. However it may be stipulated in the covenant, that the party breaking the covenant, shall pay a penalty.

God stipulates all the conditions, benefits, and penalties of the new covenant. We become parties to this covenant by voluntarily complying with its conditions.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

- The nature of covenants.
- The old covenant.
- The new covenant.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, what promise did he make?
When and to whom were these promises made?
Repeat the promises.
Discuss the fulfillment of these promises.
Show when the old covenant ended.

Verse 31

How do we determine the fulfillment of the new covenant prophecy?
Who were priests under the old covenant?

Why could not Jesus be a priest on earth?
In changing priesthood, what other change was necessary?

Verse 32

When was the old covenant made?
Discuss the differences between the old and the new.
Discuss the breaking of the old covenant.

Verses 33, 34

Repeat Heb. 8: 6, 7.
How is the new covenant written in the heart?
Give some promises of the new covenant.
Who can be members of the new covenant?

Verses 35-37

Discuss these verses.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IX—June 2, 1940

TESTING CONDUCT BY ITS USEFULNESS

Ezek. 15: 1-6; Matt. 5: 13-16; 7: 16-20; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 7

1 And the word of Jê-hô'vâh came unto me, saying,
 2 Son of man, what is the vine-tree more than any tree, the vine-branch which is among the trees of the forest?

3 Shall wood be taken thereof to make any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?

4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire hath devoured both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned: is it profitable for any work?

5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned, shall it yet be meet for any work!

6 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jê-hô'vâh: As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jê-ru'sâ-lêm.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, where-with shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house.

16 Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

16 By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“By their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matt. 7: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 11: 12-14.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

May 27.	M.	The Useless Vine (Ezek. 15: 1-6)
May 28.	T.	Salt and Light (Matt. 5: 13-16)
May 29.	W.	The Test of the Tree (Matt. 7: 16-20)
May 30.	T.	The Blight of Barrenness (Mark 11: 12-14)
May 31.	F.	The Fruits of Dissipation (1 Cor. 10: 6, 7)
June 1.	S.	Conduct and Destiny (Matt. 25: 34-46)
June 2.	S.	Moral Contrasts (Psalm 1: 1-6)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Ezekiel began to prophesy 590 B.C. It seems plain from the contents of the prophecy of our lesson, that it was delivered before the final destruction of Jerusalem 586 B.C. Some reckon that the Sermon on the Mount was preached A.D. 28. The first letter to the church of God at Corinth was written A.D. 56.

Places.—“By the river Chebar,” in the land of the Chaldees. (Ezek. 1: 1.) The parts of our lesson taken from Matthew are taken

from a sermon preached by our Lord on a mountain in Galilee. First Corinthians was written in Ephesus.

Persons.—Jehovah, Ezekiel, the people of Judah who yet remained in Jerusalem, Jesus, his disciples, Paul, and the church at Corinth.

Lesson Links.—"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest." (Ezek. 1: 1-3.) These were the captives carried away by Nebuchadnezzar when he made his first raid on Jerusalem, and brought away all but the poorest sort of the people. Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah as king over Jerusalem, subject, of course, to Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings 24: 8-17.) Later Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Then Nebuchadnezzar returned, recaptured Jerusalem, and put an end to the kingdom of Judah in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. "So Judah was carried away captive out of his land." (2 Kings 24: 18-24; 25: 1-21; 2 Chron. 36: 9-21.) Hence, Ezekiel began to prophesy five years before the final overthrow of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. But evidently the fifteenth chapter was written while Zedekiah still reigned in Jerusalem.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Worthlessness of Nonfruit-Bearing Vines (Verses 1-6)

If you ever worked in wood, and know the characteristics of the wood of a grapevine, you will see the aptness of what the Lord here says about a vine. People plant vines, not for the purpose of growing timber for any sort of building purposes or for manufacturing any sort of implements, but for the fruit they bear. A farmer would not use the wood of a grapevine for a peg on which to hang a bridle; he might use a dead vine for kindling wood. When it is burned it is gone. If a grapevine produces no fruit, it is counted as worthless. "Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work; how much less, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned, shall it yet be meet for work!" The application of the parable is easy. The Lord's people were the vine. "Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt: thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it. Thou preparedst room before it, and it took deep root, and filled the land. The mountains were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like cedars of God. It sent out its branches unto the sea, and its shoots unto the River." (Psalm 80: 8-10.) But much of the time this cherished vine had brought forth only wild grapes. (Isa. 5: 1-7.) "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem." But to get the complete lesson of this parable we must read the seventh and eighth verses.

"Ye Are the Salt of the Earth" (Matt. 5: 13)

The Bible abounds in striking figures of speech. The disciples must have been startled to hear themselves called salt. And yet there is some characteristic about the disciples of Jesus that justifies the

figure. "Salt is good"; that is, it is good for the purposes for which it is used or adapted. But salt gathered up in the crude state may have mixed with it other minerals. Put that on meat, and the other minerals are not absorbed. Hence the statement: "But if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will we season it?" (Mark 9: 50.) This saltiness belongs only to the disciples of the Lord, and they may lose it. This salt in a person's religion, like salt in certain food, gives it a better flavor, and makes it more attractive. Also, salt has a saving, or preserving power. Servants of God—the salt of the earth—are the saving power of the earth in more ways than one. (1) Ten righteous people in Sodom would have saved it from destruction. (Gen. 18: 22-33.) If there were no righteous people on the earth, the Lord would have no further use for it. (2) Christians are a mighty force in leading people to the Lord; in doing so they contribute their part in saving men. Jesus is the Savior, but Christians save others by bringing them to Jesus. "Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 16.) The gospel is the subject matter to be taught, for it is the power of God to save people. The disciple must live so that his teaching may be effective. If he lives so as to lose the vital influence of a godly life, he becomes as salt that has lost its saltiness—"it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." It is not correct to say that there is some good in everybody, for the Lord here shows that a professed Christian may so lose his power for good that he becomes good for nothing. What then may be said of the person who becomes so corrupt that his influence is decidedly corrupting to others? Salt that has lost its saltiness neither saves nor corrupts anything to which it is applied—it is merely worthless; but some people become corrupt in their influence—worse than worthless. "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another." (Mark 9: 50.)

The Light of the World (Verses 14-16)

This is another striking metaphor setting forth the power and dignity of the disciples of the Lord. No mere man would have thought of making such a statement as that to a few obscure men. Jesus passed by the great statesmen of that day, also the great generals, educators, and lawyers, picked a few obscure men, and made the startling statement to them, "Ye are the light of the world." And yet a disciple of the Lord originates no light; the light that he sends out comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. The light that we now have from him comes to us through his word. "The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psalm 19: 8.) "The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Psalm 119: 130.) Hence Christians, as individuals or as a body, may give light by teaching others. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path." (Psalm 119: 105.) Individuals and churches may hold up that lamp so as to light up the path for others. A church is spoken of as a candlestick. (Rev. 1: 12, 13, 20.) A candlestick originates no light, but it sustains that which gives the light. The church, as a candlestick, upholds the word of God, which gives the light, "among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2: 15, 16.) Also, by the way they live Christians reflect the light from the Lord. A reflector must

be kept clean and in the right place, and nothing must be allowed to come in between the reflector and the source of light. And so it behooves the Christian to keep himself clean morally, must keep himself in his proper place, and must not allow anything to come between himself and the Lord. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." A church that is doing its duty is like the city on a hill—it cannot be hid. The same thing is true of an individual Christian. If a Christian is doing his duty, he will not be like a lamp under a bushel; and so with a church. The light of both shines out without their making any effort to see that it shines. "Even so let your light shine before men." Do not boast of your good deeds; do not shine your light; let your light shine. The right kind of life, without the blare of trumpets, will influence others for good. "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.) But if a professed Christian does not live right, his influence leads the wrong way. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness." (Matt. 6: 23.)

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruits (Matt. 7: 16-18)

"By their fruits ye shall know them." Know whom? The fifteenth verse shows of whom Jesus was speaking: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." Jesus spoke a universal truth, but he was speaking especially of false prophets. The word fruits, as here used, represents the results of the false prophet's deeds and teaching—their fruit is bad, and only bad. Thistles do not bear figs; figs do not grow on thorns. A good fig tree might occasionally have on it a faulty fig, but a thorn tree never did produce a fig of any sort. A grapevine may have on it a faulty grape, but a thistle never produced good fruit of any sort. Do not judge the worth of an apple tree by an occasional faulty apple. This should help us to properly appraise the worth of a Christian. If an apple tree has ten bushels of good apples on it, you would not condemn it as a worthless tree because you found a half dozen faulty apples on it.

The Fate of the Worthless Tree (Verses 19, 20)

A tree in an orchard that does not bear good fruit is in the way; a diseased tree is a menace to the rest of the trees in the orchard. In either case the orchardist cuts down the tree, and burns it. To the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, John the Baptist said, "And even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Matt. 3: 10.) All these references to the worthless trees apply to those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees were then in the old covenant. The illustrations show what will become of the worthless church member. If a person believes the Bible, he believes that future punishment will be meted out to worthless people, even though they profess to be servants of God. "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

"These Things Were Our Examples" (1 Cor. 10: 6, 7)

In crossing the Red Sea the children of Israel "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Jehovah led them on to Mount Sinai, where they pledged themselves to do all that God commanded them. Here God spoke the ten commandments from Mount Sinai. And yet, notwithstanding their pledge and the wonders accompanying the giving of the ten commandments, within forty days they made a golden calf and worshiped it. They all had the same teaching, the same treatment, the same spiritual food and drink. Yet some were faithful; the most of them were rebellious. "Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." They fell into all sorts of sins; their punishment came promptly. There was great need that they respect the law of God. What happened to them was for their good; but their calamities were written down as a warning to all future generations. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15: 4.) God made examples of them. From their history and the things that happened to them, we should learn not to lust after evil things. If the same principles do not now apply to us, then what befell them would not be examples to us. We are not under the same law, but we are under the same God. That is worth thinking about. The incident mentioned in verse 7 happened when Moses was on the mount. (Ex. 32.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

God saves us for our own sake, and for the sake of those whom we may influence. Let not our conduct defeat God's purpose in us.

We may not be able to take another to heaven with us, but we must try. In the absolute sense, no man is his brother's keeper; but he must do what he can to care for his brother, and to lead him in the right way.

"Good for nothing." You have heard of these good-for-nothing folks? Salt that has lost its saltiness neither saves nor corrupts—it is good for nothing. The person who never leads any one astray, and yet never leads any one to a better life, serves no useful purpose; he is good for nothing.

To buy a fruit tree or a grapevine, set it out, cultivate it till it reaches fruit-bearing age, then find it worthless, is a sore disappointment. Have we fulfilled God's expectations in us; will he say of us, as he did of Israel of old, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me"? (Isa. 1: 2.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

John 15: 1-9.

The Christian as salt.

The Christian as a light to others.

The fruit we are expected to bear.

1 Cor. 10: 1-13.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
How came Ezekiel to be in the land of the Chaldees?
Give some facts about Nebuchadnezzar and his wars on the Jews.

Verses 1-6

Give the facts the Lord states about the vine.
How did the parable apply to the people of Judah?
Discuss Psalm 80: 8-10.

Matt. 5: 13

Give the main uses of salt.
In what sense are Christians salt, or like salt?
When is a member of the church good for nothing?

Verses 14-16

Repeat these verses.
Whence comes our spiritual light?

Discuss the ways in which Christians and churches are light to others.
Why is an active Christian or church like a city set on a hill?

Matt. 7: 16-18

Of whom was the Lord speaking?
How may this truth apply to all people?
Would you condemn a good apple tree for one faulty apple? Why not?

Verses 19, 20

What is done with the worthless tree?
Repeat what John the Baptist says about such trees.
What lesson do we gain from these illustrations?

1 Cor. 10: 6, 7

What is said of Israel's crossing the Red Sea?
Name some things that happened to them.
How are they examples to us?
Tell about the incident referred to in verse 7.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson X—June 9, 1940

EZEKIEL TEACHES PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ezek. 33: 7-16

7 So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Is'ra-él; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked men, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

10 And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Is'ra-él: Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?

11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jê-hô'vâh, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Is'ra-él?

12 And thou, son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall he that is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sinneth.

13 When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die.

14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

15 If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. 14: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 5: 6-10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

June 3.	M.	Watchmen Must Be Faithful (Ezek. 33: 7-9)
June 4.	T.	God Will Judge Righteously (Ezek. 33: 10-16)
June 5.	W.	Accountable for Every Deed (2 Cor. 5: 6-10)
June 6.	T.	Responsible for Every Word (Matt. 12: 36, 37)
June 7.	F.	Using My Talent (Matt. 25: 24-29)
June 8.	S.	The Peril of Neglect (Matt. 11: 20-24)
June 9.	S.	Standing Before the Throne (Rev. 20: 11-15)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—About 586 B.C. The connection indicates that it was the last year of the kingdom of Judah.

Place.—By the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldees.

Persons.—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the house of Israel.

Lesson Links.—Ezekiel began to prophesy in the fifth year of his captivity. The following references show that Ezekiel gave the dates of many of his prophecies: 24: 1, 2; 26: 1; 29: 1; 30: 20; 31: 1; 32: 1, 17; 33: 21. From the last reference it seems that the prophecy of our lesson came the year the kingdom of Judah came to an end. Ezekiel was among the captives brought from Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Judah. At that time Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah as a tributary king over Judah. Zedekiah in the ninth year of his reign rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar; but after a siege of two years Nebuchadnezzar took the city, and put an end to the kingdom of Judah. All but “the poor of the people, that had nothing,” were brought captives into the land of the Chaldees. (2 Kings 25: 1-21; Jer. 39: 4-10.) The nation as a whole had become incurably wicked. God sent to them his prophets, among whom was the heroic Jeremiah; but under the reign of Zedekiah they had grown worse and worse. “But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” (2 Chron. 36: 15, 16.) They had become so accustomed to doing evil, that there was no changing them. They had reached the point described by Jeremiah: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jer. 13: 23.) When a people or a nation reach that stage of depravity, it is fit only for destruction. See what happened to the people in the flood, and also to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and later to the Jews in the final destruction of Jerusalem. The prophecy of our lesson is so much like a part of chapter eighteen that the student should read that chapter in preparing this lesson. It shows that sin is not inherited, but is due to a man’s own individual conduct. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezek. 18: 20.) A man is a sinner because he sins, and not because he inherits sin. The ancient walled cities kept watchmen on the walls, especially in times of danger. If the watchman saw an enemy approaching, it was his duty to give warning. This warning would be given

by a signal agreed upon; some references indicate that this was usually the blowing of a horn or trumpet. The responsibility then rested upon the people inside the walls.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Ezekiel Appointed Watchman (Verse 7)

"So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel." There was a likeness between the duty of Ezekiel and the duty of the watchman on the wall of a city, and yet there was a difference. Both were to give warnings of the approach of danger; but the watchman on the wall of the city was to report the danger as he had discovered it by his own powers of observation, and Ezekiel was to report only what the Lord told him to report. Ezekiel was not allowed to make up his own report from what his own powers of observation discovered. "Therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." This clearly defined Ezekiel's responsibility as a watchman; his duty was made plain. As a watchman, he had one duty, namely, to repeat faithfully what the Lord told him to say. When Jehovah called Ezekiel to the prophetic office, he said, "Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." (Ezek. 2: 7.) When he called Jeremiah to be a prophet, he said, "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at them, lest I dismay thee before them." (Jer. 1: 17.) To Jonah he said, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." (Jonah 3: 2.) The prophet was a messenger, and a messenger has one responsibility—to deliver faithfully the message entrusted to him. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." (Jer. 23: 28.) Even Jesus the Son of God said, "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 49, 50.) And if Jesus the Son of God did not feel at liberty to invade the silence of God, and to speak where God had not spoken, what are we to take such liberties?

The Extent of Ezekiel's Responsibility (Verses 8, 9)

"The proper method of approach" did not seem to engage the thoughts of the ancient prophets; the Lord did not mean for them to worry about how to deliver his message in the most effective way. When they faithfully delivered the word he gave them, the responsibility was then with the people. When God said concerning the wicked, "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die," the prophet was not expected to soften the words of that message. A faithful messenger never adds to the message, nor takes from it; neither does he make apologies for the contents of the message. He delivers it without change. But when God said to the wicked man, "Thou shalt surely die," he meant that such would be his doom, if he continued in his wickedness. The prophet must then warn him: "And thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand." The wicked man would not escape the penalty, even though no one

warned him. The wicked man could know better, and usually does know better, than to indulge in his wickedness; yet it is the duty of God's servant to warn him, and to exhort him to cease his wickedness. If God's servant does not warn him, he will suffer as does the wicked. If the servant of God warns the wicked without any visible results, he has not made a failure; he has delivered his own soul from death. The failure is with the wicked man. The man who lives and speaks God's word faithfully, has made a success, even though he turns no one from sin.

"Why Will Ye Die?" (Verses 10, 11)

Sometimes people become so overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, that they wonder if it is possible for them ever to be saved. "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?" There is hope for a person when he feels a sense of guilt and realizes the burden of sin. There would be no need for people to ask, "How then can we live?" if they could do nothing about it. If the sinner dies in his sins, the Lord is not responsible for his so dying, for he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He has even pointed out to him the way of life, and urged him to walk therein. And now, since God has made such rich provisions for the salvation of all men, and has pointed out the way of life so plainly, there is no excuse that any sinner can reasonably offer for his lost condition. God invites and exhorts all to be saved. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45: 22.) "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) Hence, he says, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This, of course, does not refer to physical death, for that death cannot be avoided. However sin now, as then, brings an earlier death to many people.

Life or Death Determined by Conduct (Verse 12)

Our destiny is in the hands of God, and yet it also is in our own hands. David said, "My soul is continually in my hand." He could dispose of it as he desired. A righteous man is still a free moral agent. He is not so hemmed in that he cannot do wrong. An artist may paint a beautiful picture, and then destroy it. And so may a man build up a righteous character, and then destroy it. He may gain a fortune, and then squander it. He is then as poor as if he had never had the fortune. And so with the righteous man that destroys his righteous character by sin. A man is blessed for what he is, and not for what he was in the past. "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." For a child of God now to turn back into sin shows a greater guilt. "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first." (2 Pet. 2: 20.) Hence, a righteous man is not compelled to remain righteous, but can plunge again into a worse state. Nor is the wicked man forced to continue in his wickedness. When he turns away from his sins, his sins are blotted out. What

he is counts, and not what he has been. God has graciously opened up a fountain for cleansing from all sin.

God's Threats and Promises Conditional (Verses 13-16)

When God says to the righteous man, "that he shall surely live," some rush to the conclusion that such a man can never be lost—that his salvation is guaranteed against all that he may do. On the basis of such promises it is confidently affirmed by some that it is impossible for a child of God to so apostatize as to be finally lost. They fail to notice the conditionality of such promises. This is God's own explanation of the matter: "When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die." When salvation is affirmed of the righteous man, it is not thereby affirmed of the one who has been righteous. The righteous man may turn out to be a sinner; he can then no longer claim the promise to the righteous. God just as plainly says that the sinner shall surely die as he says that the righteous shall surely live. If the promise to the righteous means that he cannot turn and be lost, the threat to the sinner means that the sinner cannot turn and be saved! The conclusion is as correct for the one as for the other; but we know that such conclusion is false. God had plainly said that, though he had said to the righteous, that he should surely live; yet if the righteous man fall again into sin, "therein shall he die." Now he gives the other side: "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; . . . he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." Let no one think that the doctrine of conditional promises and threats is confined to the Old Testament. It has always characterized God's dealings with men. When Jesus said, "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned," he did not mean that it would be impossible for such a one to turn from his disbelief and be saved. If he becomes a believer, he is no longer under the condemnation of the disbeliever. And if the believer, who has the promise of salvation, ceases to be a believer, he is no longer in the class to whom salvation is promised. To the brethren at Rome, Paul said, "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die." (Rom. 8: 13.) This must refer to spiritual death, for we shall die the physical death no matter how we live. The statement cannot refer to an alien sinner, for he is already spiritually dead. Therefore let no child of God flatter himself with the notion that he cannot be lost. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 10: 22.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

Like the witness before the court, the preacher should feel himself obligated to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; not the whole truth about every subject under the sun, but about the revealed will of God. If he preaches only that part of the truth that he knows will please his hearers, he is a mere timeserver.

"How then can we live?" "Brethren, what shall we do?" "What shall I do, Lord?" "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" All these

questions are really the same question in different words, and the answers to them amount to the same thing: Forsake sin, and obey God. The erring child of God must forsake sin, pray God's forgiveness, and live obediently. To the alien sinner God says, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." He then must live obediently.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The prophet, and what he was to say.

What is required of a preacher now?

Salvation is conditional.

What are the conditions to an erring child of God?

What are the conditions to an alien sinner?

Can a child of God so sin as to be lost?

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

When did Ezekiel begin to prophesy?

Where was Ezekiel?

Who had been made tributary king in Judah?

Tell about the ending of the kingdom of Judah.

Why did the kingdom come to an end?

Give examples of God's dealings with people who were incurably wicked.

Tell about the ancient use of watchmen.

Verse 7

What were Ezekiel's duties as watchman?

What did God demand of his prophets? Give references.

What did Jesus say of his own teaching?

What is the duty of the gospel teacher?

Verses 8, 9

What was the extent of the prophet's responsibility?

What is the duty of a messenger?

"Thou shalt surely die"—how might the wicked avert that doom?

Discuss the responsibility of the wicked.

Verses 10, 11

What question was asked, and why did they ask it?

Quote passages showing God's willingness to forgive.

Verse 12

Discuss this verse.

Verses 13-16

Why do some affirm that a child of God can never be lost?

What is God's explanation of the matter?

Discuss this matter as fully as time will allow.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XI—June 16, 1940

HAGGAI URGES THE BUILDING OF GOD'S HOUSE

Hag. 1: 2-12

2 Thus speaketh Jê-hô'vâh of hosts, saying, This people say, It is not the time for us to come, the time for Jê-hô'vâh's house to be built.

3 Then came the word of Jê-hô'vâh by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste?

5 Now therefore thus saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts: Consider your ways.

6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7 Thus saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts: Consider your ways.

8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jê-hô'vâh.

9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts. Because of my house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house.

10 Therefore for your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth its fruit.

11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands.

12 Then Zê-rûb'bâ-bêl the son of Shê-âl'ti-êl, and Jôsh'û-â the son of Jê-hôz'â-dâk, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Jê-hô'vâh their God, and the words of Hâg'gâi the prophet, as Jê-hô'vâh their God had sent him; and the people did fear before Jê-hô'vâh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is."* (Heb. 10: 24, 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 122.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

June 10.	M.	Call to Build God's House (Hag. 1: 2-12)
June 11.	T.	The Builders Encouraged (Hag. 2: 1-9)
June 12.	W.	Offerings for the Tabernacle (Ex. 25: 1-9)
June 13.	T.	Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8: 22-28)
June 14.	F.	Keeping God's House in Repair (2 Chron. 34: 8-13)
June 15.	S.	Longing for Public Worship (Psalm 84: 1-4)
June 16.	S.	Let Us Go to Church (Psalm 122: 1-9)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—About 520 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Haggai, Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and the people of Israel.

Lesson Links.—The people of the kingdom of Judah were carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings 24: 10-17; 25: 1-21; 2 Chron. 36: 5-7, 11-21.) Nebuchadnezzar was a great king, and during his long reign Babylonia became a mighty kingdom. Some important points concerning the Jews in this period may be gleaned from the first four chapters of Daniel. The fifth chapter records the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians. About 535 or 534 B.C. Cyrus king of Persia issued a proclamation, permitting all Jews who so desired to return to their own country. (2 Chron. 36: 22, 23; Ezra 1: 1-4.) Isaiah, about two hundred years before this, had foretold this return of the Jews, and had mentioned Cyrus by name. (Isa. 44: 28; 45: 1.) It must be that some scribe or prophet had called the attention of Cyrus to this prophecy, which led him to say that Jehovah had charged him to build Jehovah a temple in Jerusalem. To learn that he had been a subject of prophecy two hundred years before his day would be quite flattering to Cyrus; this would make him the more willing to let the Jews go. Those who went up to Jerusalem under this proclamation of Cyrus are mentioned in the second chapter of Ezra. Zerubbabel was appointed governor of this colony. As he also had a Persian name (Sheshbazzar), it is most probable that he had also held some office under the Persian monarch. (Ezra 1: 8, 11; 3: 8; Neh. 12: 1) He was assisted by Jeshua the priest, who is also called Joshua. In the second month of the second year of their coming to Jerusalem, they began to build the house of God. (Ezra 3: 8.) But they had adversaries. These adversaries feigned friend-

ship, and proposed to help build the temple. "But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel." (Ezra 4: 1-3.) For years these adversaries, the Samaritans, did everything they could to hinder this building. During the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia they obtained an order from him that they put a stop to any further building, till further ordered. However it seems that they started building again so soon as Darius became king of Persia. It is likely that Zerubbabel had not been as persistent and energetic as he should have been in pushing this building. So much opposition by such persistent and powerful enemies had likely discouraged him.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Excuse for Not Building God's House (Verse 2)

It had been about sixteen years since these Jews returned to Jerusalem. They had built an altar on which to burn their sacrifices, and had laid the foundation for the house of God; they had also collected some material for the building. Opposition had caused them to cease building the house of God. Since there was so much opposition, they had decided that it was not a proper time to build. Perhaps they thought that a time would come when there would not be so much opposition, and they themselves would grow stronger and more prosperous. But God would stir them out of their lethargy. Even the best of men sometimes need encouragement.

God Raised Up Prophets (Verses 3-5)

Haggai began to prophesy in the sixth month of the second year of the reign of Darius (verse 1), and Zechariah began to prophesy two months later. (Zech. 1: 1.) Something had to be done to stir the people to build God's house. It seems that Haggai especially was sent to do that very thing. The people had excused themselves for not pressing the building of God's house by saying that it was not a time to do such work. Haggai reminded them that they thought it was a proper time for them to build their own fine houses. They had given much time to building their own houses, and looking after their own affairs. Perhaps this is one reason they thought that it was not a time to build God's house; they would attend to that when they had attended to their own affairs. And that is a characteristic of human beings. Instead of giving the Lord the first of all we have, we are inclined to give him some of what is left over, after we have attended to our own wants. Haggai chides them for giving all their time and energy to looking after their own affairs, while the house of God lay waste. Now Haggai calls on them to consider their ways. This was another way of calling on them to examine themselves, to look into the inconsistency of what they were doing. Self-examination is often a revealing exercise, and sometimes brings about an amendment of one's ways. David said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psalm 119: 59.) In a time of great stress, Peter denied the Lord. Afterward, "when he thought thereon, he wept." It is a good thing for a man, like the prodigal son, to think things over till he comes to himself. It

has always been true that many people are too busy about their own affairs to give any time to serious meditation and self-examination. They give no time to thoughts as to the source of their blessings. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isa. 1: 3.) Self-examination is not always a pleasant task, but it can be made to contribute greatly to the improvement of our conduct.

Their Vain Efforts (Verse 6)

"Ye have sown much, and bring in little." As they had neglected Jehovah, he was not giving them good harvests. Among other calamities that would come upon Israel for disobedience, Moses mentions these: "Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather little in; for the locusts shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but thou shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worm shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive-trees throughout all thy borders, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast its fruit." (Deut. 28: 38-40.) The men of our lesson were neglecting God's house for their own affairs, and their own affairs were not prospering. Even their food and their drink did not satisfy. Their clothing did not protect them from the cold. Their expenditure of money was so great that it seemed as if they were putting their money into bags with holes.

The Command to Build God's House (Verses 7, 8)

Again Jehovah calls on the people of Jerusalem to consider their ways. Too long had they neglected the building of the house of God. "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house." The mountain to which they were commanded to go was, of course, Lebanon, which had from time immemorial been famous for its great cedar trees. Solomon had through the good offices of Hiram king of Tyre secured timber of these famous cedars to be used in the construction of the temple which he built. (1 Kings 5; 2 Chron. 2.) If they would build this house, Jehovah would take pleasure in it; he would be pleased with them for building it. When Cyrus issued his proclamation for those who wished to do so to return to Jerusalem, he also said, "And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1: 4.) "And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah." (Ezra 1: 6-8.) It seems therefore that they were well furnished with vessels for the temple, and with the gold and the silver that might be needed. When the adversaries tried to stop this renewed effort to build the temple, they were informed that they were following a proclamation issued by Cyrus.

These adversaries took the matter up with Darius to see if such a decree had been made. Search was made; the decree was found; and Darius then gave order that the building be not hindered. In that decree these words are found: "Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for burnt-offerings to the God of heaven; also wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests that are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail; that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savor unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and his sons." These and also additional facts will be found in the fifth and sixth chapters of Ezra. The facts show that this Darius was very generous toward the Jews. With his help and encouragement the house of God was speedily built.

Their Lack of Prosperity and the Reason (Verses 9-11)

They received small returns for their labors, though they expected much. What their fields and vineyards did produce seemed to disappear after harvest as if blown away. God withheld the rains, and for lack of moisture little was produced. He called for a drought all over their fields and mountains. Nothing had prospered, and it seems that they knew not why. It seems that they should have known from their past history that failure to obey God brought failure of the products of their labors. Why all this failure? Through Haggai God gave the answer: "Because of my house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house." Their greed had brought on this loss. Their efforts to gain personal comfort and prosperity had brought suffering and a great lack of prosperity. About this same time Jehovah was saying through Zechariah, "Jehovah was sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets cried, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Return ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith Jehovah." (Zech. 1: 2-4.) These people needed houses in which to live; they were now being reminded that they needed God's favor to make living in these houses worth while.

The Prophet's Words Effective (Verse 12)

Zerubbabel, called also Sheshbazzar, was the governor; upon him rested the greatest responsibility for what was done, or not done. Joshua the priest, called also Jeshua in Ezra, appears to have been his helper. Of course these men could do very little without the help of the people. Haggai's prophecy came at a time of need. And it is to the credit of the leaders and the people that they were willing to hear the word of God and to amend their ways. They were unlike the people were just before the captivity: "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no

remedy." (2 Chron. 36: 16.) They could have saved their city and themselves from being carried into captivity.

SOME REFLECTIONS

We sometimes discredit the inspiration of prophets and apostles by the way we thoughtlessly refer to what they have said—by such expressions as, "The prophet knew," "The apostle understood," etc. But apostles and prophets did not speak what they knew and what they understood—they did not speak their own mind; God spoke through them. "The time is not ripe for a meeting here," says one. How does he know till he has tried? It is true that sometimes a field is not "ripe unto harvest." When that is true, no worth-while harvest can be reaped. It is folly to force the harvest, and reap while the grain is too green to be of any value. But let us not say that it is not a time for building a church of God at a place till we have tried.

People often become so busy about their own affairs that they forget God. And the word may be choked out by the cares of life, as well as by other things. In fact, people may become so busy about the Lord's work that they have no time to think of him. Nothing should be allowed to take the place of meditation and self-examination. "Take time to be holy."

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The prophecy of Haggai.

Rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Things that may cause us to forget God.

The need for meditation and self-examination.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Why and by whom were the Jews carried into captivity?

Who subdued Babylon?

Who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem?

Who had foretold this?

Give facts about this return as related by Ezra.

Verse 2

How long had the Jews delayed

building God's house?

What did they say about building?

Verses 3-5

What two prophets began to prophesy, and when?

Of what did Haggai remind them?

How do people frequently treat the Lord's work?

Discuss the need of examining, or considering, our ways.

Verse 6

Discuss each proverb in verse 6.

Verses 7, 8

Where were they to get material for building God's house?

Who had done so before?

What order had Cyrus given to the

Jews who did not go to Jerusalem?

What generous thing did he do?

When the adversaries tried to stop the building, what decree did Cyrus make?

Verses 9-11

What is said of the products of their labors?

Why was the land not productive?

Who caused such conditions, and why?

What did he say to them through Zechariah?

Verse 12

Discuss the facts of verse 12.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XII—June 23, 1940

MALACHI DEMANDS HONESTY TOWARD GOD

Mal. 3: 7-18

7 From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return?
8 Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation.
10 Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts.

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith Jê-hô'vâh. Yet ye say, What have we spoken against thee?

14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jê-hô'vâh of hosts?

15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they tempt God, and escape.

16 Then they that feared Jê-hô'vâh spake one with another; and Jê-hô'vâh hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jê-hô'vâh, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith Jê-hô'vâh of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I make; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 6: 19-24.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

June 17.	M.	Honest Giving (Mal. 3: 7-12)
June 18.	T.	Facing Reality (Mal. 3: 13-18)
June 19.	W.	Honesty in Service (Matt. 6: 19-24)
June 20.	T.	Dishonest Giving (Acts 5: 1-6)
June 21.	F.	False Traditions (Mark 7: 6-13)
June 22.	S.	Making a Man Honest (Luke 19: 1-10)
June 23.	S.	A Picture of an Honest Man (Psalm 15: 1-5)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Between 435 B.C. and 400 B.C.; the exact date is not known.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Malachi, and the people of Israel. Nothing is known of Malachi beyond what may be learned from his book.

Lesson Links.—From some of the things Malachi says about moral conditions among the people of Israel, it would seem that he wrote about the time Nehemiah was trying to correct some grievous things that had grown up in Jerusalem. If the student will read carefully the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, he will gather the idea

that the Jews enjoyed practical, if not entire, freedom under the reign of the Persian kings; so much so, that when Cyrus gave them permission to return to Jerusalem, only a small per cent of them went. About eighty years later another group went up under the leadership of Ezra. About 444 B.C. Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king, learned from some Jews returning from Jerusalem, that the Jews in Jerusalem were in great distress. At his earnest request the king gave him permission to go to Jerusalem, and also appointed him governor of the Jews in Jerusalem. He lost no time when he reached Jerusalem. Taking a few trusted men with him, he made a secret investigation by night, and found that the walls had all been torn down, and the gates burned with fire. He then said to the people, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." In the midst of great dangers from their enemies they finished the walls within fifty-two days. One of the sad things about the whole business was the fact that many men of influence in Jerusalem were continually in secret communication with the enemies. Nehemiah remained in Jerusalem twelve years, and then returned to the king. (Compare Neh. 1: 1 and 13: 6.) He again returned to Jerusalem about 424 B.C., and found that the people were paying little attention to the law of God. The people were guilty of four major sins—profaning the temple, failing to pay the tithe, breaking the sabbath, and marrying foreign women. Nehemiah did not depend upon persuasion to stop these evils; that would have been ineffective. Read his thirteenth chapter. It must have been about this time that Malachi prophesied. Malachi is the last of the Old Testament prophets.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jehovah Charges Israel with General Disobedience (Verse 7)

"From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them." The history of the children of Israel is in great part a history of backslidings and reformations; and yet their record is better than that of other nations, for other nations had no reformations. Israel, like other people, learned little from experience. Their sins always brought trouble upon them. Because of them the Lord frequently abandoned them to their enemies as a means of correcting them. When they were overwhelmed by their enemies, and robbed of what they had, they then felt the need of Jehovah, and turned to him for deliverance. In Malachi's day they had become so hardened in sin, that they spoke contemptuously of God's commands and institutions. They offered polluted bread upon the altar, and then said, "The table of Jehovah is contemptible." They said, "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah." And yet Jehovah graciously said to them, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah." And yet it appears that in their ignorance they were not conscious of the fact that they had gone away from Jehovah, for they asked, "Wherein shall we return?" What is the matter with us that we need to return? Wherein have we gone astray that we need to return? And many people today who are far away from the Lord imagine they are in perfect harmony with him. The trouble is, such people take their own ideas and notions as a standard of conduct; and, on comparing their conduct

with that standard, they feel fairly well satisfied with themselves. They cannot see wherein they have gone astray. "For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding." (2 Cor. 10: 12.)

They Robbed God (Verses 8, 9)

We rob another when we take his property without his consent, or when we withhold from him that which is justly his. The Lord here mentions one thing wherein they had gone astray—they had robbed him. Yet they were so hardened in their selfishness that they did not see wherein they were robbing God. "In tithes and offerings." They had withheld the tithe, which belonged to God, and thus robbed him. It is correct to say that the Hebrews were required to give a tenth. But a man does not give that which does not belong to him. The tithe belonged to God. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is Jehovah's: it is holy unto Jehovah. . . . And all the tithe of the herd or the flock, whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto Jehovah." (Lev. 27: 30-32.) The Lord had a special use for this tithe. "And unto the children of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, even the service of the tent of meeting. . . . For the tithe of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave-offering unto Jehovah, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance." (Num. 18: 21-24.) Out of the tribe of Levi one family, the family of Aaron, was selected for priests. The other Levites served about the tabernacle and temple. To the Levites Jehovah said, "When ye take of the children of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave-offering of it for Jehovah, a tithe of the tithe." This tithe was given to the priests. (Num. 18: 25-28.) The people's tithe went to the Levites, and the tithe of the Levites went to the priests. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he found that the tithes were not being collected, and so the Levites had to neglect the temple service to work in the fields for a living. (Neh. 13: 10.) They were cursed with a curse for robbing God by keeping that which belonged to him.

"Prove Me Now Herewith, Saith Jehovah" (Verses 10-12)

The more they disobeyed God the less they prospered, and the less they prospered the more they felt the need of using the tithe for their own needs. In withholding the tithe, they showed a lack of trust in God. Now God calls on them to prove him—to put him to the test; try the matter out, and see that his way is the best and most prosperous. If they would trust him and do his will, he would open the windows of heaven, and make their land so productive that their barns would not hold the harvests. The devourer—the locusts and worms—would cease from the land. Every vine would carry its fruit to full maturity. They would be so prosperous, and so happy in their prosperity, that all nations would call them blessed. Because of their abundance, their land would be called a delightful land.

They Talked Against Jehovah (Verses 13-15)

Their words had been stout against Jehovah; yet they had become so perverse in their thinking, that they could see nothing wrong with what they said. People who disobey a law soon reach the point where they think it is proper and right to condemn it. A person cannot long respect an authority while disobeying it. That is illustrated in the attitude of criminals toward the government and the enforcement officers. And some religious people disobey the command to be baptized till they think it right to ridicule baptism. A man is in a dangerous way when he finds himself inclined to speak lightly of any of God's commands or institutions. To speak against God's commands or institutions is to speak against him. In that way some people even now make their words stout against Jehovah. These men had said that it was vain to serve God, and that there was no profit in obeying him. Because some could run over the rights of others and seem to prosper for a time, they took that as evidence that such conduct was better than serving God. It was a selfish view of matters; their whole outlook was selfish. They lost sight of the fact that a person should be of service to his fellows. The proud may pretend to be happy, and the person that gains property by wickedness may seem to enjoy his prosperity; but it is not in human nature to find real joy and contentment in such a life. "Exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4: 7, 8.)

The Book of Remembrance (Verses 16-18)

From these verses we learn that not all the people of Israel robbed God by keeping his tithes for their own use; neither did all of them speak against him. Some of them feared Jehovah. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111: 10.) This does not mean a slavish fear or a panicky feeling. It is reverence and awe—a recognition of our own dependence, and a wholesome regard for the majesty and glory of Jehovah. "Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another." Those who serve God find comfort and encouragement in speaking with one another. To a servant of God both joy and strength comes from holding converse with congenial spirits. There is something radically wrong with the professed servant of God who does not enjoy talking with devout, intelligent servants of God. In the midst of such corruption as existed in Malachi's day, the few devout servants of God must have delighted in meeting together and talking about the problems that concerned them most. It is encouraging to a devout servant of God just to know that he is not alone in his devotion and service to God. Those who did so, had this assurance from Malachi: "And Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name." This book of remembrance was for God's true servants—for those who were his own possession. They would be spared in the great day of accounts. When that book is opened at the last day, it will be seen who are God's servants and who are not. But what is this book? We may know only so much as is revealed to us in the Bible. When Moses returned from his first forty days' stay

on Sinai, he found the people worshipping an idol which Aaron had made. In pleading with Jehovah to forgive them, he said, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And Jehovah said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." (Ex. 32: 32, 33.) And so a person may be written in that book, and then be blotted out of it. David prayed concerning some who had become his enemies: "Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous." (Psalm 69: 28.) So this book is called the book of life. Paul speaks of some, "whose names are in the book of life." (Phil. 4: 3.) It is therefore a book in which the names of God's people are recorded. "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life." In the judgment books will be opened—the laws of the different dispensations; and another book will be opened, which is the book of life. The dead will be judged out of the books first opened; but this other book, the book of life, is the book in which the names of God's servants are written—all of them will be in that one book. It is God's book of remembrance. (Rev. 20: 11-15.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

You have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you rob God by withholding him from that which he bought? Even his servants may rob him by not giving to him the service that is his due.

A tenth of the Jew's income belonged to the Lord. It was, so to speak, rent for the land. After that was paid he still had many gifts and sacrifices to make. The tenth supported the Levites. After the kingdom was established another tenth was required to support the government. Hence, the support of the Levites and the government required one-fifth of Israel's income, besides numerous gifts and sacrifices.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

What a Christian should give.

How people speak against God.

The book of life and the other books. (Rev. 20: 11-15.)

The duty and blessings of meditating on divine things.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What shows that the Jews enjoyed much freedom under the Persian kings?

Give an outline of Nehemiah's activities.

Verse 7

What charges did Malachi make concerning the conduct of the Jews?

What did they say in response to these charges?

Why do some people in error think they are not away from God?

What does Paul say about comparing ourselves?

Verses 8, 9

How may we rob others?

How had the Jews robbed God?

What did Jehovah say about the tithe?

How was the tithe used?

Verses 10-12

Discuss verses 10-12.

Verses 13-15

How had they used stout words against Jehovah?
 Why do people talk against law, and also against God's commands?

