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## P R E F A C E

In the following pages the reader has the thirtieth annual volume published by the Gospel Advocate Company on the Bible school lessons. First known as ELAM'S NOTES, it later became the ANNUAL LESSON COMMENTARY. In 1946 it was changed to TEACHER'S ANNUAL LESSON COMMENTARY, hoping to give *teachers in all departments a fund of information which lack of space forbids in the quarterlies*. This is the sixth volume under this new title, and the fifth by the present author.

In 1945 we began a new cycle of lessons which ends with our study of Revelation in this volume. In 1945 we spent the entire year studying about Jesus Christ; the whole of 1946 was spent studying about the church Jesus built. In 1947 we studied great men and women of the Bible. In 1948 we spent the entire year in the Old Testament, studying the rise, growth, decline, fall, captivity, and return of the kingdom of Israel. The year 1949 was spent studying Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. During 1950 we gave six months to a study of Acts and six months to studying the epistles to the churches. This year, 1951, the first six months are devoted to a study of Israel's literature and the Minor Prophets; the third quarter is devoted to a study of the various relationships of the Christian, an intensely practical study; and the fourth quarter fittingly treats of the triumph of the Lord and his people, and the glories that await them in the great beyond. This has been a wonderful cycle of lessons, affording the teacher the opportunity to teach all the vital truths of God, and to impress the student with the practical issues of Christianity.

If teachers and students find this book helpful in the preparation and delivery of their lessons, the writer will feel that his time and effort have been well spent.

THE AUTHOR

## LESSONS FOR 1951

### FIRST QUARTER

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# BIBLE DICTIONARY OF PROPER NAMES

## A

- Aa-ron (enlightened). Ex. 6: 20. Brother of Moses, and first high priest of the Levitical order.
- Ab-i-gail (whose father rejoices), 1 Sam. 25: 18. The beautiful wife of Nabal, who later married David.
- A-bra-ham (father of a multitude), Gen. 17: 5. Founder of the Hebrew people, and father of the faithful.
- A-cha-n (troubler), Josh. 7: 20. A soldier under Joshua who stole devoted items, and was put to death for his sin.
- Adam (muddy, one made or produced), Gen. 3: 17. The name of the first man.
- A-don-1-be-zek (lord of Bezek), Judges 1:5. A Canaanite chieftain captured by Judah.
- A-gur (collector), Prov. 30: 1. The writer of Proverbs 30.
- A-hab (father's brother). 1 Kings 18: 19. Son of Omri, seventh king of Israel, very wicked.
- A-has-u-e-rus (king), Esther 1. King of Persia; Xerxes of profane history.
- A-haz (possessor), 2 Kings 16: 2. Eleventh king of Judah.
- A-mos (a burden), Amos 1. A native of Tekoah, and one of the Minor Prophets.
- Am-ra-pher (powerful people), Gen. 14: 1. King of Shinar in the days of Abraham.
- An-a-ni-as (Jehovah is gracious), Acts 5: 1. Member of Jerusalem church who died for lying to God.
- A-poc-a-lypse. The Greek word which means revelation; the book of Revelation is often referred to by the use of this word.
- A-ra-bi-a (wilderness), 1 Kings 10: 15. The country east of Palestine.
- A-si-a, Rev. 1: 4. 1. The name given to all Asia Minor; 2. A name given to the western portion of Asia Minor in which were located the seven churches of Revelation.
- As-syr-1-a (plain, level), Hos. 12: 1. A powerful nation northeast of Palestine with Nineveh as its capital which took the ten tribes of Israel into captivity.
- Ath-ens, Acts 17: 22. The capital of Greece; a city of great learning.

## B

- Bab-y-lon (confusion), Mic. 4: 10. Capital of ancient Chaldea, where the Jews spent seventy years in captivity.
- Ba-laam (lord of the people), Num. 22: 21.

The son of Beor, a prophet whom Balak hired to curse the people of Israel.

- Ba-lak (void, empty, waster), Num. 22: 15. King of Moab who hired Balaam.
- Bath-she-ba (daughter of an oath), 2 Sam. 11: 3. Wife of Uriah, who later became the wife of David and mother of Solomon.
- Be-er-she-ba (well of the oath), Amos 5: 5. One of the oldest towns in Canaan, and connected with the history of Abraham and Isaac.
- Beth-el (house of God), Amos 5: 5. City about twelve miles north of Jerusalem.
- Beth-le-hem (house of bread), Mic. 5: 2. A city about six miles south of Jerusalem.
- Bil-dad (son of contention), Job 2: 11. One of Job's friends.
- Bo-az (fleetness, strength), Ruth 3: 2. A man of Bethlehem who married Ruth.

## C

- Ca-naan (low, flat), Gen. 10: 15. 1. A son of Ham and grandson of Noah. 2. The land into which the Israelites came after forty years of wandering in the wilderness.
- Ca-per-na-um (village of Nahum), Matt. 11: 23. A city of Galilee on the north-western shore of the sea of Galilee.
- Chal-de-ans, Job 1: 17. 1. The people of the country of Chaldea. 2. Wise men who claimed the power to interpret dreams and see into the future.
- Che-bar (adjoining), Ezek. 1: 1. A river near Babylon,
- Cle-ment. An early church writer, probably acquainted with Paul.
- Cor-inth. The capital of Achaia, and scene of Paul's labors.
- Cy-rus (son, throne), Ezra 1: 1. King of Persia who sent the Jews back to Jerusalem.

## D

- Dan (judge), Gen. 30: 6. Fifth son of Jacob and first of Bilhah. 2. The tribe which came from the son of Jacob. 3. A city in the north part of Palestine.
- Dan-iel (God is judge), Dan. 7: 13. A captive and officer of rank in Babylon, and the fourth of the Hebrew Major Prophets.

## E

- Eu-se-bi-us. The father of church history, born about 270 A.D.

Eve (life, or life-giving), Gen. 3: 20. The first woman, and wife of Adam.

Ex-o-dus (a going out). 1. The moving of the children of Israel to Canaan is called an exodus. 2. The second book of the Bible.

E-ze-ki-el (God is strong), Ezek. 1: 3. One of the Major Prophets, a priest, who taught the Jews while they were in Babylon,

## F

Fe-lix (happy), Acts 24: 22. A Roman governor before whom Paul preached.

Fes-tus (festival), Acts 25: 1. A Roman governor before whom Paul preached, and who succeeded Felix.

## G

Ga-ma-li-el (God the avenger), Acts 5: 34. A doctor of the law, and Paul's teacher.

Ge-ha-zl (Valley of vision), 2 Kings 5: 21. The servant of Elisha.

Gen-tiles (nations, foreigners), Acts 15: 3. A Hebrew word including all except the Jews, but used so as not to include Samaritans in some texts.

Gil-e-ad (strong, rocky), Hosea 6: 8. A mountainous district east *at the* Jordan in which the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh lived.

Gil-gal (circle, wheel), Amos 5: 5. The first stopping place of Israel west of Jordan.

Go-mer (completion, heat), Hos. 1: 3. The unfaithful wife of Hosea.

Greece, Zech. 9: 13. A country of southern Europe, Athens the capital.

## H

Ha-bak-kuk (love's embrace), Hab. 1: 1. The eighth of the Minor Prophets.

Ha-des (not to be seen), Acts 2: 27. The common receptacle of disembodied spirits, where they await the resurrection of the body.

Hag-gal (festive), Hag. 1: 1. The tenth of the Minor Prophets, who prophesied in the days of Darius.

Hez-e-ki-ah (Jehovah strengtheneth), Micah 1: 1. A king of Judah, the son of Ahaz,

Hill-el (he hath promised). A teacher in Israel who differed from Shammai on the divorce question.

Holy Spirit. The third Person of the Godhead, the revealer of all truth,

Ho-se-a (God is help, salvation), Hos. 1: 1. The first of the Minor Prophets,

Hul-dah (weasel), 2 Kings 22: 14. A prophetess in the time of king Josiah.

## I

I-du-me-a (field of Edom), Ezek. 35: 15. A country south of Canaan, and inhabited by the descendants of Esau.

Is-ra-el-ite, 2 Cor. 11: 22. A descendant of Jacob.

Ith-i-el (God is), Prov. 30: 1. A man to whom Agur talked.

## J

Ja-cob (supplanter), Mal. 3: 6. Son of Isaac, and Father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

James (same as Jacob, supplanter). 1. Brother of John and one of the apostles. Matt. 10: 2. 2. Son of Alphaeus, and an apostle, called the Less. Mark 3: 18. 3. The brother of Jesus, and writer of the Epistle of James. Matt. 13: 55.

Jeb-u-site (belonging to Jebus), Zech. 9: 7. The people who held Jerusalem until David captured it.

Je-ho-ram (Jehovah is high). 1. Son of Jehoshaphat. 2. Son of Ahab, slain by Jehu.

Je-ho-vah (the existing one), Ex. 6: 3. The incommunicable name of God,

Jer-e-mi-ah (exalted of the Lord), Jer. 1:1. One of the Major Prophets, and writer of the book which bears his name.

Jer-i-cho (fragrant), Luke 10:30. A town on the Jordan, east of Jerusalem.

Jer-o-bo-am (enlarger), 1 Kings 11: 26. 1. First king of Israel after the division of the kingdom. 2. Jeroboam II was the son of Jehoash. 2 Kings 13: 13.

Je-ru-sa-lem (foundation of peace), Neh. 4: 8. Religious and political center of the Jews, and the birthplace of the church of Christ.

Jes-se (gift of God), Isa. 11: 1. The father of David, and grandson of Ruth.

Jez-e-be-l (without cohabitation). Rev. 2: 20. 1. Wife of Ahab. 2. A woman in the church at Thyatira who was a false prophetess.

Job (hated), Job 1: 5. A descendant of Shem; a citizen of Uz; the author of the book which bears his name.

Jo-el (Jehovah is God), Joel 1: 1. The son of Pethuel, and writer of the book that bears his name, the second of the Minor Prophets.

John (whom Jehovah has graciously giv-

- en). 1. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. Matt. 3:1. 2. Son of Zebedee and brother of James, an apostle, and the writer of Revelation.
- Jo-nah (a dove), Jon. 1: 1. The fifth of the Minor Prophets and writer of the book that bears his name.
- Jor-dan (descender), Zech. 11: 3. The principal river of Palestine.
- Jo-seph (increaser), Gen. 41: 40. 1. Son of Jacob and father of Manasseh and Ephraim who became heads of tribes. 2. The husband of Mary the mother of Jesus.
- Josh-u-a (God the Saviour), Zech. 3: 1. 1. The successor of Moses and leader of Israel as they went into Canaan. 2. The son of Je-hoz-a-dak and high priest at the time the returned exiles rebuilt the temple.
- Jo-si-ah (Jehovah supports), 1 Kings 13: 2. Son of Amon and king of Judah.
- Judae-a, Matt. 19: 1. That division of Palestine which lay south of Samaria and west of the Jordan river.
- Ju-das Is-car-i-ot (Judas means "praise" and Iscariot means "man of Kerioth"), Matt. 10: 4. One of the apostles and the one who betrayed Jesus with a kiss.
- Ju-das (praise), Matt. 13:55. One of the sons of Mary, and a brother of Jesus.

## L

- La-od-i-ce-a (pertaining to Laodice), Rev. 3: 14. A city of Asia Minor, and the home of one of the seven churches to which John wrote the Revelation.
- Leb-a-non (white, snowy), Hosea 14: 4. Name of a range of mountains running from Tyre toward the northeast.
- Lem-u-el (God is bright), Prov. 31: 1. The name of an unknown king.
- Le-vite, Luke 10: 32. A descendant of Levi, and servant about the temple.
- Lot (concealed, dark colored), Luke 17: 32. The nephew of Abraham who made the unwise choice of settling in Sodom.
- Lu-bim (thirsty, inhabitants of a dry land), Nahum 3: 9. A people who lived in north Africa, and west of Egypt.
- Lyd-i-a (land of Lydus), Acts 16: 14. A merchant woman of Thyatira, whom Paul converted in Philippi.

## M

- Mal-a-chi (my messenger), Mal. 1: 1. The last of the Minor Prophets, and the writer of the book which bears his name.

- Mary (bitter), Mark 6: 3. 1. The mother of Jesus and wife of Joseph. 2. Sister of Lazarus.
- Medes (the middle), Dan. 5: 28. The people of Media, a country on the coast of Caspian Sea.
- Med-1-ter-ra-ne-an (middle of the land). The Sea west of Canaan and south of Asia Minor.
- Mel-chiz-e-dek (king of righteousness), Heb. 7: 1. Priest and king of Salem in the time of Abraham, whose priesthood was a type of that of Christ.
- Mi-ca-iah (who is like Jehovah), 1 Kings 22: 8. Son of Imlah, and a prophet in the days of Jehoshaphat.
- Mi-le-tus, Acts 20: 17. The seaport of Ephesus, where Paul met the Ephesian elders.
- Mi-ri-am (fat, thick—rebellion). Ex. 15: 20. The sister of Moses and leader among the women of Israel.
- Mo-rash-tite, Micah 1:1. A citizen of the city of Moresheth, Micah's hometown.
- Mor-de-ca-i (dedicated to Mars), Esther 2: 5. 1. A cousin of Esther. 2. One of the exiles who returned under Zerubbabel. Neh. 7: 7.
- Mo-ses (drawn out), Matt. 19: 7. The deliverer and lawgiver in Israel, and the mediator of the old covenant.

## N

- Na-o-mi (pleasant), Ruth 2: 1. Mother-in-law of Ruth.
- Na-hum (comforter), Nah. 1: 1. Seventh of the Minor Prophets, and the writer of the book which bears his name.
- Na-than (giver), 2 Sam. 12: 1. A prophet who rebuked David for his sin of adultery.
- Naz-a-reth (branch), Luke 4: 16. A town in Galilee where Jesus grew up.
- Neb-u-chad-nez-zar (may Nebor protect the crown), Dan. 4: 4. The most powerful of the Babylonian kings, and the one who took Judah into captivity.
- Ne-he-mi-ah (Jehovah is comfort), Neh. 1: 1. Cupbearer of Ar-tax-erx-es, and writer of the book which bears his name.
- Nic-o-la-i-tans (followers of Nicolas), Rev. 2: 6. Followers of one Nicolaus who held a doctrine the Lord hates.
- Nic-o-la-us (conqueror of the people), Acts 6: 5. A proselyte of Antioch who became one of the seven deacons appointed in the church at Jerusalem.
- Nin-e-veh (abode of Ninus), Jon. 1: 2.



Capital of Assyria, and city to which Jonah was sent to preach repentance.  
 No-a-mon (the place of Amon), Nahum 3: 8. A city in Egypt, thought to be Thebes, built among the rivers; the chief city of the god Amon.

## O

O-ba-di-ah (servant of Jehovah), Obad. 1: 1. Fourth of the Minor Prophets, and writer of the book which bears his name.

O-ri-on (strong), Hos. 5: 8. A constellation on the equator east of Taurus.

## P

Pal-es-tine (land of strangers). The word occurs four times in the King James version, but not at all in the American Standard version, which has Philistia. It is used to mean only a part of Canaan along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. But common usage today applies it to all of Canaan, the holy land.

Paradise (pleasure ground), Luke 23: 43. That part of Hades to which Jesus and the thief on the cross went; also used of heaven.

Pat-mos, Rev. 1: 9. The island where John was exiled and where he wrote Revelation.

Paul (little), Gal. 1: 1. The apostle to the Gentiles, and missionary from Antioch.

Pe-kah (watchfulness), 2 Kings 15: 25. One of the kings of Israel.

Pen-te-cost (fiftieth), Acts 2: 1. A Jewish feast day fifty days after the Passover; and the day on which Jesus established the church.

Per-ga-mum (citadel), Rev. 3: 12. A city of Mysia, celebrated for its great library, and the home of one of the seven churches of Asia to which Revelation was written.

Per-si-a (pure, splendid), Ezra 1: 1. The empire of Ahasuerus in which lived many Jews in the time of Esther.

Pe-ter (rock), 2 Pet. 3: 1. One of the twelve apostles of Christ.

Pe-thu-el (God delivers), Joel 1: 1. The father of Joel.

Phar-i-sees (separated). Acts 23: 6. A religious sect of the Jews who believed in angels, spirits, and the resurrection.

Pha-roah (sun), Ex. 1: 11. The title of the rulers of Egypt.

Phil-a-del-phi-a (city of brotherly love).

Rev. 3: 7. A city of Asia, and home of one of the seven churches to which Revelation was written.

Phil-ip (lover of horses). Acts 21: 9. One of the seven deacons at Jerusalem, and the evangelist who had four daughters who were prophetesses.

Phi-lis-tines (wanderer, immigrant), Obad. 19. The people living in a section between Judaea and the Mediterranean Sea.