Why did these people say it was vain to serve God?
 What does Paul say about godliness?

Verses 16-18

Discuss these verses.
 What is the book of remembrance?
 Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XIII—June 30, 1940**JONAH: THE OUTREACH OF GOD'S LOVE**

Jonah 3: 1-10; 4: 10, 11

1 And the word of Jê-hô'vâh came unto Jô'nâh the second time, saying,
 2 Arise, go unto Nin'ê-vêh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jô'nâh arose, and went unto Nin'ê-vêh, according to the word of Jê-hô'vâh. Now Nin'ê-vêh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.

4 And Jô'nâh began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nin'ê-vêh shall be overthrown.

5 And the people of Nin'ê-vêh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 And the tidings reached the king of Nin'ê-vêh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he made proclamation and published through Nin'ê-vêh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water;

8 But let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.

9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

10 And Jê-hô'vâh said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I have regard for Nin'ê-vêh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Salvation is of Jehovah." (Jonah 2: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 67.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

June 24.	M.	God's Message to a Pagan City (Jonah 3: 1-4)
June 25.	T.	Mercy for a Penitent People (Jonah 3: 5-10)
June 26.	W.	A Peevish Prophet (Jonah 4: 10, 11)
June 27.	T.	A Greater Than Jonah (Luke 11: 29-32)
June 28.	F.	An Open Door to the Gentiles (Acts 11: 17-21)
June 29.	S.	The Righteous Judge of All Peoples (Psalm 96: 1-10)
June 30.	S.	"Go Ye into All the World" (Matt. 28: 16-20)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably about 820 B.C., though Usher puts it at 862 B.C. Jonah prophesied either early in the reign of Jeroboam II, or before his reign, for he prophesied of certain things that Jeroboam would do. (2 Kings 14: 25.) According to Hales, Jeroboam II began to reign

in the year 834 B.C.; according to Usher and Oppert, 825 B.C.; according to Calmet, 819 B.C. This gives us some idea as to the period in which Jonah was sent to Nineveh, though we cannot determine the year.

Place.—Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. "Nineveh is situated on the eastern bank of the river Tigris, 550 miles from its mouth, and 250 miles north of Babylon." It was one of the very great cities of ancient times. For further information about Nineveh and Assyria, the student is advised to consult any Encyclopedia or Bible Dictionary.

Persons.—Jehovah, Jonah, and the people of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh were not descendants of Abraham. They were, therefore, not in the covenant made with the Hebrews at Sinai. Jonah was the son of Amittai, of Gathhepher, a town on the southern border of the territory of Zebulun. He was, therefore, a citizen of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of the ten tribes.

Lesson Links.—This lesson cannot be properly prepared without reading the whole book of Jonah. Many people, when thinking of the book of Jonah, think only of Jonah and the great fish, and they try to make a joke of the whole affair. But if we believe in Jesus as the Christ, we must believe the book of Jonah, for Jesus recognized it as history: "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here." (Matt. 12: 39-41.) But there is no need that any one be skeptical concerning Jonah and the whale, for God has done many things far greater than to preserve a man alive in the belly of a great fish. Is anything too hard for Jehovah? Jonah had prophesied some concerning Israel, having foretold some of the exploits of Jeroboam II. (2 Kings 14: 25.) Now Jehovah says to him, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." Jonah knew that Nineveh was a dangerous enemy of Israel, and so he protested against going. (Jonah 4: 1-3.) He thought he knew better than Jehovah; he preferred that Nineveh perish through its wickedness rather than to be saved through his work. "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa." There he went on board a ship bound for Tarshish. For the results of this disobedience on the part of Jonah read the first and second chapters of Jonah.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jonah Now Willingly Obeys (Verses 1-3)

We cannot imagine the terrors of Jonah's experience in the storm, in the sea, and in the belly of the great fish. Besides his terrors, he must have been harassed in mind with the knowledge that his own guilt had brought these things upon him. He could not know what would be the outcome of it all till the great fish spewed him out on the land. "And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second

time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." There was no disposition on the part of Jonah to run away this time. "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh." He had learned obedience by the things which he suffered. He should have known without his terrible experiences, that Jehovah's way was the only safe way. Formerly he started to Tarshish according to his own notion of things; now he goes to Nineveh "according to the word of Jehovah." He was sent on the only mission of its kind recorded in the Old Testament. We cannot know why God sent a prophet to this one foreign city, and not to others of that time, save that God's wisdom was in the matter. It was a long journey for Jonah. Even though Jonah had disobeyed at the first, he had been thoroughly subdued; the fact that God called him again shows that God recognized him a fit agent to do the work required. It is likely that a great love for his own nation, instead of a spirit of rebellion against Jehovah, caused him to flee at the first call. But it is useless to speculate on such matters.

Jonah's Preaching (Verse 4)

The burden of Jonah's preaching was, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The writer must have given merely the theme of his preaching, for it seems unlikely that he uttered only these words. That simple announcement would seem like an unalterable decree. Such a decree would create consternation, but would offer no inducement to the people to amend their ways. It seems that he said nothing during his first day's journey into the city. It was the preaching of one man against a great city, which was wholly given over to idolatry and sins of all sorts. Likely it never entered the mind of Jonah that he would accomplish anything in the way of changing that city. He was carrying out the command of Jehovah, and that was as far as his responsibility went. Anyone makes a success when he carries out the command of God, even though he reforms no one. A preacher is not responsible for results; the people to whom he faithfully preaches are responsible for results. If they give no heed, the failure is theirs.

The King and the People Greatly Stirred (Verses 5, 6)

"And the people of Nineveh believed God." They recognized Jonah's preaching as coming from God; but if Jonah did not tell them who sent him, how would his preaching lead them to believe in God? They were idolaters, and had no information about Jehovah. It is certain, therefore, that Jonah had told them who sent him, and also who would overthrow their city. Jonah's preaching was made known to the king, and he was profoundly moved. A fast was proclaimed; and both the king and the people clothed themselves in sackcloth, as a token of their distress and their humility before Jehovah. As a further token of distress and humility, the king sat in ashes. He had laid aside all emblems of royalty.

The King Issues a Proclamation (Verses 7, 8)

Not knowing the exact date of Jonah's preaching to the people of Nineveh, we do not know the name of the king who was then on the throne in Nineveh. The most impressive thing about the whole

matter is, that the preaching of one man, and he a foreigner, had brought about such a revolution in a great heathen city. If any other power or influence was used in bringing about this great result, the historian failed to tell us. If, as we are told, the direct work of the Spirit is the vital and essential thing in all conversions, the historian failed to record the most essential thing; this no inspired historian would do. It seems from verse 5, that the people voluntarily proclaimed, or announced, that they were entering on a season of fasting, or else some minor official called for fasting. However when the matter reached the king, he made a decree for a general fast, saying, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands." Nothing like that had ever occurred in a great heathen city, nor have we a record of any like occurrence since then. And this astonishing result was brought about by the preaching of one lone stranger.

Jehovah Spares Nineveh (Verses 9, 10)

The king cast himself and his people upon the mercy of God. Who knows whether God may change his purpose toward us? Who knows but that he will turn his fierce anger away from us. They would amend their ways, and leave the results with him. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not." It shows that God's threats are conditional. As his threats are conditional, so also are his promises. Many years after the incidents of this lesson, Jeremiah said, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." (Jer. 18: 7-10.) This lays down in plain terms the principles on which God punishes and blesses. It would be a great thing for the whole world today, if all nations would take warning from what Jeremiah says, and would follow the example set by Nineveh.

Jehovah Rebukes Jonah (Jonah 4: 10, 11)

God had said that Nineveh would be overthrown, and yet he had spared the city. "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry." An experience like that never happened to another preacher—in a short time he converted a great city, and saved it from destruction; and then was angry because of the great results of his preaching! But if we judge Jonah in the light of the times, we will not be too hard on him. Nineveh was a powerful and growing enemy of Jonah's people, and he preferred that Nineveh be destroyed rather than that they should destroy Israel, as they did a few years later. He had fled at the first, because he knew that God would spare Nineveh, if Nineveh repented. So disappointed was he that he

prayed, "O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. And Jehovah said, Doest thou well to be angry? Then Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city." It seems that Jonah thought it might be that Jehovah would yet destroy the city; he would watch and see. Jehovah was forbearing toward him, and made a gourd vine to grow up to give him shade from the heat of the sun. Jonah was glad to have the shade of that vine; but when he arose the next morning, he found that a worm had cut his vine. When the scorching sun beat down upon him, he fainted. Again he prayed that he might die. It seems that Jonah's emotions were stronger than his reason; he became again very angry. He said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." He was angry because Jehovah did not destroy the city, and he was angry because a worm destroyed his gourd vine. He had regard for the gourd, which had cost him no labor; he was angry because it had been destroyed. Yet it was a thing of no great importance; it came up in a night, and perished in a night. If he had such high regard for a gourd, should he have been angry that Jehovah had regard for the great city of Nineveh, in which there were more than a hundred and twenty thousand who were too young to know their right hand from their left. There must have been at least ten times as many who had passed the age of infancy. Nineveh must therefore have been a city of more than a million people. Nineveh's reformation was of short duration, as may be seen by reading the prophet Nahum, who prophesied a few years after the preaching of Jonah. From Nahum we learn of the great wealth and exceeding wickedness of Nineveh. In Nahum we find such expressions as these: "There is no end of the store, the glory of all goodly furniture." "Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven." "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not." But the day of her reckoning was coming. "And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her?" "All that hear the report of thee clap their hands over thee." Zephaniah also tells of the utter destruction of Nineveh. (Zeph. 2: 13-15.) All that now remains of Nineveh are heaps of ruins.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Consider this: As punishment is conditional, salvation is of necessity conditional. It could not be otherwise. If either is unconditional, so must the other be; if either is conditional, so must the other be.

It is proper and right for a man to love his country and its people; but when love for one's country and its people leads him to disobey God, it is wrong. Obedience to God has no national lines.

We should know that God's way is best, and that all his commands are given in wisdom and love. A man is foolish who puts what he thinks up against what God says. God's ways are not man's ways. His commands enable us to walk by his wisdom. Jonah failed to see this.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The man Jonah.
 God's threats and promises conditional.
 The city of Nineveh.
 The present ruins of the city, and what they reveal.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
 Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons, and give information about each.
 Give proof that the book of Jonah is true history.
 What had Jonah prophesied concerning Israel?
 What command did Jehovah give him?
 Give account of Jonah's flight, and what happened to him.
 What did the experience teach him?

Verses 1-3

What now did Jehovah command Jonah?
 What did Jonah do this time?

Verse 4

What was Jonah commanded to preach, and what did he preach?
 What evidence that he told about the God who sent him?

Verses 5, 6

Describe the effect of Jonah's preaching.

Verses 7, 8

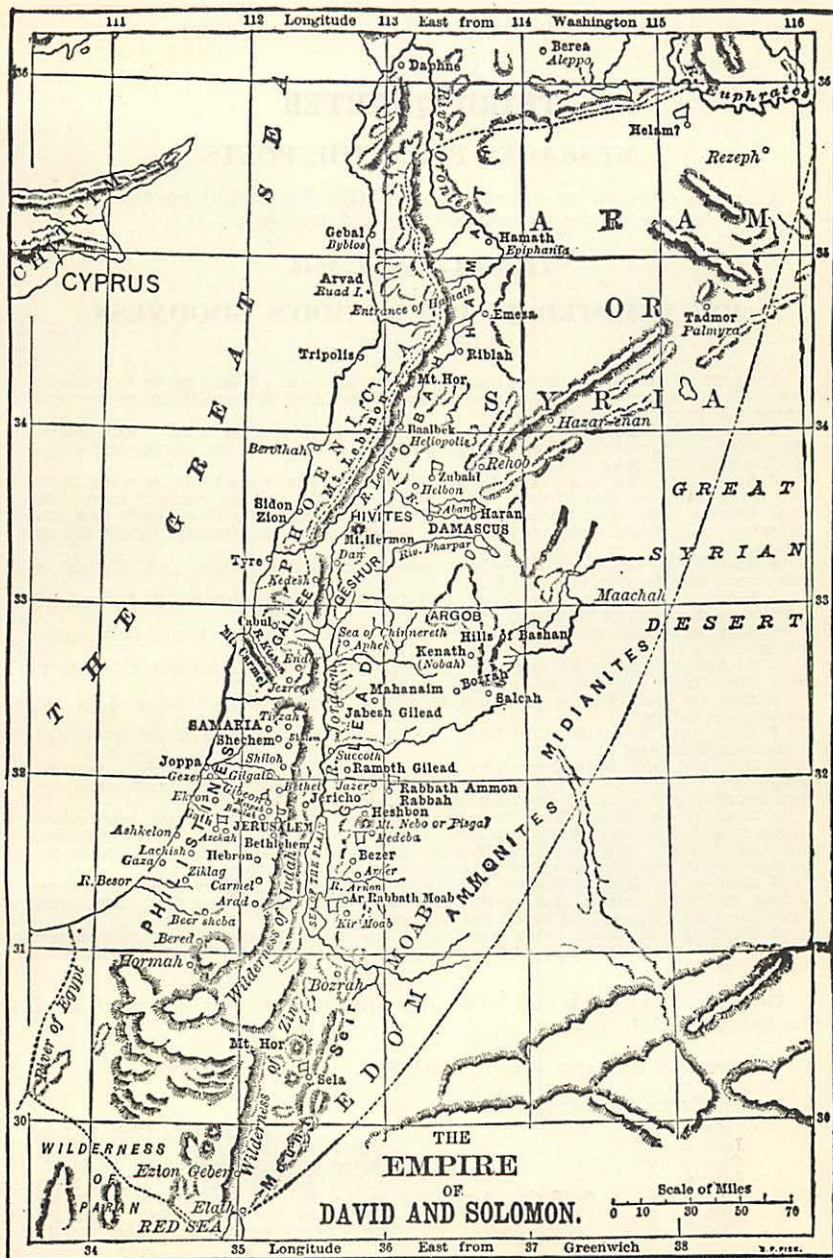
What is to you the most impressive thing about the whole affair?
 What evidence that these people were not converted by a direct work of the Spirit?

Verses 9, 10

What did the king say?
 Why was not Nineveh destroyed?
 Read and discuss Jer. 18: 7-10.
 What would save the nations of today?

Jonah 4: 10, 11

Why did Jonah become angry?
 Is it strange that he should become angry because of the great results of his preaching?
 What may have been back of Jonah's desire to see Nineveh perish?
 For what did he now pray?
 Describe Jonah's experiences while watching to see what would happen to Nineveh.
 Why did he become so angry again?
 What did Jehovah then say to him?
 What evidence that Nineveh's reformation was not permanent?
 What was prophesied concerning Nineveh?
 Discuss the reflections.



THIRD QUARTER

MESSAGES FROM THE POETS

AIM: To develop an appreciation of Old Testament poetry with a view to its use in the Christian's life and worship.

Lesson I—July 7, 1940

JOB TEMPTED TO DOUBT GOD'S GOODNESS

Job 2: 1-13

1 Again it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jê-hô'vâh, that Satan came also among them to present himself before Jê-hô'vâh.

2 And Jê-hô'vâh said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered Jê-hô'vâh, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3 And Jê-hô'vâh said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Jôb? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil: and he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

4 And Satan answered Jê-hô'vâh, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

5 But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face.

6 And Jê-hô'vâh said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; only spare his life.

7 So Satan went forth from the presence of Jê-hô'vâh, and smote Jôb with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself therewith; and he sat among the ashes.

9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die.

10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Jôb sin with his lips.

11 Now when Jôb's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place: El'î-phâz the Tê'mân-ite, and Bil'dâd the Shu'hite, and Zô'phâr the Nâ'â-mâ-thite; and they made an appointment together to come to bemoan him and to comfort him.

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his robe, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."* (Job. 1: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 8: 31-39.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

July 1.	M.	Job's Piety (Job 1: 1-5)
July 2.	T.	In Favor with God (Job 1: 6-12)
July 3.	W.	Tested by Adversity (Job 1: 13-22)
July 4.	T.	Job's Integrity (Job 2: 1-13)
July 5.	F.	Suffering According to the Will of God (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)
July 6.	S.	Strong in the Lord (Eph. 6: 10-16)
July 7.	S.	The Victory of Faith (Psalm 13:1-6)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Uncertain. It seems certain, however, that Job lived before the law of Moses was given; for the worship and family affairs were of the patriarchal order; that is, the father was priest and ruler. But the book might have been written years later by some inspired man.

Place.—The land of Uz.

Persons.—Jehovah, Satan, Job, and his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zopher.

Lesson Links.—"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance was also seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east. And his sons went and held a feast in the house of each one upon his day." (Job 1: 1-4.) These were likely birthday feasts. Job, fearing that they might have sinned at these feasts, made burnt offerings for each one of them. When the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, Satan was in the midst. Jehovah said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil." Satan replied, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face." Jehovah allowed Satan to put Job to the test—"Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand." Then four grievous calamities came upon him in rapid succession. Some of his servants were plowing; the Sabeans fell upon them, slew the servants, and took away the oxen and the asses. Fire burned up the sheep and the servants that were attending them. A band of Chaldeans took away his camels, and killed the servants who had charge of them. His children were feasting at the oldest brother's house; a storm wrecked the house and killed them. Only one servant escaped each calamity to report what had been done. "Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." So far Satan had failed.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Satan Among the Servants of God (Verses 1, 2)

Job's family were not the only servants God had in Job's day. These sons of God had a day in which they came together to worship God. "On the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah," Satan came also among them to present himself before Jehovah. That is characteristic of Satan. But why should

he be present among the sons of God? He is busy at his trade—seeking to seduce the sons of God. If the sons of God are so secure that Satan could not lead even one astray, he surely would know it; and he is too skilled in his work to waste time where nothing could be accomplished. Satan is busy. When God asked him whence he came, he replied, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Peter said, "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5: 8.)

Jehovah's Estimate of Job (Verse 3)

What one man thinks about another may not be important. He may judge by a wrong standard, or he may be so limited in his knowledge of the one he judges, that he may condemn when he should praise, or may praise when he should rebuke; but God knows all about men. And he does not flatter, though what others say about us may sometimes be mere flattery. God's estimate of a man is based on absolute knowledge; Job was therefore exactly such a man as God said he was, and what a tribute! "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Are you acquainted with his record? Have you looked into his heart? "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil: and he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." The four great calamities that had befallen Job, one after another in bewildering rapidity, had not shaken Job's faith in God and his goodness. Satan had tried to induce Job to doubt God's goodness, but had entirely failed. "He still holdeth fast his integrity"; so much so that there was none like him in the earth. Job had not yielded to Satan's temptations. The fact that Satan tempted Job to doubt God's goodness does not mean that he caused Job to doubt God's goodness in the least degree. Among other definitions of "tempt," Webster gives these: "To endeavor to persuade; to lead, or endeavor to lead, into evil." Too often people have the idea that to tempt a person is to lead him to do wrong or to stir up in him a desire to do a thing; but that is not always so. Satan tried to induce Jesus to sin; but there is no indication that he stirred up in the heart of Jesus any inclination to do what Satan suggested. Some one argued that there would have been no temptation to Jesus had there been no desire or inclination to follow the devil's suggestions. But he who so argues loses sight of two things; namely, that a mere effort to induce a person to do wrong is to tempt him, and that an evil desire in the heart is itself a sin. (Matt. 5: 27, 28.) Satan did not stir up in the heart of Jesus any evil desires; yet he tempted Jesus. He tried to get him to do wrong, but did not succeed so much as to stir up in his heart any evil desires. And everything that is said about Job shows that, though Satan did all he could to induce Job to doubt God's goodness, he did not stir up in Job's heart any inclination to do so. Job was still perfect and upright, and still held fast his integrity; so said Jehovah.

Satan's Estimate of Job (Verses 4, 5)

Satan has no righteous standard by which to judge, nor does he look for the good in any man. If a man is righteous he searches for

a weak spot in his character. He had already sorely tried Job, but had not yet found any weakness. Job was much stronger than Satan had said he was. He had said that if Job lost all he had, he would renounce God to his face. That would be more than some servants of God would stand. With such losses they would either give up in despair, or else become soured and quit; but not Job. But now Satan proposes another assault, thinking he would find a weak point in Job's armor. In fact, as before, he felt sure of his plan. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face." He thought that physical suffering would turn Job against Jehovah. Things like that do sour some people. To hope in the midst of despair, and to trust God when everything seems to go wrong, is more than some people are able to do; their faith is too weak for that. But what of Job? Did Satan have a proper estimate of him? Job would be put to the test.

Job Afflicted with Boils (Verses 6-8)

"And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; only spare his life." Afflict him as you please, but do not kill him. "So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." One who has had even one boil knows in a small degree the suffering that was meted out to Job in full measure. He sat in ashes; and the only surgical instruments he had with which to open the boils were broken pieces of crockery. It was a miserable experience for Job; the full extent of his sufferings no one can know.

Job's Wife Loses Hope (Verses 9, 10)

Job's calamities and sufferings brought despair to the heart of his wife. It has been said that his wife "went back on him," but that does not seem to be so. Her heart was crushed with grief and overwhelmed with despair—she could not see that things would ever be any better for Job. Death would relieve him of his sufferings. She seemed to believe that, if he renounced God, God would kill him. He would then be out of his misery; so she said, "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die." She evidently at the time doubted God's goodness, and she could not see how Job could still retain his integrity. Job, in his suffering, replied rather curtly: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women." To be asked to give up his trust in God sounded to Job like foolish talk. He did not feel that they merited unmixed good. Whatever good they received, was a gift of God. "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away." "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" That view of matters helped Job to bear his suffering. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Satan had terribly bruised and buffeted him, but had failed to prove to be true anything he had said about Job. And when temptation seems to the Christian to be more than he can bear, let him remember this: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13.)

Job's Three Friends (Verses 11-13)

Job's three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—learning of Job's troubles, "made an appointment together to come to bemoan him and to comfort him." We know nothing of these men, save what we learn from the book of Job. Esau had a son named Eliphaz and a grandson named Teman. As Job's friend Eliphaz is called a Temanite, it lends support to the supposition that he was a descendant of this grandson of Esau. If so, Job did not live before the days of Abraham. But where these men lived, and from whom they descended is of no great importance to us; for we never would have heard of them, had it not been for their connection with Job. They came to Job as comforters, but turned out to be tormenters. After Job and they had made some speeches, Job became indignant at their efforts to show him that his sins had brought on his sufferings. "I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all." However, when they first saw Job, "they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his robe, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." One peculiar thing about their visit is, that they sat there with Job seven days and seven nights without saying anything. They knew that their philosophy that all sufferings came to a person because of his own sins, would be of no comfort to Job; and so they said nothing till Job made his first speech. They then felt that their philosophy of sin and suffering had to be vindicated, even if their theory did make of Job as great a sinner as he was a sufferer. Their assumption of superior wisdom caused Job to say with burning sarcasm: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you."

SOME REFLECTIONS

Life contains problems beyond our ability to understand. Why the innocent must suffer is one of the mysteries. Sometimes the innocent are killed in a car wreck while the guilty escape without injury.

The book of Job is so dramatic that some people would like to make us believe that it is fiction; but they forget that life can sometimes be a greater drama than anything conceived in the imagination of man.

To give real help and comfort to those who are sick or in distress is a fine art; yet but few have mastered the art. Too many people are thoughtless like Job's comforters. The following are actual happenings—the reader can think of others. Neighbor women sat around the bed on which lay a woman seriously sick of pneumonia, and discussed in detail various cases of death from pneumonia. A man walked a few steps away from the grave where they had just lowered his wife, and heartbroken was standing alone, trying to brace himself up and gain courage to go back to that lonely home. A neighbor walked up to him and said, "Don't take it too hard; you will soon find another." "Miserable comforters are ye all."

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

- The patriarchal religion.
- Satan and his methods.
- Job's steadfastness.
- What God said about Job.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Give in detail the incidents of the first chapter of Job.

Verses 1, 2

What is said of the sons of God?
What is said of Satan?
Why should Satan be mixing with the sons of God?

Verse 3

What did Jehovah say of Job, and about his continued steadfastness?
What is the meaning of the word "tempt"?
As an illustration, discuss the temptations of Jesus.

Verses 4, 5

What shows that Job was stronger than Satan had said he was?
What did Satan now say?

Verses 6-8

What permission did Jehovah give Satan?
What did Satan do?

Verses 9, 10

What is said of Job's wife, and what did he say to her?

Verses 11-13

Who came to comfort Job?
How did they conduct themselves?
What was their philosophy of sufferings?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson II—July 14, 1940

JOB'S STRUGGLE TO FAITH IN LIFE AFTER DEATH

Job 14: 13-17; 17: 13-16; 19: 23-29

- 13 Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Shē'ōl,
That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past,
That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!
- 14 If a man die, shall he live again?
All the days of my warfare would I wait,
Till my release should come.
- 15 Thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee:
Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thy hands.
- 16 But now thou numberest my steps:
Dost thou not watch over my sin?
- 17 My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And thou fastenest up mine iniquity.
- 13 If I look for Shē'ōl as my house;
If I have spread my couch in the darkness;
14 If I have said to corruption, Thou art my father;
To the worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my sister;
15 Where then is my hope?
And as for my hope, who shall see it?
16 It shall go down to the bars of Shē'ōl,
When once there is rest in the dust.
- 23 Oh that my words were now written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
24 That with an iron pen and lead
They were graven in the rock for ever!
25 But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And at last he will stand up upon the earth:
26 And after my skin, *even this body*, is destroyed,
Then without my flesh shall I see God;
27 Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger.
My heart is consumed within me.
28 If ye say, How we will persecute him!
And that the root of the matter is found in me;
29 Be ye afraid of the sword:
For wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the sword,
That ye may know there is a judgment.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“As for me I know that my Redeemer liveth.” (Job. 19: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 14: 1-9.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

July 8.	M.	Hope and Despair (Job 14: 7-17)
July 9.	T.	“My Hope” (Job. 17: 11-16)
July 10.	W.	“My Redeemer” (Job 19: 23-29)
July 11.	T.	A God-Given Body (1 Cor. 15: 35-44)
July 12.	F.	Out of Death into Life (John 5: 19-25)
July 13.	S.	Laying Hold of Life Eternal (1 Tim. 6: 11-16)
July 14.	S.	The Assurance of Life Eternal (Psalm 16: 5-11)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Unknown, but apparently during the patriarchal age.

Place.—The land of Uz.

Persons.—Job and his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Lesson Links.—When Job's three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—came “to bemoan him and to comfort him,” “they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.” In this day of hurry that would seem to be a peculiar performance. Evidently the men were trying to make up their mind as to what to say. Their philosophy of suffering prevented them from saying anything that would be a comfort to Job, for they held that human sufferings resulted from individual sins. They would therefore say nothing till Job said something. Job's losses and suffering had somewhat embittered him. He broke the silence by cursing the day of his birth. He thought it would have been better had he died at birth. Eliphaz could refrain from speaking no longer. “But who can withhold himself from speaking?” In former days Job had been a help to others. “But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest.” Then Eliphaz states his philosophy: “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the upright cut off? According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow trouble, reap the same.” Job did not like this philosophy, and replied to the speech of Eliphaz. And thus began quite a debate between Job and his three friends. Job knew the integrity of his own heart, and did not believe that his own sins had brought on his sufferings. He became rather personal in some of his remarks. Witness this: “But ye are forgers of lies; ye are all physicians of no value.” Part of the time Job was talking to his three friends, and part of the time he was making his plea direct to Jehovah. There are some things that human beings cannot find out for themselves, but must depend on a revelation from God. Aside from revelation, no man can be sure of any future existence. When the future life was first revealed to the human family we know not, but it was brought to full light only in the gospel. However, the Old Testament worthies—even the patriarchs—expected a life beyond this present mode of existence. Abraham “looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” (Heb. 11: 10.) These worthies recognized that in this world they were strangers and pilgrims—they were looking for a country of their own, that is, a country where they would be no longer strangers and pilgrims. “But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore

God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. 11: 13-16.) It is possible therefore that Job's three friends shared with him a belief in life after death. Job could know nothing about life after death, save as it had been revealed. No amount of struggling can develop that sort of faith in the absence of testimony.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Job Prays for Deliverance from Suffering (Verse 13)

That Job looked for a resurrection at the end of time is shown by what he says in verse 12. "So man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep." Hence, Job expected an awakening out of the sleep of death. "Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol." Sheol of the Hebrew, and Hades of the Greek, have the same meaning; both refer to the unseen abode of departed spirits. David said, "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol." (Psalm 16: 10.) Peter quotes this as referring to Christ: "Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades." "Hades" is therefore an exact translation of "Sheol." Job therefore believed in this intermediate state of departed spirits. To him it was a secret place where he might be kept from what he was then suffering till Jehovah's wrath be passed. But Job did not want that to be his permanent abode—he did not want to remain there as if Jehovah had forgotten him. "That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me." It does not seem that this could be made to refer to anything except the resurrection. Job wanted a set time for Jehovah to bring him back out of his hiding in Sheol. "As he had spoken of the death of his body before, and the secreting of his spirit in the invisible world, he must here refer to the resurrection; for what else can be said to be the desire to one whose body is mingled with the dust."—Clark.

The Great Question (Verses 14, 15)

The language Job used in connection with his question does not seem to indicate any doubt when he said, "If a man die, shall he live again?" When a person sincerely asks that question, it shows that he thinks it possible that people live again. It seems that Job was stating an age-old question that he might give some answer to it. Job was the greatest servant God had on earth at that time, a priest and ruler of his family and his great household of servants. He must have had some degree of inspiration. Since other patriarchs had had settled convictions about life after death, it seems unreasonable to think that Job did not have any convictions on the subject. He would wait till his release came—his release from his sufferings would come at his death. He did not seem to hope for his release to come any sooner. In death, as we have already seen, he would be kept in the unseen state of the dead till a set time. Out of that state Jehovah would call him. "Thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee: thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thy hands." Man is God's creature, and Job represents God as having a desire for this work of his hands even when man is dead. If man ceases to be when he dies, Jehovah would not have any more desire concerning him. But Job understood that Jehovah's desire followed

man into the unseen world. Of course, neither to Job nor to any other Old Testament worthy was the matter of life after death so fully revealed as it has been revealed in the scriptures of the New Testament. If Job came to believe in it stronger after this, it was because he had additional revelations concerning the future.

Job's Steps Numbered (Verses 16, 17)

Job realized that Jehovah knew all about his life; there was nothing hid from him. He regarded his sins as sealed up in a bag as evidence to be presented against him, as evidence was presented in a court. It is even so now; there is nothing hid from his sight. Without respect of persons, God judges every man according to his works. (1 Pet. 1: 17.) "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds." (Matt. 16: 27.)

"Where Then Is My Hope?" (Job 17: 13-16)

It seems that Job in these verses had in view the prospects for this life; the preceding verse so indicates. Verse 1: "My spirit is consumed, my days are extinct, the grave is ready for me." He saw no hope of recovering himself from the calamities that had overtaken him. "My days are past, my purposes are broken off." All that he had planned had come to an end, and it seemed to him that he had reached the end—his days were all past. The marginal reading for verse 13 has, "If I hope, Sheol is my house." Sheol would be the end of all his earthly plans and hopes. The placing of his body in the grave would be making his couch in the darkness, where corruption and worms would be his nearest of kin. "Where then is my hope?" No one would see his hope realized; it would go down into Sheol with him. He would find rest from his bodily afflictions in the dust. It sometimes happens that a gloomy outlook for this life gives a person a corresponding gloomy outlook for the life beyond. Perhaps Job's calamities had this effect on him, but these verses are not conclusive on that point.

"Oh That My Words Were Now Written!" (Job 19: 23, 24)

It may be that Job here had reference to all that he had said in this controversy with his former friends. It was natural that he should want his defense recorded. But even so, it is likely that he had special reference to what he was about to say concerning the future. Where the American Standard Version has, "inscribed in a book," the King James Version has, "printed in a book." However, printing was unknown in Job's days; and it is strange that King James' translators overlooked that fact. The pith of the papyrus sedge, a plant native to the Nile, was sliced and pressed into a writing material. Some records were engraved in stone, and some on sheets of lead. Along the regions of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers much writings was done on clay tablets. Job wished that his words were not only written in a book, but that they were graven in the rock forever. His words may have never been graven in the rock, but they have become a permanent part of the world's literature.

"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" (Verse 25)

There is only one way that Job could have known this great truth, and that was by a special revelation. By his own powers he could not have known this. Some think that he referred to his redemption from his present distress; but even concerning any future earthly prosperity he had just said that God had uprooted all his hope. (Verse 10.) He therefore did not refer to any hope of returning prosperity. It seems certain that he referred to the Lord, and the redemption that would come through him. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," that my redeemer is the living one. This redeemer did stand on the earth. It is interesting to note the translation of this verse by Isaac Leeser, a learned Jew: "And well I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he will remain as the last after the creatures of the dust (are passed away)." Some understand, or think, that "stand up" refers to the resurrection of Christ.

Life After Death Revealed to Job (Verses 26, 27)

Verse 26 is an emphatic revelation of life after death. "And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God." The Jewish translation by Isaac Leeser gives this: "And after my skin is cut to pieces will this be: and then freed from my body shall I behold God." No effort on the part of Job, in the absence of revelation, could have given him an insight into this great truth. He was not giving expression to any conclusion he had arrived at by a labored effort; the Spirit of God was speaking through Job. It was the voice of God, and not of Job. Mere struggling with the problems of life had not brought him to that truth. Job did not speak as if he were merely giving an opinion that he had arrived at by speculating on the problem of life and death; his language is emphatic, as is always the language of the Spirit of God. Freed from his flesh he would see God. Through Paul the Spirit expresses the same truth: "But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake." (Phil. 1: 23, 26.) To depart from the body was to be with Christ—freed from his body, Job would see God. For the phrase, "on my side," the marginal reading has, "for myself." Leeser has, "Whom I shall myself behold to my happiness." We shall then see him as he is; now we do not fully comprehend the beauty of his character.

Job Warns His Friends (Verses 28, 29)

Job's three friends had been so severe in their criticisms, as to amount to real persecution. They had based their criticisms on a wrong theory—had judged by a wrong standard. They had said that the root of his sufferings was in Job himself; their theory of suffering was that a man's suffering was due to his own sins. Job warns them that wrath would bring punishment, and that there is a judgment. In judging, God would not use false standards by which to judge, as these men had done in condemning him. And God did judge at the close of the controversy, and condemned the three for what they had said. (Job 42: 7-9.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

There are some things that man's unaided powers cannot find out—some things that his natural eye cannot see and his ear cannot hear. Such things must be revealed, else they will never enter into the heart of man. This was Paul's point in saying, "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10.) Concerning his redeemer, and life after being freed from his body, Job spoke with the assurance of revelation of the Spirit of God—"I know." From the same source, and with the same assurance, Paul said, "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Cor. 4: 16; 5: 1.) Till these things were revealed, no man could know them. The future life was revealed to Job, though not so fully as it was afterward revealed. The thing that had been partly revealed, Jesus demonstrated in his own resurrection.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The controversy between Job and his three friends.

The evil of judging by wrong standards.

Things we cannot know without revelation.

The patience of Job.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Who were Job's three friends, and why did they come to him?

Why did they not begin to comfort him?

Who broke the silence?

What did Eliphaz argue?

Give some things Job said in answer to Eliphaz.

Show that the Old Testament worthies looked for a future life.

Verse 13

What shows that Job believed in a life after death?

Show that "Sheol" and "Hades" mean the same.

What did Job mean by wishing that Jehovah would appoint a set time and remember him?

Verses 14, 15

What does Job's question indicate? Discuss verse 15.

Verses 16, 17

Discuss these verses.

Discuss Matt. 16: 27.

Job 17: 13-16

What does it seem that Job had in mind in uttering these verses?

What plans and hopes end at death? Discuss any other point you see in these verses.

Job 19: 23, 24

For what did Job wish?

Tell about the writing material of that day.

Verse 25

How had Job arrived at the knowledge that the "Redeemer liveth"?

From what did he expect redemption?

When did this redeemer stand up upon the earth?

Discuss any other point in this verse that interests you.

Verses 26, 27

What do you understand verse 26 to mean?

How did Job arrive at this faith?

How does Paul express practically the same idea?

Discuss any other point that appeals to you.

Verses 28, 29

Why did Job mention persecution? Why had his three friends been so

wrong in their judgments?

What warning did Job give?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson III—July 21, 1940

JOB'S REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

Job 42: 1-13

1 Then Jōb answered Jē-hō'vāh, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do all things,

And that no purpose of thine can be restrained.

3 Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?

Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,

Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak;

I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;

But now mine eye seeth thee:

6 Wherefore I abhor myself,

And repent in dust and ashes.

7 And it was so, that, after Jē-hō'vāh had spoken these words unto Jōb, Jē-hō'vāh said to El'ī-phāz the Tē'mān-ite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Jōb hath.

8 Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Jōb, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Jōb shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Jōb hath.

9 So El'ī-phāz the Tē'mān-ite and Bil'dād the Shu'hīte and Zō'phār the Nā'ā-mā-thīte went, and did according as Jē-hō'vāh commanded them: and Jē-hō'vāh accepted Jōb.

10 And Jē-hō'vāh turned the captivity of Jōb, when he prayed for his friends; and Jē-hō'vāh gave Jōb twice as much as he had before.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that Jē-hō'vāh had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold.

12 So Jē-hō'vāh blessed the latter end of Jōb more than his beginning: and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jehovah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." (Job 42: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 12: 2-10.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

July 15.	M.	Repentance (Job 42: 1-6)
July 16.	T.	Forgiveness (Job 42: 7-9)
July 17.	W.	Restoration (Job 42: 10, 11)
July 18.	T.	Prosperity (Job 42: 12-17)
July 19.	F.	Preaching Repentance (Luke 24: 44-49)
July 20.	S.	The Fruits of Repentance (Acts 26: 14-20)
July 21.	S.	Sowing Time and Reaping Time (Psalm 126: 1-6)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Unknown.

Place.—The land of Uz.

Persons.—Jehovah, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Lesson Links.—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were keen philosophers, but were evidently not inspired prophets. They had a certain philosophy concerning suffering and sin. Suffering did come into the world on account of sin, but they were wrong in thinking that all the sufferings of an individual were visited upon him on account of his own personal sins. At least, they should have felt less sure

of their philosophy when they reflected that innocent infants suffered; so do animals. Job knew they were wrong; but it appears that he said more in his own defense than he should have said. In arguing from his sufferings that Job was a sinner, his friends showed very little regard for Job's feelings. They had come to comfort him, but remained to torment him, so much so that Job called them miserable comforters. Neither Eliphaz, Bildad, nor Zophar said anything about life after death. What they believed on that point we know not. However, Eliphaz made a statement in the form of a question that has since been seized on by materialists as if it were the utterance of an inspired prophet of God—"Shall mortal man be more just than God?" One should notice who said a thing before he offers it as proof. Neither Eliphaz, nor Bildad, nor Zophar had anything to say in answer to Job's last speech. They had been put to silence. But Elihu, a young man who for some reason was present, made a speech. Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job, because Job justified himself rather than God; and against Job's three friends, "because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." Elihu, with becoming modesty, had refrained from speaking while older men were speaking. He had listened till he had become so full of words seeking utterance, that his breast was like wine that had no vent, and was ready to burst its container. He had to talk. After Elihu's speech, Jehovah made Job feel rather small by a long list of searching questions, interspersed with a few statements. Some allowance can be made for Job. He had passed through a severe test. Satan had exhausted his ingenuity in his efforts to cause Job to renounce Jehovah, and had failed. Even Job's three friends had been a test, instead of a help. "Then Job answered Jehovah, and said, Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth, once have I spoken, and I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Job Recognizes Jehovah's Power (Verses 1, 2)

Job was more than a match for his three friends; but when Jehovah spoke, he felt very small. "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained." He had unlimited faith in Jehovah's power and might; and yet there is no praise in this to Jehovah for his goodness and loving-kindness. It seems that Job and the other patriarchs thought of Jehovah mostly as a God who could work out his plans, and none could hinder. Abraham was a man of great faith; yet, so far as the record reveals, he said so little about Jehovah and to Jehovah, that we know not whether he had any conception of Jehovah other than that he was a mighty God whom none could hinder. And so with Isaac, Jacob, and the other patriarchs. God's character was gradually revealed, and was much more fully revealed in the New Testament than ever before.

Job Confesses His Lack of Knowledge (Verse 3)

Job had felt very confident in the presence of his three friends. Once he said with withering sarcasm, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." (12: 2.) Again, "What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you." (13: 2.)

"Oh that you would altogether hold your peace! and it would be your wisdom." (13: 5.) But how different when Jehovah spoke! He then felt that he had said altogether too much, and had gone beyond his depth. "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."

Job Repents (Verses 4-6)

It seems that Job, on the impulse of the moment, thought of arguing the matter with Jehovah; for he said, "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." If that was his impulse, he checked himself, and changed the tone of his speech, before he got started. "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He had felt confident in the presence of his friends, but in the presence of Jehovah he abhors himself. He was humble and self-abasing in his penitence. Pride, haughtiness, and self-will must be taken out of a person's heart, or there can be no repentance. A feeling of self-righteousness is a bar to repentance. When one sees himself as a sinner, and abhors himself because of his sins, he is in a frame of mind to repent.