Pi-late (armed with a spear), Luke 13: 1. The Roman governor who condemned Jesus and allowed him to be crucified.

Ple-ia-des (cluster of seven stars), Amos 5: 8. A conspicuous loose cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus.

Poly-carp. A disciple of John the apostle at Ephesus.

Psal-ter. The book of Psalms, or a book of several psalms for use in worship.

Put (bow), Nahum. 3: 9. Descendants of Ham who helped Tyre against the Jews.

## R4

Ra-hab (broad, large), Jas. 2: 25. A woman of Jericho who was saved on account of her faith.

Ra-moth-gil-e-ad (heights of Gilead), 1 Kings 4: 13. A city of Gilead.

Re-bek-ah (flattering), Gen. 22: 23. Daughter of Bethuel, and wife of Isaac.

Rome. Rom. 1: 7. The city of seven hills, and capital of Roman empire,

Ruth (friendship), Ruth 1: 4. A woman of Moab who became the wife of Boaz.

## S

Sa-be-ans, Job 1: 15. Descendants Sheba who plundered Job's property.

Sad-du-cees (followers of Zadok). Matt. 22: 29. A sect of the Jews who opposed the Pharisees on the question of angels, spirits, and the resurrection.

Sa-ma-ri-a (Shemer's watch-mountain), Neh. 4: 2. That division of Palestine which lies between Judaea and Galilee; sometimes it is used to mean the kingdom of Israel.

Sap-phi-ra (either sapphire or beautiful), Acts 5: 1. The wife of Ananias who agreed with her husband to lie about the price of property sold.

Sarah (princess), Gen. 17: 15. The wife of Abraham, and example of obedience for all Christian women.

Sar-dis (red), Rev. 3: 1. A city of Asia

Minor, and one of the seven to which John wrote the Revelation.

Saul (desired), 1 Sam. 9: 2. The first King of Israel following the judges.

Sep-tu-a-gint. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, said to have been made by seventy men. It is the version which Jesus and the apostles used.

Sham-mai. A noted Jewish scholar who differed from Hillel on the question of divorce.

She-chem (shoulder), Hos. 6: 9. A city of Samaria, where Jesus met and talked with the woman of Samaria; it seems to be another name for Sy-char of John 4: 5.

Si-mon (hearer). 1. Peter's first name, John 1: 42. 2. A man converted by Philip in Samaria, but who soon sinned. Acts 8: 13.

Si-nai (cliffs), Ex. 16: 1. The mountain where Moses gave the law.

Smyr-na (myrrh), Rev. 2: 8. A city of Asia and home of one of the seven letters written in Revelation.

So-dom (place of lime), Amos 4: 11. The home of Lot; a very wicked city.

Sol-o-mon (peace), Matt. 6: 29. Son of David, and third king of Israel.

### T

Tau-rus. Not mentioned in the Bible, but it is a constellation which contains the Pleiades, which is mentioned in Amos 5: 8.

Te-ko-a (firm, settlement), Amos 1: 1. The home of Amos the prophet.

Te-man (on the right hand, south), Jer. 49: 7. 1. A descendant of Esau. 2. The southern portion of Edom.

Thy-a-ti-ra, Rev. 2: 18. A city of Asia, and home of one of the seven churches to which letters in Revelation are addressed.

Ti-gris. A river east of Canaan running parallel with the Euphrates.

Tim-o-thy (honoring God), 2 Tim. 1: 1. Resident of Lystra; Paul's son in the gospel.

### U

U-cal (I am strong), Prov. 30: 1. An unknown disciple of Agur.

U-ri-ah (Jehovah is light), 2 Sam. 11: 3. The husband of Bathsheba whom David had killed.

Uz (firmness). Job 1: 1. A district south of Edom, and the home of Job.

Uz-zi-ah (Jehovah is strong), Amos 1: 1. King of Judah when Amos prophesied.

### Z

Zech-a-ri-ah (Jehovah is renounced), Zech. 1: 1. The eleventh of the Minor Prophets, and the writer of the book which bears his name.

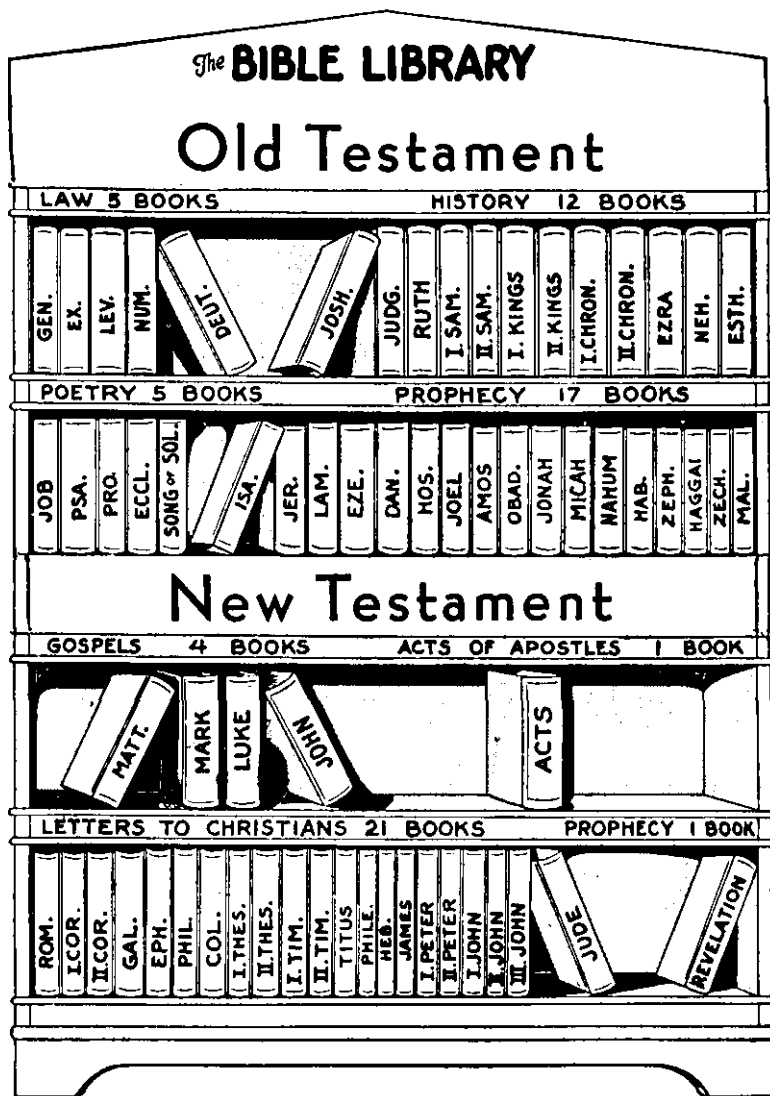
Zeph-a-ni-ah (Jehovah is darkness), Zeph. 1: 1. The ninth of the Minor Prophets; lived during the days of Josiah, and wrote the book which bears his name.

Ze-rub-ba-bel (shoot of Babylon), Hag. 1: 1. Governor of Judah under Darius after the return from captivity.

Zi-on (fortress, sunny), Psa. 2: 6. The name of a mountain in Jerusalem, and the name by which the city is often called.

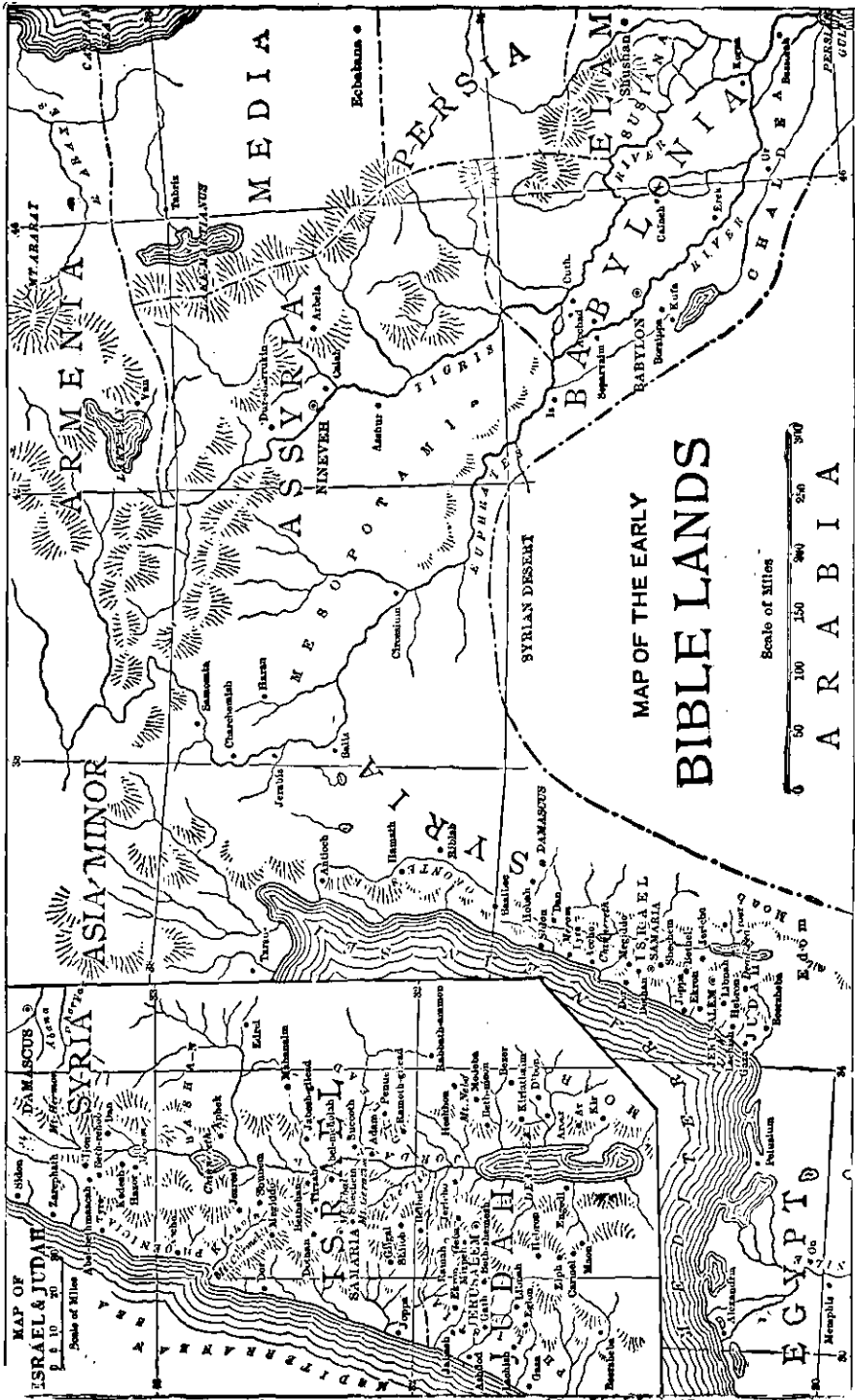
Zo-phar (hairy, rough), Job 11: 1. One of Job's friends, and a Na-a-ma-thite.

"And books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (he book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works."—Rev. 20: 12.



"Handling aright the word of truth."—2 Tim. 2: 15.

"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."—John 1: 17



MAP OF  
ISRAEL & JUDAH  
Scale of Miles  
0 5 10 20 30  
Jerusalem  
Bethlehem  
Hebron  
Gaza  
Ashdod  
Ashkelon  
Gath  
Tyre  
Sidon  
Beirut  
Damascus  
Hama  
Latakia  
Aleppo  
Hama  
Latakia  
Aleppo  
Hama  
Latakia  
Aleppo

# MAP OF THE EARLY BIBLE LANDS

Scale of Miles  
0 50 100 150 200 250 300  
A R A B I A

# FIRST QUARTER

## ISRAEL'S LITERATURE (Job, Psalms, Proverbs)

**AIM.**—To develop an appreciation of Old Testament devotional literature in its relation to the Christian life.

### Lesson I—January 7, 1951

## JOB'S AFFLICTIONS AND PATIENCE

### The Lesson Text

#### Job 2: 1-10

1 Again it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Je-ho'-vah, that Satan came also among them to present himself before Je-ho'-vah.

2 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered Je-ho'-vah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? 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 Je-ho'-vah, 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 Je-ho'-vah said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; only spare his life.

7 So Satan went forth from the presence of Je-ho'-vah, and smote Job 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 Job sin with his lips.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"In all *this* Job sinned not, *nor* charged God foolishly." (Job 1: 22.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Job 1: 13-22.

### Daily Bible Readings

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| January 1. M..... | Job Complains of His Calamity (Job 3: 1-26) |
| January 2. T..... | Eliphaz Answers Job (Job 4: 1-21)           |
| January 3. W..... | Speech of Eliphaz Continued (Job 5: 1-27)   |
| January 4. T..... | Job Answers Eliphaz (Job 6: 1-30)           |
| January 5. F..... | Job's Answer Continued (Job 7: 1-21)        |
| January 6. S..... | Bildad's First Speech (Job 8: 1-22)         |
| January 7. S..... | Job Answers Bildad (Job 9: 1-35)            |

**TIME.**—Unknown; probably before Moses.

**PLACE.**—The land of Uz; probably in the deserts east of Canaan.

**PERSONS.**—Job, his wife, and his friends.

### Introduction

We need to be familiar with the Old Testament. In it we learn of the origin of all things, the character and nature of God, God's dealings with

mankind, and man's relation to God and to other human beings. In the Old Testament, and especially the literature of this quarter, we can

learn how to express the soul's greatest emotions. "It contains model prayers, meditations, songs and benedictions. Confession, complaint, petition, thanksgiving, aspiration—all the soul's emotions find voice in the Psalms. The Psalter is a book for the culture of the heart, a book with which to deepen one's friendship with God." (Sampey.)

Did Job actually live? or is he just a character of fiction? Those who deny that Job actually lived do not hesitate to deny other historical portions of the Bible. The first two chapters and the last chapter of the book are historical in nature and should be accepted as true. Ezekiel speaks of Job as having lived such a life as is pictured in this book. (Ezek. 14: 14, 20.) James testifies to the fact that he actually lived. (Jas. 5: 11.)

Where did Job live? We are told that he lived in the "land of Uz." But it is about impossible for us to know just where that was. Many guesses have been made. Some think it was in the northern part of the Arabian desert, between Canaan and the Euphrates. Others think it was

southeast of the Dead Sea, but this would hardly be spoken of as "the east," and Job was called the greatest of the children of the east. (Job 1: 3.) He lived near enough to the Chaldeans and the Sabeans that they could plunder his fields and pastures. (Job 1: 13-17.)

When did Job live? Since Job lived 140 years after his trouble (Job 42: 16), it is supposed his life span was about 250; so he lived before the life span was shortened. He must have lived before the time of Moses. There is no mention in Job of the Exodus, nor of the destruction of Sodom, though both events would have been good proof of the doctrines argued, so scholars think he must have lived before these events. The name Jehovah is used only five times in the poetry of the book, while the name Shaddai—the Almighty—is used more than thirty times, which suggests that Job lived before the term Jehovah came into common use. (Ex. 6: 2, 3.) Smith's Bible Dictionary quotes Ewald as saying that Job must have lived during the period between Abraham and Moses. (Vol. II, p. 1410.)

### Golden Text Explained

1. **Job sinned not.** Our text says, "In all this Job sinned not." The word *this* refers to the events of the first trial Satan was allowed to bring upon him. First his property was taken by thieves and fire. (Job 3: 13-17.) Next his children were killed in a storm. (Job 1: 19.) The average person might have gone into a fit of sorrow and rage; sorrow because of the loss of his children, and rage because his property was taken by thieves. The average man would have cursed the thieves and charged God with not exercising proper care of him. True greatness is not obvious when the stream of life runs smoothly. It is when storms rage, and when the fires of trial are hottest that true greatness can be seen. Instead of cursing the thieves and charging God with folly, Job 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."

2. **What to do when tried.** First,

Job worshipped God. This was no unusual thing with Job; he worshipped God regularly. But when trial came upon him, he did not charge God with folly in allowing *one of his worshippers to suffer loss*. In his regular worship he had found God a present help in time of need. (Psalm 46: Iff), and when sorrows came he turned immediately to God—He did the opposite of charging God with folly. Next, Job recognized that he came from God and that he belonged to God. It is easy enough for us to see God in the lives of these patriarchs, but very difficult for us to see him in our lives. We need to recognize him as working in our lives today. He gave us a being; he blesses us with what we have; he removes from us that which we lose. Job saw God in these events; we usually see the thieves and the storms only. Job blessed God; we usually blame the thieves and the storm, because we see nothing more in our experiences. In the next place Job expressed his con-

victions when he said that God gives and God takes away, and blessed be the name of Jehovah. We gain strength by expressing our feelings, emotions, and convictions to others. Having committed ourselves publicly to a certain course, we will find it easier to follow that course. When Job praised the Lord for his provident care, it was not probable that he would soon turn.