Jehovah's Wrath Kindled Against Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Verse 7)

Job and these three men, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, had a debate. The young man Elihu had waited with becoming modesty while the older men spoke. When the three would answer Job no further, he felt bound to talk. His philosophy was much like that of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Elihu made quite a lengthy speech, but it seems that no one took any notice of it; Job did not reply to it, and Jehovah did not mention it. But Jehovah did severely rebuke Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. To Eliphaz, who seems to have been the leader of the other two, Jehovah said, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." In view of what Jehovah here says, it is not safe to try to prove anything by what either of these three said. In this religious discussion, as in all other religious discussions, one side misrepresents God, that is, does not speak of him the thing that is right. It is possible for both sides to be wrong; one side must be wrong, or else there would be no difference. Even the person who is in the right may say some things that should be left unsaid, as did Job; but such unfortunate use of words does not affect the point at issue. Job was right in his contention; the others were wrong. It does not seem that the three friends looked beyond this life, but believed that justice was meted out here in this life. They seemed to argue that it would be a perversion of justice if the wicked did not always suffer in this life, and the righteous always prosper. Job argued that often the wicked prospered and the righteous suffered. It does not mean that Job thought there was injustice with God; he looked for matters to be finally adjusted in the next life. Reason, as well as revelation, teaches us that there must be a final adjustment of all things. Job's contention was in harmony with God's plans; the contention of the others was not. Hence, God commended Job, and condemned the

others. This is one debate in which there was no doubt as to who won.

"Jehovah Accepted Job" (Verses 8, 9)

Under the patriarchal form of religion, the head of the family or clan was the priest. His household included his family and all of his slaves and dependents. He made the offerings for all who were under him. But in the incident of this lesson Jehovah would not accept Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar as priests. They had severely criticized Job and tried to make him out a great sinner. Of course they did not so regard themselves. But Jehovah was greatly displeased with them, and demanded that they offer burnt offerings; but they must bring them to Job, that he might perform the office of priest for them, as if they belonged to his household. "For him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly." Job was also to pray for them. This arrangement was, of course, for only this one instance. They did as Jehovah had commanded them, "and Jehovah accepted Job."

"Jehovah Turned the Captivity of Job" (Verses 10, 11)

Only in a physical sense was Job a captive of Satan; Jehovah had so delivered Job into Satan's hands, to see if he could be induced through calamities and physical sufferings to renounce Jehovah. If he had not stood the test, he would then have been in the power of Satan morally and spiritually. To be called on to make offerings for his former friends and to pray for them, after they had so tormented and abused him with their words, was itself a severe moral test for Job. But he stood the test; in all his trials he had not failed. He had proved to be steadfast in his fidelity to Jehovah; "and Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before." The idea argued by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar must have been the generally accepted theory among the people surrounding Job, for it seems that they had all forsaken him in his distress. If so, they thought that, inasmuch as he had suffered more than any others in their acquaintance, he must be the greatest sinner in their country. To them he had become a moral pest, a man unfit for their association; they had, therefore, stayed away from him. But now, that Jehovah had vindicated him and accepted him, they could see their mistake. "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that Jehovah had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold." And this was one of the ways in which Jehovah made Job so prosperous. The fact that it is said that these people now came, "and did eat bread with him in his house," shows that they had not thought him fit to treat as a social equal. The treatment accorded Job shows how unjust our judgments may be when we judge by wrong standards, or on insufficient evidence. Job had been terribly misjudged by all the people about him, including his friends of great ability.

Jehovah Blessed Job More Than Ever (Verses 12, 13)

"So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." When we were first introduced to Job, he had seven sons and three

daughters. "His substance was also seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household." This household is mentioned separate from his sons and daughters; they were his slaves and dependents. In the return of his prosperity, he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. "He had also seven sons and three daughters." It is singular that the writer gives the names of his daughters, but not of his sons. And while the writer says nothing about what sort of men the seven sons were, he gives these words of praise concerning the daughters: "And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren."

SOME REFLECTIONS

We must form our estimate of others, but let us be sure that we judge by a righteous standard, that we have correct evidence, and that we do not allow our feelings to bias our judgment.

James says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." And who has not? And yet how few know what real patience is, or wherein Job manifested his patience. If we think patience consists in accepting without protest or complaint any sort of calamities that come upon us, or meekly and quietly listening in silence to all sort of criticisms and misrepresentations that may be heaped upon us, we will not be able to see what constituted the patience of Job; for Job fumed and fussed about his calamities, and talked abruptly to his friends in reply to their criticisms. His steadfastness was his patience. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." He maintained his integrity—he did not waver. Patience is the quality of remaining steadfast in our service to Jehovah through whatever disappointments, trials, or criticisms may be our lot. Patience is a heroic quality, a steadfast adherence to a high purpose. It is the spirit of never let go. And when we see Christians dropping out for any wrong, fancied or real, that they think they have suffered, we see the need of patience.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of Job's trials.

The value of a definite purpose.

What patience really is.

How an erring servant of God may be restored to his favor.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What is your estimate of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar?

What seems to have been their philosophy of suffering?

What finally made Job feel small and insignificant?

Verses 1, 2

What seems to have been the idea Job and the other patriarchs had of Jehovah?

What did Job say to Jehovah?

Verse 3

What had been Job's attitude in the presence of his friends?

In the presence of Jehovah, what did he say?

Verses 4-6

What condition of heart must precede repentance?

Verse 7

What did Jehovah say to Eliphaz?
What was the main issue between Job and his three friends?

Verses 8, 9

Give the patriarchal form of rule and worship.

What did Jehovah require of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and why?

Verses 10, 11

In what sense had Job been in captivity?
Discuss the contents of verses 10, 11.

Verses 12, 13

Contrast Job's latter prosperity with his former prosperity.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IV—July 28, 1940

WEIGHING CONSEQUENCES

Prov. 1: 7-10; Isa. 5: 11, 12, 18-23; Gal. 6: 7-9

- 7 The fear of Jê-hô'vâh is the beginning of knowledge;
But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction.
8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
9 For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head,
And chains about thy neck.
10 My son, if sinners entice thee,
Consent thou not.

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them!

12 And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jê-hô'vâh, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope;

19 That say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Is'ra-êl draw nigh and come, that we may know it!

20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink;

23 That justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."
(1 Tim. 4: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 9: 42-47.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

July 22. M.	Living Prudently (Prov. 1: 1-10)
July 23. T.	The Folly of Ignoring God (Isa. 5: 8-17)
July 24. W.	Anticipating Harvest (Gal. 6: 1-9)
July 25. T.	Weighing Alternatives (Prov. 4: 10-19)
July 26. F.	The Sum of All Wisdom (Eccles. 12: 9-14)
July 27. S.	Permanent Values in Character (1 Cor. 3: 10-17)
July 28. S.	A Wise Decision (Psalm 26: 1-12)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—For Proverbs, between 915 and 875 B.C.; for Isaiah, between 760 and 700 B.C.; for Galatians, about A.D. 55.

Places.—Solomon and Isaiah wrote in Jerusalem; Paul wrote Galatians at Ephesus.

Persons.—Solomon, Isaiah, Paul, and the people for whose benefit they wrote.

Lesson Links.—Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, though some of them may have been in use in his day. His purpose in writing these proverbs is stated in the first six verses of the book. These six verses may be considered the preface to the book. Jehovah had made Solomon the wisest of men, but his life shows that superior wisdom is not a guaranty against wrongdoing. Isaiah prophesied at a time when the people of Israel and Judah had greatly corrupted themselves. Even those in authority, who should have held the people in check, were leaders in corrupt practices. "How is the faithful city become a harlot! she that was full of justice! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loved bribes, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." (Isa. 1: 21-23.) In Paul's day there was great corruption throughout the world. The heathen religion did not, and could not, promote morality. The Jews had come to depend on formalities and outward show, rather than on godly living; so much so that they were little better than the heathen. But it seems that immorality and self-indulgence has been prevalent in all countries and in all ages.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Fear of Jehovah (Verse 7)

"The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge." For the word "beginning," the marginal reading has "chief part." "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28: 28.) The same thought is expressed in many places, such as Psalm 111: 10; Prov. 9: 10; 15: 33. Of the wicked David said, "There is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, that his iniquity will not be found out and be hated." (Psalm 36: 1, 2.) To fear Jehovah is to recognize his power, majesty, and glory, and our helplessness before him and our dependence upon him. It is also to recognize that he is just, and will punish the wicked. "For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 30, 31.) "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." (2 Cor. 5: 11.) "For our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12: 29.) "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. 10: 26, 27.) Hence, the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. (Eccles. 12: 13.)

Admonition to Hear Counsel of Father and Mother (Verses 8, 9)

A newborn babe is perhaps the most helpless of all of God's newborn creatures, and remains so longer than any other living thing. It is absolutely dependent on others for food, protection, and guidance. Parents are the natural ones, and also the divinely appointed ones, to care for their children. Not the least of their obligations to their children is their duty to teach them the true principles of life, and to guide them in the ways of righteousness. To accomplish this task with any degree of success, they must gain and maintain the respect and reverence of their children. To allow the child to "talk back" in a disrespectful way, is to lose the respect of the child, and therefore to lose all wholesome influence over the child. Here parents often fail miserably. If children do not respect father and mother, they are not likely to respect any authority, human or divine. Children also have responsibilities. Intelligent children know that they owe honor and respect to their parents. The duty of parents to their children, and of children to their parents, inheres in the very nature of their relationship. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." One of the ten commandments which set forth the duty of children is repeated and made binding in the New Testament: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), . . . that thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. 6: 1-3.) The next verse says, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." Wholesome respect for parents is an adornment that anyone should delight to wear; "for they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." And to have children to rise up and call them blessed, is a greater treasure to parents than rubies and gold. No criminals come out of homes where such spirit abides.

Let Not Sinners Entice You (Verse 10)

The sinner that Solomon here speaks of was a lawbreaker, a criminal. Such a man has no interest in right living. He would not try to induce a young man to do right, but would gladly lead him into a violation of the law. Do not lend a listening ear to his proposals; consent not to his schemes. Such a man promises to divide the spoils—promises you to let you in on "easy money," but his course leads to bloodshed. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and walk not in the way of evil men." (Prov. 4: 14.) The way of evil is progressive. It generally begins with listening to the enticing words of evil men or women; the next move is to take a stand with them, and then a person is ready to scoff at all good advice—to scoff at the laws of both God and man. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers." (Psalm 1: 1.) "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and scoffers delight them in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge?" (Prov. 1: 22.) The admonition of verse 10 continues through verses 11-19.

Drinking and Carousing Bring Woe (Isa. 5: 11, 12)

The eleventh verse sets forth the practice of those who have become drunken sots; the sole effort of such a man is to fill himself with strong drink. He begins his drinking early in the morning and continues it till late in the night. But even a man like that had his first time to get drunk. He gradually reached such a state of debauchery; no one ever became a sot all at once. Neither does anyone intend to reach that state when he begins to drink. It should be a warning not to begin. Every drunken wretch is a warning. But there is a feast, a social affair; music enlivens the occasion; and wine flows freely. The person who has no intention of ever becoming a drunkard is there. The others scoff if he refuses to drink; and in many ways they give him to understand that he is a misfit. He cannot stand the pressure, and drinks. Not being used to strong drink, he becomes more drunken than the others. He is now one of the crowd; his downward course has begun. Such men soon reach the point where "they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands."

Woe to Them That Challenge Jehovah (Verses 18, 19)

The wording of verse 18 is peculiar, but it seems to refer to those who sin on a big scale—they add crime to crime, till there is a long unbroken string of them. They sin continuously, and without remorse of conscience. They reach the point where they meet God's threats of punishment with a challenge to him to do his worst. "Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it." His long-suffering and forbearance is regarded by them as an indication that he did not mean to do anything about it. Through Ezekiel the Lord rebuked them for having a proverb to that effect: "The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is this proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will make this proverb to cease. . . . For I am Jehovah; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall be performed." (Ezek. 12: 21-25.) Men have reached a terrible degree of hardness of heart when they can boldly challenge Jehovah to make good his threats of punishment. "I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them." (Ezek. 6: 10.)

Sin Warps Thinking (Verses 20, 21)

A man's habits, whether social, business, or sinful, influences his thinking; his thinking also influences his habits. They act and react on each other. In this way a certain line of thinking will lead to sinful habits, a criminal life; and a criminal life warps a person's thinking, till he does not think straight on any moral or governmental question. He is found on the wrong side of every moral question. To him evil is good, and good is evil. In his mind's eye every one who tries to put down immorality and crime is an enemy and a hypocrite. He hates the man who seeks to enforce the law. Ignorance is darkness. Even in religion a person's mind may become so darkened by error, that he thinks he is in the light, and that those who hold the truth are in utter darkness. We see this mani-

fested all around us. Error and sin are sweet to some people, though the final fruits of each are bitter. Woe unto all who are thus deluded.

Woe to Egotists, Drinkers, and Bribe-takers (Verses 22, 23)

"Be not wise in thine own eyes." (Prov 3: 7.) Not much can be done for the person who is wise in his own eyes, or for the one who is righteous in his own estimation. The one who is wise in his own eyes does not have a teachable spirit—he will not receive instruction. He closes his eyes, and stops his ears, and hardens his heart against the truth of God. There is only one chance for him to escape the woe pronounced upon him: "let him become a fool, that he may become wise." (1 Cor. 3: 18.) No one should be proud of his ability to drink much wine; rather, he should be ashamed to put himself in a class with whom God is displeased, and upon whom he has pronounced a woe. A man who will justify the wicked for a bribe, and thereby deprive the righteous man of his rights in the matter, is a menace to well-ordered society, be he judge, juror, or witness. Woe to all such.

What We Sow We Reap (Gal. 6: 7-9)

Paul was speaking of the use people make of their means. Verse 6: "But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." A person may give his means to support the preaching of the gospel or to help the needy; or he may spend it for luxuries, for things to gratify his own proud heart, or to satisfy his baser appetites and passions. In spending his money in revelry and drunkenness he is committing a double sin—wasting his money that he may commit these sins. But no matter in what useless way we are spending our money we are sowing to the flesh. Let us not deceive ourselves about such matters, for we will reap what we sow. That law is embedded in the nature of things; and we can neither avoid it, nor change it. The only way to reap eternal life, is to sow to the spirit. If that at times seems hard to do, "let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." There must be a sowing time before the harvest.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Every parent owes it to his child to teach him obedience.

Paul's admonition to Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his oft infirmities, was really a prohibition against its use for any other purpose. (1 Tim. 5: 22.)

Every person who has had any experience in trying to correct any wrongs, whether moral or religious, has seen how sin, selfishness, and prejudice warp men's thinking. People in error and sin have no correct standard by which to judge; and crooked living makes crooked thinking.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is a general truth. Everything brings forth after its kind. If this were not so, there would be no certainty in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Seed brings forth after its kind. That is true in religion. Sow different doctrines, and produce different religious groups. It is as easy to see why folks differ in religion as it is to see why different vegetables grow in different rows in the garden.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How evil starts and grows on people.
The evils of egotism.
How sin warps a person's whole outlook on life.
The ways in which we may sow to the flesh.
How we may reap eternal life.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
Give the dictionary definition of proverb.

What was the condition of the Hebrew people when Isaiah prophesied?

Discuss the condition of the world morally when Paul wrote.

Verse 7

Discuss the fear of Jehovah.
Why fear him?

Verses 8, 9

Discuss the needs of a child.
What is essential on the part of parents?

Discuss the duties of children to their parents.

Verse 10

Discuss the admonition and application of verse 10.

Isa. 5: 11, 12

What do you think cause most drinkers to begin drinking?

What can be done to decrease the drink temptation?

Verses 18, 19

What do you think verse 18 signifies?
Discuss verse 19.

Verses 20, 21

Discuss the influence a man's habits have on his thinking.
Why do evil men condemn those who are trying to do right?
Why do some religious people make light of some teaching in the Bible?

Verses 22, 23

Why is egotism hurtful to one's character?
What is a teachable spirit?
Discuss bribery, and the ways in which people may be bribed.

Gal. 6: 7-9

What matter did Paul have under consideration?
How many ways can a person sow to the flesh?
What general law did Paul state?
Give the results of sowing to the flesh, and of sowing to the spirit.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson V—August 4, 1940

THE TWO WAYS

Psalm 1; Matt. 7: 24-27

- 1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 But his delight is in the law of Jê-hô'vâh;
And on his law doth he meditate day and night.
- 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For Jê-hô'vâh knoweth the way of the righteous;
But the way of the wicked shall perish.

24 Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock:
25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.

26 And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand:
 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked shall perish." (Psalm 1: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 2: 1-7.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

July	29.	M.	.....	The Good Way (Jer. 6: 16-21)
July	30.	T.	.....	A Divided Heart (Jer. 17: 5-10)
July	31.	W.	.....	Ways of Pleasantness (Prov. 3: 13-18)
August	1.	T.	.....	The Way of Peace (Luke 1: 67-79)
August	2.	F.	.....	Two Ways to Build (Matt. 7: 24-27)
August	3.	S.	.....	The Two Ways (Psalm 1: 1-6)
August	4.	S.	.....	The Way of Holiness (Isa. 35: 5-10)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—For this Psalm, between 1070 and 1030 B.C.; for Matthew, A.D. 28 or 29.

Places.—Jerusalem; a mountain in Galilee.

Persons.—David, Jesus, the disciples of Jesus, and the multitudes.

Lesson Links.—The most of the Psalms were written by David. David was impetuous and warmhearted. He sinned grievously at times, but always repented in deep humility without trying to justify himself or blaming anyone else for his sins. He was, therefore, a man after God's own heart. He was a man of varied attainments, and excelled in all of them. He was a great warrior, a great musician, a great poet, a great king, and a great servant of God. The second part of our lesson begins with these words: "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine." This connects this part of our lesson with all that Jesus had said in this sermon on the mount. The opening words of that sermon gave the very foundation of all sincere efforts to serve God: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be poor in spirit is to recognize our sinfulness, and our need of righteousness and salvation; it is to recognize our entire dependence on God. The one who is poor in spirit recognizes also his poverty of resources; he knows that he cannot invent a way of salvation, nor contrive plans for acceptable service to God. Being sensible, he recognizes a like poverty in all others, and will not follow their plans or creeds. The poor in spirit write no creeds, nor do they follow any. To be poor in spirit is the opposite of being proud and haughty. Such a one will gladly accept the rich provisions God has made for him; herein consists his blessedness. A thoughtful reading of the other beatitudes show that they come in their natural order, each one growing out of the condition expressed by the one before it. On some points Jesus contrasted his teaching with what they had been taught by the law of Moses and by their tradition. Such teaching as they had received prohibited certain deeds; his teaching goes back to the thought or motive that gave rise to the deed. He shows that a person may sin even in his thoughts and motives. In the righteous deeds we perform there must be no desire or effort to make a show of what we do. They must not let anxiety for the morrow consume them. Do right today, and the morrow will take care of itself. "Judge not," and

yet he says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." He was warning against the habit of judging unjustly or severely. A tree is known by its fruit, but we do not judge a tree without sufficient evidence. Let justice be tempered with mercy; "for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." In preparing this lesson the verses immediately preceding the last part of our lesson should be carefully considered: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Man Who Is Blessed, or Happy (Verses 1, 2)

The marginal reading for "blessed" is "happy." Blessed, or happy, is the man whom he proceeds to describe. He does not walk in the counsel of the wicked—he does not follow their advice, nor their enticing words. A wicked man is not one who occasionally sins; he is a man who lives in sin—a man who is a thoroughgoing sinner. Such a man would not give good counsel. If a person follows the counsel of such sinners, he soon becomes identified with them—takes his stand with them. He stands in their way, stands in their way of living. He goes the way they go. He soon becomes so hardened in sin that he scoffs at the law, at religion and religious people, and at the church. Thus David describes the growth in sin, for people do grow in sin when once they turn themselves loose. People do not reach the worst stage in hardness in sin and depravity all in one step. After telling what the man he is describing does not do, David tells what he does—not what he ought to do, but what he really does. "His delight is in the law of Jehovah." David himself found great delight in Jehovah's words, as the following testimonies gleaned from Psalm 119 show: "I will delight myself in thy statutes." "Thy testimonies also are my delight." "And I will delight myself in thy commandments." "I delight in thy law." Many such statements are easily found. There is something lacking in the person who finds no pleasure in reading God's word and in meditating upon its wonders. It reveals to us the way of life and salvation. And there is no other book that favorably compares with it, even as literature. Skeptics have tried to find flaws in its historic statements; but every time they announced that they had found an error, later discoveries proved the supposed error to be a historic fact. Happy is the man that delights in the law of Jehovah, and meditates on it day and night. Meditating on the law of the Lord gives one moral strength, and helps one to make proper adjustments. It is a pity that people allow themselves to become so rushed with the affairs of life that they have no time for serious meditation; character is greatly enriched by such meditation. "Oh, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

The State of the Righteous and of the Wicked (Verses 3-6)

The righteous man is like the tree planted by the streams of water; he grows, bears the fruits of righteousness, and prospers.

"The wicked are not so." They are as chaff—they are of no value to others. Measure them by any standard of value, and they do not stand the test; nor will they be able to stand the test when the judgment comes. "He will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." Such characters will have no place in the congregation of the righteous. There are two ways—the way of the righteous, and the way of the wicked. The way of the righteous is the way God has marked out for them; it is the narrow way that leads to life. The way of the wicked is any other way they may choose to take. The way of the wicked, the way that leads to death, covers all the ground not covered by the narrow way. That way is so broad that anyone can make a path of his own in it.

Building on the Rock (Matt. 7: 24, 25)

A serious error has found place in the thinking of some late writers, an error that would rob us of the use of the Sermon on the Mount, except some few of its principles. In his notes, Scofield says, "For these reasons the Sermon on the Mount in its primary application gives neither the privilege nor the duty of the church." His supposed reasons were, that this sermon was to be the law governing the kingdom which he supposed Jesus was about to restore to Israel, but which he deferred till some time yet future. Then the Sermon on the Mount will be binding. If that position were true, we would be perverting that sermon if we made it apply to us now, or tried to obey any of its teaching. But students of the Bible should not cheat themselves out of this wonderful sermon by accepting such teaching. Only to forestall such a fatal blunder is the idea referred to in this connection. It would seem to any reader that, while the phrase, "these words of mine," applies immediately to the Sermon on the Mount, words spoken later were just as important. That sermon contained in condensed form all that was taught later on. It would require too much space to show how comprehensive many of these statements are, but this one will illustrate the point: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." That lacks little, if any, of including the whole plan of salvation. This shows why Jesus could make such statements about those who did, and those who did not, do his commands. To hear his words is to give attention to them—to hear with understanding. There is a difference between merely hearing a man's words, and really hearing what he says. To hear in an approved way, is to give heed to what is said. The man born blind, whose eyes Jesus had opened, said to his questioners, "I told you even now, and ye did not hear." (John 9: 27.) Again, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6: 60.) They heard, and yet they did not hear. To some Jews Jesus said, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." (John 8: 43.) To really hear, is to give interested approval to what is said. One who thus hears the words of Christ and does them, is like the wise man. A man cannot do what Jesus said, unless he so hears as to understand and believe what he said. To obey is to do what he says, and to do it because he says it. In obedience there is the recognition that the person obeyed has the authority to command. There is a difference between following

advice and obeying constituted authority. Obeying authority is a duty which we cannot evade without punishment; following advice is a privilege which we can exercise or reject, as we please. The words of Jesus are authoritative; to obey him we must recognize the truth that he has authority to command; we must recognize him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. One who does not so recognize him cannot render acceptable obedience to him. Obedience to God's authority has always been necessary; and no blessings were ever promised to those who did not obey, and no one in disobedience ever received God's promised blessings. "But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezek. 18: 21.) One can therefore see why the one who hears and obeys the Lord is like the wise man who built his house on the rock. If there is nothing of importance attached to obeying what the Lord says, it would seem the part of wisdom not to waste any time in doing what he says. But since our eternal happiness depends on doing what he says, it is wise beyond measure to do what he says. Hearing and doing, we build on the rock; and there is something solid and satisfying about such building. Luke records a similar statement: "Every one that cometh unto me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock: and when a flood arose, the stream brake against that house, and could not shake it: because it had been well builded." (Luke 6: 47, 48.) If a stone house, such as they built then in that country, was built on the sand, not much washing under its foundation would be required to cause it to fall. A good foundation is essential to a good house. If a man builds his hope of eternal happiness on the solid rock of truth by hearing and doing the truth, his hope has a sure foundation. He who so builds is a wise man. "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1: 10, 11.)

Building on the Sand (Verses 26, 27)

The foolish man knew nothing about building a house, and he did not try to find out before he began to build. With him it seemed to make no difference, just so the house was built. So he built it on the sand. The floods came and undermined his house—washed the sand from under its foundation, and it fell. His money and labor were lost. So will it be with the one who hears the words of Christ, but does not obey what Jesus taught. If a man builds his hopes of eternal life on anything save hearing and obeying the words of Jesus, he is building on the sand.

SOME REFLECTIONS

The influence of the life of a good man is a power for good beyond measure; the influence of the life of a wicked man is ruinous beyond measure.

Two ways are open to man, and he may choose the way he desires to travel. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate,

and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it."

Is anyone accused of being narrow? If you will think a little, you will discover that truth on any matter is narrow; it is just a certain thing or a certain way. Error covers all the ground not covered by the truth. No one would think of criticizing a person as narrow, because his correct solution of a mathematical problem differed from the work of others who did not solve the problem correctly. Every one should be "broad-minded enough" to recognize this fact.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Psalm 1.

The benefits of meditation.

Man's inability to direct his own steps.

God's way and man's ways contrasted.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.

What can you say of David?

Give the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount.

What is it to be poor in spirit?

In what sense are we not to judge?

Verses 1, 2

Discuss the character whom David pronounces blessed.

Why meditate on the law of the Lord?

Verses 3-6

Why are the wicked like chaff?

What did John the Baptist say would be done with the chaff?

What two ways are there?

Matt. 7: 24, 25

Does the Sermon on the Mount apply to us?

Give reasons for your answer.

Show how some statements in this sermon include much.

How may a person hear, and yet not hear?

What is obedience?

Show that obedience has always been necessary.

How build on the rock?

Verses 26, 27

Why is disobedience like building a house on the sand?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VI—August 11, 1940

THE WORKS AND THE WORD OF GOD

Psalm 19

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
- 2 Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language;
Their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.
- 6 His going forth is from the end of the heavens,
And his circuit unto the ends of it;
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
- 7 The law of Jê-hô'vâh is perfect, restoring the soul:
The testimony of Jê-hô'vâh is sure, making wise the simple.
- 8 The precepts of Jê-hô'vâh are right, rejoicing the heart:
The commandment of Jê-hô'vâh is pure, enlightening the eyes.

- 9 The fear of Jê-hô'vâh is clean, enduring for ever:
The ordinances of Jê-hô'vâh are true, *and* righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
In keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can discern *his* errors?
Clear thou me from hidden *faults*.
- 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*;
Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be clear from great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O Jê-hô'vâh, my rock, and my redeemer.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer."* (Psalm 19: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 119: 9-16.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

August 5.	M.	.....	The Testimony of the Heavens (Psalm 19: 1-6)
August 6.	T.	.....	The Testimony of Revelation (Psalm 19: 7-14)
August 7.	W.	.....	The Testimony of Humanity (Psalm 8: 1-9)
August 8.	T.	.....	Man Is God-Conscious (Acts 17: 22-28)
August 9.	F.	.....	A Universal Father (Eph. 3: 14-21)
August 10.	S.	.....	God, Our Dwelling Place (Deut. 33: 26-29)
August 11.	S.	.....	Universal Praise (Psalm 148: 1-14)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Between 1070 and 1030 B.C. There is nothing to indicate at what time of his life David wrote Psalm 19.

Place.—Probably Jerusalem.

Persons.—David and the people for whom he wrote.

Lesson Links.—Our experience and observation teach us that every made thing had a maker, and every effect had a cause, and every design had a designer. A watch has a designer and a maker, or makers. Railroads equipped with rolling stock do not just happen to be. Cities must be built by somebody—they do not just happen to spring up out of nothing. But all the works of man, as numerous and wonderful as they are, fade into insignificance when compared with the universe, or even with this world on which we live. If a man should argue that all these works of men just happen to be, and that man therefore had nothing to do with making them, he would be called a fool. Why? Because he talks contrary to common sense—contrary to all that experience and observation has taught us. That is the reason that David said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Such a man has to assume that the whole universe just happened to be, that it had neither designer nor maker; and that is contrary to all that our observation and experience have taught us; such an assumption is foolishness.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God (Verses 1-3)

The heavens—the moon, the planets, the stars, the sun, the whole expanse of the heavens—declare the glory of God, just as a great piece of work of some genius reflects glory upon its maker. Go into

an art gallery where are collected the finest paintings known, and pick out what you think is the finest painting ever made by man—what a master painted that! And yet some scenes in nature so far surpass that work of art, that it seems but the work of a novice. Look at the pyramids and think of their hugeness, and then turn your face toward the great mountains. Look at the great searchlight that casts its rays for miles, and then gaze, if you can, at the sun. Examine the greatest machine made by man, and then consider this great machine we call the universe. Man's art is great; but let us consider that, what we call nature, is God's art, God's workmanship. If man's work glorifies him, how much more do the works of God glorify him. "The firmament showeth his handiwork." The things out in space show skill in their making, in their arrangement, and in their perfect timing. The whole thing is a perfect timepiece. Man's finest timepieces will eventually vary. Astronomers can compute the exact time and progress of an eclipse as far ahead as they choose, but they cannot be so sure of the exact movements of the hands on the face of the finest watch or clock that man can make. And yet man's handiwork shows that he has developed marvelous skill. God's works utter speech—they continue to praise him. In no uncertain tones they speak his majesty, wisdom, and power, even to the ends of the world. And yet there is no speech nor language; no voice is heard. God's works speak his praises without uttering speech; what they are tells the story to all who think.

The Sun (Verses 4-6)

"In them," that is, in the heavens, "hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." He assigned the sun its place, a tabernacle. But what does that mean? We are told that the sun is the center of the solar system—the center of what was considered the heavens. Did David mean that the sun is the center of the solar system, surrounded by all the other heavenly bodies, as if they constituted a tabernacle around the sun? If so, his statement was in advance of his times. In speaking of the sun's going forth, and of its circuit, David was speaking of it as it appears, just as we now speak of its rising and setting. In all such matters the Bible uses words as we use them. Even a skeptical scientist, who would criticize the Bible because it contains such expressions, does not hesitate to speak of the rising and the setting of the sun. No matter how many millions of miles away the sun may be, "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

The Uses of God's Word (Verses 7-9)

When a thoughtful person looks at all the things which he can see, and knows that there are yet many things beyond the range of his vision, he knows that all these things had a maker or makers; but no one can tell from viewing nature whether it was all made by one God or a hundred gods. Nature does not tell us that there is but one supreme being; that truth came to us by revelation. When we know there is one God, nature declares his glory. But even so, nature does not declare his will. Can a man by searching find out God? Not where there has been no revelation; nor can he by searching nature find out the will of God in spiritual matters. Nature does not point out to us the way to heaven, nor tell us of the glories of the

life beyond this. That which nature cannot do, the law of God does—"The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul." The sinner's soul is out of its proper place; it is out of harmony with God. Neither education in the wisdom of the world nor social refinements can restore the soul to its proper place; only the law of Jehovah can do that. Paul states in other words the same truth that David states: "I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1: 16.) If it did not lead a man out of sin and restore him to favor with God, it would not save him. Only the individual himself can keep the gospel from leading him out of sin into salvation; he may, like some of old, harden his heart. (Matt. 13: 15.) If a man rejects the gospel, he rejects the power by which God saves men. The "simple," of verse 7 are not people of weak minds; but people who are not schemers and who are not wise in their own eyes, but honest, sincere, trustful people. The testimony of Jehovah makes such people wise, for they are teachable. It could not refer to people with weak minds, for nothing but a miracle could make such people wise. The sincere and honest person, who feels his need of comfort and guidance, rejoices in the precepts of Jehovah; for they give him the comfort and the guidance which he craves. With David, he can say, "Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine afflictions." (Psalm 119: 92.) The word of God gives enlightenment. "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." (Psalm 119: 104.) "The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119: 130.)

God's Word More Valuable Than Gold (Verses 10, 11)

People generally have a poor sense of values; so much like children are they. Reach out both hands to a child with a deed to a rich gold mine in one hand and a pretty red apple in the other, and see which it will take. You know without trying the experiment. The child does not know values. Some men prize strong drink above their own salvation and the happiness of their families; they have less sense of values than the child. Some men place a higher value on false theories or on the allurements of the world than they place on the word of God. Not so with David; God's ordinances were precious to him. "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honey-comb." "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." (Psalm 119: 72.) "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." (Psalm 119: 127.) And the early Christians demonstrated that they loved the Lord and his gospel more than any earthly goods, yea, more than life itself. And there are many today who have that same degree of love for the Lord and his word. "Moreover by them is thy servant warned." They warn us against dangers along the way of life; prohibitions against certain things are warnings. On the highway you see various signs; some of them are warnings. You endanger your life and that of others, if you give no heed to these warning signs. He is a fool who thinks somebody is trying by such signs to interfere with his liberties. "Be not drunken with wine." "Be not deceived." "Be not weary in well-doing." "Take heed." These are

warning signs which God has erected along the highway of life to protect the travelers from hurtful things. He is foolish who thinks God is trying to interfere with his liberties. We should love the word of God because of its warnings. It would not meet our needs, if it did not have these warnings. "In keeping them there is great reward." God will render eternal life "to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption." (Rom. 2: 6, 7.) "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5: 8, 9.) Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14: 23.) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7: 21.) The rewards mentioned in these scriptures are great, and should induce us to put forth our best efforts to keep the precepts of God.

Hidden Faults and Presumptuous Sins (Verses 12, 13)

"Who can discern his errors?" The Psalmist was not saying that not one could discern Jehovah's errors, for Jehovah makes no errors; he was stating in the form of a question the fact that no one can fully discern his own errors. If we could clearly see all of our own errors, we would likely be greatly astonished. As long as we err in judgment, we shall continue to err in practice. Even the best and wisest of men are not wise enough to rid themselves of all faults. And these faults that we do not know about are the hidden faults. They may not be hidden from others so much as from ourselves. It is possible for a person to be so deceived as to commit sin in doing what he thinks is right. An illustration: Many people have been deceived into thinking baptism is a matter of indifference, and have therefore sinned in disobeying that command. To such it is a hidden sin—they do not know they have sinned. And there are presumptuous sins. Such sins are different from sins of ignorance, and from sins growing out of the heat of passions. The presumptuous sin is an arrogant, highhanded sin. It is the worst of sins, because it is aimed directly at the authority of God. To set aside God's law and substitute a way of our own, is a presumptuous sin. King Saul did that when he knowingly and deliberately did as he pleased about carrying out God's order as spoken by Samuel. (1 Sam. 15.) Saul's sin was a willful setting aside of God's law. To the average person David's sin in the matter of Uriah and his wife (2 Sam. 11: 2-21) would seem to be a much greater sin than Saul's, but in God's sight it was not. David sinned through the weakness of the flesh; he had not determined to set aside the authority of God. When he thought the matter over, he loathed himself, and sincerely repented. (Psalm 51: 1-17.) The greatest crime any one can commit against any government is treason or rebellion. David refers to presumptuous sin as great transgression, and prayed that he might be free from such sins. It would seem therefore that the willful sin and the presumptuous sin is one and the same. It is committed when a man puts his will up against the will of God.

Praying That Words and Meditation Be Acceptable (Verse 14)

Much evil grows out of unguarded speech. With words we may blaspheme the name of God, tell lies on an innocent person, corrupt the morals of others, cheat and defraud, and lead people into destructive errors. Guard your speech, or you may thoughtlessly use hurtful words. It is easy to talk, but not so easy to escape the consequences of what we say. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one." "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth." (See also Col. 3: 8, 9.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

Get away from the smoke of the city some bright night, look up into the heavens, and let your thoughts go out with your vision. Do the things you see tell you anything?

The heavens declare the glory of God, but it takes the law of God to restore the soul. All the theories about the depravity and deadness of the sinner, and his inability to do anything without a direct work of the Spirit, cannot destroy the Bible's statement that the law of Jehovah restores the soul, and that the gospel is God's power to save.

One trouble with the party spirit in religion, it makes liars and slanderers out of people. Pray to be delivered from it.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

What the word of God does.

Different kinds of sins.

How and why we should guard our speech.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What do our experience and observation teach us as to what we see?

What conclusion does this lead to respecting the universe?

Verses 1-3

How do the heavens declare the glory of God?

How do they utter speech without voice or language?

Verses 4-6

Discuss these verses.

Verses 7-9

Contrast what the heavens do with what the word of Jehovah does.

Discuss Rom. 1: 16.

Who are the simple?

Give some scriptures as to what the word of God does.

Verses 10, 11

Show how people lack a sense of values.

What does David say of gold as contrasted with God's word?

Discuss the warnings in God's word. Tell about the rewards of keeping God's precepts.

Verses 12, 13

What may be included in hidden faults?

Discuss presumptuous sins.

Verse 14

Discuss the evils that may result from speech.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VII—August 18, 1940

GOD'S CARE OF HIS PEOPLE

Psalm 23

- 1 Jê-hô'vâh is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul;
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
- 6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days
of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of Jê-hô'vâh for ever.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want."*
(Psalm 23: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 34: 1-8.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

August 12.	M.	My Shepherd (Psalm 23: 1-6)
August 13.	T.	His Universal Care (Matt. 6: 25-34)
August 14.	W.	Gracious and Merciful (Neh. 9: 26-31)
August 15.	T.	My Father (Jer. 31: 7-12)
August 16.	F.	His Workmanship (Eph. 2: 1-10)
August 17.	S.	His Care for the Lost (Matt. 18: 10-14)
August 18.	S.	His Providential Care (Psalm 145: 9-21)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Date not known. Assuming, as the title indicates, that this Psalm was written by David, it was written between 1075 and 1010 B.C.

Place.—Not known—probably Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah and the Psalmist. Some have argued that David did not write the twenty-third Psalm, but the contents are so much in harmony with David's experiences and his character, that it seems to be his production.

Lesson Links.—We are first introduced to David on this wise: Jehovah sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to succeed Saul as king. Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel, beginning, it seems, with the oldest. Jehovah accepted none of them. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep." Jesse had not thought it worth while to have David present, for he was then evidently only a lad. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward." (1 Sam. 16: 1-13.) It appears that David then went back to keeping the sheep. He was later called into the service

of king Saul, and remained in that service more or less constantly, till his growing fame so excited the jealousy of king Saul, that Saul sought to kill him. During much of the time after this, David was kept fairly busy keeping out of the hands of Saul, till Saul was killed in battle. After this David became king. When we read of his activities as a king and a warrior, we wonder how he had time to develop into such an accomplished musician and poet. Some of the Psalms are prophetic; such prophecies in the Psalms describe things as if then in existence, or as if they had already occurred. But it matters little whether this Psalm is prophetic or whether it merely states things that are true at all times. Jehovah has always cared for his people.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Shepherd (Verse 1)

Jehovah was the shepherd of whom David sang in this beautiful Psalm. As David had had much experience as a shepherd of his father's sheep, it was natural that he should look to Jehovah as his shepherd. Jehovah was the shepherd of all his people. "For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." (Psalm 95: 7.) "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations." "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." But even though Jehovah was the shepherd, there were undershepherds. Jehovah had said to David, "Thou shalt be shepherd of my people Israel." (2 Sam. 5: 2.) The leaders were also shepherds; but in the days of Isaiah and of Jeremiah they had become selfish, and had miserably failed in their duties. (Isa. 56: 11; Jer. 10: 21; 23: 1.) And so also were they in the days of Ezekiel. (Ezek. 34: 2, 8.) Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, is our shepherd. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." "I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10: 11, 14.) "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things." (Rom. 8: 32.) As in olden times, so now he has supplied his sheep with undershepherds. To the elders of the church at Ephesus Paul said, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20: 28.) With increased emphasis the child of God can now say, "I shall not want."