We may learn from Job's experiences that the path of the righteous is not always smooth. Trials and hardships are blessings instead of

curses, if we accept them rightly. Sorrows and reverses are not always proof of sin in the life of an individual. Job's friends argued that Job was guilty of some great sin because he was suffering great trials. But happiness and prosperity alone will not build a Christian character. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We must have some experiences in this side of life if we expect to grow into the likeness of Jesus. It is human to avoid such, and some sin in their efforts to avoid hardships.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. God Praises Job (Job 2: 1-3)

*A day when the sons of God came.* The picture we have in these first verses is of God as a monarch seated on his throne and his servants coming on a set day to make report of their services. This is not an unusual representation of Jehovah. (1 Kings 22: 19ft.) By the term "sons of God" we are to understand angels who serve God in doing whatever they are commanded to do (Heb. 1: 14). They are represented as coming before the throne of God to receive their orders for service, and then, when the service is performed, they report as to the success or failure of their mission.

Satan came *also among them*. The word Satan means *adversary*, one who opposes another. Satan is represented as coming into this gathering as though it was the usual thing. In Job 1: 6 we have the same statement. No one in the gathering seems surprised to see him in the meeting. He is said to come "to present himself before Jehovah" the same as the sons of God. Are we to conclude that he is compelled to report his activities? to get permission to carry on his work? to learn how strong a trial he is allowed to *impose* on the people of God?

From *whence comest thou?* In answer to this question Satan said he had been going to and fro and walking up and down in the earth. From this we learn, (1) that Satan is not an omnipresent being. God is omnipresent; it is impossible to escape from him; we are in his presence re-

gardless of where we may go (Psalm 139: 1-16.) People usually think of Satan as being omnipresent, but he goes about from place to place seeking whom he may destroy. (1 Pet. 5: 8.) (2) We learn that Satan is subject to God, and that he cannot go beyond that which God allows. (3) We learn something of the *intense* activity of Satan. The statement *going to and fro* suggests feverish activity. Hence Satan is pictured as going feverishly from one place to another seeking opportunities to oppose people in their efforts to live as the Lord directs. Nor must we think of him as being alone in this work, for he has many angels to help him (Matt. 25: 41; Eph. 6: 12.)

*Hast thou considered my servant Job?* Job was a man of such character that God was pleased to call him his servant. Though Satan accused Job, God was still glad to own him as a servant.

*None like him in the earth.* This is high praise; the greatest, the best man *on* earth. God then gives four reasons for this appraisal of Job. (1) Job was a perfect and upright man. The word perfect is often misunderstood to mean sinless. Job was human, therefore imperfect in the sense that he had not attained sinless perfection. But the word *perfect* means complete and entire, lacking in no virtue essential to character. There are nine things which make the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22, 23), and one who possesses all nine is a perfect man, though he may not have either one of them to perfection. **The** word

*upright* means that he was a righteous man in his dealings, and therefore is a part of the perfection of his character. (2) Job was one that feared God. He was a pious man, a devoutly religious man. His life in thoughts, words, and deeds, was determined by what he believed to be the will of God. (3) Job was a man who turned away from evil. He did not try to see how near evil he could live without being engulfed in it. Many people love the world so much that they live as nearly like the world as they dare without endangering their chances of salvation. Job did not flirt with evil; he turned away from it. That is the only safe course. Those who flirt with evil will be soon married to evil. (4) Job was a steadfast man in his course; he held fast his integrity. We have our ups and downs in life; we serve faithfully for a while and then we grow weary and faint for a while. Job was constant in his affection and service.

*To destroy him without cause.* Satan is spoken of as *moving* God to destroy Job. This is not to be taken in the sense of *forcing*, for no one can force God to do anything. But the accusations of Satan had something to do with causing these trials to be sent upon Job, God says they were without cause, that is, there was no good and sufficient reason for such trials in the accusations. This does not mean that the trials were unjust, or that they did not accomplish good. God cannot be moved to do something useless; he cannot be moved to allow a trial that is wholly harmful, one from which no good can be derived. If the accusations of Satan had been the only reason for trials, Job would not have suffered.

## II. Satan Accuses **Job** (Job 2: 4-6)

*Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.* This is obviously a proverbial statement, and though its general meaning here is clear, no one seems to know where the proverb came from nor its exact meaning. What is the meaning of "skin for skin"? Space does not allow a statement of various explanations one can find in the average commentary. The accusation Satan brings by the use of this proverb is that Job stood the first trial of the loss of his

property and children with ease because his life was not affected, his life was not in danger. He accuses Job of valuing his life more than anything else, even his integrity. This is an old slander with enough truth in it to make it appeal to many people. It has been stated in these words: Every man has his price; offer him enough, or provoke him sufficiently, and he will turn against God. Can one conceive of Paul as having a price? Martyrs by the thousands went gladly to the lions and to the fire rather than forsake God. Men gladly give their lives for liberty to worship God, and many die that others may be free from the tyranny of kings and dictators.

Behold, *he is in thy hand; only spare his life.* God grants Satan the privilege of bringing trials upon Job. In Job 1: 12 we find God granting Satan power to do anything he wished except to touch Job. Now he is granted the privilege of touching Job, to do anything he pleased within certain limits. We may never understand why certain things are done, or why God allows Satan to do these things; but we must see from this example that God does exercise care for his people. Notice the following: (1) Satan is subject to God; he must gain permission to bring trials upon people. No doubt we attribute many things to Satan when they are due to nothing more than the desires of our flesh. It is true that such may remotely be due to the work of Satan, but not immediately. (2) Satan has the power to afflict people with disease. In verse 7 Job's disease is said to be the work of Satan. (3) Job's temporal losses of Job 1: 14ff. are said to have been caused by Satan. Though he used what we would view as natural causes, he was directly and personally responsible for those losses. (4) Satan has the power to take life. It is suggested in chapter one that the death of Job's children was the work of Satan. But whether that can be proved or not, the fact that God gave Satan liberty to do any thing he wished except to take Job's life is proof that Satan had the power to take Job's life.



### III. Job Tried and Found Faithful (Job 2: 7-10)

*Satan smote Job with boils.* Barnes says the word for boils is singular, and that it suggests a burning, inflamed sore or ulcer. Since the word is singular it seems that his whole body was covered by one putrefying sore. "The disease of Job seems to have been a universal ulcer; producing an eruption over his entire person, and attended with violent pain, and constant restlessness." (Barnes.) It has been called a black leprosy, or elephantiasis. It was such a sore as invited worms. (Job 7: 5.) It made him like a rotten thing. (Job 13: 28.) It consumed his flesh and caused the bones to be covered only with skin. (Job 19: 20.) It was so revolting that his friends and loved ones turned against him.

*Took him a potsherd to scrape himself.* A potsherd was a piece of broken pottery. Some have thought that the loss of his property was so complete that he could not hire a physician, and that he had nothing better than a piece of pottery to use. This seems farfetched. Since the disease was considered contagious, and in its last stages very repulsive, no one would go near enough to give him personal attention; and since it was considered incurable, he was left to do the best he could for himself; and since he was thought to be suffering for some great sin, his friends may have thought it not pleasing to God to try to relieve him of the suffering which they thought God inflicted for sin.

*Renounce God, and die.* These are the words of his wife. Some one suggested that the only reason Satan did not take her life when he took

the children *was* that she would be of assistance to him in the trial of Job. According to Jewish tradition she was Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, but there is little foundation for the tradition. She seems to have been provoked by the steadfastness of Job. She was tired of bearing with him in his trial. She preferred no husband at all to one in his condition. She had the idea that God would take Job's life if he cursed, or renounced him as being unkind to his children. It was a quick and simple way to end all. She preferred to be dead and separated from God than to suffer such trials in communion with God. Her philosophy is common today.

*Thou speakest as one of the foolish women.* The word *foolish* may be taken as stupid or impious. Lack of piety and stupidity are much alike. This was certainly a wise trick on the part of Satan. He reached Adam through his wife, and now he tried to get Job to listen to his wife. Strong men lose half, and sometimes more, of their strength when a faithful wife turns against them.

*Shall we receive good, and not evil?* The word *evil* here is not to be taken in the sense of that which is sinful, for God's treatment of Job was not sinful. For good and evil we would say the sweet and bitter of life. Job said if we are willing to receive the sweets, pleasures, of life from God, we ought *to be* willing to take the bitter, the bad, that comes along. Submission to God means that we take both. If we refuse to take the evil in life, we are not living by the will of God, but by our own will. The sweets are pleasant, but they do not develop strength of character.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Satan's first trial of Job was swift, sudden, loss. Protracted suffering was a greater trial and calculated to do what sudden sorrow did not accomplish. We need to be extra careful under long periods of suffering. We need to be attentive to those who are in such suffering that we may encourage them to be faithful.

2. We should be slow to speak during periods of suffering. Job's wife spoke unadvisedly because she had

not given proper consideration. If Job had listened to her, she would have been responsible for great damage to him.

3. The aim of all Satan's temptations is to get us to renounce God. This was the object of his temptations of Jesus. The trials he brings upon us are but softening up processes to get us in position to renounce God and die. Death, eternal death, is the penalty for renouncing God.

## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

## Introduction

Why should we be familiar with the devotional literature of the Old Testament?  
What evidence do we have that Job actually lived?  
What do you know about where Job lived?  
Give and discuss several reasons for giving Job an early date.

## Golden Text Explained

Of what did Job's first trial consist?  
In what spirit did Job accept his loss and sorrow?  
In what words did Job express his attitude towards God?  
What was Job's first act expressive of his attitude?  
What is meant by charging God with folly?  
To what extent does God work in our lives today?  
What is gained by an expression of our emotions and convictions?  
On what conditions may hardships be blessings to us?  
Why are sorrows, losses, and hardships good for us?

## God Praises Job

What picture do we have of God and his work in this lesson?

Who are the "sons of God" and what is their work?

What is the meaning of the word Satan? What is suggested as to his relation to God?

Discuss three lessons as to the nature and activity of Satan.

In what sense was Job a perfect man?

What statement suggests the piety of Job?

What was Job's attitude toward evil?

What is said of Job's steadfastness?

In what sense did Satan move God to destroy Job?

## Satan Accuses Job

What proverb did Satan use in accusing Job to Jehovah?

What is the meaning of this proverb as applied to Job?

Is there any truth in it? Can you show exceptions to it?

To what extent is Satan subject to God?

What power does Satan have over our bodies? Our prosperity?

Does he have the power of life and death? With what limitations?

## Job Tried and Found Faithful

How did Satan afflict Job?

How did this disease affect Job?

What care did Job receive? Why?

What was the attitude of Job's wife? What advice did she give?

What was Job's reply and its meaning? What shows Job's complete submission to God?

Are trials as good for us as joys? Why? Read and discuss the Topics for Discussion.

## Lesson II—January, 14, 1951

## THE MINISTRY OF SUFFERING

## The Lesson Text

Job 5: 17-27

17 Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth:  
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.  
18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up;  
He woundeth, and his hands make whole.  
19 He will deliver thee in six troubles;  
Yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.  
20 In famine he will redeem thee from death;  
And in war from the power of the sword.  
21 Thou shalt be hid from the source of the tongue:

Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.  
22 At destruction and dearth thou shalt laugh;  
Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.  
23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;  
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.  
24 And thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace;  
And thou shalt visit thy fold, and shalt miss nothing.  
25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great,  
And thine offspring as the grass of the earth.

26 Thou shalt come to thy grave in  
a full age,  
Like as a shock of grain cometh  
in in its season.

27 Lo this, we have searched it, so  
it is;  
Hear it, and know thou it for  
thy good.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" (Job 23: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Job 23: 1-9.

### Daily Bible Readings

|         |        |                                  |                     |
|---------|--------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| January | 8. M.  | Job's Answer to Bildad Continued | (Job 10: 1-22)      |
| January | 9. T.  | The Speech of Zophar             | (Job 11: 1-20)      |
| January | 10. W. | Job Answers Zophar               | (Job 12: 1-25)      |
| January | 11. T. | Job's Answer to Zophar Continued | (Job 13: 1-28)      |
| January | 12. F. | Job's Answer to Zophar Concluded | (Job 14: 1-22)      |
| January | 13. S. | Second Speech of Eliphaz         | (Job 15: 1-35)      |
| January | 14. S. | Job Answers Eliphaz              | (Job 16: 1, 17: 16) |

TIME.—Unknown; probably before Moses.

PLACE.—The land of Uz.

PERSONS.—Job and his three friends.

### Introduction

Who wrote the book of Job? Harmon (Introduction to the Holy Scriptures) says it is certain that some Israelite dwelling in southern Judaea wrote it. But after reading what a number of other able scholars have to say on the subject, we cannot accept his conclusion as a certainty. Some think Moses wrote it, but the majority think it was written before the law was given, and before the time of the Exodus. The Pulpit Commentary, in the Introduction to the book, says that Job lived long before the time of Moses, and that the book was written after Job's death and probably not long before the Exodus. The only proof offered that it was written after the death of Job is the statement of his death (Job 42: 17), and if that be accepted as proof we must conclude that Moses did not write Deuteronomy since chapter 34 gives the account of his death. Albert Barnes, in his Introduction, says: "It seems to me, therefore, by this train of *remarks* . . . that the work was composed by Job himself in the period of rest and prosperity which succeeded his trials, and came to the knowledge of Moses during his residence in Arabia, and was adopted by him to *represent the Hebrews, in their trials, the duty of submission to the will of God, and to furnish the assurance that he would yet appear to crown with abundant blessings his own people*, however

much *they might be afflicted.*" Home (Introduction to the Scriptures, Vol. IV) says about the same thing, and answers two objections to the view. One is that there are Hebrew terms which Job could not have used. To this Home answers that Moses *may* have rewritten' the few lines where such terms are thought to be used. The other is that the Jews would never have accepted the *writings*- of Job, a stranger, into their sacred canon. If Moses accepted the book and used it and commended it to them as containing a lesson helpful to them in their sufferings, no Jew after his day would have thought of rejecting it. Job had the ability, as manifested in his speeches, to write such a book. The art of book-making was known in his day, even though he lived long before the time of Moses. If the historical portions of the book be accepted as true, Job lived long enough after his trials to write such a work. There seems to be no good reason to conclude that Job was not the author, and until some conclusive reasons are given, we may well hold to the accepted opinion that Job wrote the book which bears his name. If we get the habit of going off after opinions just because they are modern and novel, we will soon get the reputation of being as changeable as the wind.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. God's knowledge of man.** Job's statement that God "knoweth the way I take" may be understood in two ways. First, it may mean the omniscience of God, that he knows all men and all things that befall them. Second, it may mean that Job affirms that God approves his way of life. This meaning is to be preferred. Job continues by saying, "My foot hath held fast to his steps; his ways have I kept, and not turned aside. I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips." Job was conscious of no transgression which would merit such punishment as his suffering. He was arriving at the conclusion that this suffering was not in punishment for his sin, but a trial sent upon him to make him stronger and purer. Having lived in harmony with God's commandments, making due allowance for human frailty, Job knew that Jehovah approved of the way he had taken, and therefore his suffering must be a trial and not punishment. When David suffered after his sin with Bathsheba, he could not have such a strong conviction of approval, so he could not be sure that his suffering was not in punishment for his sin. A clear conscience is a great source of comfort in times of suffering. We should so live that when we suffer we may be sure it is not sent upon us as punishment, but for our betterment and God's glory.

**2. God's discipline of man.** (a) God has the right to discipline man in any way he may choose. We must never forget the sovereignty of God, and his complete ownership of man. (b) God's purposes in discipline are many, some of which, no doubt, are unknown to us. We know that he disciplines us for our sins,

and Job's friends thought this was the sole purpose of discipline. But from the book of Job we learn that Job's suffering was to teach mankind a lesson concerning God's dealings with man. Paul teaches us that God scourges his children that they may be partakers of his holiness. (Heb. 12: 10.) Peter teaches us that such suffering is to purify us. (1 Pet. 1: 6-8.) James tells us that trials work patience, or steadfastness in us (Jas. 1: 2-4), from which it is implied that they strengthen us. And certainly such trials make us appreciate Jesus more for having endured so many trials for us. They make us more sympathetic with others who are enduring trials so that we may render them the service they need while going through such experiences.