Our Shepherd's Care for His Flock (Verses 2-4)

What the Psalmist said for himself is true for every child of God. In using the pronoun of the first person he made the relation between Jehovah and his servant seem more intimate than could have been done by saying, "He maketh his servants to lie down in green pastures." Notice the repetition of the pronoun of the first person—used seventeen times in the six verses of the Psalm. It makes the reader feel as if he were expressing his own feelings and experiences. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." It is the business of the shepherd to see that the sheep have good pasturage. The food

supply is abundant in green pastures. The good shepherd loves his sheep, and is diligent in finding good pasturage for them. Christians are too much inclined to think of our shepherd as far off. Are we not the sheep of his pasture, and does he not know and love his own? "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." (John 10: 10.) "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain into life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1: 3.) He gives his sheep every good thing—everything that is good for them. And he has provided a full supply of spiritual food. We do not need to hunt pasturage in strange fields. "He leadeth me beside still waters." Not by rushing, turbulent, splashing streams of water, but by waters that are still, or that flow gently. This is expressive of peace, rest, and contentment; and these are found more abundantly in the full development of the plan of salvation through Christ. Our shepherd said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11: 28-30.) This rest is to be found here and now—rest from doubts and fears, and rest from the burden of sin. By learning of Jesus and obeying him we find rest. There is peace, and rest, and contentment in knowing that our sins are forgiven, and in knowing that we have been rightly taught, and in knowing that we are under the care of the great shepherd of our souls. And the yoke of Jesus makes life's burdens easier to bear. "He restoreth my soul." The watchful shepherd knew when a sheep strayed from the flock. If he had a hundred sheep, and one strayed away, he left the ninety-nine, and sought for the lost sheep till he found it; and then he brought it back with rejoicing. (Matt. 18: 12, 13.) And does not our shepherd have more care for his sheep than any earthly shepherd ever could have? To restore the soul is to bring it back where it should be. "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul." Through his word he brings back the lost sheep. Do calamities bring a person back out of sin? They may put a person into a condition of mind and heart, so that he is willing to listen to the word of God; but it is the word of God that brings the strays back into the fold. And by this word he guides us in paths of righteousness, and this word is our only guide in the right ways of life. "The valley of the shadow of death" is not, in Old Testament usage, death itself. It is a place of darkness and danger, a place where death lurks. David had been through many such places; but Jehovah was with him, and he therefore feared no evil. That the Psalmist was not talking about death itself is shown by his statement that the rod and staff comforted him as he walked through the valley of the shadow of death. The rod was evidently the shepherd's crook, by means of which he could pull a sheep out of dangerous places; the staff was that on which he might lean for rest. It could not be that the rod refers to the rod of correction; for though correction may result in comfort, correction itself is not a comfortable experience. This allegory of the shepherd and his sheep is as comforting as it is beautiful, giving the servant of God a feeling of contentment, peace, and security in the knowledge that Jehovah cares for him as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

A Guest in the House of Jehovah (Verses 5, 6)

The figure is changed. The Psalmist is now a guest in the house of Jehovah, who has prepared for him a bountiful feast. In the presence of his enemies he feasts undisturbed at the table of Jehovah—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." This had been literally done in the history of David. One instance: When he fled before Absalom and his army, and had reached Mahanaim, Shobi, and Machir, and Barzillai "brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and meal, and parched grain, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat." (2 Sam. 17: 27-29.) It is especially true now that our shepherd supplies us with an abundance of spiritual food; and this spiritual food satisfies the longing of the hungry soul. And our enemies cannot keep us from feasting on this rich supply of spiritual food. "Thou hast anointed my head with oil." Anointing the head of a guest was a mark of special honor. On one occasion Jesus dined with Simon, a Pharisee. While they were reclining at the table a woman, a sinner, "brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." This did not suit Simon. Among other things Jesus said to him, "My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment." While dining with another Simon, "there came unto him a woman having an alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and she poured it upon his head, as he sat at meat." (Matt. 26: 6, 7.) Of course the language of the Psalmist is figurative—Jehovah does not pour literal oil on the heads of his servants. He was merely showing that Jehovah honors those who are guests in his house, as all of his servants are; he was carrying out the figure of a perfect host. And so in this: "My cup runneth over." An abundance of choice wine was served to an honored guest. But the word "cup" came to represent one's portion in life. Here it represents the fullness of God's blessings—his rich provisions for those who serve him. "I will take the cup of salvation." (Psalm 116: 13.) But as the word "cup" represents one's portion in life, it not infrequently represents the bitterest of suffering. "Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life." David had full confidence that Jehovah would continue to bless him, if he remained true to Jehovah, which he was determined to do. "All the paths of Jehovah are lovingkindness and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." (Psalm 25: 10.) But when David turned from contemplating the goodness and loving-kindness of Jehovah to a close inspection of his own life and deeds, he felt the need of praying that Jehovah's goodness and loving-kindness be not taken from him. "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Jehovah; let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; and my heart hath failed me." (Psalm 40: 11, 12.) "And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever." The temple was Jehovah's house, and yet it does not seem that David here refers to the temple,

for he did not dwell in the temple at Jerusalem. It had not yet been built. Nor could it refer to the tabernacle, for David did not dwell in the tabernacle. It is an ideal expression, in which the Psalmist thinks of himself as always a guest in the house of Jehovah; or else it is prophetic, referring to the church of God. Paul said to the church at Corinth, "Ye are . . . God's building." "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3: 9, 16.) It seems however that David conceived of himself as always in the presence of Jehovah. "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in his temple." (Psalm 27: 4.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

"Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and the hungry soul he filleth with good." (Psalm 107: 8, 9.)

You who are inclined to fill your speech and your writings with adjectives, thinking you thereby add to its beauty and effectiveness, read carefully Psalm 23, and think of its beauty and perfection. Count the adjectives; you will find only two—green and still.

The Old Testament heroes had much for which to praise God; but we have much more, "God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11: 40.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

David's life before he became king.

The duty and responsibility of a shepherd.

Jesus our chief shepherd.

The elders of the church as shepherds.

The better things that God has provided for us.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Under what circumstances are we first introduced to David?

Name some of David's accomplishments.

Verse 1

What was David's background for this Psalm?

Give some other quotations about Jehovah as a shepherd.

Who were the undershepherds?

What do Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel say of these shepherds?

Who is our shepherd?

Who are undershepherds in the church?

Give Paul's admonition to them.

Verses 2-4

What do you think the use of the pronoun of the first person adds to this Psalm?

To help answer this question, read or write the Psalm, using some substitute, such as "the writer," for the pronoun of the first person.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures"—discuss the significance of this expression.

What abundant preparations have been made for us?

Discuss the expression—"He leadeth me beside the still waters."

We may find rest from what, and how may we find it?

How does the Lord restore the soul? Discuss the "valley of the shadow of death."

Discuss the "rod" and the "staff."

Repeat the first four verses of this Psalm.

Verses 5, 6

To what is the figure now changed?
What does the figure now signify?
Name an instance in which it had
been literally fulfilled in David's
experience.

What is the significance of anointing
the head with oil?
Give some examples.
Give significance of the expression—
"My cup runneth over."
Discuss the first part of verse 6.
What is now God's house? Give
proof.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VIII—August 25, 1940

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

2 Sam 12: 13, 14; Psalm 51: 1-3, 9-13; 32: 5

13 And David said unto Nā'thān, I have sinned against Jê-hō'vāh. And Nā'thān said unto David, Jê-hō'vāh also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jê-hō'vāh to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions;
And my sin is ever before me.

9 Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
And uphold me with a willing spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee,
And mine iniquity did I not hide:
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jê-hō'vāh;
And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James 5: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 1: 7 to 2: 2.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

August 19.	M.....	Confession and Forgiveness (2 Sam. 12: 13, 14)
August 20.	T.....	A Contrite Sinner's Prayer (Psalm 51: 1-3, 9-13)
August 21.	W.....	God Answers a Prayer of Confession (Dan. 9: 20-23)
August 22.	T.....	A Contrite Sinner Pardoned (Luke 15: 11-24)
August 23.	F.....	Forgiving Offenders (Luke 17: 1-4)
August 24.	S.....	Confession and Cleansing (1 John 1: 5-10)
August 25.	S.....	The Blessedness of Forgiveness (Psalm 32: 1-5)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—For Second Samuel and the Psalms, according to Hales, 1052 B.C.; according to Usher, 1035 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, David the king, and Nathan the prophet.

Lesson Links.—The events that led up to David's confession and forgiveness do not make pleasant readings; it is a sordid story. Uriah, faithful to his king, was in the army away from home, fighting for his country. During this time David had unholy relations with Uriah's wife, and then schemed to cover up his sin; but his scheme failed of the results he naturally expected. He then sent this order to Joab: "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." His orders were carried out, and Uriah was killed; and David thus became both an adulterer and murderer. The details of this sordid story may be found in 2 Sam. 11: 2-26; 12: 1-12. Some things in David's confession may be made very helpful to us today; but we must not overlook what is said about confession of sins in the New Testament. What the New Testament says about the confession of sins may be learned from the following passages: Acts 8: 14-24; 19: 18, 19; James 5: 16; 1 John 1: 9. Shall sins be publicly confessed? Certainly not all sins should be confessed publicly. The Bible does not say that we should confess any sin publicly; no one therefore has a right to demand such confession. However, if a person has sinned publicly, or has for some time lived in sin, making no pretense of living right, and then decides to reform his way of doing, it will help him and the cause he represents, if he will let it be known publicly that he has repented and intends to live right. In such cases there is no need that the person go into details about the sins that he has committed. But if one has committed a sin, and the public knows nothing of it, why tell them? No good can result from such telling, but much harm might result. It is good to exercise a little common sense in this matter of confessing sins. Another form of confessing can result in nothing but harm. Under high-pressure methods in a series of meetings some of the most faithful, but emotional, members are stirred up to think they should confess their sins; they come forward and confess publicly that they have not been living right. No one knows wherein they have not been living right; they therefore wonder what secret sins these people have been indulging in. This foolish confession therefore puts these good people under a cloud of suspicion, and has permanently injured their influence. People suspicion their morals.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Confession—Forgiveness—Consequences of Sin (Verses 13, 14)

The student should read carefully the incidents leading up to this section of our lesson. Notice the sins for which David made confession. After David so grievously sinned, the prophet Nathan came to him, and by a little parable so worded that David did not see that the prophet was seeking to make David pronounce his own condemnation. David's wrath was so stirred against the rich man of the parable that he said, "As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." To which Nathan replied, "Thou art the man." This must have come as a great shock to David, for after all, David was a man of tender feeling. To make David feel more keenly his guilt, Nathan reminded David how

Jehovah had honored and blessed him, and then said, "Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith Jehovah, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." The sense of guilt overwhelmed David. There was not even any promise of forgiveness in what Jehovah said to him through Nathan the prophet. There was no demand that he repent and confess his wrong, and no promise of forgiveness on condition that he would do these things. The matter had been presented to him in such a way that he saw his deep guilt and the justice of Jehovah's condemnation. His sense of guilt impelled him to say, "I have sinned against Jehovah." It is not likely that it so much as entered his mind that he was performing a condition of forgiveness. It was his conscience, not his self-interest, that caused him to confess his sin. It is possible that we so impress upon an erring child of God, that confession of sin and prayer for pardon are conditions of forgiveness, that he goes through the form in a sort of mechanical way. It would be better for him if he could be so impressed with his guilt, that his conscience would give him no rest till he said to the Lord, "I have sinned against thee." Such a sense of guilt would lead him to a genuine repentance, a wholehearted confession, and an earnest prayer for the Lord to forgive his transgressions. Because of David's repentance and confession, Nathan said to him, "Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." David had committed two capital offenses, and had virtually pronounced sentence upon himself; and now to learn that he was not to die for his crimes must have filled him with humility and thanksgiving. But a man may be forgiven of his sins, and yet have to suffer, at least, some of its consequences. We see this truth demonstrated all about us. A man may ruin his body by sin and dissipation, and through obedience obtain forgiveness, he will yet have to suffer the physical consequences of his sins. David was forgiven, but the child would die. It was better for the child that it die in infancy than to face what would have been its lot in life. Nathan said a thing that should weigh heavily on the heart of every child of God, and act as a restraint to keep him back from sin: "... by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme." If a man loves Christ, and wears his name, he will not want to do a thing that will give sinners occasion to blaspheme that name. After asking the Jews a lot of searching questions, Paul said to them, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written." (Rom. 2: 24.) Referring to false teachers, Peter said, "And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2: 2.) It is bad for a professed follower of Christ to conduct himself in such a way as to bring reproach on the cause he professes to love. Instead of being a helper, he is practically an enemy. To all such,

Nathan's question to David is appropriate: "Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight?"

David Relies on God's Loving-Kindness and Tender Mercies (Psalm 51: 1-3)

God is just in that he punishes the guilty; but when a man sincerely repents of his sin, he is no longer at heart guilty. In so far as he is able to do so, he has put sin away; he has cleansed his heart. And here is where God's grace—his loving-kindness and tender mercies—can come to man's rescue without doing violence to God's justice. Justice demands the punishment of the guilty, but the man who repents sincerely has cleared his heart of sin, though the penalty for sin still hangs over him. By the grace of God that penalty is removed; the man is forgiven. Here justice and grace meet together. David did not expect Jehovah to forgive him without his repentance. In fact, it is impossible to forgive one who has not repented. To forgive a person is to consider him as not guilty; this cannot be done so long as the person cherishes the sin in his heart. But David had repented; he had put those grievous sins out of his heart. On that basis he could sincerely pray that God would forgive him; and he could pray in faith, for he had full confidence in the loving-kindness and tender mercies of Jehovah. In early life he had put his trust in Jehovah, and Jehovah had led him safe through many dangers. He had sung the glories of Jehovah, and had gloried in his goodness and mercy, as no one else had done. The parts of our lesson that are taken from Psalm 51 will strike us with greater force if we notice that this Psalm was written by David after Jehovah, through Nathan, had so severely rebuked him. What he says in this Psalm concerning sin and guilt, has special reference to his guilt in the matter of Uriah and Uriah's wife. He had praised the mercy and loving-kindness of Jehovah, but he had now come to the point where he needed this mercy and loving-kindness as never before. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." David made a true confession; he did not try to justify himself in any way. A confession with a defense is no confession; it is merely an effort to implicate someone else in your sin. Make a clean breast of the matter, and let the other fellow do the same, if he so desires. David did not hint that he considered anyone else as in the least to blame for what he had done. "For I know my transgression; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight." David had done both Uriah and his wife a great wrong, but the sin of it was against Jehovah. You may do your fellow man a wrong, but the sin of the act is against God. So any ill feelings that may exist between two people is not just a personal matter between them; the evil that either does to the other becomes a matter between the wrongdoer and God. Hence, in doing another person an injustice or an injury, we do our own souls a greater injury.

David's Prayer for God's Continued Presence (Verses 9-13)

David had gloried so much in God's love toward him and his presence with him, he felt keenly the fact that his sin had separated

between him and God, and that God had hid his face from him. He earnestly desired that God's presence be with him and remain with him. Hence, the prayer of verses 9-12. He wanted God to hide his face from his sin, instead of from him. He realized how impure his heart had been in the sins he had committed, but now he earnestly desired a clean heart and a right spirit. "Cast me not away from thy presence." Nothing else so bad could happen to anyone than to be cast away from the presence of Jehovah and his Spirit. David was in distress of soul; all joy had gone out of his life; he prayed that the joy of salvation be restored to him. And he felt that he could not teach sinners God's way till he had been restored to God's favor. So long as he felt himself to be such a sinner, he felt that he could have no part in converting sinners from their sins. For that reason, and to that end, he prayed for God's presence and the joy of his salvation. Songs of joy had fled from him; so he prayed, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." (Verse 14.)

David Speaks of His Confession and Forgiveness (Psalm 32: 5)

To see how David's sins had been weighing him down read verses 3 and 4: "When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was changed as with the drought of summer." But he had confessed his sin, and God had forgiven him. Joy and gladness were again his; again he could sing God's praises.

SOME REFLECTIONS

No one told David that he had to make his acknowledgments, as people are sometimes now told to do. Nathan told David what a great sin he had committed, made David see his guilt, and then left the matter with David. David's confession was therefore voluntary; it came from a heart that would not rest till confession was made and forgiveness obtained. That is the only confession that is of any worth.

If by any unnecessary word or act you have hurt another's feelings, make full and free confession, and ask forgiveness. Do not try to justify yourself. Self-justification never healed a wound, nor obtained forgiveness from God or man. Such pretended confessions show that there has been no repentance.

It is strange that some otherwise excellent Christians will not make a clean, clear-cut confession under any circumstances. If they attempt to make a confession, they invariably try to justify self; they try to implicate others and blame them for their own sins. Such pretended confessions are little, if any, short of hollow mockery.

A young man told this: "A widow in this town was a regular attendant at worship, and so far as the members knew she was a faithful, godly Christian woman. Under the influence of a 'confess-your-sins' sermon, she came forward, and confessed that she had not been living right. I have been wondering about that woman ever since." Common sense should keep people from making such blanket confessions.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

What constitutes a real confession of sins.

To whom should confessions be made?

When harm may result from confessions.

Has any one a scriptural right to demand a confession?

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Discuss the promiscuous confessing of sins publicly.

Verses 13, 14

Give the parable Nathan told to David.

What did David say in reply?

What then did Nathan say?

Give an outline of all that Nathan said to David.

What did David then say?

What prompted David to confess that he had sinned?

What did Nathan then say to David? What consequences followed?

Show that we may suffer the physical consequences of sins, though forgiven.

How may our sins injure the cause we represent?

Psalm 51: 1-3

When can sins be forgiven?

Discuss this point at some length.

On what basis could David pray for forgiveness?

Discuss the nature of David's confession.

What constitutes a real confession of sins?

What particular sin did David have in mind in this confession and prayer?

Repeat the verses of this section of our lesson.

Against whom had David sinned?

Against whom do we sin when we do another person an injury?

Verses 9-13

For what did David pray in these verses?

What had so stressed David?

What did he wish to do, if forgiven?

Psalm 32: 5

Repeat verses 3 and 4.

Also repeat verse 5.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IX—September 1, 1940

PRAISING GOD FOR HIS BLESSINGS

Psalm 103: 1-5, 10-18

- 1 Bless Jê-hô'vâh, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
- 2 Bless Jê-hô'vâh, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
- 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
- 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowned thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
- 5 Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
- 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
- 13 Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jê-hô'vâh pitieth them that fear him.
- 14 For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust.
- 15 As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
- 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.

- 17 But the lovingkindness of Jê-hô'vâh is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
18 To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his precepts to do them.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (Psalm 103: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 116: 12-19.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

August	26.	M.	God's Bountiful Goodness (Psalm 103: 1-5, 10-18)
August	27.	T.	Blessings Promised (Deut. 28: 1-6)
August	28.	W.	The Blessings of a New Nature (Gen. 32: 22-29)
August	29.	T.	Spiritual Blessings (Eph. 1: 3-14)
August	30.	F.	All Good Things Come from God (James 1: 12-18)
August	31.	S.	Fitting Praise (Psalm 107: 1-9)
September 1.	S.		A Call to Praise (Psalm 150: 1-6)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—According to Hales, David came into prominence about 1075 B.C., and began to reign some years later. Some of his Psalms were written before he became king, but we do not know at what period of his life he wrote Psalm 103.

Place.—Most likely Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, David, and the people generally.

Lesson Links.—In the New Testament there are not found such lengthy outbursts of praises as are found in the Psalms. It is true that God is praised in the New Testament, but not at such lengths, nor in such details. And this is not because the New Testament writers loved and revered God less than did David; for God's greatness, his love, and goodness had been manifested to the New Testament writers in a far greater degree than David had ever known. There was no need that such praises be repeated in the New Testament. David was a poet; and poetry differs, as all know, from prose in style of utterance, as well as in other ways, being usually more sentimental and imaginative. David was a great king, as well as a great poet. These facts would give him a hearing among other peoples and nations. This gave him an opportunity to spread the truth about Jehovah. The nations around about Israel, and perhaps the great majority of the Hebrews, regarded Jehovah as merely the God of the Hebrews. When Jehovah commissioned Moses to go back to Egypt and bring Israel out of bondage, Moses knew that the people, as a whole, had little, or no, idea about Jehovah. He therefore said to God, "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? . . . And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you." (Ex. 3: 13-15.) To identify him as the God of their fathers would make Jehovah seem more real and intimate than if he had said the God who sent him was the God of heaven and earth. David had a higher idea of Jehovah than the untutored Hebrew could possibly have; and certainly he had a much higher idea of Jehovah than did the people of the nations around him,

for they regarded Jehovah as merely the god of the Hebrews who was not always able to take care of his own people. In a broad sense, David was writing for all people. Many of other nations would read what he said. He would therefore portray to them the greatness and the goodness of Jehovah, and lead them, if possible, to see that Jehovah was the supreme being, the only true and living God. The intelligent people of other nations were not ignorant of Hebrew literature, and that knowledge was a help in spreading the gospel.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

"Bless Jehovah, O My Soul" (Verses 1, 2)

How may we bless Jehovah? We determine the meaning of words by their use. In such expressions as David here uses, to bless does not mean, as some think, to confer a benefit; for we cannot confer a benefit on the Lord. To bless Jehovah is to praise him, or to thank him, for his goodness, for his benefits to us. It is well to get this point fixed in our minds. Mistaking the meaning of this word, brethren sometimes ministering at the Lord's table say, "The Lord took bread, and blessed it; as we cannot bless it, we can give thanks for it." But the word "it" is not in the original, nor is it in the American Standard Version—"Jesus took bread, and blessed." That is, he gave thanks, as may be seen by comparing the reports of the different writers. Where Matthew used the word "blessed," Luke and Paul uses the expression, "when he had given thanks." (Luke 22: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 24.) Hence, such passages show that to "bless" is to "give thanks." This helps us to see that from David's soul he was pouring out his thanks to Jehovah for his mercy and goodness. All that was in him cried out in giving thanks to Jehovah for his many benefits. These he must not forget; he must not become indifferent toward Jehovah and his many blessings. And so should we keep in mind God's love and mercy, remembering always, that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1: 17.)

Some Benefits Mentioned in Detail (Verses 3-5)

The words, "all his benefits," in verse two, cover all the good things Jehovah does for his servants. Now David begins to name some of these benefits. His had called on his soul to give thanks to Jehovah, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities." So the soul had iniquities to be forgiven. David was not of the number who think that all the sins they commit are sins of the body, and not of the soul. He knew that he had sinned, and that God had forgiven the iniquities of his soul. It is likely that this Psalm was written after David had sinned so grievously and been forgiven. If we knew it to be so, we could more fully appreciate the warmth with which David called on his soul to bless Jehovah for his forgiveness. When a person has sinned grievously, and knows that he is under condemnation, and deserves it, as did David, no other blessing would be so desirable as forgiveness. If a person sees himself as a condemned sinner, and does not at that time desire forgiveness above all things else, it is to be feared that he has not sincerely repented. A penitent man has put sin out of his heart, and he longs for God to blot that sin out

of his book of remembrance, and erase the condemnation. In forgiving a man's sins, the Lord also redeems him from destruction; for destruction awaits the man whose sins are not forgiven. Under the law of Moses certain sins were to be punished by physical death. The proper authorities could inflict that punishment, but that was as far as they could go. God had to take care of the spirit of the sinful man, and the fate of the rich man as recorded in Luke shows how he did that even under the law of Moses. But the one whom he forgives and redeems from destruction will be crowned, not only here, but hereafter, with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Paul conceives of the crown of life as representing all these future rewards. Said he, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." We strive for earthly goods, and they give us some pleasure, but give no permanent satisfaction. The craving of people for new thrills, for new adventures, for increased prosperity, etc., shows that earthly things cannot satisfy the longing of a never-dying spirit; God never intended that such things should give permanent satisfaction. But he who created the soul and gave it that longing, can give that which satisfies, and that is found in redemption from sin. Even now, in this life, he satisfies, in part, the longings of our souls by settling our doubts and confusions, and by giving us rest from a sense of guilt, and lifting from us the sentence of condemnation. Perhaps David did not have all this in mind, but it is now within the reach of every son and daughter of Adam.

Jehovah's Loving-Kindness to Israel (Verses 10-12)

When we read the history of the children of Israel, we are amazed at their perversity, and God's goodness to them. Jehovah was merciful to them, else they had all been destroyed; so also, were it not for God's mercy, would all other peoples have been destroyed. Sin deserves punishment; yet when Israel turned from their sins, God forgave them. David included Israel with himself, when he said, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins." In the midst of Judah's corruption and her consequent sufferings, Jeremiah said, "It is of Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." (Lam. 3: 22, 23.) And toward those who love and serve him his loving-kindness is beyond our comprehension. "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him." Verse 12 is an expressive way of stating how completely and thoroughly God forgives sins.

Jehovah Pitieth Them That Fear Him (Verses 13, 14)

On Mount Sinai, when Moses went up the second time, Jehovah declared himself to Moses in this way, and in these words: "And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear

the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation." (Ex. 34: 6, 7.) He is not harsh and tyrannical in his dealings with his people, but merciful and gracious; yet he will not clear the guilty. He knows our weakness, as a father knows the weakness of his children; and therefore pities us, as does the father his child in its falls and sufferings. But he does not pity those who defy him and rebel against him. He is full of love and pity toward those who love him, even when they fail to come up to the full measure of their duty; "for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." And we of today have an additional comforting thought: "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." (Heb. 4: 15, 16.) "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2: 1.)

The Brevity and Frailty of Life (Verses 15, 16)

The grass grows luxuriously and the flowers bloom beautifully for a few fleeting days; so are man's days short—he soon passes away. At most, man's earth life is short, and yet how often is life snapped out in childhood and youth. Accidents and sickness take the life of the young as well as the old; even to those who are in robust health life is not secure. Neither wealth nor worldly fame can purchase redemption from the grave. If the religion of Christ does not put the high and the low on a common level, death will. "But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: and the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings." (James 1: 9-11.) We naturally shudder at death; for it for the present is a conquering enemy, from which there is no present escape; but some joyous day that enemy will be destroyed. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Death will be destroyed by the resurrection of all the dead.

Loving-Kindness to the Obedient (Verses 17, 18)

Jehovah's loving-kindness will have no end. He is not changeable—not kind today, and cruel tomorrow. With him there can be no variation. (James 1: 17.) "For I, Jehovah, change not." (Mal. 3: 6.) And this loving-kindness that is from everlasting to everlasting is upon those that fear him—"to such as keep his covenant," to those that remember his precepts to do them. He will by no means clear the guilty; he is true to his word, whether it be a threat or a promise. If a man stand condemned one day, and the next day enjoys the promise of salvation, it is because he, and not Jehovah, has changed. If a man is in a class who enjoys God's favor, and is later condemned, God's word is still true—the man ceased to be of the class to whom the promise of life was made. Read the Bible from beginning to end, and you will not find one word

to give comfort to anyone in sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and yet God pleads with that sinner to turn from his sins, that he may live. If a man thinks it does not make any difference whether he obeys or does not obey, he deceives himself. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. (James 1: 22.) No approved servant of God ever spoke lightly of God's commands, or defended or excused anyone in disobedience; nor will they do so now.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Were it not for the goodness and mercy of God, all would be lost; for all have sinned and come short of righteousness.

We are servants of either God or the devil, and our own voluntary actions determine which. "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6: 16.)

God does not send folks to hell; they go there of their own free will, while all heaven is persuading them not to do so. God, through Christ, prepared the way to heaven, and revealed it by the Holy Spirit, and now exhorts the sinner to walk in it. The next move is his; and if he does not make that move, he alone is to blame. There is no compulsion; every man decrees his own destiny. God does not wish "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3: 9.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How and why we bless God.

How has God manifested his loving-kindness?

What is God's attitude toward sinners?

How we may enjoy his loving-kindness.

The sinner decrees his own destiny.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What ideas did people anciently have about gods?

How was Moses to identify Jehovah to the people of Israel in Egypt?

On this point, what purpose would David's Psalms serve?

Verses 1, 2

Discuss how we may "bless" Jehovah. For what may we give thanks?

Verses 3-5

Why would David be so thankful?

How is a man redeemed from destruction?

What is forgiveness; and what is necessary to forgiveness?

What was the penalty for certain sins under the law of Moses?

Was there any future penalty?

How does Jehovah satisfy the soul?

Verses 10-12

Discuss these verses.

Repeat Lam. 3: 22, 23.

What does David say of the greatness of God's loving-kindness?

Verses 13, 14

Read and discuss Ex. 34: 6, 7.

Why does God pity us?

What advantage do we now have?

Verses 15, 16

Discuss the brevity of life.

Discuss James 1: 9-11.

How did Paul regard death?

Verses 17, 18

What is said of Jehovah's unchangeableness?

How then may a person be under condemnation one day and safe the next day?

If a man is saved, and then condemned, who changes?

How may a man deceive himself?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson X—September 8, 1940

INVITING OTHERS TO WORSHIP GOD

Psalm 96

- 1 Oh sing unto Jê-hô'vâh a new song:
Sing unto Jê-hô'vâh, all the earth.
- 2 Sing unto Jê-hô'vâh, bless his name;
Show forth his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples.
- 4 For great is Jê-hô'vâh, and greatly to be praised:
He is to be feared above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols;
But Jê-hô'vâh made the heavens.
- 6 Honor and majesty are before him:
Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe unto Jê-hô'vâh, ye kindreds of the peoples,
Ascribe unto Jê-hô'vâh glory and strength.
- 8 Ascribe unto Jê-hô'vâh the glory due unto his name:
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- 9 Oh worship Jê-hô'vâh in holy array:
Tremble before him, all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations, Jê-hô'vâh reigneth:
The world also is established that it cannot be moved:
He will judge the peoples with equity.
- 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
- 12 Let the field exult, and all that is therein;
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy
- 13 Before Jê-hô'vâh; for he cometh,
For he cometh to judge the earth:
He will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with his truth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Oh magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together.” (Psalm 34: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 2: 2-4.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

September 2.	M.	Why Worship God? (Psalm 96: 1-13)
September 3.	T.	Invited to Worship (Isa. 2: 1-5)
September 4.	W.	Worship in the Home (Rom. 16: 1-10)
September 5.	T.	God Speaks Through Worship (Acts 10: 1-6)
September 6.	F.	When Worshipers Assemble (Acts 16: 12-18)
September 7.	S.	Won to Worship (John 4: 19-29)
September 8.	S.	The Gladness of Worship (Psalm 122: 1-9)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—The time of the writing of Psalm 96 is unknown.

Place.—Probably Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah and David.

Lesson Links.—To worship is to perform acts of homage or adoration; especially, to perform religious service. There is, therefore, an element of worship in all acceptable service to God. To yield willingly to God's directions is to honor and revere him as supreme, and that is worship. There is, therefore, not that distinction between worship and service that some try to make. Who may worship God acceptably? The very nature of worship makes it impossible for one who cherishes sin and rebellion in his heart, to worship God acceptably. One who wants to have his own way about what he does in worship, cannot worship God acceptably; such

a one is in reality putting himself on an equality with God, or even putting himself above God. He has discarded God's way for his own way. That was the trouble with Cain, and also with Nadab and Abihu. (Gen. 4: 1-8; Lev. 10: 1-5.) There are other examples of such pretended worship, and there is much teaching against such worship. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15: 9.) Such worship does not honor God; it profanes him—puts him on a level with man. But what is acceptable worship? "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4: 23, 24.) To worship God in spirit is to be sincere, to put the heart into the worship. This means reverence, adoration, and love for God and his way. It is a God-centered, instead of a self-centered, worship. There is no flattery in praise, when our heart is in it. Of God's own people David said, "But they flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they faithful in his covenant." (Psalm 78: 36, 37.) They could not be faithful in his covenant so long as their heart was not right with him; their praises were mere flattery—plain lies. The heart that is right before God will strive to worship him according to his will—his truth. Hence, true worship is to worship sincerely and according to his truth. And that is the way Jesus says people must worship God. Worship directed by our own notions, or by the doctrines of men, is will-worship. Concerning these doctrines of men, Paul says, "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Col. 2: 20-23.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

"Declare His Glory Among the Nations" (Verses 1-3)

Some commentators take this Psalm to be a description of conditions that would prevail under the reign of Christ. It is not well to be dogmatic, but it is hard to see how some of the conditions described in this Psalm existed under the law of Moses; we at least can see how many of the things said in this Psalm fit conditions in the present dispensation. This may be seen as we proceed. "Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song." Why a new song? That would hardly mean that they were merely to arrange words in a new composition about the same thing concerning which they had already been singing; people under Christ did sing a new song, for they had something new about which to sing. This new song was to be for all the people of the earth, but the law of Moses was not for all the people of the earth; a song that was adapted to that dispensation was not for all the people of the earth. But sing sometimes means to celebrate something in poetry, or to praise in verse; to express enthusiastically, as to sing one's praise. In singing unto Jehovah, we are to bless his name; that is, give him thanks for his goodness and blessings, to pronounce him blessed. We can do this with a tune or without a tune. The Septuagint version has "evangelize" where we have "show forth" in verse 2—evangelize, announce, his salva-

tion. To evangelize was to announce glad tidings; the command is therefore, to announce the glad tidings of salvation. "Declare his glory among the nations." It was not intended that the law of Moses should be declared among the nations, nor among all peoples; but the gospel of Christ is to be preached among all nations and to all peoples. The Great Commission, given by Christ to his apostles after he arose from the dead, was the first time preaching was commanded to be done to all nations and peoples.

"Great Is Jehovah, and Greatly to Be Praised" (Verses 4-6)

There are many reasons as to why Jehovah should be praised; one of which is his greatness. However there are many ways in which a person can be great, and still more ways in which Jehovah is great; but David did not specify any certain way in which Jehovah is great, and that means that he is great in every point of excellence. He is great in power, and in knowledge, and in wisdom, and in mercy, and in goodness. He is therefore greatly to be praised. "He is to be feared above all gods." The gods of the people were idols which they had fashioned with their own hands. With a tinge of sarcasm Isaiah tells what the heathen man does. With his own hands he plants a tree; he then cuts it down. With some of it he builds a fire to warm by, and with some of it he bakes bread. "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god." (Isa. 44: 12-17.) Does that sound foolish? But it is no more foolish than the superstition about the number thirteen, or that about a horseshoe, or that about a rabbit's foot, etc. It is a marvel that sensible people allow themselves to be influenced by such superstitions; they are merely different forms of idolatry. And an idol, no matter what form it has, can do nothing; but a belief in such things may hinder one's progress. Jehovah is the only one that can help; he is the creator of all things. "But Jehovah made the heavens." Jehovah even made the material out of which idols are made by men. He is therefore not to be compared with idols. "Honor and majesty are before him."

"Worship Jehovah in Holy Array" (Verses 7-9)

If the phrase, "kindreds of the peoples," in verse seven seems obscure, then note this translation by Isaac Leeser: "Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye families of the people, ascribe unto the Lord honor and strength." To ascribe to Jehovah, is to attribute to him the qualities mentioned. We are commanded, or exhorted, to ascribe to Jehovah honor, strength, and the glory due to his name. In our limited knowledge, we may not comprehend all the points in which glory is due the name of Jehovah. We must recognize him as our creator; we must also attribute to him the perfection of character—his power, wisdom, knowledge, and his love for man. For all these things he is entitled to our best service; and so we are required to bring an offering, and come into his courts. We have now been bought with the blood of Christ, and all that we have and are rightfully belong to him. Our whole being is, therefore, the offering that we must bring to him. "Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto

God." (Rom. 6: 13.) All the things required of us are summed up in the exhortation: "Oh worship Jehovah in holy array: tremble before him, all the earth." That is, worship him in godly fear. It will be seen that the commands, or exhortations, of these verses were for the earth, for all people, and not merely for the people of Israel.

"Say Among the Nations, Jehovah Reigneth" (Verse 10)

The language of this verse is not the language of Judaism; no Hebrew ever thought of making the law of Moses a world-wide religion. That religion was a national religion. It was neither designed nor fitted for the whole world. But this speaks of a time when the reign, or kingdom, of Jehovah was to be preached among all nations; and it was to be made known that Jehovah would judge all peoples with equity. Such announcements were never made except under the reign of God through Christ. There came a time when this reign of Jehovah was announced in all the world. Its near approach was announced by John the Baptist: "And in these days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This was not a premature announcement, for John was a prophet of God. Besides, Jesus preached that the time for the coming of this reign of God had been fulfilled, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." (Mark 1: 15.) "When the apostles went and preached the mediatorial kingdom of God, as set up and administered by the Son of his love, to all the nations, what did they but fulfill the command here given. . . . And as far as the doctrine has been cordially received, the moral state of the world has been established on an immovable basis."—*Scott*, on Psalm 96: 10.

An Exhortation to Universal Rejoicing (Verses 11-13)

The publication of the reign of heaven is here represented as bringing such glorious results that even inanimate things are personified and exhorted to rejoice. We would naturally conclude that in the expression, "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice," the inhabitants of these regions are meant; but sea, field, and trees are personified and exhorted to rejoice. But figures of that kind are not unusual in the Old Testament scriptures. "Sing, O ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel." (Isa. 44: 23.) "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (Isa. 55: 12.) And there are many such expressions. Such expressions represent the great joy that would result from the events mentioned; and it is not difficult to see that they are figures of speech, for we know that real mountains and hills do not sing, and that trees do not clap their hands. "For he cometh to judge the earth: he will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth." Some of God's judgments are rendered even in this life. "He that believeth not hath been judged already." (John 3: 18.) The unbeliever has been judged as unworthy of salvation.

"According to their way and according to their doings I judged them." (Ezek. 36: 19.) Concerning what God had done to the Egyptians in delivering Israel from bondage, Stephen said, "And the nation to which they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place." (Acts 7: 7.) They came forth after God judged Egypt. But this does not mean that there will not be a great day of judgment at the last day. "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17: 30, 31.) "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." (Heb. 9: 27.) When the judge sits on his judgment throne, all nations, all peoples, will be gathered before him. (Matt. 25: 31-46.)

SOME REFLECTIONS

"Salvation was a glorious work, full of wonders. And this was to be evangelized, as before to the Jews by the prophets, so now to all people by the apostles."—Clark.

In his "Practical Observations" on this Psalm, Scott says, "When our Immanuel had finished his work on earth, and was received to his glory in heaven, the church began to 'sing a new song' unto him, and to bless his name: and his apostles and evangelists lost no time, but 'having received the promise of the Father' in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, they immediately proclaimed the glad tidings of his salvation; so that 'daily in the temple, and from house to house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ'; and in 'a short time they began to declare his glory among the heathen, and his wonders among all people.' His honor and majesty, his strength and excellency, were at that eventful period so displayed in his doctrine and by his miracles, that vast multitudes renounced their idols, to worship Jehovah in 'the beauty of holiness,' as 'God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself'; to 'render unto him the honor due unto his name'; to bring their spiritual sacrifices, and to come into his courts."

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How to worship God today.

What about present-day superstitions?

"His marvelous works among all the peoples."

The kingdom of God on earth.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
What is it to worship?
Who may worship God acceptably?
What was wrong with the worship of Cain, Nadab, and Abihu?
What is acceptable worship?

What is it to worship in spirit?
Discuss Psalm 78: 36, 37.
What is it to worship in truth?
Give some references on this point.

Verses 1-3

What does this Psalm seem to describe?
Who would sing a new song?

What was to be declared among the nations?
Was the law of Moses preached to all nations?

Verses 4-6

Why is Jehovah to be greatly praised?
Give Isaiah's sarcastic description of the making of heathen gods.
What is the difference between trusting in a heathen's "god of luck," and trusting in a horseshoe or rabbit's foot, as an emblem of good luck?

Verses 7-9

Discuss verses 7-9.

Verse 10

Why could not this verse refer to the preaching of the law of Moses?
Show when the reign of God was preached among the nations.
When did this preaching of the reign of God begin to be preached to the nations?

Verses 11-13

What figure of speech is here used?
Why such a figure of speech?
Show a similar use in other places.
Show that some of God's judgments are enforced in this life.
What is said of the day of judgment?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XI—September 15, 1940

THE EVER-PRESENT GOD

Psalm 139: 1-12, 23, 24

- 1 O Jê-hô'vâh, thou hast searched me, and known me.
- 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising;
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
- 3 Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 For there is not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O Jê-hô'vâh, thou knowest it altogether.
- 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thy hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.
- 7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
- 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Shê'ôl, behold, thou art there.
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
- 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
- 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night;
- 12 Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
- 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts;
- 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 2: 24-28.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

September 9.	M.	.....	The Ever-Present God (Psalm 139: 1-12, 23, 24)
September 10.	T.	.....	God in Heaven (Eccles. 5: 1-7)
September 11.	W.	.....	God on the Sea (Acts 27: 18-26)
September 12.	T.	.....	Present in Temptation (Matt. 4: 1-11)
September 13.	F.	.....	Present to Help (Isa. 41: 8-13)
September 14.	S.	.....	The Light of His Presence (John 1: 1-9)
September 15.	S.	.....	Forever with God (Psalm 61: 1-8)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Unknown.

Place.—Probably Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah and David. Some commentators do not think David wrote this Psalm.

Lesson Links.—As Jehovah is infinite in person and in attributes, it is impossible for a finite mind to comprehend him. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things." (Rom. 11: 33-36.) Yet we can learn some things about him, though our knowledge about him be not full and complete at any point. We think of Jehovah as a person, yet the word "person" is rather a weak word to apply to so exalted a being. And as a person he cannot be conceived of as being everywhere present in person at the same time. If we try to speculate, we become lost in our speculations, and find no solid footing. To accept what the Bible says about him as true, and to order our lives according to his will, is sufficient.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jehovah Knows the Ways and Thoughts of Man (Verses 1-4)

Jehovah created man, and therefore knows him. He would know him fully, had man been created by some other power. He knows man after man has corrupted himself. He knows every man's deeds, even in the smallest matters. "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising." Inasmuch as he knows these insignificant actions, he certainly knows all our other deeds and actions. The next expression is singular: "Thou understandest my thought afar off." Perhaps that means that he knows our thoughts before they are matured—knows them while circumstances and conditions are shaping up that which causes us to entertain such thoughts. Knowing us, and knowing the circumstances and conditions that are shaping up around us, he knows what our thoughts will be. We can keep no thoughts hidden from him. God knows our actions, our words, and our thoughts. By deeds and words we put into actions the thoughts, the meditations, of our hearts. Hence David prayed, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my rock and my redeemer." (Psalm 19: 14.) "Thou searchest out my path." Jehovah knows where we walk; he knows whether we walk in the paths of righteousness or in sin. "Doth not he see my ways, and number all my steps?" (Job 31: 4.) And he knows the sort of place where we choose to take our rest; he is acquainted with all our ways. "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether." As he knows our thoughts before they take definite form, so does he know our words before we frame them.

"Such Knowledge Is Too Wonderful for Me" (Verses 5, 6)

"Thou hast beset me behind and before." Leeser translates it thus: "Behind and before thou has hedged me in." He knew what

was in the past, and what was yet to come. He was thus hedged in by the knowledge of Jehovah; and what was true of David is true of all of us. "And laid thy hand upon me." His hand is upon us for blessings when we do well, and for punishment when we do evil. And his thorough knowledge of our thoughts, words, and deeds enables him to dispense justice unerringly. No wonder David felt that such knowledge was too wonderful for him, so high that he could not attain to it. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) The extent of God's knowledge is beyond our comprehension.

We Cannot Get Away from God's Presence (Verses 7-10)

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Through Jeremiah Jehovah said, "Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? saith Jehovah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah." (Jer. 23: 24.) And here again we find truths about Jehovah that are too wonderful for us to comprehend. But this we know: We cannot get away from him. We read of one man who tried that very thing. God said to Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah." (Jonah 1: 1-3.) Jonah found that he could not flee from Jehovah. We must think of Jehovah as a person, though the word "person" is rather a weak word to apply to him. He is a being, the supreme being. As he is a being, a person, we cannot think of him otherwise than having an abiding place, a place where he dwells; and we think of that place as heaven, for so the Bible teaches. In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, he repeated three times this petition: "Yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place." (1 Kings 8: 30, 39, 40.) Not less than seven times Jesus used these words: "Your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5: 16, 45; 6: 1; 7: 11; 18: 14; 23: 9; Mark 11: 25.) About the same number of times he referred to God as "My Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7: 21; 10: 32, 33; 12: 50; 16: 17; 18: 10, 19.) And Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven." If he is present in person on earth or in Sheol the same as he is in heaven, why say, "Our Father who art in heaven"? And why should Jesus, when he was about to leave the earth, say to the Father, "But now I come to thee"? On the morning of his resurrection Jesus said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." (John 20: 17.) We think of him therefore as abiding in heaven. But we can think of him as being everywhere present in knowledge and power; and that must have been the point David was presenting, for he had just been describing God's knowledge of all things. He apparently was continuing the same idea; for what he says in verses 7-11 grows out of what he had said in verses 1-6. As Jehovah's knowledge comprehends all things, reaching to the remotest bounds of time and space, it is impossible for anyone to flee from him; that seems to be David's point. Instead of thinking

of Jehovah as being present in person in every place, we can think of his knowledge as making everything present to him. As all time is the present with him, so the remotest corners of space is as if it were in his presence. With him there are no far-off places. Hence, whether David ascended into heaven, or made his bed in Sheol, he was in the presence of Jehovah. For "Sheol" of verse 8, the Common Version has "hell"; in some other places "grave" or "pit" is used. The English Revision made little, or no, improvement in the translation of this word. The translators of the American Standard Version have this to say in their preface: "The uniform substitution of 'sheol' for 'the grave,' 'the pit,' and 'hell,' in places, where these terms have been retained by the English Revision, has little need of justification. The English revisers use 'Sheol' twenty-nine times out of the sixty-four in which it occurs in the original. No good reason has been given for such a discrimination. If the new term can be fitly used at all, it is clear that it ought to be used uniformly." The word "Sheol" of the Old Testament, and "Hades" of the New Testament, have the same meaning; for in quoting a passage from the Old Testament in which "Sheol" is found, Peter used the word "Hades." (Acts 2: 25-28.) It is the place of departed spirits—the intermediate state. But this does not mean that the word might not sometimes be used in a figurative sense, as when Jonah referred to the fish's belly as "Sheol." (Jonah 2: 2.) In verse 9 David uses a beautiful figure of speech in expressing the wide sweep of his imagination. In the uttermost part of the sea Jehovah's hand would lead him and uphold him. If a person rebels against Jehovah, and tries to get away from him, he cannot do so. If he is obedient to Jehovah, Jehovah will lead and sustain him wherever he may be. No place is distant from Jehovah.

There Is No Darkness to Jehovah (Verses 11, 12)

"The darkness and the light are alike to thee." Expressions like these in verses 11 and 12 bear on their face the imprint of inspiration; for darkness is so real to human beings that men of those times could not have, of themselves, conceived such ideas as these verses express. As men cannot see in the darkness, how could they conceive of the idea that darkness and light are alike to anyone? "Even the darkness hideth not from thee." "Darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge, are things that stand in relation to us; God sees equally in darkness as in light; and knows as perfectly, however man is enveloped in ignorance, as if all were intellectual brightness. What to us is hidden by darkness, or unknown through ignorance, is perfectly seen and known by God; because he is all sight, all hearing, all feeling, all soul, all spirit—all in all, and infinity in himself. He lends to everything; receives nothing from anything. Though his essence be unimpartible, yet his influence is diffusible through time and through eternity . . . yet, in the infinity of his essence, neither angel, nor spirit, nor man can see him; nor can any creature comprehend him, or form any idea of the mode of his existence. And vain man would be wise, and ascertain his foreknowledge, eternal purposes, infinite decrees, with all operations of infinite love and infinite hatred, and their objects specifically and nominally, from all eternity, as if himself had possessed a being and powers coextensive with Deity. O ye wise fools! Jehovah,

the fountain of eternal perfection and love, is as unlike your creeds, as he is unlike yourselves."—*Adam Clark.*

"Search Me, O God, . . . Try Me" (Verses 23, 24)

If a person had perfect knowledge, he would be able to know all his faults; but our knowledge is so limited that many of our faults are never discovered. Even some things that we think are right are later seen to be wrong; but God, the heart searcher, knows. "I, Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." (Jer. 17: 10.) God knows the hearts of all men. (Acts 1: 24.) We cannot hide our thoughts from Jehovah any more than we can hide ourselves from him. But David showed his willingness, even his desire, that God search him and know his thoughts. If there were any wickedness about him which he had not discovered, he wanted it brought to the light; only in that way might he get rid of it. "And lead me in the way everlasting." Man's ways are many, and changeable. God's way is the everlasting way, and that is the way of obedience to his will. God's commands—his laws—have changed; but under every dispensation the everlasting way has been the way of obedience. That principle has not changed. And in the great day of accounts every man will be judged by the law under which he lived. These different laws are the books out of which the people are to be judged. (Rev. 20: 11-15.) Even the principle of judgment will be the same to all—the dead are to be "judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works."

SOME REFLECTIONS

We cannot fully know God, nor his ways of doing things. His wisdom is beyond our comprehension. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11: 33, 34.)

"Men are most tempted to sin, either when, being from home, they are no longer under restraint from those of their neighbors or relations, whose censure they dread; or when in secret, as when in the bedchamber, they have no apprehension of being detected by any human eye; but the Psalmist recollected, that God saw him, and was present with him, in every situation."—*Scott.*

"It is far more profitable to meditate on divine truths, with application to our own cases, and with hearts lifted up to God in prayer, than with a speculative, curious, and disputing frame of mind. The omniscience and omnipresence of God are generally acknowledged: yet they seldom produce their practical effect upon the hearts and conduct of mankind, because they are not apprehended by a true and realizing faith. Hence great numbers allow that their judge is witness to their whole conduct; and yet they are careful to save appearances with their fellow criminals, while they transgress in secret, and amuse their depraved imaginations with every kind of speculative wickedness! Nay, even true believers, through weakness of faith, are often very wavering in obedience, and easily discouraged from it, by the trivial circum-

stances of time, place, company, or solitude. We should therefore, by meditation and prayer, seek to have our minds suitably affected with the firm belief, and habitual recollection, that the just, the holy, the almighty God fully searches us out, and knows us, however our fellow creatures may mistake or misrepresent our characters."—Scott.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Jehovah is a person, a being, not a principle.

In what sense can we think of him as present in every place?

Discuss Rom. 11: 33-36.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Repeat Rom. 11: 33-36.

How must we think of Jehovah?

Verses 1-4

What does David say as to God's knowledge of him?

What is meant by knowing his thoughts afar off?

Verses 5, 6

What does verse 5 mean?

Discuss verse 6.

Repeat Isa. 55: 8, 9.

Verses 7-10

Repeat verse 7, also Jer. 23: 24.

Who sought to flee from Jehovah, and with what results?

Where does Jehovah abide? Quote proof.

In what sense can he be everywhere? What is Sheol?

Verses 11, 12

Discuss verses 11 and 12.

Verses 23, 24

Why can we not know all our faults?

Discuss Jer. 17: 10.

What is the "way everlasting"?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XII—September 22, 1940

THE VOICE OF WISDOM

Prov. 4: 10-27

- 10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;
- 11 And the years of thy life shall be many.
- 12 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom;
- 13 I have led thee in paths of uprightness.
- 14 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened;
- 15 And if thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
- 16 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not slip:
- 17 Keep her; for she is thy life.
- 18 Enter not into the path of the wicked,
- 19 And walk not in the way of evil men.
- 20 Avoid it, pass not by it;
- 21 Turn from it, and pass on.
- 22 For they sleep not, except they do evil;
- 23 And their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.
- 24 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
- 25 And drink the wine of violence.
- 26 But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light,
- 27 That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
- 28 The way of the wicked is as darkness;
- 29 They know not at what they stumble.
- 30 My son, attend to my words;
- 31 Incline thine ear unto my sayings.
- 32 Let them not depart from thine eyes;
- 33 Keep them in the midst of thy heart.
- 34 For they are life unto those that find them,
- 35 And health to all their flesh.

- 23 Keep thy heart with all diligence;
For out of it are the issues of life.
24 Put away from thee a wayward mouth,
And perverse lips put far from thee.
25 Let thine eyes look right on,
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
26 Make level the path of thy feet,
And let all thy ways be established.
27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:
Remove thy foot from evil.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 15.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

September 16.	M.	.....	Wisdom, the Principal Thing (Prov. 4: 1-9)
September 17.	T.	.....	Choosing the Right Way (Prov. 4: 10-19)
September 18.	W.	.....	Keeping the Heart Pure (Prov. 4: 20-27)
September 19.	T.	.....	A Wise Choice (1 Kings 3: 5-14)
September 20.	F.	.....	Wisdom and Understanding (Job 28: 20-28)
September 21.	S.	.....	Wisdom from Above (James 3: 13-18)
September 22.	S.	.....	Wisdom for the Asking (James 1: 2-11)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Between 1030 and 990 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Solomon and his son.

Lesson Links.—A proverb is defined to be “an old and common saying; a maxim; saw; adage.” There is no other such collection of proverbs as that which Solomon left on record. Whether he is the author of every one of these proverbs, or whether he gathered true proverbs from other peoples and nations, is immaterial; for in either case they bear the stamp of his approval; or, what is more, the stamp of divine approval. But the fact that the book is called “The Proverbs,” or, “The Proverbs of Solomon,” does not necessarily imply that every statement in the book is a proverb. In fact, from the heading of that part which begins with chapter ten, it seems that Solomon meant that as the real beginning of his proverbs. It has been said that the first nine chapters “form a connected didactic poem, in which wisdom is praised, and the youth exhorted to devote himself to her.” Chapter 1: 1-6 gives the title, and in a general way, the purpose of the book: “To know wisdom and instruction; to discern the words of understanding; to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness and justice and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion: that the wise man may hear, and increase in learning; and that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels: to understand a proverb, and a figure, the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.” (Verses 2-6.) Verses 7-19 is an exhortation to fear Jehovah and to listen to the instructions of father and mother instead of the enticements of sinners. But the student should read carefully all that part of the book that comes before our lesson. Among the many other things that Solomon did, “he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fishes.” Hence,

among Solomon's many accomplishments, he was a great naturalist, or biologist. But his work in this line has not been preserved, excepting the few references to such matters found in "The Proverbs." Sometimes the words "wisdom" and "knowledge" may be used as synonyms, but in general use they differ in meaning. "Knowledge" is information, acquaintance with facts and truths; "wisdom" is the capacity of judging soundly, and skill in the use of whatever means we have at hand in accomplishing our purposes. Knowledge gives us the what; wisdom, the how. A person may have much knowledge, and little, or no, wisdom. Knowledge comes by study, experience, and observation. "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1: 5.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Father's Counsel (Verses 10, 11)

Neither father nor mother knows in all cases what is best; but if they do not know more of life, and have more wisdom than growing children, they have made poor preparation for their exalted position. However any father or mother has learned some things that the child does not know, and has gained some wisdom that the child does not have. The idea that no special effort should be made to restrain and guide the child, but that it should be allowed self-expression, and that without hindrance, is as vicious as it is foolish. Why not apply that theory in allowing the child to run out in the street in the midst of fast-moving traffic? Solomon had no such foolish and hurtful ideas. "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings." The father would have the son to avoid unnecessary physical danger and dissipation. "And the years of thy life shall be many." Good advice, if followed, tends to prolong life, and also to make life more worth living. "Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live." (Verse 4.) "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom." Nothing is better than wisdom. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver, and the profit thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her. Length of days are in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her." (Prov. 3: 13-18.)

A Father's Assurance (Verses 12, 13)

"Thy steps shall not be straitened." You will not be left in a narrow sphere—you will not be cramped. Your borders will be enlarged—your fields of usefulness will be extended. That results from exercising wisdom and honesty in all that you do. If one sticks to these principles, he will not fall. Hidden away in a long list of genealogies is this fine classic: "And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my border, and that thy hand might be with me, and that thou

wouldst keep me from evil, that it be not to my sorrow! And God granted him that which he requested." (1 Chron. 4: 9, 10.) That is a short prayer, but it contains more than many long prayers; it contains all that the heart of a righteous man could desire. Jabez did not want his steps straitened; he wanted his borders enlarged. And so should every Christian pray, for every Christian should want a wider field of usefulness. "Take fast hold of instruction." A man who has no instruction is bound to live a restricted life. This does not mean that he must attend college; many people who have never attended college have a wide field of information. This is said, not to discourage attending college, but to encourage those who cannot attend college. Many people excuse themselves for not gaining useful knowledge on the grounds that they had no school advantages. That is not a valid excuse, for people can study at home.

A Warning Against Wicked Associates (Verses 14-17)

Because some men and women have a lot of glamour, and for one reason or another possess fame, the young are likely to make them their ideals. Too often wicked characters are portrayed on the screen in such a way as to excite the imagination and admiration of boys and girls. A shady life is made attractive, and that is hurtful. And all about us are men and women, more or less attractive, whose influence is frequently worldly, if no worse. It was so in Solomon's day. There would be no danger that son or daughter would enter the way of the wicked, or the path of evil men, if there was nothing alluring in such a life. Whether they do it intentionally or not, sinners deceive the unsuspecting; for there is deceit about sin. (2 Thess. 2: 10.) The only safe course for any one is to "avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass on." What Solomon meant by the wicked and the evil men is seen by reading verses 16 and 17: "For they sleep not, except they do evil; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence." They are not merely sinners, but criminals. But a criminal life usually has its beginning in smaller offenses. A person of good morals does not suddenly become a vicious criminal; criminals are not made that way.

The Ways of the Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted (Verses 18, 19)

When a person first begins to see the way of righteousness, he does not see its full light and glory; it then "is as the dawning light." The more he learns, the more the light of truth shines in his heart, till he reaches the point where the dawning light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Solomon here gives us a beautiful and striking figure of speech, and its beauty increases as you ponder its significance. On the other hand, the way of the wicked is darkness; there is no growing light for him, but his way grows darker and darker till he knows not at what he stumbles. He blames others for his mishaps, and even becomes embittered toward the law and all good people. Thus it was with rebellious Israel: "Therefore is justice far from us, neither doth righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but, behold, darkness; for brightness, but we walk in

obscurity. We grope for the wall like the blind; yea, we grope as they that have no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the twilight." (Isa. 59: 9, 10.) This expresses the complaint of the wicked. Hence Jesus said, "Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." (John 12: 35.) Darkness comes to those who do not use the light they have.

"Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence" (Verses 20-24)

"Incline thine ear." People hear what they want to hear, and they can build up a resistance against certain sounds. You cultivate yourself not to hear the ticking of the clock, and so with other sounds. By training, people can come to hear what others do not hear. Cultivate your ear to hear the word of God; and when the word of God is heard, keep it in your heart; "for out of it are the issues of life." A man lives out in his life what he has in his heart, whether it be good or bad. "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornication, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7: 21, 22.) If the heart is clean, if it is full of God's thoughts, it will lead to a clean life, to a life devoted to the service of God. A person makes slow progress in trying to control his tongue so long as there is evil and corruption in his heart. Drive evil out of the heart by filling it with the word of God, and then the heart will not give utterance to filthy speech. A pure fountain cannot send forth that which is bitter. If the heart is right, both speech and conduct will be right. Fill your heart so full of the word of God that it becomes the controlling force in your life. This is the secret of the easy way to speak and to live as you should; but you will fail, no matter how many good resolutions you make, unless you let the word of God dwell in you richly.

Have a Definite Aim in Life (Verses 25-27)

"Let thine eyes look right on." Set before you a goal, and strive for it. There is satisfaction in accomplishing a worthy purpose. There is only one good thing that is worthy of all our energies. Be able with Paul to say, "This one thing I do." With that one purpose in Paul's heart, it was easier for him to forget every hindering cause. To him the things he gave up to reach his goal were but refuse. There is great expulsive power in an ideal. To have our hearts fully set on reaching a goal, or attaining an ideal, makes it easy to sacrifice anything that hinders. Other things seem less attractive. "Let all thy ways be established"—form habits of usefulness. If you do not keep your heart fully set on the goal, a lot of attractions along the way will keep turning you aside, till you lose sight of your aim. "Remove thy foot from evil"—keep your feet in the even path of righteousness. Only by walking in the light of God's word may we find security.

SOME REFLECTIONS

No one can do any worth-while thing as it should be done, unless he knows how. Living right is a fine art, and requires careful thought and diligent application. To live carelessly is to fail.

One of the finest things in the world is a teachable spirit with the ability to distinguish the true from the false. But do not boast of having an open mind. Close your mind against the things that are hurtful. Some of these open minds are like an open road; they are ready for any sort of traffic that comes along, and on them nothing permanent grows.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the teachable spirit.

Contrasting the way of the righteous with the way of the wicked.

How to control our speech.

The expulsive power of an ideal.

The difference between wisdom and knowledge.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

What is a proverb?

What part of "the Proverbs" appears not to be proverbs?

What was the purpose of the book? Give some of Solomon's accomplishments.

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?

Verses 10, 11

Why should children listen to the advice of parents?

What is your idea of the theory of self-expression?

Why does following good advice prolong life?

What does Solomon say of wisdom?

Verses 12, 13

Give the meaning of the statement, "Thy steps shall not be straitened."

Tell about Jabez and his prayer. Discuss the expression, "Take fast hold of knowledge."

Verses 14-17

Repeat the admonitions of these verses.

What kinds of people are liable to lead the young astray?

What is the safe course to follow?

What does Solomon say of the wicked and evil people?

How are criminals developed?

Verses 18, 19

When is the way of righteousness as dawning light?

How may the light be increased?

What of the way of the wicked?

Discuss Isa. 59: 9, 10; also John 12: 35.

Verses 20-24

What is meant by the admonition, "Incline thine ear"?

Give some illustrations as to how people can train their ear to hear or not to hear.

Why keep the heart with all diligence?

What does the Lord say comes from the heart?

How then can we control our speech and our conduct?

Verses 25-27

What is the advantage of having a worthy purpose in life?

What was Paul's one purpose?

How may we find security?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XIII—September 29, 1940

THE USE AND ABUSE OF WEALTH

Prov. 11: 24-31; Luke 16: 11-13

24 There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more;
And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat;
And he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

26 He that withholdeth grain, the people shall curse him;
But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

- 27 He that diligently seeketh good seeketh favor;
 But he that searcheth after evil, it shall come unto him.
 28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall;
 But the righteous shall flourish as the green leaf.
 29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind;
 And the foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart.
 30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life;
 And he that is wise winneth souls.
 31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth;
 How much more the wicked and the sinner!

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."*
 (Matt 6: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 6: 17-19.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

September 23.	M.	The Wise Use of Wealth (Prov. 11: 24-31)
September 24.	T.	Riches Ignobly Obtained (Jer. 17: 9-11)
September 25.	W.	The Folly of Covetousness (Luke 12: 13-21)
September 26.	T.	Counsel to the Rich (1 Tim. 6: 17-19)
September 27.	F.	God's Judgment upon an Opulent City (Rev. 18: 15-20)
September 28.	S.	True Riches (Luke 16: 9-13)
September 29.	S.	The Folly of Trusting in Riches (Psalm 49: 1-12)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—For Proverbs, between 1030 and 990 B.C.; for Luke, A.D. 29 or 30.

Places.—Jerusalem and Perea.

Persons.—Solomon and his son, Jesus and his disciples. Some Pharisees were present also when Jesus made the speech recorded in Luke 16: 1-14.

Lesson Links.—In studying this lesson let us not conclude that it has to do only with the rich. Our wealth is what we possess, whether much or little. Some people have nothing, and no prospects of ever having anything. There are the very rich and the very poor; between these extremes in various grades are all the rest of the people. All are under obligation to do all the good we can with our means, whether our income be large or small. Of course some of our means should go to the preaching of the gospel. Every Christian recognizes this obligation, though he may not give to that cause as much as he should give. But aside from this essential work, there are the poor and the helpless who need our assistance. To use all we have on ourselves is evidently a misuse of our means. Some people misuse their means in spending it on their families in a way that is not only a waste, but is very hurtful to their children. It is easier to give them money, and let them go their way, than to deny them, and see that they find some honorable work to gain their own spending money. In this abuse of wealth, they also abuse their children. To use our wealth to help the poor in a way that will be helpful, instead of hurtful, requires careful thinking and skill. Some are not dependents by choice; but have been made so by

conditions or circumstances that they could not control. They still have their self-respect; they feel keenly their condition. Only acute suffering makes them accept charity. How to help these without hurting their feelings or destroying their self-respect, is a problem. The person who looks upon such a one as a nobody, is not fit to try to help such people. Also there are those who will not work so long as people feed and clothe them. To give money or help of any sort in such way as to encourage people to be idle, is certainly a grave abuse of wealth. It would be better to hire them to do something that you would otherwise do yourself; it might bring them back to self-respect. Perhaps the worst abuse anyone can make of wealth is to spend it in dissipation—spend it in destroying both soul and body. And yet the amount of money spent in dissipation and carousing is great—no one knows how much. And those who do such things forget that a man must reap what he sows.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Wise Spending—Unwise Withholding (Verses 24, 25)

These verses seem to be directed to the businessman; at least, they fit the businessman. There must be a wise outlay of money, if he prospers in his business. The farmer must scatter his seed, if he expects to increase it. Withholding his seed makes gain impossible. If the businessman puts out no money, he will take in none. If there is no outlay, there is no income. The truth holds good in moral and spiritual affairs; the law is wider in application than it appears at first to be. A man gains knowledge by giving out what he knows. He gains spiritual growth by the proper expenditure of his time, means, and energy. But Paul shows that liberality in material things is also rewarded by material blessings: "But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." (2 Cor. 9: 6, 10.) This agrees with verse 25 of our lesson: "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." But there is a vast difference between liberality and wastefulness. Wastefulness is wrong, and the more we waste, the less we have to give to worthy causes. The charge against the unrighteous steward was that he wasted his lord's means; and for that he was dismissed. (Luke 16.) True liberality is to give wisely according to one's ability. To give where it does no good, and probably harm, is one of the abuses of wealth. A sympathetic person sometimes wastes his means by signing notes for people who make no effort to pay, nor did they intend to pay; by signing notes for such people, he encourages fraud. "A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his neighbor." (Prov. 17: 18.) "But he that hath pity on the poor, happy is he." (Prov. 14: 21.) "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Jehovah, and his good deed will he pay him again." (Prov. 19: 17.) "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that

they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (1 Tim. 6: 17-19.)

On Making Friends and Prospering (Verses 26, 27)

It happens sometimes that some man makes a fairly good crop of grain when his neighbors make little or none. He could sell some of his grain, but refuses to do so, fearing that his supply might fail before another harvest. "He that withholdeth grain, the people shall curse him." He is not concerned about his neighbors' needs, and loses friends. "But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it." It is not here a matter of giving, but of being neighborly enough to deny self to sell grain to the neighbor who has none. He would manifest the spirit of the good neighbor, and also make friends, should he say, "Here is the grain you need; pay it back, if you make more than you need." To seek good—to strive to do good—is to gain the favor of God and also of good people. The man is rich indeed, who has the favor of God and of his good neighbors. He will find the truth of this demonstrated in times of trouble. But if a man searches for evil, he does not have to go far to find it; neither does he have to search diligently. Evil is of two kinds—physical and moral. Physical evils are the calamities—sickness, disease, and injuries—that come upon us. We really seek them when we follow a course that leads to them, and they will certainly come upon us. Witness some drivers of automobiles.

The Folly of Trusting Riches (Verses 28, 29)

To trust in riches is to trust in an uncertain thing. Riches can easily forsake us while we live, and will certainly forsake us when we die. "Wise men die; the fool and the brutish alike perish, and leave their wealth to others." (Psalm 49: 10.) Solomon gained so much wealth, that he "made silver and gold to be in Jerusalem as stones." (2 Chron. 1: 15.) But when he was old he said, "And I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he will be a wise man or a fool? yet will he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity." (Eccles. 2: 18, 19.) Why then strive to be rich? The effort is dangerous. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6: 10.) Jesus said, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10: 24.) Hence—"He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as the green leaf. He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind; and the foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart." If a man is foolish, and unable to manage his own affairs, he is fortunate in being able to work for the wise. It is the only honest way he can make a living. The world today is overrun with that sort of people, and there seems to be no help for that condition.

The Wicked and the Righteous Shall Be Recompensed (Verses 30, 31)

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." Did Solomon mean that the reward of the righteous would be the right to eat of the fruit of the tree of life? or did he mean the results of the generosity of the righteous would be life to the poor? No matter; the statement is true either way. The righteous will have a right to the tree of life. (Rev. 22: 14.) And the righteous, by his good deeds, is as a tree of life to those whose lives he sustains. And the righteous is as a tree of life in that he, by his good deeds, wins people from sin and death. Hence, "He that is wise winneth souls." And it requires some wisdom to do much at saving souls. But this is the main business of the individual Christian, and of the church as a whole. The righteous and the wicked shall be recompensed in the earth; they shall also be recompensed in the world to come. We need not worry ourselves as to what extent they are both recompensed here. What we do not understand we can accept by faith. The New Testament teaches abundantly as to the recompense in the world to come. "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6: 23.) God "will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. 2: 6-11.)

The Unrighteous Steward (Luke 16: 11, 12)

These verses are a conclusion from what had been said, as is shown by the word therefore. Read verses 1-10. The unrighteous steward had wasted his lord's means. When told that he would be dismissed, he began to use some more of his lord's means for his own advantage. His lord commended him for his wisdom, not for his rascality. His rascality lost him his position. But he showed wisdom in using the means at hand for his future good. We are God's stewards; he has merely put us in charge of some of his property. If we waste his means, we are unfaithful stewards of God. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." Property is called the mammon of unrighteousness, because it leads to so much unrighteousness. By the proper use of it we may make friends, who, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will receive us into the eternal tabernacles. Matt. 25: 31-40 shows this matter clearly; read it. We make these friends by helping those who are in need. If we have not been faithful in the use of the material things which God has intrusted to us, we cannot reasonably expect to be given the true riches of heaven. These riches in heaven will not be loaned to us temporarily, as are the material things here. We shall heir them; they will be ours. But that depends on what we do here. The form of the question Jesus asked shows plainly that the riches of heaven will not be given to us unless we make proper use of what we now

have in our care. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6: 38.)

Cannot Serve Two Masters (Verse 13)

Wealth is all right so long as it is a servant; but when it becomes master, and we its slave, our service to God ceases. We cannot serve mammon and God, for we cannot serve two masters. We must love God more than earthly goods, else we become the slaves of wealth, whether we have much or little. A man may make the gaining of wealth his master, even though he is poor. The matter is not determined by the amount we possess, but by our attitude toward the gaining or the hoarding of wealth. The man who desires to be rich is likely in more danger than the one who is rich. If we order our lives according to the word of God we will not go wrong.

SOME REFLECTIONS

A man meets you on the street, and says, "Mister, give me a quarter to buy something to eat." You hand him a quarter; that is wrong, for he may be collecting money with which to buy liquor. Take him to a restaurant, pay for something to eat, and see that he eats it.

Promiscuous giving, even to the needy, has started some people to begging. Some beggars have become wealthy, and kept on begging. Others have become filthy bums. Giving, if not wisely done, may ruin the one you are trying to help. Give freely, but give wisely.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Solomon's wealth, and how obtained.

What he said about his experiments. (See Eccles. 2: 1-20.)

The unfaithful steward.

Wealth as a master, or as a servant.

QUESTIONS

Where is our lesson found?

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.

What is our obligation with respect to our possessions?

Name some good uses of wealth.

Name some ways in which wealth is abused.

Discuss the way in which we should help the poor and needy.

What do you consider the worst abuse people can make of wealth?

Verses 24, 25

What is wise spending?

What blessings come of wise spending?

Discuss 1 Tim. 6: 17-19.

Verses 26, 27

What is said of the one who withholds grain?

Name some ways in which a person can be rich.

Verses 28, 29

Why is it folly to trust in riches?

What of Solomon's wealth, and what did he say about it?

Discuss 1 Tim. 6: 10.

Verses 30, 31

Discuss the first clause of verse 30.

Give proof that both the righteous and the sinner shall be recompensed here and hereafter.

Luke 16: 11, 12

Repeat and discuss the parable of the unrighteous steward.

Why is property called the mammon of unrighteousness?

How make friends that will receive us into the eternal tabernacles?

Discuss verses 11 and 12.

How can the owner make his wealth a blessing to himself as well as to others?

Why can we not serve God and mammon?

Discuss the reflections.

FOURTH QUARTER

THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL: STUDIES IN LUKE

(First Half of a Six Months' Course)

AIM: To discover through the Gospel of Luke the warm human sympathy of Jesus and his regard for the earthly welfare and the eternal salvation of men, and to cultivate similar attitudes.

Lesson I—October 6, 1940

LUKE AND HIS GOSPEL

Luke 1: 1-4; Acts 1: 1; Col. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 11

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us,

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word,

3 It seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Thē-ōph'ī-lūs;

4 That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.

1 The former treatise I made, O Thē-ōph'ī-lūs, concerning all that Jē'sūs began both to do and to teach.

14 Lūke, the beloved physician, and Dē'mās salute you.

11 Only Lūke is with me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"It seemed good to me also . . . to write . . . that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." (Luke 1: 3, 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 1: 9-13.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

September 30.	M.	A Gospel of Certainties (Luke 1: 1-4)
October 1.	T.	Luke, the Beloved Physician (Col. 4: 11, 14)
October 2.	W.	The Message of Luke's Gospel (Luke 4: 16-22)
October 3.	T.	A Gospel of Tolerance (Luke 4: 25-27)
October 4.	F.	Luke Portrays the Father (Luke 11: 11-13)
October 5.	S.	Luke's Picture of Jesus (Acts 1: 1-5)
October 6.	S.	The Annunciation (Luke 1: 26-38)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—The date of the writing of the Gospel according to Luke is not known. Acts was written about A.D. 63; Colossians, about A.D. 62; Second Timothy, probably A.D. 68.

Places.—The place where Luke wrote his gospel is not known. Acts was probably written in Rome, as was also Colossians and Second Timothy.

Persons.—Luke, Theophilus, Paul, the Colossian brethren, and Timothy.

Lesson Links.—Very little is known of the personal history of

Luke. It is not known where he was born, nor where he was educated, nor where he practiced medicine. Authorities are not agreed as to whether he was a Jew, a Greek, or a Roman. His name is not Jewish, but many Jews who grew up in foreign countries had foreign names. Some have thought he was one of the seventy who were sent out by Jesus, as he is the only writer who mentions that fact. (Luke 10: 1-12.) Some think he was one of the two disciples who went out to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection of Christ. (Luke 24: 13-34.) This supposition grows out of the fact that only Luke mentions this incident, and on the further fact that he mentions the name of one of the two, but does not give the name of the other. But these conclusions are drawn from insufficient evidence, though they may be true. As Luke wrote Acts, it is easy to see where he comes into view in that book. In the sixteenth chapter of Acts Luke refers to Paul and his company as "they" and "them," till he reaches verse 10. From that point on it is "we" and "us," till Paul leaves Philippi. Luke evidently remained at Philippi for a time. Luke again begins to use "we" and "us" in chapter 20, verse 5. From that time it seems that Luke was with Paul till he was a prisoner in Rome.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Luke Writes to Theophilus (Verses 1-4)

For some years after the gospel began to be preached, inspired men did all their preaching and teaching orally. In the absence of written documents, interested disciples would naturally want to make notes of the things they heard from eyewitnesses. What facts they learned from these eyewitnesses, they would try to arrange in narrative form. Luke informs us that many had taken in hand to write narratives of this sort. Luke says nothing against such attempts at writing narratives. "Who are meant by these 'many' has been much discussed; but it is now agreed that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark could not be intended to be included in those writings. . . . The narratives in question were probably the compositions of pious and well-meaning persons; but, as we may infer, without necessary information, or qualifications for writing a gospel history. They were not intentionally false, but necessarily erroneous and defective. It is certain that we are not to understand what are called the apocryphal gospels (as they have been collected by Fabricius), since very few, if any, of these can be proved to have been then in being. It is, however, probable that a portion of them would be incorporated into those apocryphal gospels, and thus have been preserved. 'It is (as Wets. observes) not surprising that the minds of men, strongly excited as they were by the mighty moral revolution which had taken place, should have been deeply interested about the origin and nature of a religion so novel in its character, and promulgated in a manner so widely different from all that had preceded it.' That they were in some degree defective or erroneous, is implied in the very act of St. Luke's undertaking to supply Theophilus with more certain information."—*Bloomfield*. That the writings about which Luke speaks were narratives, shows that the writers had undertaken to write histories of the life of Christ. They were writing about "matters which have been ful-

filled among us." For "fulfilled," the marginal reading has "fully established," which seems better. The facts concerning the life of Christ had been fully established; there was left no room for a reasonable doubt.

Eyewitnesses.—Jesus selected twelve men to be his special witnesses. Some others were with him all the time during his personal ministry, and also saw him after he arose from the dead. (Acts 1: 21, 22.) It seems that many others were with him a part of the time. But apparently of these only the apostles were made infallible witnesses by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24: 48, 49.) "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1: 8.) "To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days." (Acts 1: 3.) These witnesses could not have been mistaken as to the miracles Jesus performed, nor as to his identity after his resurrection. And, being guided by the Holy Spirit, their testimony was without error. "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed." (Mark 16: 20.) Hence, the matters about which these other writers had attempted to draw up narratives, has been fully established unto us by these eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.

Traced Accurately.—"Having traced the course of all things accurately from the first." As Luke had traced out accurately the life and deeds of Jesus, it seemed good to him to write this account. Inspiration was never meant to encourage mental laziness. Luke had searched diligently to gain all the facts about the life and deeds of Jesus. The Holy Spirit would guide him in writing down these facts, so as to guarantee his accuracy in reporting his facts. "To write unto thee in order." There was likely not much order or system about the narratives to which Luke had referred. There was to be an orderly arrangement in Luke's record. Probably Luke meant that his material would be orderly arranged, and not that he would place everything in chronological order. "Most excellent Theophilus." As Luke addresses Theophilus as excellent, some commentators have concluded that Theophilus was an officer of the Roman government, but this is not a necessary conclusion. It more likely was applied to him because he was of an excellent character. It does not seem that one Christian would address another in his capacity as an officer of a government, unless it had been an official matter. If the name Theophilus—lover of God—was applied to him after he became a Christian, it would mean that he was greatly devoted to the Lord. If it was given to him in childhood, it would show what his parents hoped he would be. If so, they were not disappointed.

Luke's Purpose in Writing.—"That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." The Greek word from which "know" is translated, is intensive—know accurately or assuredly. Of course, Luke was not writing for Theophilus alone, but for all who might read his record. He wrote

that all who read his record might know assuredly the certainty of the life and the deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet John said, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20: 30, 31.) One wrote that they might believe; the other, that they might know. Is there a difference? When evidence in support of a proposition is so overwhelming and convincing that the matter could not be any other way, we can say that we know. Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." There are many other passages of the same import. One more: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2: 36.) On the evidence Peter had presented they were to know assuredly. But faith is different. There may be knowledge where there is no faith. Faith has in it an element of trust. We believe in some men, because we know them—we know them to be worthy of trust; we also know some people in whom we do not believe. Hence, knowledge may promote faith, or it may destroy faith. Knowledge concerning God and the Christ leads to faith in them.

The Former Treatise (Acts 1: 1)

"The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." This identifies Luke as the writer of Acts. The former treatise was the gospel according to Luke. Both were addressed to Theophilus—both were written by the same person. In his gospel Luke gives many circumstances connected with the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus, which are not mentioned by the other writers. The Acts gives an account of the preaching of the apostles and their helpers in carrying out the provisions of the Great Commission. It is more than a history of conversions; it is a history of the beginning and growth of the church. There was no organizations formed in addition to the church, through which to convert sinners and edify saints. As individual servants of God, these early preachers carried the message of salvation to all parts of the known world. The gospel was for the whole world; and yet some extremists among the Jewish Christians sought to fasten the law of Moses on all Gentile converts. This was the only thing that caused general disturbance in the early church.

Luke, the Beloved Physician (Col. 4: 14)

"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you." It might be impossible to prove that Luke, the beloved physician, was the same Luke who wrote the Gospel according to Luke and Acts; but it is generally taken for granted that it was the same Luke. The circumstances favor that idea; for Luke, the writer, had been much with Paul, and it is reasonable to conclude that the same Luke was with him when he wrote this letter. As he was a physician, we naturally conclude that he was a man of education. His style of writing shows that he had literary ability. And this does not argue anything against his inspiration. The Holy Spirit is not so limited that he cannot adopt a man's natural style even in directly controlling his speech, oral or written. If the Holy Spirit did not adopt

a man's natural style, all inspired literature would have the same style; and yet each writer has a style of his own.

"Only Luke Is with Me" (2 Tim. 4: 11)

It seems that Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome, after which he made an extensive preaching tour, and was arrested again. He had no hope of being released from this imprisonment, except by death. It seems that the authorities at Rome showed so much bitterness toward him, that nearly all his friends had forsaken him. (Read verses 9-16.) Because of these conditions, Paul was not severe toward those who had been with him, but had now forsaken him; yet he was human, and felt the sting of it. On account of what was before Paul, and the fact that his friends had forsaken him, there is a note of indescribable sadness in the statement, "only Luke is with me." Luke had not forsaken him. Luke was not a timeserver, but was steadfast in his devotion to Paul and the Lord whom he served.

SOME REFLECTIONS

It is a mistake to say that faith always ends where knowledge begins. To know that God is, does not destroy faith in him. In fact, the more we know him, the more we believe in him. To believe in God means more than to believe that he is, or even to know that he is. Cain believed in the existence of God, as did Abel, and undertook to worship him, but he did not act by faith. He had more faith, more confidence, in his own way than he had in God's way. Neither is "faith lost in sight." Jesus said to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed."

It may be truthfully said that the restoration movement resulted in the rediscovery of the book of Acts. Denominational preachers, with mystic ideas of conversion, had not given that book much attention; at least, they had not discovered its place as a guide in the field of evangelism. They had not realized that it showed by practical examples how people became Christians; they were as likely to refer people to the Psalms of David to learn how to be saved as to any other portion of the Bible.

Faith, courage, and steadfastness of purpose—these are some of the essential elements that make up a worth-while character; and Luke had these. He was with Paul in some of his successful preaching tours; and when the shadows gathered thick about Paul, Luke did not forsake him. Paul's simple statement—"Only Luke is with me"—did not speak well for his other companions. There are many fair-weather friends; few are like Luke.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Knowing and believing.

Luke as a man.

The Acts.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
Where does Luke first come into view?

How do we determine when Luke was with Paul?

Verses 1-4

How was Christianity first made known?

Repeat the verses of this section of the lesson.

What is implied in what Luke says about the other narratives?

What proof that others beside the apostles was with Jesus all the time of his ministry?

How were the apostles specially qualified to be witnesses?

What does Luke say of his qualifications to write a correct narrative?

What was Luke's purpose in writing? Why did John write his narrative?

Show that knowledge does not destroy faith.

Acts 1: 1

Discuss this verse.

What purpose does the book of Acts serve?

Col. 4: 14

Discuss this verse.

2 Tim. 4: 11

Who had forsaken Paul, and why? Discuss the circumstances surrounding Paul.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson II—October 13, 1940

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

Luke 2: 40-52

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

41 And his parents went every year to Jê-ru'sâ-lêm at the feast of the passover.

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

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jê'sus tarried behind in Jê-ru'sâ-lêm; and his parents knew it not;

44 But supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance:

45 And when they found him not, they returned to Jê-ru'sâ-lêm, seeking for him.

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

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

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

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nâz'â-rêth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jê'sus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2: 52.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 4: 11-15.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

October 7.	M.	Physical Growth (Gen. 25: 27-34)
October 8.	T.	The Worth of Wisdom (Prov. 3: 13-18)
October 9.	W.	Social Growth (Rom. 14: 13-23)
October 10.	T.	Religious Growth (Eph. 4: 11-16)
October 11.	F.	Symmetrical Development (Luke 2: 40-42)
October 12.	S.	Normal Boyhood (Luke 2: 43-47)
October 13.	S.	His Father's Business (Luke 2: 48-52)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—It is not known how many years are included in what is said in verses 40 and 52. According to the common reckoning, the

visit to Jerusalem was A.D. 8; in reality it was A.D. 12. "The precise date of the birth of Jesus is still disputable. The common reckoning or Vulgar Era as devised by Abbot Dionysius Exeugus (he died about A.D. 556) was based upon the notion that Jesus was born on December 25, one week before the January 1 of the Julian year which we call A.D. 1, thus really on December 25 of the year 1 B.C. But no chronologist now contends that December 25 was the natal day; the only attempt is to fix the year. As Herod died in March or April of the year 4 B.C., and Matthew puts the birth of Jesus before Herod's death, the birth would fall in the still earlier part of the year 4 B.C., or in a previous year. Suffice it to say that the very learned work, *L'Art de Verifier les Dates*, puts the birth in the year 7 B.C., to make Jesus two years old at the Christmas before the death of Herod, and other chronologists have adopted the years 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, B.C., and even A.D. 1, 2, or 3, giving a range of ten years."—*Bible Encyclopedia*. If it had been important that we know the exact day and year in which Jesus was born, the Lord would have given us the date.

Places.—Nazareth and Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus, Joseph, Mary, and certain teachers of the law.