**3. The outcome of discipline.** Job said he knew he would come forth as gold. Gold is purer for having gone through the fire, so Job knew that he would be a better man. And since he was not conscious of any great sin in his life, he knew that the trial would prove his innocence. The outcome of our trials depends to some extent upon us and our attitude toward them. This is not to deny that God gives us strength, and that we must stand alone without the help of God; but it is to affirm that we may succeed or fail in trials according to the attitude we take towards them. The same sun melts wax that hardens clay, the difference being in the nature of the substances. So trials may either harden and destroy us, or they may soften, enrich, and purify us. If we recognize the hand of God in them, endure them patiently and submissively, be faithful to God regardless of their strength and length of endurance, we will profit by them.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Principle Stated (Job 5: 17-19)

*Happy is the man whom God corrected.* Our Lesson Text is from the speech of Eliphaz. (Job 4: 1.) He was a Temanite. Teman was a part of Idumea, a country south of Canaan. The Temanites, likely, were descendants of Esau. (1 Chron. 1:

35, 36.) The people of Teman were noted for their wisdom. (Jer. 49:7.) They also had a reputation for great strength. (Obad. 9.) Eliphaz was the leader of this group of friends who argued with Job during his trial. He stated the principle here that chastisement is good for a man. The word

happy is to be taken in the sense of blessed. One will not be happy during a trial, but may count himself blessed that he is tried. We are told to count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials. (Jas. 1: 2.) Job was denying that he was guilty of any great sin which would bring upon him such suffering as he was enduring. Eliphaz was arguing that Job should confess his sin and be happy in the correction which God was bringing upon him.

Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. This sounds like the advice of Solomon to his son. "My son, despise not the chastening of Jehovah; neither be weary of his reproof: for whom Jehovah loveth he reproveth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." (Prov. 3: 11, 12.) Could it be that Solomon took his teaching from Job? The writer of Hebrews 12: 5, 6 was surely acquainted with both Old Testament writers. How can we despise the chastening of God: 1. When we rebel at our trials and hardships; 2. When we refuse to accept them as the chastening hand of God, and look upon them as something evil; 3. When we refuse to be corrected if we have done something wrong.

He maketh sore, and bindeth up. The word *he* refers to God, the Almighty of verse 17. This is a poetic way of saying that God sends chastisement upon people, and when it has accomplished its purpose, God sends comfort and consolation. It should be remembered that Eliphaz arrived at this scriptural conclusion without the aid of written revelation. How much dealings God had with people other than the Hebrews is not known, but evidently these men of Teman had some knowledge of God and his dealings with humanity. We need not think of Eliphaz as being inspired, for in fact we have evidence that he was not inspired on some points he argued. This casts no doubt on the inspiration of the book of Job, for the writer gave an inspired account of what the uninspired men said in their debate with Job. But this is a true conception of God's dealings with men, and a fine statement of the principle.

He will deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven. This statement is really not intended to mean a certain number, but rather an indefinite number of things through which a man might be brought to ruin. Though Amos does not use the numbers six and seven, he does use this form of speech a number of times to mean an indefinite number. (Amos 1: 3, 6.) The fact that Eliphaz does not name seven things in the list given is sufficient to prove that he was not trying to say this number is the sum of things from which God will save his people.

## II. Defended from Outward Evils

(Job 5: 20-23)

He will redeem thee from death. In the time of famine, according to Eliphaz, God will keep his people from death. The family of Jacob was saved from famine when they were taken into Egypt.

In war from the power of the sword. It seems to be the idea of Eliphaz that God would guard his people in time of war so as to keep them from death. These statements are not to be taken in an unlimited sense. They are simply so many illustrations of the principle that though God's people are led into trials and hardships, God will protect them and keep them from evil. David expressed the same idea in these words: "I will say of Jehovah, he is my refuge and my fortress; My God in whom I trust. For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shalt thou take refuge: his truth is a shield and a buckler," (Psalm 91: 2-4, and following.)

From the scourge of the tongue. This is protection from calumny. The reader should read Psalm 64 in this connection, where the tongue is called a "sword," "arrows," and a "snare." David, like Eliphaz, promises protection from God to the righteous. Solomon says rash speech is like the "piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health." (Prov. 12: 18ff.) The word *scourge* here means a *whip*. This should cause each one of us to think whether our tongue is a scourge or a balm.

Neither be *afraid of destruction*. This is a promise of salvation from destruction of whatever kind. Here again we must limit this promise, for given an absolute application it would prevent death, an appointment of God. A reasonable application of it would be that God will preserve one in times of trouble.

*Neither shalt thou be afraid of beasts*. In many places, especially sparsely settled sections of the earth, wild beasts are to be feared. Eliphaz believed that God would protect his people from such dangers if they lived righteous lives.

*Thou shalt be in league with the stones*. Some have suggested that this means that the fields will be free from stones which make the land infertile. Others think it means that one will be kept from injury in work or travel. Perhaps the beasts are used to represent animate creation, while stones are used to represent inanimate creation, so according to Eliphaz, God will keep his people from harm or injury by all creation. The stones have a league, some translate a covenant, and the beasts are said to be at peace with the righteous. So both animate and inanimate creation are in harmony with him who lives in harmony with God. This is a poetic way of saying that God makes all things work together for good to them that love the Lord. (Rom. 8: 28.) And we should remember that we are dealing with poetry, for if we do not, we will have a difficulty in seeing the truth in some of these statements where we might otherwise get a good lesson.

### III. Favored With Good Things (Job 5: 24-27)

In verses 20-23 we have an illustration of the principle stated in verses 17-19 in which is seen our defense from outward evils. In this section we have the principle illustrated in the fact that we are blessed with good things. God not only defends his people from the evils and dangers of life, but he blesses them richly with the good things of life.

*Thy tent is in peace*. This means that a righteous man may leave his tent to do his work or to go on a

business trip in the assurance that God would keep his family from harm while he was gone. The blessing of God's peace was to be upon his tent. This is similar to God's promise to the men of Israel to protect their homes while they went to Jerusalem to worship three times a year. (Ex. 34: 24.) Belief in the providence of God is a source of comfort.

*Thou shalt visit thy fold, and shalt miss nothing*. The language of this version seems to suggest that God will keep him from losses of his sheep and cattle, but either the doctrine is wrong, or Job was not a righteous man, for he lost his cattle. The King James version has, "and shalt not sin." This does not relieve the difficulty. Another translation gives the sense that if a man travels, God will bring him back home without losing his way. Taken in connection with the preceding statement, we may conclude that it is a promise of God's providence over the righteous.

*Thy seed shall be great*. A numerous posterity was regarded as a blessing, and Eliphaz believed that the righteous man would have a large posterity. Moses used the figure of "the sands of the sea," and "the stars of heaven," but Eliphaz says the offspring of the righteous shall be "as the grass of the earth."

*Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age*. Righteousness and longevity are coupled together a number of times in the scriptures. Moses said, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee." (Ex. 20: 12.) Paul renewed this promise to children who obey their parents. (Eph. 6: 1-3.) Solomon said, "My son, forget not my law; but let thy heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and years of life, and peace will they add to thee." (Prov. 3: 1, 2.) Not only does God promise long life to the obedient, but warns that the disobedient will not live so long. "The fear of Jehovah prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." (Prov. 10: 27.) Some one is ready to say that he knows of a wicked man who lived to be a hun-

dred years old, and he knew a good man who died in the prime of life, or in youth. No doubt all of us know of such exceptions to the rule, nor did the Lord intend that these statements should be taken as a full statement of the case with out other conditions, and with no limitations. But the lesson to be gained is that righteousness has a tendency to prolong life, and disobedience and dissipation tend to shorten life.

*Like a shock of grain.* This is a picture of a well matured life. As grain is gathered when it is ripe and ready for the gleaner's sickle, so the

righteous will attain to a mature age and be gathered at a proper time into the Father's care and keeping.

We *have searched it*. Eliphaz does not claim inspiration for his source of information; he says he has searched for it. And so it is—we have found it so by experience.

Hear *it, and know it for thy good*. In these words Eliphaz invites Job to try this teaching in his life. He assures Job that it will work out for his good. He was missionary in his methods; we should live right and invite others to try righteousness for themselves.

### Topics for Discussion

1. We may not always know the ways of God, for many of them are past finding out; but we may be assured that God knows our ways, for they are laid bare to the all-seeing eyes of him with whom we have to do.

2. It is better to be chastened as God's children while we live that we may become partakers of his holiness, than avoid chastening now and finally be condemned as an enemy of God.

3. The best insurance one can have in time or in eternity is to secure and maintain the friendship of God. His friendship may be had only if we are willing to keep his commandments. (John 15: 14.) We do not in this way buy, or merit, his friendship; but such is the nature of God that he can be on friendly terms with those only who live as he teaches us to live.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Name some probable authors of the book of Job.

*Does the fact that Job's death is mentioned in the book prove Job did not write it? Why?*

When did Moses probably become acquainted with the book?

Was Job a Jew? Why would the Jews accept the book into their sacred canon?