Lesson Links.—Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, an ancient city about six miles south of Jerusalem. (Matt. 2: 1-9; Luke 2: 1-7.) But Jesus grew to manhood in Nazareth. Before the marriage of Joseph and Mary was consummated, an angel announced to her that she, a virgin, would become a mother in a miraculous way. (Matt. 1: 18-23; Luke 1: 26-38.) "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us." The prophecy is quoted from Isa. 7: 14. Six months before the angel made his startling announcement to Mary, a son had been promised to Zacharias and Elisabeth, whose name was to be John. This child was born according to the angel's promise. "Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. . . . And all went to enrol themselves, every one to his own city." Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth "into Judæa, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enrol himself with Mary." Many others, on the same mission, had reached Bethlehem before Joseph and Mary arrived, so that all the room in the inn had been filled when they applied for lodging. "And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." In such surroundings did the King of kings make his advent into the world. Only an inspired writer could tell such things in such a way as Luke wrote—a simple narrative, not a word of comment.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Childhood of Jesus (Verse 40)

We have no means of knowing how long Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem after Jesus was born, before they fled to

Egypt. They did not flee to Egypt before the days of her purification were ended, and they had made the offerings according to the law. This covered a period of thirty-three days. (Lev. 12: 1-8.) After they returned from Egypt they made their home at Nazareth, where they had formerly lived. Here Jesus grew into manhood. The language indicates that his body grew strong. We cannot think of Jesus as a physical weakling, either as a child or as a man. "And the grace of God was upon him." Many persist in saying that grace is unmerited favor. Grace is favor; why say it is unmerited favor? Surely no one would say that God's unmerited favor was upon Jesus! It seems that Jesus developed in a natural way, growing up as did other children. It is not likely that the neighbors thought of him as anything else than a child like others.

The Passover (Verse 41)

There were three annual feasts of the Jews. (Deut. 16: 1-17.) The Feast of the Passover originated in connection with the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. (Ex. 12: 1-51.) Only the men were required to attend the Passover, though the women might attend if they so desired. Her devotion to the Lord would lead Mary to attend this feast every year, if she could do so; and Luke says she and Joseph attended every year. If all the women and men attended these feasts, there was none left at home to care for the children. They must have taken them along.

Jesus at the Age of Twelve (Verses 42-45)

"And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast." It seems to be assumed that this was the first time Jesus attended the Passover; the record does not say so. Certainly Joseph and Mary had not left him at home alone during all the former years of his life. He is specially mentioned here, and also his age, because of the incidents of this journey. "And when they had fulfilled the days." The Feast of the Passover and the seven days of unleavened bread that followed made eight days. For company and for protection against robbers, neighbors would make the journey in companies. When Joseph and Mary and their company started on the return journey, Jesus did not join them, but tarried in Jerusalem; and they did not discover that he was not in the company till the end of the first day's journey. It has been said that the men in these journeys formed one group and the women another. If so we can easily see how Joseph and Mary might each think Jesus was with the other. Some have charged that Joseph and Mary were very negligent not to discover that Jesus was missing till the end of the day; but that seems rather unjust. Jesus was no baby; he was twelve years of age, and Joseph and Mary had learned to have the utmost confidence in him. And besides, was not the hand of God in the matter. Joseph and Mary were not to blame for not discovering his not being in the company; he was not to blame for tarrying behind. When they searched for him, and found that he was not in the company, they were greatly distressed. "And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him." Nothing save known disaster is so distressing to parents as the uncertainty as to what may have happened to a child. Under

such circumstances, rest of body and mind is impossible; the heart aches, and yearns to know. In such a state of mind Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem.

"They Found Him in the Temple" (Verses 46, 47)

"After three days they found him in the temple." In the Jewish manner of counting time, "after three days" meant after three days had come, that is, the third day. We can feel sure that Joseph and Mary took little rest during these days of anxious search. Likely they looked for him first in their lodging place. The idle talk of the multitudes interested him not; he cared nothing for their gossip; so "they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions." These teachers were the Rabbins, the doctors of the law. They were considered the authority as to what the law of Moses taught. And as the tradition of the elders had never been committed to writing, but was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, these teachers would have to have the whole system committed to memory. Hence they would likely be better informed in tradition than in the law of Moses. We would not understand that in asking them questions Jesus was seeking information, but propounding questions for their consideration. He readily answered their questions. "And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." They knew that he had not been trained in their schools; they knew therefore that he had never been taught by any of the great teachers. For a young boy to have such understanding, especially as he had never had an expert teacher, was cause for amazement. But they did not know who and what he was. A person's understanding and character are revealed in the questions he asks as well as in the answers he gives to the questions of others. Both his questions and his answers were so well chosen as to astonish these wise teachers of the Jewish religion.

An Exchange of Questions (Verses 48-50)

When Joseph and Mary saw Jesus in the midst of the great teachers of the law conversing with them, they were astonished, that he, a mere boy, had been so daring as to go into the presence of so august a body of men and hold converse with them. They themselves would likely have felt timid in the presence of such men, and to be questioned by them. "And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" It seems that there is a gentle rebuke in that question. They had sought him sorrowing, and it seemed to them that he had not been concerned about their evident distress at his disappearance. But the hand of God was in the matter, though they did not know it. Had they known, they would not have been filled with distress. Jesus did not give a direct answer to their question; he asked them a question that should have started them to thinking. "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" You should have spent no time in searching for me; you should have known that I would be in my Father's house. It seems that no one caught the significance of his saying, "My Father's house." "My Father"—there was a lot of meaning in that "my," had they noticed it.

God was his Father in a special sense—a sense in which he is the Father of no one else. A man may become a son of God, but Jesus was, and is, the Son of God. The truth that he is the Son of God in a special sense, is set forth abundantly throughout the New Testament; so must we believe. But none of those who heard Jesus understood the significance of what he said. They knew, of course, what he said; but they did not comprehend his meaning. They therefore could give him no answer. But it is no marvel that they did not understand him. "Understood not" comes in frequently during the personal ministry of Jesus. Frequently the disciples did not understand Jesus, because they had their hearts set on other things. There is such a thing as an understanding heart.

"He Was Subject Unto Them" (Verses 51, 52)

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth." The Bible is exact as to geography, as in all other matters. Though Nazareth was much nearer the source of the Jordan than was Jerusalem, yet its altitude was lower than that of Jerusalem. It is to be noted that Jesus readily yielded obedience to Joseph and Mary, and left the interesting discussion in which he was engaged. "And he was subject unto them." He was perfect in his obedience and faithfulness to them; yet an occasional young boy or girl thinks it shows one's importance to disobey parents. "And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." She did not understand what he said, but she could ponder over it, as any mother would do. "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." This is practically a repetition of the facts stated in verse 40. Jesus was human, and we think of such statements as applying to his human nature. Unless his divine nature shined out in his conversation with the teachers in Jerusalem, we have no record that it manifested itself till after his baptism. But when we try to understand the union of deity with the nature of man, we find that our intelligence is too limited to comprehend it. We believe it, but cannot understand it.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a good woman, but she was a human being. No human being is worthy of being worshiped. To pray to her and to worship her is idolatry.

Jesus set an example of obedience to parents. The Lord enjoins that duty upon all children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. 6: 1-3.)

They found Jesus in the temple, his Father's house. If the average boy or girl of today were missing, where would he or she most likely be found? This is not an accusation against the youth of today, but merely a question. However both young and old might profit by giving it serious consideration.

Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament. A single question asked by Nathanael (John 1: 46) gave rise to the idea that Nazareth was a disreputable city; but such a question would have arisen about any other place in Galilee. The chief priests said to Nicodemus, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of

Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John 7: 52.) And the astonished people on Pentecost asked, "Behold, are not all these that speak Galilæans?" (Acts 2: 7.) Galileans were not held in high esteem.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The Passover.

Luke 2: 40, 52.

Obedience to parents.

Nazareth.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
Give the facts and circumstances connected with the birth of Jesus.

Verse 40

Discuss this verse.

Verse 41

Tell about the Passover, and its origin.
With whom was attendance voluntary?

Verses 42-45

Is there proof that this was the first Passover Jesus attended?

Tell how Jesus came to be missing, and the search for him.

Verses 46, 47

Where was he found, and what was he doing?

Verses 48-50

Tell about the questions that passed between him and Mary.

Verses 51, 52

Why does it say they went down to Nazareth?

What did Mary do with reference to what Jesus had said?

Discuss verse 52.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson III—October 20, 1940

THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 3: 3, 8-17, 21, 22

3 And he came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?

11 And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.

12 And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?

13 And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire:

17 Whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

21 Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jē'sūs also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

22 And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.” (Luke 3: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 40: 1-5.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

October 14.	M.	Make Ready for the Lord (Luke 3: 1-6)
October 15.	T.	The Need of Repentance (Luke 13: 1-5)
October 16.	W.	“What Then Must We Do?” (Luke 3: 10-14)
October 17.	T.	Personal Preparation (Psalm 51: 1-10)
October 18.	F.	Fruits of Repentance (Luke 3: 7-9)
October 19.	S.	Expectant Faith (Luke 3: 15-17)
October 20.	S.	Good Tidings (Luke 3: 18-22)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—About A.D. 26.

Place.—John preached in “all the region round about the Jordan.” But John did not confine his work to the wilderness along the Jordan. “And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there.” (John 3: 23.)

Persons.—John the Baptist, the multitudes, the publicans, soldiers, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father in heaven.

Lesson Links.—The prophet Isaiah (40: 3-5) foretold the mission of John the Baptist; and so also did Malachi (3: 1). The writers of the gospels apply these prophecies to John the Baptist. (Matt. 3: 1-3; Mark 1: 1-4; Luke 3: 2-6.) John the Baptist himself quoted Isa. 40: 3 as applying to himself. (John 1: 19-23.) He therefore filled a place in the development of the plan of salvation through Christ. “There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.” (John 1: 6-8.) John was born of godly parents, Zacharias and Elisabeth, when “they both were now well stricken in years.” Zacharias was a priest; while he was burning incense in the temple, the angel Gabriel announced to him that Elisabeth should bear him a son, whose name was to be John. This son was born according to promise. “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.” (Read the first chapter of Luke.)

The word “desert,” as used in the Bible, does not mean a dry region devoid of vegetation, but an uninhabited, or sparsely inhabited region. Zacharias and Elisabeth lived in a city of Judah, in the hill country south of Jerusalem. (Luke 1: 39, 40.) Here John grew to manhood, unspoiled by either the self-righteousness of the Pharisees or the materialism of the Sadducees. “John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.” (Mark 1: 4.) “And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 3: 1-2.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON**What John Preached (Verse 3)**

No one statement can express fully what John preached. He preached to the people that they should believe on the one that was soon to appear. He preached that men should repent and be baptized. So closely was repentance, baptism, and remission of sins connected, that it is said that he preached "the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." John said, "I indeed baptize you in water unto [Greek, or into] repentance." (Matt. 3: 11.) A question arises: If John baptized those who had repented, how did he baptize them into repentance? A little reflection will help. He demanded of those he baptized that they bring forth fruits answerable to amendment of life; that is, that they live so as to prove they had repented—had amended their way of living. He therefore baptized these penitents into a state or life of repentance. The baptism of such people was unto, or into, remission of sins. John was a prophet, a powerful preacher. His powers as a preacher would attract attention. And his preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, would stir the expectant Jews as no other announcement would. This accounts, in a great measure, for the great interest John's preaching stirred up among the Jews. Great multitudes flocked to his preaching and were baptized. The language of verse 3 shows that John did not confine his preaching and baptizing to one particular place. "He came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." Nor did he do all his baptizing in the river Jordan; for he did some "baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized." (John 3: 23.)

John Preached Individual Responsibility (Verses 8, 9)

John's mission was two fold. By his preaching and baptizing he prepared people for the coming king; he also introduced him to the people—bare witness of him. (John 1: 6-8, 19-34.) If we read verse 7, we will see whom John was addressing in verse 8: "He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The language was addressed to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him to be baptized. (Matt. 3: 7.) And strange to say, some have concluded that the language quoted by Matthew shows that John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees. If so, the identical words addressed to the multitudes show that he also refused to baptize them! If not, why not? Who then did he baptize? All who asked to be baptized—Pharisees, Sadducees, and the multitudes. But he demanded of all that they bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. In the very nature of the case this cannot mean that they were required to bring forth these fruits before he would baptize them. The fruits of repentance are seen in the life we live, and not in some imaginary experience we tell before baptism. They came to John confessing their sins and claiming repentance; on that confession John baptized them and exhorted them to live so as to show they had repented. There was no use for them to claim any rights because they were fleshly descendants of Abraham. In this kingdom that was soon to be set up, fleshly descent from Abraham would count for nothing. Only the seed of Abraham in a spiritual

sense would count. That is shown by what John immediately adds: "For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." If God had converted stones into human beings, they could not in any sense be fleshly descendants of Abraham—they would not be, and could not be, children of Abraham after the flesh. The worth of a fruit tree is determined by the fruit it bears. Often apple trees, peach trees, and pecan trees are grown from the seed, by way of experiment, to see what kind of fruit they will bear. Such trees as are shown by their fruit to be worthless are cut down. John applied that principle to people. If a person does not produce good fruit, no matter if he has claimed repentance and has been baptized, he is fit only to be cut down and cast into the fire. And what John says about this fruit bearing shows that in exhorting them to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance, he had reference to the life they were to live, and not some token of repentance to be presented to him before they were baptized.

"What Then Must We Do?" (Verses 10, 11)

From what John had said, the multitudes knew that there was something that they must do. "And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." This was the fruit they were to bring forth. Certainly he did not mean for them to return home where their food supply and extra clothing were, and divide up before he would baptize them. They were to divide with the needy as evidence that they had repented, and had amended their way of living. Those who had food and clothing were to divide with those who were destitute. If such liberality was required of those who were being prepared for material in the then coming kingdom, it is certainly as necessary for those who are now in the kingdom. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need." (Eph. 4: 28.) Paul put in much time and endangered his life in an effort to minister to the poor saints in Judea.

Publicans Inquire What to Do (Verses 12, 13)

Publicans were tax collectors. They paid the Roman government a certain sum of money for the right to collect taxes in a given locality. Their profits came from collecting a greater sum than they had paid the government. There was a great temptation for them to collect unjust amounts. If they assessed a Jew a certain amount, he had no recourse. Not being a citizen, the Jew had no rights of citizenship. John's exhortation to these inquiring publicans was therefore very appropriate: "Extort no more than that which is appointed you." That is, collect according to government rates, and no more. To go beyond that would be robbery.

Soldiers Inquire What to Do (Verse 14)

If these were Roman soldiers, they were not Jews. According to the marginal reading the Greek word means, "Soldiers on duty." This seems to indicate that they were Roman soldiers; but was John baptizing any but Jews? Perhaps they were of the temple police, whose business it was to keep order about the temple. In either

case they were soldiers on duty; that is, they were men who had certain duties to perform, and these duties were such as belonged to soldiers. A soldier on duty is armed, and he is therefore so equipped that he is able to extort from others by violent means. Here was a special temptation to the soldier. It is true, especially in times of war, that soldiers go on raids to collect food, and sometimes other valuables, from the innocent and helpless. To gain their own ends, they might bring wrong accusations against innocent parties. Hence, John's admonition: "Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages." The Common Version—the King James Version—is at fault here, for it has, "Do violence to no man." This would put John in the attitude of exhorting these soldiers to draw their wages, and then refuse to do what they were paid to do. John would not exhort people to be so dishonest as to draw wages, and then refuse to do what they were paid to do. No matter what we think about war, we cannot afford to make John guilty of exhorting any one to engage in such dishonest and treasonable trickery.

Is John the Messiah? (Verse 15)

"The people were in expectation"—they were looking for the Messiah to appear. John's fame spread through the nation. Besides, he was preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It was natural therefore for the people to question among themselves, "Is John the Messiah?" So much did that question gain currency that the authorities in Jerusalem sent a committee to John to inquire of him if he were the Christ. When John confessed to them that he was neither Christ nor the prophet whom Moses foretold, they said to him, "Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?" (John 1: 19-22.)

John's Answer (Verses 16, 17)

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." As John was a prophet, God was speaking through him. He was therefore the voice of God. The committee sent by the Pharisees said to John, "Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?" (John 1: 24, 25.) John said to all who were present, "I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." John did not feel himself worthy to do the most menial service for this coming one. The one coming after him would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. As the worthless fruit tree would be cut down and cast into the fire, so would the worthless people be cast into the fire. In referring to this statement of John, Jesus shows that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for the apostles. (Acts 1: 5.) That the baptism of fire was for the worthless is shown in verse 17: "... the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus (Verses 21, 22)

The baptism of Jesus is reported more in detail in Matt. 3: 13-17. Jesus came a long way to be baptized. Being cousins, John and Jesus, of course, knew each other. John knew that Jesus was a

good man, but did not know he was the Christ. He felt that it would be more appropriate for Jesus to baptize him than for him to baptize Jesus. But Jesus replied, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus would do all that God commanded, even to being baptized. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Later John himself said, "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1: 33, 34.) So far as the record shows never was there another scene on earth comparable to the baptism of Jesus. John the greatest living man was the administrator, Jesus the Son of God was the subject, the Holy Spirit gave his sanction by descending upon Jesus, and the Father spoke his pleasure from heaven. The greatest man and all three persons of the Godhead took part in that event. How unbecoming therefore for man to make slight remarks about an ordinance that was so honored!

SOME REFLECTIONS

Prophets, as well as other speakers and writers, frequently used figurative language. Isa. 40: 3-5 is an example. John was to prepare a highway for the coming king; yet all know that he was not to make a literal road. His work was with people, preparing them for the coming of the king.

"Every valley shall be filled." The downtrodden and discouraged people must be lifted up—must be filled with new hope. The haughty and the proud must be brought low—must be brought into humble submission to the will of God. Those who are crooked in their dealings must be straightened out. Rough people must become gentle and kind.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The condition of the Jews—moral, political, and religious—in John's day.

The mission of John.

John as a man and a preacher.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Give prophecies concerning John the Baptist.
Name his parents.

Verse 3

Give the substance of John's preaching.
Why did people become so interested in John's preaching?

Verses 8, 9

Give the twofold work of John.
What did John call the people who came to be baptized?
What did he demand of those he baptized?
How are the fruits of repentance shown?
What illustration does he give about a tree and its fruit?

Verses 10, 11

Discuss each demand of these verses.

Verses 12, 13

Who were publicans?
What did John demand of them?

Verse 14

Discuss the soldiers, and John's demands of them.

Verse 15

Who did the people think John might be, and why?

Verses 16, 17

What did John say of himself?

Whose voice was he?

What did John say of the one that was to come?

Discuss the baptism referred to.

Verses 21, 22

Give the incidents connected with the baptism of Jesus.

When did John learn that Jesus was the Messiah?

How do the incidents of this baptism of Jesus dignify baptism?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IV—October 27, 1940

CHRISTIAN MOTIVES FOR ABSTINENCE

Luke 1: 13-16; 2: 40; 4: 4; 6: 21, 25, 43-45

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zāch-ā-rī'ās: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Ē-lis'ā-bēth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

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

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Īs'rā-ēl shall he turn unto the Lord their God.

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

4 And Jē'sūs answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

25 Woe unto you, ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

43 For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit.

44 For each tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

45 The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* (Rom. 14: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 16: 7-11

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

October 21.	M.	Total Abstinence (Luke 1: 13-16)
October 22.	T.	Fruits of Abstinence (Luke 6: 43-45)
October 23.	W.	An Old Law (Lev. 10: 8-10)
October 24.	T.	The Nazirites (Num. 6: 1-4)
October 25.	F.	The Woes of Wine (Prov. 23: 20, 21, 29-32)
October 26.	S.	Controlling the Body (1 Cor. 9: 24-27)
October 27.	S.	Mutual Helpfulness (Rom. 14: 13-23)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—About A.D. 26 and 28.

Places.—Jerusalem, Hebron, Nazareth, the wilderness of the temple, some place in Galilee.

Persons.—John the Baptist, Jesus, and the multitudes.

Lesson Links.—Palestine was a country much given to the growing of grapes and the making of wine. The use of wine was common. Drinking to drunkenness was an evil then, as it is now. It takes a lot of teaching to get people out of any practice that has become a part of their habits and social customs. To give the people some idea of the evils of drinking intoxicating liquors and also to maintain the purity of the worship, God issued this decree, or prohibition to Aaron at Sinai: "Drink no wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting, that ye die not: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: and that ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah hath spoken unto them by Moses." (Lev. 10: 8-11.) As these instructions came immediately after Nadab and Abihu had been burned to death for corrupting the worship by making no distinction between the holy and the common, it lends support to the conclusion that Nadab and Abihu had been drinking wine, and that the wine had emboldened them to do a thing which God had not commanded. The priests were therefore not allowed to drink wine while on duty. But all Christians are priests unto God, and they are supposed to be on duty all the time. Paul's injunction to Timothy shows that a Christian should drink wine only as a medicine. No other reason should move people to drink wine, or any other alcoholic liquors. Physicians rarely prescribe such remedies these days. There is no way by which we can estimate the evils of the drink habit; yet we can see many of the evils.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Son Promised to Zacharias and Elisabeth (Verses 13, 14)

"There was in the days of Herod, king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth." These good people had no child, for Elisabeth was barren. On a certain day, while Zacharias was burning incense unto the Lord in the temple, "there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him." The best of men fear in the presence of a heavenly visitor. The beloved John had been closely associated with Jesus during the personal ministry of Jesus and had often seen him after Jesus arose from the dead; yet when Jesus appeared to him on the isle of Patmos, he fell at the feet of Jesus as one dead. It was nothing therefore to the discredit of Zacharias, that he feared when he saw this angel. From verse 19 we learn that this angel was Gabriel. Zacharias was a righteous man, and there was no need that he fear an angel; yet human nature is such that he did fear. Gabriel had been sent to Zacharias to bring to him the glad news that Elisabeth would bear him a son. "And thou

shalt call his name John." Later he was known as John the Baptist, because he baptized people. "And thou shalt have joy and gladness." The fact that a son should be born to them after all these years of longing and praying would bring joy to them. And the character of this son would make their joy and gladness complete, for he would bring to them neither sorrow nor shame. And many would later have occasion to rejoice that such a son had been born into the world.

John's Greatness and Work Foretold (Verses 15, 16)

A man might be great in the eyes of the world, and yet be of no worth in the eyes of the Lord, but John was to be great in the sight of the Lord. That is true greatness. After John was cast into prison, and his ministry therefore closed, Jesus said concerning him, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." (Matt. 11: 11.) Neither God nor Jesus used words of flattery; and when they called a man great, it was because he was great. And "he shall drink no wine nor strong drink." Because John was to drink no wine nor strong drink, it has been supposed that he was to be a Nazirite from birth. To learn the requirements of the vow of the Nazirite read Num. 6: 1-21. The vow of the Nazirite was a special vow, which people voluntarily took upon themselves for a definite period of time. They were told what to do at the end of the period of their vow. While the vow was upon them they were to drink nothing made from grapes; neither were they to eat grapes or anything made of grapes. There were a number of other requirements. Sampson was to be a Nazirite from birth. (Judges 13: 2-5.) It is possible that John also was a Nazirite, though the Bible does not say he was. The fact that he drank no wine nor strong drink did not necessarily make him a Nazirite. People could abstain from drinking wine without being a Nazirite. When a person becomes a Christian he does not vow the vow of the Nazirite, but he does pledge himself to do what is right and to abstain from hurtful things. If he lives up to that pledge, he will not need to make any other vow. If he breaks that solemn pledge, he will likely break any other vow that he might make. Although John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, he did not perform any miracles. (John 10: 41.) The great work laid out for John to do is briefly summed up in verse 16, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God." How he brought about this result is told more in detail in last Sunday's lesson.

The Childhood of Jesus (Luke 2: 40)

After Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt with the child Jesus, they made their home at Nazareth in Galilee. (Matt. 2: 19-23.) Here Jesus lived till after he entered his public ministry. But little is said of that period of his life. Only one incident of that period of his life is recorded. (Luke 2: 41-51.) With the exception of this visit to Jerusalem, his life at Nazareth is summed up in verses 40 and 52. Verse 40: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." He grew stronger physically, and increased in wisdom. He grew in a normal way, as does any healthy child. The language shows that he was

not a physical weakling. To the people of Nazareth he was just another child in their midst. Verse 52 shows that as he grew older they regarded him as an exceptional child, or boy: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." His character was such as to gain him this favor. He did no wrong. Had he done wrong it could not have later been said of him that he did no wrong. Neither was guile found in his mouth. (1 Pet. 2: 22.) He spent no days in dissipation—he sowed no wild oats. Such things are unnecessary in the life of any young person.

"Man Shall Not Live by Bread Alone" (Luke 4: 4)

After Jesus was baptized, he "was led in the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil." The nature of the temptations which he suffered during those forty days are not recorded, but they kept Jesus from developing any sense of hunger. The devil must have then let up long enough for nature to reassert itself, for he then became hungry. This gave Satan an opportunity to present another temptation. "If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread." With no inclination to follow the devil's suggestions, Jesus immediately replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." Matthew adds, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "Bread" is here used as a comprehensive term for all physical food. Man must have food to sustain life; without it the body soon perishes. But there is an inward man; and it must have food, or perish. That necessary food is the word of God. So few think of the needs of the inward man; but they delight in giving the physical man food and drink. In this they are moved by appetite alone; reason would teach them that the inward man must have food.

The Blessedness of Spiritual Hunger (Luke 6: 21)

That the physical man becomes hungry is one of God's wise provisions. If hunger did not assert itself, some would neglect to eat. It is a blessed thing when people have spiritual hunger. They will seek the needed food. And yet there is always a longing for that which we have not. The restlessness of the people show a universal hunger. But like some children, we have cultivated a taste for unwholesome food till the pure word of God does not appeal to us. We can cultivate a taste for the word of God till it becomes to us, like it was to David, sweeter than honey. Cultivate a desire for the right. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5: 6.)

Woe to Those Who Are Full Now (Verse 25)

Jesus was not speaking here of those who were full of righteousness, but those who were full of riches, and full of their own ways and doings—those who, like the Laodiceans felt, that, having riches, they had need of nothing, not knowing that they were really poor and blind and naked. (Rev. 3: 14-22.) They laugh over what they consider their good fortune; but there will come a time when they will weep and wail, because they neglected their real needs for fleshly gratification.

A Tree and Its Fruit (Verses 43, 44)

"Each tree is known by its own fruit." The people could easily grasp the significance of this illustration. The nature of a tree is seen in its fruit. A good fruit tree will not bear bitter fruit. A bad tree will not bear good fruit. Neither does anyone expect to gather figs from a thornbush—briers do not produce grapes. But we do not condemn an apple tree as worthless because we find a few faulty apples among an abundance of good fruit. Yet we sometimes severely condemn a good man because we discover that he did a wrong thing. The one fault looms up bigger in the eyes of the mote hunter than a whole life of good deeds. The general course of a man's life determines whether he is valuable or worthless. Is the man helpful to the cause of righteousness, or is he a hindrance?

The Heart Determines the Conduct (Verse 45)

If the heart is clean and pure, no corrupt speech will proceed out of the mouth, nor will the person engage in vile deeds. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good." A rebellious life does not come from a loyal heart. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word." (John 14: 23.) If a man loves his neighbor, he will seek to do him good. No argument is needed to prove these truths. It is true also that an evil heart leads to corrupt speech and evil deeds. There is no such thing as the heart remaining pure while the body indulges in sin. The idea that a regenerated man's heart will always remain pure, though his body wallow in sin, is an extremely erroneous and hurtful notion. The heart determines the conduct. Jesus said, "That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7: 20-23.) Evil thoughts are formed in the heart, and then they proceed from the heart in the form of speech and deed. Speech is the expression of a thought in words; deeds are the expression of thoughts in action. No amount of arguing can change the inherent nature of these plain truths.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Our bodies are God-given. There is, therefore, a sacredness about the body. Through the instrumentality of the body we serve God. Our bodies therefore should be kept as morally clean and healthy as possible, so that they may be good instruments of service.

All our natural appetites and passions are God-given. Properly directed and controlled, they are a blessing to ourselves and others; but perverted and debased by our giving ourselves up wholly to them, they drag us down to a plane lower than the beasts of the field.

We should, therefore, abstain from all fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. We must have food and drink, and these should be wholesome. No one should abuse his body by the excessive use even of wholesome food and drink, and he certainly should not indulge in eating and drinking that which is harmful.

"For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." (Tit. 2: 11, 12.) Therefore the Christian's ground for abstinence is, that he may be able to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

What Jesus said about John in Matt. 11: 7-18.

The vow of the Nazirite.

Different ways in which a drunkard is a nuisance and a menace.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
What law was given to the priests concerning strong drink?
What seems to have given rise to that law at that particular time?

Verses 13, 14

Tell about Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth.
Give his experience in the temple while he was burning incense.
What was to be the child's name?

Verses 15, 16

What did the angel say of this child that was to be born?
What did Jesus say of John's greatness?
Why is it supposed that John was a Nazirite?
Describe the Nazirite vow.
Who was a Nazirite from birth?
What does a man really pledge himself to do when he becomes a Christian?

Luke 2: 40

In what city did Jesus grow to manhood?
Discuss verse 40.

Luke 4: 4

Why does it seem that Jesus did not hunger during the forty days?
Tell of the first temptation mentioned, and the reply of Jesus.

Luke 6: 21

What useful purpose does hunger serve?
For what should we hunger?

Verse 25

Discuss verse 25.

Verses 43, 44

Discuss the illustration Jesus gives. Do you condemn a tree for one bad apple?
What is the evil of the mote hunter?

Verse 45

Where do our deeds, good or bad, originate?
What does Jesus say of the origin of evil deeds?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson V—November 3, 1940

JESUS DECLARES HIS MISSION

Luke 4: 16-30

16 And he came to Nāz'ā-rēth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet I-sā'īāh. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Că-pēr'nă-üm, do also here in thine own country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country.

25 But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Is'rā-ēl in the days of Ē-lī'jāh, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land;

26 And unto none of them was Ē-lī'jāh sent, but only to Zār'ē-phāth, in the land of Sī'dōn, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And there were many lepers in Is'rā-ēl in the time of Ē-lī'shā the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Nā'ā-mān the Sūr'i-ān.

28 And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things;

29 And they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 61: 1-3.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

October 28.	M.	.....	Meditating on Method (Luke 4: 1, 2, 14)
October 29.	T.	.....	A Magnificent Mission (Luke 4: 16-30)
October 30.	W.	.....	Good Tidings to the Poor (Matt. 25: 31-40)
October 31.	T.	.....	Release to the Captives (Rom. 8: 1-11)
November 1.	F.	.....	Healing the Blind (Luke 18: 35-43)
November 2.	S.	.....	Liberty for the Bruised (Luke 5: 12-16)
November 3.	S.	.....	The World Fulfilled (Luke 7: 16-23)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—About A.D. 28.

Place.—Nazareth in Galilee.

Persons.—Jesus and the people of the city of Nazareth.

Lesson Links.—In Luke and John we find some things not recorded by Matthew and Mark. The temptation of Jesus must have come immediately after his baptism. He then returned to the place where John was baptizing. At this time John pointed him out as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Jesus then collects a few disciples. (John 1: 29-51.) He then attended a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, where he performed his first miracle. (John 2: 1-11.) Then he went down to Capernaum, and from there to Jerusalem to attend the Passover. While there he cleansed the temple, and did many miracles. (John 2: 12-25.) Also during this visit to Jerusalem he held the famous conversation with Nicodemus. (John 3: 1-12.) He then spent some time in Judea baptizing people through the agency of his disciples. (John 3: 22; 4: 1, 2.) Thrice he passed through Samaria on his way to Galilee. The incidents recorded in John 4: 3-42 occurred during this journey. It seems that Jesus, on returning to Galilee, did not visit Nazareth first, but spent some time visiting and teaching in other cities. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and a fame went out concerning him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." (Luke 4: 14, 15.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

Jesus Attends the Synagogue in Nazareth (Verse 16)

Originally the word synagogue was applied to a congregation, or organized group, of Jewish worshippers. The word synagogue and the word ecclesia, the word translated church, differ little in meaning. Synagogue meant, a leading, or bringing together; convening an assembly of people. Ecclesia meant, an assembly, a body of people called out of their homes and gathered together. In Jewish usage the word synagogue was applied first to a body of Jewish worshippers, and then it came to be applied also to the house in which they met. It seems that James applied it one time to a body of Christians assembled for worship. (James 2: 2.) Of course, in every Jewish town or city there was at least one synagogue. Each synagogue was well organized. Besides other activities, they met on the sabbath for worship and reading the law. It was the custom of Jesus, as well as of all other devout Jews, to attend these synagogue services. In these services someone was selected to read some portion of their scriptures. On this occasion Jesus was appointed to read. It seems that the custom was to stand while reading.

Jesus Reads from Isaiah (Verses 17-19)

When Jesus stood up to read, the attendant handed him the book of the prophet Isaiah. "He opened the book, and found the place where it is written." Follow our Lord's example. The ordinary reader in those days would not so easily find a given passage of scripture, for there were then no chapters and verses. The passage Jesus read is now easily located, for he read Isa. 61: 1, 2. Jesus had the Spirit without measure. Isaiah had foretold that he would preach the gospel—the good tidings—to the poor. When John in prison sent two of his disciples to Jesus, with the question, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus told them to tell John about the miracles they had seen, and that the poor had the good tidings preached to them. This last was to remind John that this prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled in Jesus. From this information he expected John to draw a correct conclusion. (See Matt. 11: 2-6; Luke 7: 19-23.) "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives." The prophet was not foretelling that Jesus would secure the release of criminals or prisoners of war, whom the government had captured; for he did not meddle in the affairs of the government. His efforts were devoted to the releasing of those whom Satan held captive. Paul speaks of sinners as in the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him. (2 Tim. 2: 26.) Jesus came to release people from this captivity—from this bondage to sin. That is to be done by the proclamation of the gospel. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus proclaimed the good news to these prisoners of Satan; and through the power of that gospel many have been, and are yet, being released. "And recovering of sight to the blind." Through the ministry of Jesus many physically blind received their sight. But many more were to have the eyes of their understanding—their spiritual eyes—opened by the power of these glad tidings. That has been going on ever since these glad tidings first began to be announced. Isaiah foretold these days and these results. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears

of the deaf shall be unstopped." (Isa. 35: 5.) Again Jehovah said through Isaiah, "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (42: 6, 7.) This also speaks of the release of the prisoners—the captives of Satan. In the darkness of sin they are as in a dungeon. Paul was sent with this gospel to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts 26: 16-18.) People have been terribly bruised morally and spiritually by the buffetings of Satan and the crushing weight of sin. But in Christ we find refuge and healing. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53: 4, 5.) He alone can heal hearts that are bruised by sin or by grief and sorrow.

Jesus Applies the Prophecy (Verses 20, 21)

Uninspired men are unreliable interpreters of prophecy. The prophecies were so written that no uninspired man, nor group of uninspired men, could so weave them together as to make it possible to stage a bogus fulfillment of them. Even the learned doctors of the law, who likely were more familiar with the prophecies than any other men have ever been, could not make the prophecies concerning the Messiah fit one person. They thought that the Christ and the prophet of whom Moses spoke were two different beings. (John 1: 19-22.) They could not see how the suffering and despised servant of Isa. 53 could be the triumphant Messiah of other prophecies. They could not, therefore, stage a bogus fulfillment of these prophecies. A single prophecy relating to one place or one event may sometimes be plain enough; but to gather all the prophecies and try to fit them into a scheme of things, is a thing the learned Jews could not do. Any really pious and humble heart today will be admonished by the failure of these learned Jews. But Jesus knew the prophecies and their fulfillment. "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." But the sequel shows that these synagogue leaders and teachers did not believe what Jesus said. It did not fit into the scheme of things which they had formulated; their scheme blinded them, as it also blinded the teachers and lawyers in Jerusalem. We should be careful not to imitate them by formulating a future scheme of things, lest we be blinded as they were.

"Is Not This Joseph's Son?" (Verse 22)

Jesus was speaking to a group of his neighbors. They were all acquainted with him and his people; and yet none of them really knew him. Had they known him, they would not have "wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." But to them he was only a neighbor boy that grew up in their midst, only a carpenter, the son of a carpenter. "Is not this Joseph's son?" On what appears to have been another occasion they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his

brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" (Matt. 13: 55.) We know him; he grew up here in a carpenter's shop. We know his people; they are just good, ordinary folks. Where did he get such wisdom? They tried to account for him as a man, and could not find the answer. If he were just a mere uneducated man, a village carpenter, his powers were an unfathomable mystery. No man can account for him on that basis. If we recognize him for what he was, the Son of the living God, all questions about his powers and wisdom are answered; for, being the Son of God, neither his power nor his wisdom is limited.

Prophets Not Honored at Home (Verses 23, 24)

"Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself." We doubt you. We have heard that you did great works at Capernaum; now clear yourself by doing them here. Jesus saw their insincerity. It is singular that people will belittle themselves and their community by thinking that no one of importance can develop in their community among the people they know; but so it usually is. Hence, "No prophet is acceptable in his own country." That is true, but it does not speak well for the discriminating powers of people. They should recognize true worth when they see it, even in those who grow up with them. But, after all, distance frequently gives a better view; a person may be so close to a great mountain that he cannot see it.

Jesus Illustrates What He Had Said (Verses 25-27)

Elijah was one of the most heroic of Old Testament prophets; yet Ahab, his king, sought his life. In that critical time no one of his own country furnished refuge; at least, so it seems. Jehovah therefore sent him into a Gentile country, "to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon." (See 1 Kings 17.) From all that is said about this woman, it seems that she was a Gentile; yet none of the widows of Israel fared so well as she did during Elijah's abode with her. For a full account of the healing of Naaman read the fifth chapter of Second Kings. It is certain that Naaman was not a Hebrew. Naaman was a great general, but he was a leper. Leprosy was common in those days. There were many in Israel. Elisha was a prophet in Israel, and possessed miraculous powers; and yet sin and rebellion reigned so in Israel that none of the many lepers of Israel honored Elisha sufficiently to ask Elisha to cure him. And apparently they were all so unworthy that Jehovah sent none to Elisha to be cured. Again, a more worthy person upon whom to bestow a great favor was found in the army of a foreigner. Thus these great prophets had not received much honor in their own country.

The Speech Enraged the People (Verses 28-30)

"And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things." Evidently their wrath increased as he proceeded, till they could stand it no longer. They did not wait for an orderly dismissal. The group of orderly worshipers was turned into a howling mob. It seems that they should have been contented

with telling him that they wanted to hear no more, and with asking him to leave their city. But they were too enraged for that—they wanted to kill him. “They rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong.” In some way he escaped them, and went his way. But why should they have become so enraged at Jesus? They were all familiar with the facts he related. Evidently they were enraged at him because of what his reference to these incidents implied. They could easily see that he was really implying that they were unworthy of any special miracles. In their self-righteousness they regarded his implication as slander. To hint to them that they were more unworthy than the widow of Zarephath or Naaman the Syrian, was more than they would stand.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Jesus honored labor by working with his own hands. The people of Nazareth asked, “Is not this the carpenter?” (Mark 6: 3.) Only a shallow mind looks upon labor with disdain.

Society prejudice is mean and contemptible. It does not propose to listen to one who belongs to what it considers a lower strata of society; and thus sometimes it cheats itself. If there is any difference, religious prejudice and self-righteousness is even worse. This is perhaps because people's religion means more to them than anything else. They therefore become stirred up more over anything that militates against their religion, or implies that they are not good men.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The synagogue and its uses.

Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth.

How Jesus fulfilled the prophecy he read.

The story of Elijah.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Trace the movements of Jesus from his baptism to the visit to Nazareth.

Verse 16

Give the meaning of the word synagogue.

Give the meaning of the word translated church.

Give some of the activities connected with the synagogue.

Who was appointed to read on the occasion of our lesson?

Verses 17-19

Tell how Jesus proceeded.

What scripture did he read?

How was he to release the captives? In what ways did he give sight to the blind?

Discuss Isa. 53: 4, 5.

Verses 20, 21

How did the learned Jews fail to correctly interpret prophecy?

Why did the Jews reject Jesus?

Verse 22

Why did the speech of Jesus astonish his neighbors?

How alone can we account for the power and wisdom of Jesus?

Verses 23, 24

Discuss these verses.

Verses 25-27

Discuss the examples Jesus gave as illustrations.

Verses 28-30

Tell about the effects of his speech. Why did the people become so enraged?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VI—November 10, 1940

THE GOLDEN RULE

Luke 6: 27-38

27 But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

29 To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also.

30 Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.

36 Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 And judge not, and ye shall not be judged; and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” (Luke 6: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 5: 43-48.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

November 4.	M.....	Design for Living (Luke 6: 20-26)
November 5.	T.....	Nonresistance (Luke 6: 27-30)
November 6.	W.....	Ministering Love (Luke 6: 31-35)
November 7.	T.....	Mercy's Reward (Luke 6: 36-38)
November 8.	F.....	Motes and Beams (Luke 6: 39-42)
November 9.	S.....	Roots and Fruits (Luke 6: 43-45)
November 10.	S.....	Building Securely (Luke 6: 46-49)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 28 or 29.

Place.—A plain near Capernaum. After Jesus ended the speech from which our lesson is taken, “he entered into Capernaum.” It seems that the speech was made just outside the city.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and a vast multitude.

Lesson Links.—Some have thought that the sermon from which our lesson is taken is the same sermon that is recorded in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew. Whether or not they are the same, is a matter of no great importance to us. There is a similarity, and yet also a difference, in the two. The circumstances of the two are different. Jesus went up into a mountain, and there preached the sermon recorded by Matthew; he came down out of a mountain, and stood in a plain, to preach the sermon recorded by Luke. There is nothing strange in concluding that he preached two sermons somewhat alike. After the men of Nazareth sought to kill Jesus, he made his home at Capernaum. He spent much time in the cities and villages of Galilee, preaching and healing physical ailments. His fame increased rapidly; his growing popularity excited

the enmity of the Pharisees. Such enmity had a background, or shall we say a foundation? Jesus had not been educated by their accredited teachers of the law and according to their tradition; he was teaching without permission from what they considered the proper authorities; he was gaining far more fame than any of them had ever had. In other words, he was not regular, a free lance, and much too popular. Something had to be done about it. They objected to him because he ate with "sinners." He met that by saying, "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." They objected to him because he did not require his disciples to fast. He met that objection, and those who now think there should be some definite teaching on fasting might benefit by reading what he said. He classed fasting with mourning. On one occasion they accused him of breaking the Sabbath, and laid a trap, as they thought, on another occasion, to find him guilty of breaking the Sabbath law. (Luke 6: 1-11.) Because all their charges were refuted, and all their schemes came to naught, "they were filled with madness." They then held a council to see if they could decide on what to do to him. "And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles." The names are given. "And he came down with them, and stood on a level place." Great crowds gathered about him, some from the regions of Tyre and Sidon. He began his sermon with a number of beatitudes, and then pronounced some woes. (Verses 20-26.)

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

"Love Your Enemies" (Verses 27, 28)

"But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies." To the average reader this seems like a hard demand—even impossible. But the Lord does not require impossibilities. It is, however, impossible to have the same feelings toward an enemy that seeks to do us harm, that we have toward the members of our own family, or even toward our close friends; neither does the Lord demand such a thing. The Greeks had two words for love. The word here used is more abstract and practical than the other, and does not necessarily call for an exercise of the affections. The next words of the Lord show us how to love our enemies; that is, they show us in what way we are to carry out the demand to love our enemies. "Do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you." It sometimes happens that our enemies will not allow us to perform any material service for them, if they know it. To curse did not mean to use blasphemy, but to call down evil upon one; that is, to wish evil upon him; it is the opposite of to bless. Yes, there are those who wish evil to come upon the Christian, but he must wish blessings for them. The Christian must even pray for those who despitefully use him. This should be done quietly, secretly. It would be arrogant and repulsive to say to one who was doing you wrong, "I will pray for you." But why such instructions? For two reasons: (1) that the Christian may develop a Christlike character, and (2) that he may win the enemy to Christ. To accomplish these ends a right spirit is necessary. To assume a holier-than-thou attitude

toward an enemy, is as hypocritical as it is repulsive. Conducting one's self properly toward an enemy is a fine art, which few master.

Give More Than Is Demanded (Verses 29, 30)

"To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other." Human beings are inclined to retaliate—to pay back in kind; but Jesus would not have it so. Yet we might offer the other cheek in such a manner as to be really a dare, an insulting gesture; this would make the enemy even more angry. Jesus would have us act in such a way as to soften the anger of the enemy, instead of stirring it to greater heat. The spirit and the manner in which we do a thing has much to do with its results. Be peaceable, not ready with a blow. "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men." (Rom. 12: 17, 18.) "And from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." (Matt. 5: 40.) A lawsuit is bad at best; if you win, you usually lose more than you gain. Besides, a suit sometimes stirs up a bad spirit in a community. Concerning going to law, Paul inquires, "Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded?" "Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." A similar demand is made in Matt. 5: 42. On that verse, J. W. McGarvey remarks: "No lending was provided for by the law of Moses except for benevolent purposes, for no interest was allowed, and all debts were canceled every seventh year. The giving and lending referred to, then, are limited to cases of real want, and the amount given or loaned is to be regulated accordingly. Giving or lending to the encouragement of vice or indolence cannot, of course, be here included." Certainly no precept of the gospel is intended to encourage dishonesty.

Practicing the Golden Rule (Verses 31-34)

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." This is called the Golden Rule. It is the highest and most comprehensive statement of social relations that had ever been made. Others had stated a sort of negative rule: Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you. That is merely refraining from doing harm to others; in addition to that, the Golden Rule requires that we do good to others. We must be better than sinners. Sinners love those who love them. There is no praise due such love as that. If Christians do not do better than sinners do, how are they better? Jesus would have his disciples to love their enemies, and not merely those who love them. It is easy to do good to those who do good to us—sinners do that. We would like for others to be fair and square in their treatment of us, even though they be enemies. We must therefore be just and fair in our relations with them, even if they are not likeable characters. To be a Christian should mean something—certainly it is more than a mere profession. It should enter into our hearts and regulate our conduct, and, so doing, should lift our manner of life above that of the world. The question of verse 33 is another way of saying that

we should practice the Golden Rule in our dealings with those who do not do good to us; we certainly would like for them to do good to us. There is no reward nor merit in lending to those, who, we feel, will certainly return the loan, even though, in doing so, we help a person out of a temporary difficulty. If you were in dire need of food and clothing for yourself and family, and were to ask a brother for a loan to supply your needs, you would not like for him to ask if you would be able to repay him, and if so, when? The man who asks for a loan may fully intend to repay the loan, but you see no chance for him to do so; what then? Give him what he needs, and help him to maintain his self-respect by telling him he can pay it back when he can. But professed Christians will sometimes exact interest on a loan to a poor person, who borrows to meet his actual needs. Such practices are not even up to the requirements of the law of Moses. Of course to lend money which is to be used in business or speculation is an entirely different matter.

Concerning Kindness and Mercy (Verses 35, 36)

"But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing." This is a repetition in condensed form of what has already been said. It is here repeated for emphasis, and to bring it into close connection with the promises which are immediately stated. The things stated must be done in order that the promises be obtained; the language plainly shows this to be so. Do as commanded, "and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High." To be sons of God—joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ—is as great a reward as anyone needs to desire. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." (Rom. 8: 17.) "For he is kind toward the unthankful and evil." This seems to be what is meant by loving enemies and doing them good. God is kind toward those who show no gratitude for his blessings—toward those who do not obey him. His mercy and forbearance are amazing. "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." Mercy is kind or compassionate treatment of the suffering or condemned. God's mercy is seen in what he has done for the sinner, and in his long-suffering and forbearance toward him. And as he is merciful, so must we be. There is frequently too much harshness on the part of Christians toward those whom they deem to be wrong in morals or in doctrine. Rebuke them? yes, with all long-suffering and teaching.

On Judging Others (Verse 37)

"And judge not, and ye shall not be judged." In the Sermon on the Mount we have these added words: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." The Lord does not mean that we are to form no judgments as to the character of people; for he himself said that a tree is known by its fruit, and that we are to beware of false prophets. How could they beware of false prophets, if they were to form no judgments as to who was true and who was false? A church could not discipline an unruly member, if it be denied the right to decide as to character. We could not render honor to whom honor is due, as Paul enjoins us to do, if we

are to form no opinion as to who is worthy of honor and who is not. But we are not to judge harshly; we are usually too ready to condemn. This is what is prohibited, as the rest of the verse shows. "And condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released." We are certainly not to judge a man as guilty on a mere suspicion, not on probabilities. If he did wrong, under the same circumstances, would we have done better? To judge a man as guilty without definite proof, is evil surmising, and that is condemned.

Give Generous Measure (Verse 38)

To sell by short measure or weight is another way of stealing; a Christian cannot afford to practice such dishonest tricks. He cannot afford to let people starve, if he can help it. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom." Liberal giving is rewarded. Do not give grudgingly and sparingly. Give full measure in all your dealings. "For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." As we sow, so shall we reap. The whole lesson shows that our manner of judging others and our manner of dealing with them, will be taken into consideration in God's dealing with us. It is of vital importance, therefore, that we do good to all men.

SOME REFLECTIONS

It is hard to repeat a good deed to a person who shows no appreciation; but there is greater reward in doing so.

There is no merit in making a loan for gain; any sinner will do that. If you loan to a person in need, and he fails to pay, rest assured that God will reward you.

Heaven is the final goal of the Christian; but Jesus intended for his religion to make people better here—to make them better in every relationship in life. A Christian indeed is a blessing to his community. If you do not help others, and if others do not find it easier to live the Christian life in their association with you, you are not what you should be.

To surmise a thing is to suppose, without sufficient evidence, that it is so. Evil surmising is to think or imagine that a person is guilty of evil, and yet you have no real evidence. Read 1 Tim. 6: 3-5, and see the class of sins with which evil surmisings is listed; and yet it is likely that most of us are guilty of that sin.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How to help the needy without harming them.
Kindness, mercy, and forbearance.
Honesty in business.
Evil surmising.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Give some incidents between last lesson and this.

Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus?
How did Jesus answer them about fasting?

Verses 27, 28

How can we love our enemies?
Why do good to an enemy?

Verses 29, 30

Discuss Rom. 12: 17.
Discuss verses 29, 30.

Verses 31-34

Repeat the Golden Rule.
What was new about this rule?
How does the Golden Rule require us to do good to others?
Why should we do good to those who do not do good to us?
Why is giving to the needy practicing the Golden Rule?

Should a Christian exact interest on a loan to a needy person?

Verses 35, 36

Discuss the contents of these verses.

Verse 37

Discuss judging others.

Verse 38

Discuss verse 38.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VII—November 17, 1940

JESUS' CONCERN FOR LIFE AND HEALTH

Luke 7: 2-15

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death.

3 And when he heard concerning Jē'sūs, he sent unto him elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant.

4 And they, when they came to Jē'sūs, besought him earnestly, saying, He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him;

5 For he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue.

6 And Jē'sūs went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof:

7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed.

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

9 And when Jē'sūs heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Is'rā-ēl.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole.

11 And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went to a city called Nā'in; and his disciples went with him, and a great multitude.

12 Now when he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

14 And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."* (John 10: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 3: 16-21.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

November 11.	M.	The Answer to Faith (Luke 7: 2-10)
November 12.	T.	Restoring the Dead to Life (Luke 7: 11-17)
November 13.	W.	Saved by Faith (Luke 7: 36-50)
November 14.	T.	The Deeper Healing (Mark 2: 1-12)
November 15.	F.	The Prodigal Comes to Life (Luke 15: 11-24)
November 16.	S.	The Abundant Life (John 10: 7-10)
November 17.	S.	Life for Life (John 10: 11-18)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably A.D. 28 or 29.

Places.—Capernaum and Nain. Capernaum was an important city of Galilee, situated on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. Nain is now called Nein, and is a small hamlet, "situated about three miles south by west from Mount Tabor." It is situated on an eminence overlooking the plains of Esdraelon.

Persons.—Jesus, a centurion, his servant, some elders of the Jews, the disciples of Jesus, a widow of Nain, her son, and the multitudes.

Lesson Links.—In studying this lesson, let us not forget the purpose of the miracles wrought by Jesus, the prophets, and inspired men of the New Testament. The miracles of Jesus were not due primarily to his concern for life and health, else they never would have ceased. God has always made his revelations to peoples and nations through human agency. It was necessary that these agents receive their messages in such a way as to assure them that they were from God, and not mere hallucinations of their own mind. And when these agents, or messengers, went out to preach, claiming that God had sent them with a revelation, the people had a right to know that these messengers were not frauds nor self-deceived. "Any impostor could claim that God sent him. Even if he were known to be sincere, how could his hearers know that he was not deceived? How could they know for a certainty that God had sent him with a message? But what evidence will suffice? The reply is obvious. The revelation, in order to be of use, as to those who receive it directly from God, must not only be declared by them to us, but must have a divine attestation. In other words, those who declare it to us must show, by some incontestible proof, that it is from God. Such proof is found in miracles."—*The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia*. Not all miracles were signs, though all signs were miracles. The American Standard Version keeps up the distinction between miracles and signs, for that distinction is made in the Greek Testament. Many great miracles were not signs. When God created the heavens and the earth, and all things in the earth, he performed a series of great miracles, but they were not signs. No man saw them, and no message was confirmed by them. And when God raises the dead at the last day, it will be a great miracle, but it will not be done for a sign to anyone. Nicodemus had the correct idea: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3: 2.) When God told Moses in the land of Midian to return to Egypt with a message of deliverance for the children of Israel, he objected: "They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah hath not appeared unto thee." What then could be done? God gave Moses some miracles to perform, "that they may believe that Jehovah, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." (Ex. 4: 1-9.) Jesus commissioned his apostles to announce his gospel message to the whole world; "and they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed." (Mark 16: 20.) If we know the purpose of signs, we know why they ceased. If we become confused as to why Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead, we may conclude that he still

does so; for he is now as much concerned about life and health as he ever was.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Centurion Asks Jesus to Save His Sick Servant (Verses 2, 3)

This centurion was, of course, not a Jew, but a Roman citizen. The Roman government had soldiers stationed in various places to keep down any trouble. The centurions mentioned in the New Testament seem to have been men of good character. This one had a servant, a bondservant, a slave, that he prized very highly—"who was dear unto him." In the wars of those days, men of ability and good character were captured and sold as slaves. This slave was evidently of good character and ability. At the time Jesus entered Capernaum on this occasion this servant of the centurion was sick, and at the point of death. The centurion knew of the miracles of healings that Jesus had been performing. When therefore he heard that Jesus had returned to Capernaum, "he sent unto him elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant." There was nothing arrogant about this centurion. Some army officers, placed, as this centurion was, amongst a people who did not even have the rights of citizenship, would have been inclined to send an order for the appearance of Jesus, but not this centurion. He even had elders of the Jews to do the talking for him. He showed a remarkable degree of humility.

The Elders Praise the Centurion (Verses 4, 5)

"And they, when they came to Jesus, besought him earnestly, saying, He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him; for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." If you will consider the circumstances, it will seem remarkable that such happy relations existed between these elders and the centurion. The Jews hated the Roman government, and would be inclined to have a special hatred for the soldiers who were placed in their midst to make them respect the Roman authorities; but no such feelings existed toward this centurion. "He loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." They therefore considered him worthy of any good thing Jesus might do for him. There was nothing tyrannical about this centurion. That any foreigner could gain such praise from leaders of the Jews is remarkable; and especially so, that a centurion should be so highly praised by them. And this centurion must have been a man of means, for a synagogue large enough to accommodate the people of as populous a city as Capernaum, would cost quite a sum of money. He was also a generous man, or he would not have built that synagogue.

"I Am Not Worthy" (Verses 6, 7)

As Jesus neared the centurion's home, the centurion sent friends, most likely Jewish friends, to Jesus with this word: "Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee." The elders of the Jews said he was worthy; he himself said he was not worthy even to go out to meet Jesus, much less so to have Jesus

to come into his house. A man of real worth never boasts of his importance. A man is never richly endowed with any accomplishment of which he boasts.

The Centurion's Great Faith (Verses 8-10)

"Say the word, and my servant shall be healed." The centurion knew what it meant to speak by authority. He was under authority himself. He knew that when the government at Rome ordered him to do a thing, he did it. The emperor did not have to come into personal contact with him to get him to move. The emperor's word was sufficient. And even though the centurion's power was thus limited, there was power in his word. Those under him were subject to his orders; he did not have to come into personal contact with those under him to have them do what he desired them to do. "I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." He knew the power of a word of authority; the miracles that Jesus had been performing in that district convinced him that Jesus had power over all human ailments. He knew, therefore, that Jesus had power to heal his servant without coming into personal contact with him. He could command the sickness of the servant to go, and it would depart. Contrast his faith with the faith of the Jews who thought they had to touch Jesus, or be touched by him, in order to be healed, and you can see the significance of what Jesus said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Many Jews had come to Jesus for healing, but none had so high a conception of the power and authority of Jesus as did this centurion. Many today limit the power of the Holy Spirit by arguing that he cannot do anything for the sinner without coming into personal contact with him. Their faith does not measure up to that of the centurion's. It would be well for all such thinkers to ponder seriously what the centurion said, and what Jesus said of his faith. In more ways than one it is an outstanding incident.

Jesus Meets a Funeral Procession (Verses 11-13)

If it were according to the plans and purposes of God, he could keep all people from dying; and he would not have to be present in person to do so. Martha and Mary both said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But Jesus could have kept him from dying without being in that home; but to do so, would not have served his purpose. Such a miracle would not have caused anyone to believe in him, for no one would have known that he had anything to do with preventing the death of Lazarus. And Jesus could have prevented the death of the only son of the widow of Nain, without leaving Capernaum; but it would not have served his purpose to do so. This again brings up the purpose of Christ in working miracles. Miracles were not wrought by him primarily for the sake of the sick or the bereaved, but to show his power, and to convince people that he was what he claimed to be. It would seem that the results of this visit to Nain shows the purpose of the visit. The visit was so timed as to meet the funeral procession near the gate of the city. This was not a mere accidental meeting. Jesus had a purpose in doing what he was now about to do, and he

so timed the meeting that the deed might be performed in the most public place. As John wrote about the miracles to produce faith, so were the miracles performed for the same purpose. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20: 30, 31.) Concerning the signs which he did, Jesus himself said, "The very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me"; "the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me"; "if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father"; "believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." (John 5: 36; 10: 25, 37, 38; 14: 11.) The foregoing quotations leave no doubt as to why Jesus performed miracles.

Jesus Raises the Widow's Dead Son (Verses 14, 15)

Jesus had compassion on the sorrowing widow. To him death and human suffering were not delusions of the mortal mind, but real. To regard sickness, suffering, and death as delusions of the mortal mind destroys all sympathy for sufferings. The fact that Jesus did not recognize death and suffering as delusions of the mortal mind proves that such an idea is itself a delusion. "And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." The inspired penman said he was dead; the young man had not deluded himself into thinking he was dead!

The Effects on the People (Verses 16, 17)

"And fear took hold on all: and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us: and, God hath visited his people." But Jesus was more than a great prophet. However he was a prophet, the prophet foretold by Moses. (Deut. 18: 15-19.) Such a great miracle convinced these people that Jesus was from God; only words could tell them that he was the Son of God, the Messiah. Jesus was not yet ready to have that truth announced. Raising a dead person would create no end of talk. This miracle was performed in Nain of Galilee, but it was reported in other places. "And this report went forth concerning him in the whole of Judæa, and all the region round about."

SOME REFLECTIONS

It is singular that a person can be so deluded that he denies all the information that his five senses (or six, if you prefer) conveys to his mind. With those thus deluded there is no such thing as touch, nor taste, nor smell, nor hearing, nor sight, nor is there any sense of weight. All these are said to be delusions of the mortal mind. You do not become sick—you merely think you do, for you do not have a body to become sick. Strange delusion!

The Bible sets forth the idea that sickness, pain, and death are real. On one occasion Jesus said emphatically, "Lazarus is dead."

The Bible is full of evidence of the reality of death. When we sing, "Death is only a dream," we sing foolishness, for death is an awful reality. The Bible tells us that death is an enemy. The sting that produced death is sin. Sin entered the world, and death by sin. Shall we then deny the reality of sickness and death? To do so, is to deny that Jesus and his apostles worked any miracles, and to deny also that there will be any resurrection. It is also to deny that Jesus died and rose again; if that is so, we are yet in our sins. Let us not delude ourselves into believing another gospel; that would be as fatal as to preach another gospel.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The reality of sickness and death.

The centurion's faith.

The purpose of miracles.

Signs have ceased.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, places, and persons.
The class should spend some time in discussing miracles and signs.

Verses 2, 3

What or who was a centurion?
Discuss the character of the centurion of our lesson.

Verses 4, 5

What did the elders of the Jews say about this centurion?
What is remarkable about that?

Verses 6, 7

Discuss what the centurion said about himself.

Verses 8-10

How did the centurion show such great faith?
How do people now sometimes limit the power of the Holy Spirit?

Verses 11-13

Why does not God keep people from dying?
What was the primary purpose of miracles, that is, signs?
Quote passages showing why Jesus performed miracles.

Verses 14, 15

What shows that Jesus recognized the reality of death?
Tell about his raising this widow's son.

Verses 16, 17

Tell about the effects of this miracle on the people.
How extensively reported?
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson VIII—November 24, 1940

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Luke 8: 4-15

4 And when a great multitude came together, and they of every city resorted unto him, he spake by a parable:

5 The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it.

6 And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

7 And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him what this parable might be.

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom

of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved.

13 And those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Take heed therefore how ye hear."* (Luke 8: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 15: 1-6.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

November 18.	M.	.....	The Seed Is the Word (Luke 8: 4-15)
November 19.	T.	.....	Seed by the Wayside (Tit. 1: 10-16)
November 20.	W.	.....	Seed on the Rock (2 Tim. 4: 9-18)
November 21.	T.	.....	Seed Among Thorns (Matt. 6: 24-34)
November 22.	F.	.....	Seed on Good Ground (Acts 2: 37-47)
November 23.	S.	.....	Good Soil (Psalm 119: 9-16)
November 24.	S.	.....	Conditions of Fruitfulness (John 15: 1-8)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably A.D. 28.

Place.—Sea of Galilee. "On that day Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach." (Matt. 13: 1, 2.)

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes.

Lesson Links.—As Jesus was the Son of God—God manifest in the flesh, it follows without argument, that he was the greatest teacher that ever walked among men. He made man, and knew his mind perfectly, and therefore knew how to impart information in the most skillful way. Through that which was known, he led his hearers into new fields of thought. The wisest and most learned men of today cannot construct a parable equal to this parable of the sower. Let the one who thinks that the world has outgrown Jesus, attempt to make better parables than he made. Sometimes Jesus spoke parables, and left them with his hearers for them to make the application; a few parables he explained. A parable is a comparison, an extended simile. Jesus used familiar things in nature to illustrate spiritual things, or worldly things to illustrate heavenly things. Parables were not fictions, but facts.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Parable Stated (Verses 4-8)

As Jesus was sitting in a boat a little way from the land, and the people were on the sloping land along the shore, all could see and hear him with ease. "The sower went forth to sow his seed." In those days the people lived in towns and cities for protection. Some of their farms would necessarily be a considerable distance away. They all literally went forth to sow their seed and to gather their

harvests, and to perform other necessary labor. Neighborhood paths often led through the fields. Hence, the expression, "And as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it." In some of the fields solid rock would be near the surface; the thin soil would warm up quicker than deeper soil, thus producing a more rapid growth till the hot sun took up all the moisture. It would produce a plant, but mature no fruit. Some seed fell among the thorns; it, too, produced plants, but the thorns choked it down so that it could bear no fruit. The seed that fell on good ground brought forth abundantly—a hundredfold. Matthew and Mark mention thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. There were in reality only two kinds of soil, namely, the productive and the nonproductive; and these shaded off into three grades each—six grades in all.

The Disciples Ask for an Explanation (Verses 9, 10)

The facts of the parable, as Jesus stated them, were familiar to the disciples. He had stated no new facts; but they could see that he meant what he said to be an illustration, for a parable is an illustration. But they could not see what he meant, nor why he had turned from plain speech to parables. So they "asked him what this parable might be." Matthew reports them as asking also, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Jesus gave an answer, which at the first hearing, sounds strange: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." Here were two classes of hearers—the disciples of Jesus and his enemies. To the disciples it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Let us not conclude that in some mysterious way God had imparted to the disciples the ability to understand, but had withheld that ability from the rest of the people; that would destroy personal responsibility. The disciples had accepted Jesus as their Lord and teacher, and were desirous of learning the nature of his kingdom; they had a teachable spirit. Only the people who love the truth, the people who hunger and thirst for the truth, can learn it. All such will have their desire for the truth fulfilled; Jesus guarantees that they shall be filled. (Matt. 5: 6.) At the time of this speech of parables, the enemies of Jesus were growing more bitter. They wanted to catch him in his talk, and be able to so pervert what he said as to use it to his hurt. But the parables meant nothing more to them than nice little stories. They could not twist them into something hurtful. Matthew gives a fuller report of this matter, and his report shows why it was not given to these enemies to know the mysteries of the kingdom: Their hearts had become perverse, and their ears were dull of hearing, and they had closed their eyes. They did not want to see the truth, nor did they want to have a correct understanding of the kingdom. They had their scheme figured out, and they would not listen to anything else. They did not want to turn from their theories, nor from their formalities in religion. (Matt. 13: 15.) Their attitude toward the truth closed their eyes and stopped their ears against it. When men do not love the truth, but take pleasure in their own unrighteous ways, God sends them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie. (2 Thes. 2: 9-12.) God forces none to hear his word,

nor to understand it when they chance to hear it; but anyone who loves the truth will have an opportunity to hear it. And only the person who treats the truth fairly and honestly can understand it. These enemies of Jesus were cheating themselves out of the best things that had ever come their way. To his disciples, Jesus said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not." (Matt. 13: 16, 17.) The glories which the Old Testament heroes had longed to see were now being unfolded before the eyes of the disciples; the foolish Pharisees refused to see them. And people are still closing their eyes and hardening their hearts, as did these enemies of Jesus.

Jesus Explains the Parable (Verses 11-15)

We are not left to figure out for ourselves the meaning and application of this parable. At the request of the disciples, Jesus explained it to them item by item.

The Seed.—"The seed is the word of God." Mark says: "The sower soweth the word." Seed has within it a germ of life. If the germ of life in the grain has been destroyed, that grain in reality is not seed. If the word of God had no life-giving quality in it, it could not be called seed; but Jesus said it was seed. If the seed is not sown, there can be no harvest. You may cultivate and fertilize a field all you please, but the seed must be sown, or there will be no harvest. Educate and refine people all you can, yet there will be no spiritual life if the word of God is not sown. This truth should stimulate Christians to do all they can to sow the seed of the kingdom. "Preach the word."

The Wayside Hearer.—Some seed falls by the wayside, and produces no fruit; but the fault is not in the seed—the word is not to be blamed for the failure. The seed is incorruptible, and was sown. "Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved." The devil knows how people are made believers; he knows that if the word of God remains in their heart, they will believe. Hence, when he can do so, he takes the word out of their heart, "that they may not believe and be saved." He is wise enough to know that nothing but the word of God will produce faith. From this truth we know that every scheme that has a tendency to lessen the influence of the word is of the devil. He may even cause people to think that they honor God most by trusting in some direct work of the Spirit to produce faith. With him, it is anything that will keep people from giving the word of God that warm reception that is necessary to cause it to germinate, and produce spiritual life in the heart.

On the Rock.—The seed did not fall on a bare rock. If it had done so, it would not have grown at all. There was enough soil on the rock to cause the seed to germinate and produce a plant; but the soil was so shallow that the plant could not take deep root. The soil soon dried out, and the plant perished. This represents some who receive the word; they hear the word gladly, and become Christians. "And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble." It will be noticed that the seed

on the rock produced a plant in the vegetable kingdom, but it soon perished. The corresponding fact in the parable is, that some people readily receive the word—produce a plant in the spiritual kingdom, which grows rapidly for a time, but cannot stand tribulation and persecution. The Christian plant was produced in the spiritual kingdom, just the same as the plant was produced in the vegetable kingdom; but both plants perished. To say that this parallel does not hold good, is to say that the parable and the explanation Jesus gave of it is misleading. This part of the parable shows that Christians can fall away and perish.

The Thorny Ground.—This was likely strong soil, capable of producing good harvests, had it not been infested with noxious growths. The seed that fell among thorns produced plants, but the thorns so choked the plants that they brought no fruit to perfection. Matthew and Mark say that such plants become unfruitful. It is not said that all life was choked out of the plants among the thorns; the thorns so hindered the plants that they brought no fruit to perfection. Putting together what the three writers say, we learn that the thorns were, cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, and the lusts of other things. These things choke some plants—some Christians—till they bear little or no fruit. It is impossible to escape all the cares of this life. We must look after our children, and that is a care. We must do what we can to make a living, and there are many cares connected with that. Some people allow these cares to so overwhelm them as to absorb all their time and energy. Even when spiritual life is not entirely choked out, such people bring no fruit to perfection. Riches sometimes so absorb the thoughts, time, and energy of otherwise good people, that they finally lose all interest in the Lord and his word. It is not only those who possess riches that are in danger; "but they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. 6: 9.) Too many allow the pleasures of this life to be their main objective; so much so, that they become "fed up" on the common pleasures, and begin to look for "thrills." Such pleasure seekers become a burden to themselves and a nuisance to others, if not worse. There is no chance for the word of God to produce fruit in them.

The Good Ground.—"These are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast"—hold the word fast in a good and honest heart. And this implies that the others were not good and honest. This does not mean that such people were not honest in their business affairs. Many a person is honest with his fellow man, who is not honest with God. A person who goes back on a pledge can hardly be called honest. In this way some are not honest with God—they do not keep their pledge to him. And there is such a thing as intellectual honesty, and such a thing as intellectual and spiritual dishonesty. The wayside hearer would not treat God's word fairly—he was dishonest with God; he was also dishonest with himself, for he was cheating himself out of God's riches. What is honesty but to render to every person that which justly belongs to him? To fail to do this, is to be dishonest. We owe it to the truth to give it a fair and just hearing. We justly belong to God, both by creation and redemption. Hence, to withhold ourselves and our services from him, is to be dishonest with him. If

we are pleased with our religion because it suits us and fits pleasantly into our surroundings, we are doing more than dealing dishonestly with God—we are leaving him altogether out of consideration. To make a god out of your own notions and conveniences, is one of the worst types of idolatry.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Some Truths in Nature.—All life is the product of seed; life comes from life. Science knows nothing of spontaneous generation; all it knows of the origin of any living thing is that it came from seed. That seed must be planted in soil or surroundings adapted to its growth. Science knows also that seed produces after its kind.

Corresponding Truths in Spiritual Affairs.—This parable gives warrant to the conclusion, that all spiritual life is the product of seed; that this seed must be sown in soil adapted to its growth; that it produces the same kind of fruit the world over. It produces Christians only, only Christians. The word of God is the seed that produces this fruit. To produce something else, other seed must be sown. This truth shows why people differ in religion—different kinds of seed have been sown in their hearts.

As the word of God is the only seed that will produce Christians, every Christian should do what he can to sow that seed. Jesus is the great sower, but under him every Christian should be a sower of the seed. Every Christian should know the worthlessness of sowing his opinions, or the opinions of anyone else. "Preach the word."

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

How are people made believers?

May believers fall away and be lost?

The duty of all Christians in sowing the seed.

What is essential to be a good sower of the seed of the kingdom?

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Why was Jesus the greatest teacher?

What is a parable?

Verses 4-8

Why would Jesus say, "The sower went forth to sow his seed"?

Repeat the facts of the parable of the sower.

Let students in turn describe the different kinds of soil.

Verses 9, 10

Why did Jesus speak in parables on this occasion?

Who can be taught the truth of the gospel?

Why did not some understand what he said?

Verses 11-15

In the explanation Jesus gave, what is the seed?

Why is the word called seed?

Why did the devil take it out of hearts?

Discuss that which fell on the rock. May the word produce a plant in the kingdom that may perish?

What about the seed and the thorny ground?

Discuss the thorns that choke the word out of the heart.

Discuss 1 Tim. 6: 9.

How many grades of good ground are represented?

Why does Jesus connect good ground and an honest heart?

When is a person honest with his fellow man?

What is it to be honest with God?

Why are people who follow their own ways not honest with God?

To what gods do some people bow in this country?

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson IX—December 1, 1940

AN EXACTING DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 9: 49-62

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

50 But Jē'sūs said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you.

51 And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jē-ru'sā-lēm,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Sā-mār'i-tāns, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jē-ru'sā-lēm.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them.

56 And they went to another village.

57 And as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jē'sūs said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house.

62 But Jē'sūs said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9: 62.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 16: 24-27.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

November 25.	M.	Conditional Service (Luke 9: 57-62)
November 26.	T.	Supreme Devotion (Matt. 10: 37-39)
November 27.	W.	The Daily Cross (Luke 9: 23-25)
November 28.	T.	Utter Consecration (Rom. 12: 1, 2)
November 29.	F.	Calling a Disciple (Luke 5: 27-32)
November 30.	S.	An Exemplar of Discipleship (Phil. 3: 7-14)
December 1.	S.	“Are Ye Able?” (Mark 10: 35-40)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 29 or 30.

Place.—On the way from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples.

Lesson Links.—Many events of great importance occurred between the last lesson and this—too many to mention here. Luke records only a part of the events recorded by the other writers. Five notable miracles are recorded in the eighth chapter: (1) causing a great storm to cease; (2) suddenly calming the raging waters; (3) casting a legion of demons out of a maniac; (4) healing a woman who had been twelve years an invalid; (5) raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead. “And he called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. And he sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” This is what is usually known as the limited commission, so called because they were sent only to the Jews. Compare chapter

nine, verses 1-6, with Matt. 10: 1-15 and Mark 6: 7-11. They were to preach the kingdom of God—preach the near approach of that kingdom; they were enabled to work miracles to confirm their preaching. Soon after the apostles returned from this preaching journey, he asked them, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?" They had heard various opinions expressed by the people. He then asked them, "But who say ye that I am?" Matthew reports a fuller answer than does Luke. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon this truth confessed by Peter Jesus said he would build his church. That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the foundation of the whole structure of Christianity, and of all our hopes. If Jesus be not the Christ, the church has no foundation, no reason for its existence. But the time to announce him publicly as the Christ had not yet come. He charged them to tell no man that he was the Christ. For the first time he then told them in plain words that he must be killed and raised up the third day. Read also Matt. 16: 13-23; Mark 8: 27-31. "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray." While praying he was transfigured before them. Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, and talked with him about "his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Doubtless this was done to encourage him, and to give the three disciples a glimpse of men in their glorified state. But Jesus charged them to tell no one what they had seen. To tell the other disciples would excite their envy; and the people might discredit their veracity.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

John Enters a Criticism Against Another Disciple (Verses 49, 50)

The disciples had been disputing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus gave them a gentle, though emphatic, rebuke. Of course, it was not pleasant to be rebuked by their beloved master. It seems that John thought to relieve the situation by directing criticism toward one who was not present; the language so indicates. "John answered and said, . . ." He was not answering anything that had been said, but merely making answer to the situation. "Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." It seems that John thought this man should be in the immediate company of those who were going about with Jesus. He made no complaint against this man that he was teaching anything wrong or doing anything wrong. As he was casting out demons in the name of Christ, he was acting by the authority of Christ, or as the agent of Christ. He could not do such miracles unless God was with him. John's only complaint against him was, that he would not become a member of the company of disciples who were traveling about with Christ. He was certainly a disciple of Christ—a follower of the teaching of Christ. "But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not." If you see him again, let him alone; "for he that is not against you is for you." In Mark's report we have: "Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name,

and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us." (Mark 9: 38-40.) A correct understanding of this incident will show how far wrong men are, who seek to use it to prove that no religious group should oppose the false teachings of others.

Jesus Determined to Go to Jerusalem (Verses 51, 52)

The writers of the gospels did not follow a strict chronological order. They seemed to prefer the grouping of events and discourses. It is possible, therefore, that verses 51 and 52 are out of their chronological order. They seem to fit in with his last journey to Jerusalem, but this is not certain. It seems that Jesus had practically fulfilled his work in Galilee. If these verses are in their chronological order, then he made another short visit to Galilee. (Luke 17: 11.) But the language here used seems to indicate plainly that it referred to his last journey to Jerusalem. "And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." He had purposed to go to Jerusalem, and nothing would keep him from going. Just why he departed from his usual custom, and sent messengers ahead to prepare for lodging, we are not informed. Perhaps it was because the Samaritans, through whose country he was making this journey, were not friendly to the Jews. The two messengers he sent were evidently James and John.

James and John Stirred to Great Anger (Verses 53-56)

The village to which these disciples first went would not receive Jesus, "because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem." This so enraged James and John that they said to Jesus, "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" But James and John were too harsh in their judgment upon these Samaritans. The Samaritans did not know that Jesus was the Messiah; to them he was a Jew on his way up to Jerusalem to worship. There was so much religious antagonism between the Samaritans and the Jews, that the fact that he was on his way to Jerusalem to one of the feasts of the Jews, stirred them up against him all the more. On account of this antagonism, the Galilean Jews, in going to Jerusalem to the feasts, passed down on the east side of the Jordan. The Jews regarded themselves as superior to the Samaritans. For an inferior group of people to refuse to receive the Lord was more than James and John could tolerate. Religious prejudice, if allowed to grow into fanaticism, causes bitter and unmerciful persecutions. The sort of fanaticism manifested by James and John caused, in later years, many devout people to be tortured to death. And it was all done professedly in the name of him who rebuked James and John for manifesting such a spirit. Jesus went with his disciples to another village. The town which would not receive Jesus thus had cheated themselves out of the best thing that had ever come their way. But even so, they were not so blameworthy as people today who will not receive Jesus, for they did not know that he was the Messiah.

The Poverty of Jesus (Verses 57, 58)

"As they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." He meant of course to attach himself to the company that traveled with Jesus. Jesus did not deny him, but gave him to understand that he had no earthly home in which to offer him lodging. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was poor, yet possessed all things. The same thing is true of the poor Christian who is faithful. Paul spoke of himself "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. 6: 10.) What was true of Paul may be true of any faithful child of God.

"Follow Me" (Verses 59, 60)

This man to whom the Lord said, "Follow me," replied, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." From Matt. 8: 21, 22, we learn that this man was a disciple. He was therefore already a follower of the teaching of Jesus; hence, Jesus asked him to join them in their travels. He asked that he be allowed first to bury his father. Jesus then made what seems to many to be a strange demand: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God." Concerning this request and the answer Jesus gave, Johnson remarks: "There are two views: (1) That his father was already dead, and he wished only to attend the funeral and properly observe the last rites. If this view is correct, the Savior meant to teach that the duty to the Lord is higher than any earthly duty, and when one has to yield to the other it must be the lower one. (2) The view is also held that the disciple asked that he might be permitted to remain at home until his father's death and burial, and then follow Christ. This is the more probable view." But McGarvey takes the view that the father was then dead. Concerning this man, his request, and the reply of Jesus, McGarvey has this to say: "This man was doubtless one of the twelve, and it has been conjectured, with a good degree of probability, that he was James or John, Zebedee being the father who was to be buried. Compare 20: 20, where Salome is called 'the mother of Zebedee's children,' instead of Zebedee's wife, implying that Zebedee was no longer living. In the answer of Jesus there is a play on the term dead. It was a man physically dead who was to be buried; but those who were to bury him were dead in another sense, in a sense in which the disciple was not dead; that is, they were dead to Jesus. Under ordinary circumstances it is proper for a disciple not only to assist in paying respect to the dead, but to be foremost in it; but the call on this disciple came into direct conflict with the command of Jesus, 'Follow me'; and he was taught that even the most solemn and tender duties of social life must give way to a command of Jesus. The case is an extreme one, and on this account the lesson it teaches has greater emphasis. It should be noted, as partly illustrative of the case, that to assist at a funeral made a man unclean, and that not less than seven days were requisite for his purification. This would require a considerable delay on the part of the disciple. (See Num. 19: 11-22.)"

"Looking Back" (Verses 61, 62)

This man, and the one just mentioned, each had something he wanted to do first. They were not seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. They would follow the Lord, but first something else. "I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." This figure is drawn from agriculture. If a man lays off a straight row, he must keep his eye on some object straight ahead. He is not fit to plow a row for planting, who persists in looking back. It is possible that these people at this man's house would not favor his leaving all to go with Jesus; they might even be unbelievers in Jesus. In either case they would seek to persuade him to stay at home. It would be better for him not to return to those who might persuade him to remain at home. "In thousands of instances it has been shown that the convert who goes to confer with unbelieving relatives before the final step, is likely to part with Christ instead. Heathen, ready to be baptized, who go home for a final farewell before the step, are likely to be persuaded not to take it, so missionaries tell us."—B. W. Johnson.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Because Jesus loved John, and because he wrote much about love, some have represented him as an easygoing, unresentful sort of person; yet Jesus named him and James "Sons of Thunder." True to the fiery disposition which that name indicates, he wishes to call down fire upon a village of Samaritans. But if a man is not capable of resentment, he is not capable of love.

It is easy to find reasons, or excuses, for putting off taking a decisive step in the service of the Lord. Yet so far as we know the first of these men who proposed to follow the Lord was not turned aside by what Jesus said of his own poverty. Jesus did not want him to be one of the company of his followers with a wrong idea as to what it meant in the way of self-denial.

Any man should love his father; yet there is a limit even to that love. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10: 37, 38.)

In this lesson two extremes in the character or person of Jesus are set forth. He set himself forth as poorer than the animals and birds; yet he expressed no bitterness at his lot. And yet quietly he spoke with the authority of heaven.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The character of the apostle John.

Being poor, and yet rich.

What it means to be a disciple of Christ.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Give the five miracles mentioned in the eighth chapter.

When Jesus sent the twelve, what were they to do, and what were they to preach, and to whom?

Tell about what led up to Peter's confession.

Tell about the transfiguration.

Verses 49, 50

What had the apostles been discussing?

What criticism did John make?

Discuss the incident.

Does it forbid opposing false teaching?

Verses 51, 52

Discuss these verses.

Verses 53-56

What stirred James and John to such anger?

Why would the Samaritans oppose giving Jesus lodging?

Verses 57, 58

How was Jesus poor and yet rich?

Discuss these verses.

Verses 59, 60

Discuss these verses.

Verses 61, 62

What was the danger in this man's returning to tell his people farewell?

Give a discussion of the verses.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson X—December 8, 1940

A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Luke 10: 25-37

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jē'sūs, And who is my neighbor?

30 Jē'sūs made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jē-ru'sā-lēm to Jēr'i-chō; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And in like manner a Lē'vite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Sā-mār'i-tān, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion.

34 And came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.

36 Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?

37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jē'sūs said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." (Luke 10: 27.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Lev. 19: 13-18.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

December 2.	M.	"Who Is My Neighbor?" (Luke 10: 25-37)
December 3.	T.	A Cruel Reception (Luke 4: 22-30)
December 4.	W.	Am I My Brother's Keeper? (Gen. 4: 3-10)
December 5.	T.	A Neighborly Deed (Acts 3: 1-10)
December 6.	F.	Love of Neighbor (Rom. 13: 8-10)
December 7.	S.	Rules for Neighbors (Lev. 19: 9-18)
December 8.	S.	Whose Neighbor Am I? (1 Cor. 10: 23-33)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 29 or 30.

Place.—Most likely Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus and a certain lawyer.

Lesson Links.—After the events of the last lesson, Jesus appointed seventy disciples, and sent them on a mission similar to that on which he had previously sent the twelve. These were commanded, as the twelve had been commanded, to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." It is well to take notice of what these seventy were to preach. It has been argued that, though John the Baptist, and also Jesus in his early ministry, preached that the kingdom was at hand, the Jews rejected the kingdom, and the offer was withdrawn, and never preached as at hand any more after Matt. 10; yet these seventy near the close of the public ministry of Christ are commanded to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." In view of the theory referred to, this is an important passage to keep in mind. The more thickly settled a community becomes, the more complex becomes the problem of being a good neighbor. If you were alone on an island far out in the ocean, you could rightly take your high-powered rifle and shoot at will in any direction you please, but not so in a city. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden had no neighbor problem. But in a thickly settled community, where we constantly come into contact with other people, our problems are as varied as the comfort and welfare of the people surrounding us, or with whom we chance to come into contact. One sometimes hears someone say, "It is nobody's business what I do." That is about as foolish a statement as one can make. What you do is the business of everybody with whom you come into contact. However it seems that some, when they get on the highway in a high-powered car, think it is nobody's business how many they maim or kill. Everyone on the highway is due your consideration—he is your neighbor, at least, for the time being.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

A Lawyer's Question (Verse 25)

The lawyers mentioned in the gospels were not attorneys, such as we now have, but men skilled in the law of Moses. The man who is called a lawyer in Matt. 22: 35 is called a scribe in Mark 12: 28. Hence, as scribes were skilled in the law, they were called lawyers; both being applied to the same class of men. Such a one would have to be skilled in the tradition of the elders as well as in the law of Moses. To be skilled in the tradition of the elders required a great deal of memory work, for the traditions had not at this time been reduced to writing. The Pharisees had tried every way to trap Jesus in his talk, and had failed. The Sadducees tried, and failed. It seems that the Pharisees had now decided to test his knowledge of the law. They evidently thought that, as he had not studied in their schools under their great teachers, he certainly could not be a match for one of their skilled men. They hoped to be able to discredit him before the people by showing his lack of the knowledge of the law. Hence, "a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him" to find out what he knew. "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" A Sadducee would not have asked that ques-

tion, for they did not believe in any sort of life after death. They were materialists, believing in neither angels, nor spirits, nor the resurrection. Not so much stress was placed on eternal life in the law and the prophets as in the New Testament. But this lawyer believed in such a state; so did all the Pharisees. It will be noticed, too, that he believed he had to do something in order to inherit eternal life. He was well enough informed to know that, no matter what he had to do, eternal life was an inheritance. No amount of service that he could render would make it any less an inheritance. Even in the affairs of this world inheritances are sometimes conditional, but they are none the less inheritances.

"This Do, and Thou Shalt Live" (Verses 26-28)

Jesus would have the lawyer answer his own question. "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" In this question Jesus really affirms what this lawyer surely knew, namely, that inheritance must be according to law. This is true in nature, in the affairs of men, and in the kingdom of God. Laws among men may change, as they have done in God's dealings with men, but it still remains true that inheritance is according to law. A rich young man once came to Jesus, and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus did not tell either this young man or the lawyer that there was nothing either could do, but gave both to understand that they must do certain things—must comply with the law. To the young man he said, "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. 19: 16, 17.)

The Lawyer Answers.—Jesus had asked, "What is written in the law?" The lawyer replied by quoting from Deut. 6: 5 and Lev. 19: 18: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Mind and heart are sometimes used interchangeably, but where there is a distinction made, as here, the mind is the intellectual faculty. With it we think, reason, weigh propositions, and form judgments. And the heart would then be the emotional faculty. With it we love, hate, admire, rejoice, and so on. Hence our intellectual powers and our emotions are to be fully devoted to the service of God. The word "soul" is hard to define, for it sometimes refers to the whole man, and sometimes it seems to refer to the spirit. Perhaps here it includes the whole inner man. All our strength, both physical and spiritual, is to be devoted to the service of God. To love God is to obey his commandments, to devote ourselves to his service. No man loves God who is disobedient to him, or is indifferent about his service. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14: 15.) "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John 14: 21.) "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (1 John 5: 3.) When a man wants to be religious, but wants to have his own way about it, he does not love God. Let no man deceive himself, for he is not his own judge. Self-love is inherent; it is a part of our God-given nature; it leads a person to look out for his life. Jesus does not require impossibilities, and it does not seem possible for anyone to love his neighbor in the same degree as he loves himself. He can love in the same manner. He can have regard for his neighbor's comfort and convenience; he can

help his neighbor in need. To love the neighbor as one loves himself, leads to an effort to do good to the neighbor; it will keep a man from seeking any advantage of his neighbor. He will not try to get the best of him in a trade. Such love makes a man a useful citizen, a helpful neighbor. Such love leads a person to be merciful and forbearing. If a man loves God, he will seek to please God; if he loves his neighbor, he will seek to please him in everything that is right. It is natural for us to want to please the ones we love. And Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." That is, he would inherit eternal life, for that was the matter of inquiry, if he would obey the commandments he had just mentioned. The lawyer therefore had not been mistaken in thinking that he had to do something in order to inherit eternal life. But that same truth is abundantly taught in the gospel. In speaking of Jesus the Christ the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, said, "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

The Lawyer Desired to Justify Himself (Verse 29)

It is a common failing of humanity to try to justify self, and yet an effort to justify self serves only to make matters worse. Self-justification never heals a wound, nor rights a wrong. To try to justify self in the sight of God is foolish, for no one can deceive God. The word from which we have neighbor has in it the idea of nearness. It has that meaning in its first uses in the Bible. (See Ex. 3: 22; 11: 2.) Later it seems to have been applied by the Hebrews only to Hebrews. Naturally the lawyer had this idea, and felt that he had always been fair and just in his treatment of a fellow Jew. If the term "neighbor" was to be applied only to a Jew in good standing, then he felt that he had fulfilled the law in that particular. And yet he had his doubts, and he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Likely he thought Jesus would give an answer in harmony with the Jewish idea as to who a neighbor was.

A Wounded Man, a Priest, and a Levite (Verses 30-32)

It is said that many robbers infested the hills of Judea, who assaulted and robbed people passing along the highways. Jesus tells of one certain occurrence. This man was evidently traveling alone, "going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." The robbers fell upon him, took what he had, even to his clothing, and almost killed him. The priests were supposed to be good men, and leaders in worship and service. But one, passing along the way, paid this wounded man no attention; a Levite did the same thing. Both of them saw him, and perhaps muttered, "Poor fellow." They were not responsible for his condition; why bother? Likely they both felt that the country was going to the bad, when a man could not travel the highway in safety. It does not seem that it occurred to them that they were acting very little better than the robbers. They did not have enough sympathy for a sufferer to put themselves to any trouble and expense to give him any assistance. They were too busy serving the Lord to waste time in looking after a helpless man! And so are some people today!

The Good Samaritan (Verses 33-35)

There was so much antagonism between Jews and Samaritans that they were practically enemies; yet a certain Samaritan came along and found this wounded Jew. He could not have had any warm affection for a Jew. He knew that this Jew, if well, would have nothing to do with him—would not so much as receive a favor from a Samaritan. But when this Samaritan saw the suffering and helpless Jew, “he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine.” The wine would be used for cleansing the wounds, and the oil for dressing them. Though they knew nothing about germs and disinfectants, they doubtless had learned by experience that wine was good for wounds. Having done what he could in rendering first aid, “he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” He remained with the wounded man overnight, taking care of him as best he could. And still he did not feel that he had discharged his full obligations. The man was not able to leave the inn, and the robbers had left him without anything with which to pay for his further lodging. “And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.” He was loving his neighbor as himself. To love your neighbor as yourself is to put into practice the Golden Rule. This was not a supposed case, but one which the lawyer himself knew about. Had it been a supposed case, or had the lawyer not known of such a case, he would have said, or thought, “Ah, but no Samaritan would do such a thing as that.”

Again the Lawyer Answers His Own Question (Verses 36, 37)

The lawyer had asked “Who is my neighbor?” After Jesus relates the foregoing incident, he asked the lawyer, “Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?” There was but one answer the lawyer could make, excepting that he could have shortened his answer by saying, “The Samaritan.” But it seems that he could not bring himself to call the name of Samaritan in connection with a good deed; so he said, “He that showed mercy on him.” “Go, and do thou likewise.” Hence, a man's neighbor is the one who is near enough that service can be rendered him in time of need.

SOME REFLECTIONS

If a man does not love God enough to want to do his will, he does not love him enough to be saved.

Love for God is not a mere sentiment; it is a life of devotion to his service.

Love eliminates selfishness; we willingly sacrifice for the one we love, whereas selfishness disregards the comfort and interests of others.

Certainly the man next door is your neighbor, whether he is in need or not. If you play the part of a good neighbor, you will not let yourself, nor anything you have, be a nuisance. But your neighbor is also anyone with whom you have anything to do or

with whom you can have any relations. If you love your neighbor as you should, you will try to help him to be a Christian, and will so conduct yourself toward him as to make it easier for him to live right.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

God's love for man.

How love for God and neighbor transforms one's life.

How self-righteousness dwarfs one's character.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.

Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Tell about the appointment of the seventy.

What were they to preach?

Why is the neighbor problem now more complex than formerly?

Why is it other people's business what one does?

Verse 25

Who were the lawyers?

On what point did this lawyer try Jesus, and why?

What did the lawyer believe about eternal life?

Verses 26-28

What does Jesus' question imply?

What did Jesus once say to a rich young man?

What answer did the lawyer give?

Discuss verse 27.

What is it to love God?

How love the neighbor as one's self?

What did Jesus say must be done to inherit eternal life?

Verse 29

Discuss the evils of self-justification.

Verses 30-32

Give the story told in these verses.

Verses 33-35

Tell about the Samaritan.

Verses 36, 37

Discuss these verses.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XI—December 15, 1940

JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY

Luke 11: 1-13

1 And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation.

5 And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him;

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee?

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11 And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” (Luke 11: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 121.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

December 9.	M.	.....	The Prayer of Persistence (Luke 11: 1-10)
December 10.	T.	.....	Exhortation to Prayer (1 Tim. 2: 1-8)
December 11.	W.	.....	Power in Persistence (Luke 18: 1-8)
December 12.	T.	.....	Intercessory Prayer (John 17: 9-20)
December 13.	F.	.....	Faith in Prayer (Matt. 15: 21-28)
December 14.	S.	.....	Humility in Prayer (Luke 18: 9-14)
December 15.	S.	.....	Our Hope Is in God (Psalm 130: 1-8)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—A.D. 30.

Place.—Judea, probably the Mount of Olives.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples.

Lesson Links.—Prayer grows out of desire, a feeling of dependence, and confidence in some one's ability to grant the request we make. If a person did not desire a thing, he could not sincerely pray for it; if he did not feel dependent—if he felt his own ability to get what he wanted—he would not pray for it; neither would he pray to anyone, unless he felt that such a one was able to give him that which he desired. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to prayer is a lack of confidence in God's ability to answer prayer. It is argued that all things proceed according to the laws of nature, and that therefore God could not answer a prayer without working a miracle. A wise woman once said during a study of prayer, “We pity the heathen in his praying to his idols; but, I tell you, we surround God with so many limitations that we make him little more to us than a heathen's god is to him.” The theory mentioned limits God, makes him more helpless, than his creatures; for the smallest mother bird answers the hunger cry of its young. And we answer the requests of others every day. Parents hear and answer the requests of their children. In none of these matters is a miracle wrought; and yet we are told that God cannot do likewise without working a miracle! Some people put in so much time figuring what God can do and what he cannot do, that they fail to do what they should do. The early Christians were not hindered by these modern theories; they prayed, and left the answering in the hands of God. It would help us, if we would quit theorizing about what God cannot do, and believe the truth stated by Paul, that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” (Eph. 3: 20.) It is not, therefore, becoming in us to subscribe to a theory that makes God less able than his creatures. But not all prayers are answered. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” (Prov. 28: 9.) “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” (Psalm 66: 18.) If a man prays for the purpose of making an impression on men, that is all the reward he gets for his prayer. (Matt. 6: 5.) On the other hand, “Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.” (1

John 3: 22.) A study of the prayers recorded in the Bible is both interesting and profitable. These prayers are full of reverence and confidence; they are short, and to the point. There was no effort at high-sounding language nor rhetorical flourishes. What a difference there is between those prayers and some we hear these days!

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

"Lord, Teach Us to Pray" (Verse 1)

John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, though we are not informed as to the nature of the prayers John taught them. People do need to be taught how to pray, and what to pray for. It is likely that the disciple wanted to know how to pray, and not merely what he ought to pray; for the request shows that he felt the need of praying. He did not know how to pray nor what to pray for. In the sixth chapter of Matthew Jesus gives some teaching on how to pray, and how not to pray. A secret, or personal, prayer should not be prayed in a public place. A secret prayer should be prayed in secret. No prayer is heard for its multitude of words, though some public prayers are overburdened with words. A public prayer is supposed to be the prayer of an assembly of worshipers. One man is designated to lead. Naturally he would be supposed to pray for those things that concerned the whole assembly of worshipers. The worshipers follow the prayer, and at the close sign the petition, so to speak, with their amens. It is then the united petition of the worshipers. This makes it necessary for the leader to speak so that the entire congregation can understand what he says, else how can they say the amen? In public prayers there is a temptation to the leader to make a nice speech, so as to impress the church with his ability in prayer! Leaders who do such things, need to be taught to pray to the Lord, and not to make speeches to the worshipers.

Jesus Gives Them a Model Prayer (Verses 2-4)

On account of conditions and circumstances prayers, to be appropriate to the occasion, must vary. It seems, therefore, that Jesus was giving them a model by which to formulate their prayers. In fact, in Matt. 6: 9, Jesus says, "After this manner therefore pray ye." He then gave them practically the same words as are found in this section of our lesson. Where Luke has "Father" Matthew has, "Our Father who art in heaven." Search the Bible through, and you will not find in any of the recorded prayers the endearing terms so often heard in prayers of today. God is addressed with reverence and awe, but never as "our dear, loving heavenly Father." Why not go by the Bible in this respect as well as in others? The Lord teaches us to pray, and how to pray, but many do not heed the teaching. Even our songs of praise, many of them, are too maudlin to be scriptural in style of expression. There is dignity in saying, "Father," or, "Our Father who art in heaven." This term recognizes him as more than God to us, more than the Creator. The term "Father" is applied to him because he sustains a relation to us similar to that of our fathers. There is a close relationship between father and child. The father has an interest in his children, and yearns for their welfare and happiness. He hears their cries

and grieves over their troubles and sorrows. Within his power, he gives them what he thinks is best for them to have, and withholds from them what he thinks would be to their hurt. And as God is our Father, he seeks our highest good, and grants to his faithful children their rightful desires. If not, in what sense is he a Father?

The First Petition.—"Hallowed be thy name." To hallow is to make sacred, or to hold as sacred. To hallow the name of God is to revere it, to esteem it above all other names. This is a petition, therefore, that God's name be revered throughout the whole earth. Those who revere his name will not speak it lightly; they will not use it as a byword, nor in foolish jesting, nor swear falsely by that name. Perjury is, therefore, a double sin; it is lying, and taking the name of God in vain. Let the name of God be held and spoken in reverence, as becomes children of God.

The Second Petition.—"Thy kingdom come." The kingdom foretold by the prophets had not then been established. Its near approach had been preached by John the Baptist, and was so preached by Jesus himself. It was, therefore, appropriate for the disciples then to pray for it to come. Since it has come, why should anyone pray for it to come? Would it not sound queer for one to pray for the church to come? It would be just as appropriate as to pray for the kingdom to come. If a man is a Christian, he is in the kingdom; it would not be sensible, therefore, for such a one to pray for the kingdom to come. We may pray for God's kingdom to be increased—for more and more people to be brought into it, and for those in it to be better citizens of that kingdom.

The Third Petition.—"Give us day by day our daily bread." The marginal reading has, "Greek, our bread for the coming day." This is a petition for the necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter. Of course, Jesus did not mean to encourage his followers to look for these things to be handed to them without any effort on their part. God has appointed that men must work for the things they need; and yet there are many forces that may help or destroy our efforts—forces that God alone can control. Man can cultivate the soil and plant the seed, but he can have no control over weather conditions that make growth possible. We pray for those things that are clearly beyond our power to produce. Laws in the physical world may be invariable, but that does not hinder our using them, or operating by them, in answering the petitions of our children or the call for help from anyone. God can do infinitely more than we can; let us not try to make him helpless under the operations of his own laws.

The Fourth Petition.—"And forgive us our sins." This petition sets forth clearly the idea that the followers of Christ commit sin; if that were not so, there would be no use to teach them to pray for the forgiveness of sins. To those who would claim that they do not sin, John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1: 8.) Were it not for the mercy and grace of God, we would all be doomed for all eternity. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1: 9.) Therefore the one who does not think he has any sins to confess, deceives himself, and has no promise that his sins will be forgiven.

But how many can say what Jesus taught them to say? "For we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Sin is here spoken of as a debt to God. Obedience is his due; sin is a failure to give him his due. When therefore we sin, we have not paid him what is due him.

The Fifth Petition.—"And bring us not into temptation." Do not put us to the test; do not bring us into conditions that will try us. The petition is a recognition of our weakness; we might not stand the trial. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13.) But in our ignorance we might not find the way of escape, or in our weakness might not take advantage of the way of escape.

Jesus Encourages Persistence in Prayer (Verses 5-8)

The illustration Jesus gave seems a little strange to us, for the customs of today are not as they were then. The man had securely shut the door; besides, he did not want to disturb the children. It is easy for parents to sympathize with him on that point. He preferred that his friend would go on, and not cause him to disturb his children; but his friend was so persistent, he would disturb them anyway. So, because of his friend's persistence, he arose and gave him as many loaves as he wanted. And Jesus gave that illustration to encourage his disciples to be persistent in their praying. The same point is emphasized in the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow. (Luke 18: 1-8.) The widow felt that her cause was just; yet, knowing the judge to be selfish and unjust, she persisted in her pleas till she obtained justice. Jesus spoke this parable to them "to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." That is, they should persist in their praying, and not give up.

"Ask, and It Shall Be Given You" (Verses 9, 10)

There are limits to all such promises. If we turn our ear away from hearing the law, God will not hear us. If what we ask for is not what we ought to have, God will not grant our request. We know not how to pray as we ought. (Rom. 8: 26.) We, like children, desire many things that are not best for us to have; but God is a wise Father. There are some things that God has definitely promised; we know that it is according to his will to grant such things. In making our petitions for other things, it is appropriate to say, "If it be thy will."

God's Willingness to Answer Prayer (Verses 11-13)

When children ask for things they need, no father will give them hurtful or useless things. Jesus uses this illustration to show that our Father in heaven is more willing to give good things to his children than are earthly fathers. Where Luke has the Holy Spirit, Matthew has "good things." As Luke records it, the Holy Spirit is to be given to those that pray for the Holy Spirit. As the ordinary gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to all that obey the Lord, it does not seem that it is this for which they were to pray; for a

disciple to pray such a prayer would be to pray for what he already has. While the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit was given according to his own will, yet it was proper and right for disciples to desire such gifts. (1 Cor. 12: 11; 14: 1.) As it was right to desire such gifts, it would be lawful to pray for them. As such gifts have ceased to be given, it would not now be proper to pray for them.

SOME REFLECTIONS

"Holy and reverend is his name." (Psalm 111: 9.) Things pertaining to God are holy, and must be revered. (Lev. 19: 30; 26: 2.) David would not kill wicked king Saul, because Saul was God's anointed. (1 Sam. 26: 6-11.)

To your mind is there any sacredness in the Bible? If we had reverence for God and the things of God, we would not use his name lightly, nor would we weave a passage of scripture into some foolish joke.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." (James 4: 3.) It is not God's will that we should spend our means for fun and frolic. "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5: 14.)

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

God answers prayer.

What constitutes acceptable prayer?

The prayer of Jabez, (1 Chron. 4: 9, 10.)

The Lord's Prayer. (John 17.)

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.

Why do people pray?

Name some hinderances to prayer.

Why are not all prayers answered?

Verse 1

Give some reasons why people need to be taught how to pray.

Discuss the difference between secret prayer and public prayer.

Verses 2-4

Why is the term Father applied to God?

Let the class in turn discuss each petition of this model prayer.

Verses 5-8

Repeat the illustration Jesus gives.

What is the point in the illustration?

Give the parable of the widow and the unjust judge, and its lesson.

Verses 9, 10

Discuss these verses.

Verses 11-13

What illustration does Jesus here give?

What application does Jesus give of the illustration?

Discuss verse 13.

Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XII—December 22, 1940

SHARING THE SHEPHERDS' JOY

Luke 2: 8-20

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

9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

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

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

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

14 Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Beth'le'hém, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

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

17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child.

18 And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.” (Luke 2: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 9: 6, 7.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

December 16.	M.	The Birth in the Manger (Luke 2: 1-7)
December 17.	T.	Good Tidings of Great Joy (Luke 2: 8-12)
December 18.	W.	The Angels' Chorus (Luke 2: 13, 14)
December 19.	T.	A Pilgrimage to the Manger (Luke 2: 15-20)
December 20.	F.	A Light for Revelation (Luke 2: 25-35)
December 21.	S.	The Visit of the Magi (Matt. 2: 1-12)
December 22.	S.	Named Jesus (Matt. 1: 21-25)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—4 B.C. See time in lesson for October 13.

Place.—Bethlehem of Judea.

Persons.—Joseph, Mary, the child Jesus, the shepherds, and the angels.

Lesson Links.—When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, he gave him the promise that in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed. (Gen. 12: 1-3.) This promise was renewed when Abraham offered up Isaac. (Gen. 22: 15-18.) This promise was repeated to Isaac and to Jacob. (Gen. 26: 1-4; 28: 13, 14.) From Paul we learn that this promised seed was Christ. (Gal. 3: 16.) To Moses Jehovah said, “I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it

of him." (Deut. 18: 18, 19.) Peter quoted this prophecy as applying to Jesus. (Acts 3.) Peter then made this significant statement: "Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days." (Acts 3: 24.) The prophecies concerning the Messiah are too numerous to mention here; the student can easily find them, if he so desires. And in studying these prophecies there is one point that should not be overlooked; namely, these prophecies concerning his person, his character, his mission, and his reign are so varied that no human skill could have made them apply to one person. To illustrate this point, note that the Jews made a distinction between the Christ and "the prophet." (John 1: 19-21.) They thought the scriptures taught that the Christ would not be put to death, but would abide forever. (John 12: 32-34.) This shows that no fraud could have made any success at fulfilling these prophecies. Because of the political condition of the Jews, these prophecies were more interesting to them than they would have been, had they been prosperous in a well-ordered government of their own. They were looking for a deliverer. (See Luke 2: 25-38; 3: 15.) Though these Jews had studied these prophecies closely, they did not really know them—did not know their meaning. They had built up a theory as to how these prophecies would be fulfilled; and because things did not occur according to their theory, they would not believe when the prophecies were fulfilled right before their eyes. "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him." (Acts 13: 27.) Their theory so blinded them, that, though they could quote these prophets by memory, they did not know that they themselves were fulfilling them.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

The Shepherds of Bethlehem (Verse 8)

"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled." (Verse 1.) It seems that the Jews were expected to be enrolled in their ancestral city. Though Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, their ancestral city was Bethlehem of Judea. It was the city in which David was born; here he had grown to manhood. Both Mary and Joseph were of the family of David. It was necessary, therefore, that they go to Bethlehem to be enrolled. Such crowds preceded them to the little city that they could find no room in the inn. Certainly the innkeeper did not refuse them lodging because he had anything against them, and certainly he had nothing against the unborn child. And yet many sermons have been preached on "No Room for Jesus in the Inn," as if the innkeeper refused Joseph and Mary lodging because of his intense animosity against the unborn child! It is likely that many others failed to find room in the inn. When Jesus was born, his mother laid him in a manger. Such seems horrible to us; but on account of the customs of that time, it most likely did not seem so bad to them, though it was a great discomfort. No informed person now claims that Jesus was born on December 25. As the shepherds were watching their flocks that night out in the open country, it must have been in the warm season.

Here in these same hills David had cared for his father's sheep. It is possible that the shepherds of our lesson were descendants of Jesse. They must have been godly men, to be so honored as they were. No doubt that often as they looked up into the starry heavens at night, they had thoughts of the nineteenth Psalm. Such meditation makes for piety and reverence.

An Angel Appears to the Shepherds (Verse 9)

The shepherds evidently had brought their sheep together for the night. They would thus be company to one another; besides, they could alternate in keeping watch over the sheep by night. Perhaps they were discussing the prophecies concerning the deliverer that was to come. "And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid." It is natural for a person to be filled with fear at the sight of a heavenly visitor; it is not to their discredit that they are, but rather to their credit. Even the beloved apostle John, when he saw the glorified Christ, was so overcome with fear that he fell at the Lord's feet as one dead. (Rev. 1: 13-17.) It is no wonder, therefore, that these shepherds, in the lonely hours of the night, were afraid when this angel suddenly stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Nothing like that had ever appeared to them before.

The Angel's Announcement (Verses 10-12)

"Be not afraid." The angel would assure the shepherds that there was no danger, so that they would be in a frame of mind to listen more calmly and attentively to what he had to tell them. "For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy"—such tidings as mortal ear had never heard. The angel was not only bringing them good tidings, but good tidings of great joy. And these good tidings of great joy were not for a select few, but to all the people. These shepherds, being Jews, would likely understand that expression to include only the Jews. They had it worked out that the deliverer would deliver them from all Gentile rule, and restore their old kingdom. The tidings of great joy were announced in these simple words: "for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." "City of David" is not here used as a name for Bethlehem. It is referred to as the city of David because David was born and reared there. The term "city of David," when used as a name, applied to a section of Jerusalem. (2 Sam. 5: 7, 9, and numerous other places.) Notice the descriptive terms the angel used concerning this newborn babe—Savior, Christ, Lord. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life." (1 Tim. 1: 15, 16.) He is to save people from sin here, and from the consequences of sin in the eternal world. He is the expected Messiah. Messiah is Hebrew for anointed; Christ is the corresponding term from the Greek. He was to be, according to the prophets, the anointed prophet, priest, and king; he is also Lord. In these offices, or rela-

tionships, we must accept him, else our faith is not as it should be. That the angel intended for these shepherds to visit the babe at once is evident, for he gave them explicit directions as to how they would find him, and how they would know they had found the right babe, and not another. "And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

A Multitude of Angels Visit the Shepherds (Verses 13-15)

One angel made the announcement concerning the birth of the Savior. But these lowly shepherds were to be honored yet more; for "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying," as if singing a refrain to the first angel's announcement, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." There is peace between God and those in whom he is well pleased; it could not be otherwise, for those in whom God is well pleased are in harmony with his will. And there is peace between those in whom God is well with God. If there is a lack of peace between two people, one or both is at variance with God. Because Jesus makes peace between God and man, and sets forth principles upon which men can live at peace with one another, he is the Prince of peace. Having delivered the message, and having sung their song of praise, the angels returned into heaven. The whole occurrence was very unlike man's way of doing things. Men would have sought out the great men of Jerusalem and made the announcement to them in pomp and splendor. But God chose lonely shepherds, watching their flocks away from the crowd, and made the wonderful announcement to them in language both simple and sublime. It is wonderful that these obscure men heard such a message and such singing as none others had ever heard. So soon as the angels departed, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." They had full confidence in what the angels had said. It seems that all went. Perhaps they felt that he who sent them would look after their flocks while they were away.

The Shepherds' Report Caused the People to Wonder (Verses 16-18)

"And they came with haste." They were prompt in their obedience to the angel, for what the angel said to them was in effect an order for them to go and seek out the child. But they would follow the angel's message eagerly and joyfully. They found the babe in a manger, as the angel had said they would. That was a sign that they had found the right babe. When they found things just as the angel had said they would, and therefore had no doubt they had found the right babe, "they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child." No such report as that had ever before been made to a group of people, and we can well believe that the shepherds had not yet recovered from their excitement over the visit of the angels and the announcement of the birth of this child. How eagerly they would tell what they had seen and heard. "And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds." The people

were bound to believe what the shepherds said as to the things which they had seen and heard; for their presence there in the night was proof that they had been divinely guided to the child, for how else would they have known to come? These wonderful things would stir men's souls to their deepest depths. Is it any wonder that those who were watching over the mother and the newborn babe were astonished at what they heard. It had not occurred to them that the babe was anything more than an ordinary babe. Then these shepherds came rushing in exhibiting signs of excitement, and likely all but out of breath from their haste. How eagerly they told their story! and how eagerly those present would listen to their recital! It was a wonderful night in the lives of all those who were present; and yet none of them could possibly know the full significance of what they saw and heard.

The Shepherds Returned to Duty (Verses 19, 20)

The events of that night would mean more to Mary than to anyone else, and for that reason she would puzzle more over their significance than would anyone else. She would keep alive in her heart the events of that night. Other things would have to enter into the shepherds' thoughts, though they could never forget that night. There were sheep out there in the hills that needed their care and attention. "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them."

SOME REFLECTIONS

Had this lesson appeared in these studies in its chronological order, it would have been the second lesson of this quarter; it appears now as a Christmas lesson. Had God meant for us to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, he would have given us the date of his birth, and also some instructions as to the manner of its observance.

The usual manner of celebrating the supposed birthday of Jesus is out of harmony with his life and teaching. If men were to make a deliberate effort to mock the teachings and claims of Jesus, they could not more effectively do so than some do in their Christmas celebrations.

One cannot entirely escape the spirit of Christmas, nor need he try to do so. It is well to have a season of joy and good-fellowship. It helps to cultivate the spirit of giving, even though the gifts are not always to the needy. We like to know that our friends remember us, and we like to remind them that they still have a place in our hearts. But no thoughtful person will think that he is celebrating the birthday of Jesus, nor will anyone who has any respect for Christ Jesus, engage in revelry and carousing.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Prophecies concerning Jesus.

Will Jesus save those who refuse to recognize him as King?

Jesus the Prince of Peace.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Give the promise made to Abraham, and renewed to Isaac and Jacob.
How do we connect this promise with Christ Jesus?
What did Moses say about a prophet?
Why could not somebody fraudulently pretend to fulfill these prophecies?

Why would the Jews at the time of our lesson be specially interested in prophecies concerning a deliverer?

Verse 8

Where was the home of Joseph and Mary, and why were they in Bethlehem?
What about their lodging in Bethlehem?
What is said of the shepherds?

Verse 9

Who visited these shepherds?
Why do people fear in the presence of a heavenly being?

Verses 10-12

Repeat, and discuss the message of the angel.
Discuss the terms Savior, Christ, and Lord.
How would the shepherds find the newborn babe?

Verses 13-15

Tell of the multitude of angels, and the significance of what they said.

Verses 16-20

Read and discuss the remaining verses of the lesson.
Discuss the reflections.

Lesson XIII—December 29, 1940

JESUS REQUIRES FAITHFULNESS

Luke 12: 35-48

- 35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning;
36 And be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him.
37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them.
38 And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants.
39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through.
40 Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.
41 And Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?
42 And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?
43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath.
45 But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;
46 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful.
47 And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes;
48 But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."* (Luke 12: 48.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 3: 10-12.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.—

December 23.	M.	“Be Ye Also Ready” (Luke 12: 35-40)
December 24.	T.	The Faithful Steward (Luke 12: 41-48)
December 25.	W.	Faithfulness in Little Things (Luke 16: 1-12)
December 26.	T.	Faithfulness Required (1 Cor. 4: 1-5)
December 27.	F.	A Man of Faith (James 1: 2-8)
December 28.	S.	Heroes of Faith (Heb. 11: 1-10)
December 29.	S.	The Crown of Life (Rev. 2: 8-11)

LESSON SETTINGS

Time.—Probably A.D. 30. It is thought by some that Luke records this incident out of its chronological order, though that is not certain.

Place.—Probably somewhere in Judea.

Persons.—Jesus and the multitudes.

Lesson Links.—On the occasion of our lesson a vast multitude had gathered about Jesus, “insomuch that they trod one upon another.” (Verse 1.) Jesus first directed his remarks to his disciples, saying, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” All their secret planning and scheming would be brought to light. The disciples were exhorted to fear no man; God’s care was over them. “And when they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say.” (Verses 11, 12.) While Jesus was speaking, “one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.” His own financial affairs seemed to him more important than what Jesus was saying. In the division of property in those days the oldest son received a double portion; that is, he received twice as much as did either of the other heirs. That was not at all unfair, for the oldest son had to assume much of the responsibility of caring for and supporting the younger children; perhaps at the time of the division much of his life had already been spent. In this case it is possible that the older brother had managed to get possession of all the property; that might have been the grounds of the complaint this man made. It is bad when anyone wants to defraud others; it is unnatural when one member of a family wants to cheat other members of the family. It seems beastly; extreme covetousness is at the bottom of such unnatural conduct. But Jesus gave this man to understand that he had not come to sit in a court of arbitration. He then showed the folly of making gain the object of life. The man who struggled till he had much goods laid up, and then meant to take life easy, died before enjoying it, and left it all to others. The Lord called him foolish. Then the Lord taught his hearers not to be anxious about the material things of life, but to seek the kingdom of God, and these things would be supplied. By this Jesus did not encourage laziness, for no man can seek the kingdom of God while depending on others to support him in idleness.

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON

An Exhortation to Preparedness (Verses 35-38)

People in those days wore loose garments. They used a girdle, or belt, to bind their garments about them when they were walking,

laboring, or serving. In preparing and serving meals servants girded up their clothing about their loins. Having their loins already girded up indicated readiness to serve. If their master was away, and they had their loins girded and their lamps burning, they showed alertness and a readiness to serve him the moment he entered the house. He would not have to call for lights—they had them ready. He would not have to call for them to get ready to serve him—they were ready when he came. Jesus aimed this parable at his disciples. Like all parables, it cannot be made to fit at every point. The essential idea is that the followers of Christ should always keep themselves ready for any service. Good servants are the Lord's "minute men"—ready any minute to do his bidding. They are to be "like unto men looking for their lord." Of course, the Lord did not mean that his servants should, or even could, get everything ready, and then stand around watching and waiting for him to come. The servants that he will find watching are the servants who are actively engaged in doing his will. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." When servants are in charge of a house, there are other things for them to watch out for besides their lord's return. They must keep a close watch to see that everything goes on right and in readiness for their lord's return. For every servant to be busy in the discharge of his duty was the best preparation the servants could make. "And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

The Master of the House and the Thief (Verses 39, 40)

The thief does not advertise the time of his coming, or even that he is coming at all. He does not want people to expect his coming. His success depends greatly on his not being expected. If a thief were expected, it would be foolish not to guard against him; a sensible man would be ready for his coming. Jesus uses this illustration to impress on his disciples that they should always be ready. This emphasizing readiness shows that watchfulness really means readiness. Whether the Lord comes soon or late is none of our business; our business is to make ready: "for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." It will be well for people to meditate on what will then be the difference between those who are ready and those who are not ready; study this point, not in the light of what you think should be, but in the light of what God says will be. He will decide that point, and not you; and he will decide it in harmony with his will, and not according to your notions.

Blessed Is the Faithful Servant (Verses 41-44)

It is not hard for us to decide what it takes to constitute a faithful servant in the affairs of this life. Anyone who works for another serves him. We have no slaves as they did in those days; but the man who hires himself to work for another has sold his services for a stipulated time at a named price. It is the hired servant's duty to work faithfully at the task assigned him; he must work according to the plans and purposes of the man who hires him. He never thinks of adopting the idea that one way is just as good as another, just so he is honest; for he knows that he could not be honest with

his employer in following such a notion. From this, let us learn what it is to be an honest, faithful, servant of God. Peter asked the Lord a peculiar question: "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?" The Lord requires faithful service on the part of all. He did not give a direct reply to Peter's question, but replied by asking him a question. "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?" From the parable of the unrighteous steward, it seems that the steward sometimes had charge of his master's business—a sort of general manager. (Luke 16: 1-13.) He certainly had charge of the household affairs; a part of his duty was to look after the food supply. We can easily see what was required in a steward, and how faithful a good steward would act. "Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4: 2.) "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." From the parable of the unrighteous steward we learn that all of the servants of God are stewards. They have certain powers and property committed to them to be used in the service of the Lord. The property we have in our care is the Lord's; we are to use it in the interest of his cause. And so with any God-given power we have. Paul had been intrusted with the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles. "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. 4: 1.) And even though had he not been willing to discharge his duties as a steward, the obligation was still resting upon him. "For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me." (1 Cor. 9: 17.) All Christians, in a general sense, are stewards of the gospel—it is their duty to teach it to others. "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God." (Heb. 5: 12.) We are to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet. 4: 7-11.) By being faithful stewards, we make to ourselves friends who will receive us into the eternal tabernacles. (Luke 16: 9.) Unless we regard the following statement as added to complete the parable, it is somewhat confusing: "Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath." The man had one steward, and from the parable it seems that his responsibility included only household affairs. If he proved faithful in that capacity, he would set him over all his affairs—make him general manager. It does not seem possible that the Lord has picked out any one Christian to whom that would apply. It does show that the faithful steward will be richly rewarded. But if there is any one Christian today that imagines he will some day be appointed general manager over all the Lord's business, he is deluding himself.

The Fate of the Unfaithful Servant (Verses 45, 46)

A faithful servant would have discharged his duty whether his lord came early or late; the fact that his lord delayed his coming would not have caused him to be unfaithful. But delay in his lord's coming gave the unfaithful servant a chance to show what was in him. This servant had charge of his lord's affairs, and therefore had servants under his authority. He was a bully and a drunkard.

There was no righteousness and honesty in him; so he said to himself, "My lord delayeth his coming." He therefore began to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to fill himself with food and strong drink. Of course, he thought he would have time for all this and then to straighten up before his lord returned; for he would not want to be so doing when his lord returned. But the whole parable shows that he was fundamentally wrong in his attitude toward his lord and his fellow servants. "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful"—"the hypocrites," according to Matthew. This parable, therefore, shows that a servant may so conduct himself as to be finally lost. "There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 24: 51.) This is expressive of the extreme anguish which the unfaithful and hypocritical servant shall suffer.

Punishment of the Disobedient (Verses 47, 48)

The servant who made a mistake while honestly seeking to do his lord's will, is different from the one who deliberately does as he pleases regardless of his lord's will; and so also a sin of ignorance is not so bad as a deliberate setting aside of authority. A man may sin through weakness while recognizing the proper authority. After a law has been enacted and published, there is no excuse for ignorance. A man who could know the Lord's will, but fails to do so, cannot claim immunity from punishment on the claim that he sinned ignorantly. A failure to know the Lord's will is itself a sin. The following quotation is from Clark's Commentary: "The subject of the forty-seventh and forty-eighth verses has been greatly misunderstood, and has been used in a very dangerous manner. Many have thought that their ignorance of divine things would be sufficient excuse for their crimes; and that they might have but few stripes, they voluntarily continued in ignorance. But such persons should know that God will judge them for the knowledge they might have received, but refused to acquire. No criminal is excused, because he has been ignorant of the law of his country, and so transgressed them; when it can be proved that those very laws have been published throughout the land. Much knowledge however is a dangerous thing, if it be not improved; as this will greatly aggravate the condemnation of its possessor. Nor will it avail a person, in the land of light and information to be ignorant, as he shall be judged for what he might have known, and, perhaps, in this case, the punishment of this voluntarily ignorant man will be even greater than that of the more enlightened; because his crimes are aggravated by this consideration, that he refused to have the light that he might neither be obliged to walk in the light, nor account for the possession of it. So we find that the plea of ignorance is a mere refuge of lies, and none can plead it who has the book of God within his reach, and lives in a country blessed with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

SOME REFLECTIONS

In every emergency the man who is prepared for it fares the best; for when the emergency arises, it is then too late to prepare for it.

Take your concordance, and follow the word "blessed" in its appli-

cation to man. Not one time will you find such statements as, "Blessed are those who are religious," or "blessed are those who do things through ignorance," or "blessed is the man who thinks one way is as good as another," or "blessed is the man who is true to his conscience." But blessings are pronounced on those who do the will of God.

Ignorance saves no one; if it did, the more ignorant a person is the more sure would be his salvation. On the contrary, ignorance causes many to be lost. "Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4: 1, 6.) Every servant of God is commanded to add knowledge to his faith. The man who does not seek to know God's will, does not love him.

TOPICS FOR INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

The curse of ignorance.

The advantages of having a knowledge of God's word.

The characters upon whom God pronounces blessings.

QUESTIONS

Tell where the lesson is found.
Repeat the Golden Text, and give reference.

Lesson Settings

Give time, place, and persons.
Give the incidents of the first part of this chapter.

Verses 35-38

Why and when were girdles used?
What exhortation is given in verse 35?
Give the parable of these verses, and the lesson of it.

Verses 39, 40

Give the illustration of these verses.
What lesson does it teach?

Verses 41-44

What does it take to constitute a faithful servant in the affairs of this life?

Who is an honest and faithful servant of God?

Give Peter's question, and the Lord's answer.

Give some lessons about stewardship.

Verses 45, 46

What is said of the unfaithful servant?

The delay of his lord's return gave the unfaithful servant an opportunity for what?

What was done with the unfaithful servant?

Verses 47, 48

Discuss the subject matter of verses 47 and 48.

Discuss the reflections.

Consider These Facts . . .

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