Were the arts of writing and book-making known in Job's day?

#### Golden Text Explained

What is meant by the statement, "God knoweth the way I take"?

Why did Job believe God approved of his way of living?

To what conclusion did Job come with reference to the purpose of his suffering?

Contrast David and Job with reference to these matters.

On what ground does God have the right to discipline man?

Give and discuss several purposes God has in his discipline of man.

What is the result of discipline? May we determine the result? How?

#### Principle Stated

What do you know of Eliphaz? The country from which he came?

For what were the Temanites noted?

What did Eliphaz say of the man whom God corrects?

What are we told not to despise?

Discuss three ways we may despise the chastisement of the Lord.

What is meant by making sore, and binding up?

Was Eliphaz speaking by inspiration?

What do you think of his education?

From how many troubles will God deliver the righteous?

#### Defended from Outward Evils

From what will God redeem his people?

Give one example from scripture.

Discuss the promise to save from the sword.

What is the scourge of the tongue? What terms does David use with reference to it?

Of what may the righteous not be afraid? What is meant by being in league with stones?

Under what figures is all creation presented?

What place does "poetic license" have in interpreting these statements?

#### Favored with Good Things

What is meant by one's tent being in peace?

What promise did God make the Israelites when they went to Jerusalem for the feasts?

What do these statements indicate as to

the belief of Eliphaz in the providence of God?  
 What is said of a righteous man's posterity?  
 What is the connection between righteousness and longevity?  
 Compare the teachings of Moses, Paul, and Solomon on this point.

Is righteousness the sole condition of longevity?  
 What figure did Eliphaz use to picture the maturity of life?  
 How had Eliphaz arrived at these lessons he taught?  
 What did Eliphaz suggest that Job do?  
 Read and discuss Topics for Discussion.

Lesson III—January 21, 1951

JOB'S APPEAL TO GOD

The Lesson Text

Job 23: 1-12

1 Then Job answered and said,  
 2 Even to-day is my complaint rebellious:  
 My stroke is heavier than my groaning.  
 3 Oh that I knew where I might find him!  
 That I might come even to his seat!  
 4 I would set my cause in order before him,  
 And fill my mouth with arguments.  
 5 I would know the words which he would answer me,  
 And understand what he would say unto me.  
 6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?  
 Nay; but he would give heed unto me.  
 7 There the upright might reason with him;

So should I be delivered for ever from my judge.  
 8 Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;  
 And backward, but I cannot perceive him;  
 9 On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him;  
 He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.  
 10 But he knoweth the way that I take;  
 When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.  
 11 My foot hath held fast to his steps;  
 His way have I kept, and turned not aside.  
 12 I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips;  
 I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I cleave unto thy testimonies: O Jehovah, put me not to shame." (Psalm 119: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Job 23: 13-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 15. M..... Second Speech of Bildad (Job 18: 1-21)
- January 16. T..... Job Answers Bildad (Job 19: 1-29)
- January 17. W..... Second Speech of Zophar (Job 20: 1-29)
- January 18. T..... Job's Answer to Zophar (Job 21: 1-34)
- January 19. F..... Third Speech of Eliphaz (Job 22: 1-30)
- January 20. S..... Job Concludes His Reply to Eliphaz (Job 24: 1-25)
- January 21. S..... Bildad's Speech and Job's Reply (Job 25: 1-26: 14)

TIME.—Unknown; probably before Moses.  
 PLACE.—Land of Uz.  
 PERSONS.—Job and his friends.



## Introduction

What conception did Job and his friends have of God? The belief in many gods, or polytheism, was prevalent in the time of Job. The question of good and evil led many to believe in the eternal existence of good and evil, two gods eternally in conflict. But Job and his friends were monotheists, they believed in one God, and this belief is stated by them as clearly as it is by any other writers of the Bible, and "in a manner infinitely superior" to that found in any writings of the time outside the Bible.

As to the characteristics of this one supreme God, the following are to be found in Job:

1. He is almighty. (Job 5: 9; 6: 4; 9: 5-12; 37, 38.)
2. He is all-wise. (Job 11: 11; 12: 13; 21: 22; 42: 1-6; 26: 6.)

3. He is inscrutable, incomprehensible. (Job 11: 7-9; 36: 26; 37: 23.)

4. He is the creator of all things. (Job 4: 17; 10: 8-11; 35: 10; 38: 4-10.)

5. He is the supreme governor of creation. (Job 5: 9-13; 37: 14-24; 26: 7-14.)

6. God is holy. (Job 15: 15, 16; 25: 5, 6; 4: 17.)

7. God is eternal. (Job 10: 5; 36: 26.)

8. God forgives the penitent, (Job 5: 17-19; 11: 13-19; 22: 21-23; 33: 23-28.)

9. God hears prayers. (Job 12: 4; 22: 27; 33: 26.)

10. God dispenses life and death. (Job 1: 21; 4: 9; 10: 12; 33: 4.)

11. God reveals his will to man. (Job 4: 12-17; 33: 14-17.)

(See Barnes' Notes, Introduction.)

## Golden Text Explained

Our text is the middle verse of a very fine lesson, so we are taking the liberty to include verses 30-32 of Psalm 119, which read as follows:

"I have chosen the way of faithfulness;

Thine ordinances have I set before me.

I cleave unto thy testimonies:

O Jehovah, put me not to shame.

I will run the way of thy commandments,

When thou shalt enlarge my heart."

2. A good choice. David said he had chosen the way of faithfulness. Our life is an expression of our choice whether we wish to admit it or have people regard it as such. The Old Testament is replete with examples of choices, both good and bad. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Josiah, and many others, may be used as examples of men who made the good choice when they had every encouragement and opportunity to do otherwise. Adam, Lot, Saul, Jeroboam, Ahab, and Judas Iscariot, and many others, show us that men are liable to make the wrong choice in spite of encouragement and opportunity to do otherwise. We should notice that David follows the statement of his choice by saying that he had set the ordinances of God before his eyes.

This suggests that the way of faithfulness is a life in harmony with God's will as expressed in his ordinances. Man has not the liberty of determining how he is to live; God reserves that to himself. He alone may direct our steps in holiness. When man begins to walk by his own will, he departs from God and the way David chose.

2. Determination to live by his choice. David says, "I cleave unto thy testimonies." The word *cleave* suggests firmness and steadfastness. Having made the choice to live for God, David determined to hold tenaciously to that choice during life. And since faithfulness is attained only by living in harmony with God's law, David determined to *cleave* unto the testimonies, or the law of God. By cleaving to the testimonies, he would realize his choice of faithfulness to the Lord. He then prays the Lord not to put him to shame. By this he means that he prays God will preserve him from leaving and forgetting the testimonies to which he has determined to cleave. If he should fall from that steadfastness, he would be put to shame before God and men. It is said there are three kinds of shame. (a) The shame of which we may be proud;

enduring the shame of the world for the sake of Jesus, (b) The shame of self-reproach from a smiting conscience for failure to do right, (c) The shame of public condemnation which men reap when they have disregarded the moral standards of the community. We should pray for strength to bear the first type of shame, and pray earnestly that we may be preserved from everything that would bring the other types of shame upon us. If we make the same choice David made, and determine to live in harmony with that choice, and pray this prayer, we may be sure of not being ashamed.

3. **Fervent activity.** David says, "I will run the way of thy commandments." Running indicated zealous, fervent, activity. The Christian life is called a walk, but we get the idea of greater zeal when we use the word run. We walk through force of habit, but we run only when we put our minds to it. Running indicates that a *person* has something definite in

mind to do, something important to do, something worth doing, and a determination to do it immediately. Running creates interest on the part of others. If people are out walking leisurely, we think nothing of it; but if a number of people are running as fast as they can down the street, we get interested immediately. So David would run in the way of God's commandment so as to attract the attention of others to follow a good example. David conditions his running on the enlargement of his heart by the Lord. This means (a) enlargement of intellect or understanding;

(b) of the affections to love more;

(c) of the will to carry out our purposes as we have determined; and (d) of the *conscience* that we may be corrected in the slightest departures from our set purpose. Such enlargement comes from God only when and through our cooperation which makes such blessings possible. God will not miraculously give such enlargement.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Job Complains and Searches for God (Job 23: 1-9)

Today *is my complaint* rebellious. The word *complaint* here is rather difficult. It is used a number of times by Job. (Job 10: 1; 21: 4; 7: 11, 13.) Did Job mean to say that he was complaining in a rebellious spirit? Pulpit Commentary so explains it. But Barnes suggests that the word *complaint* should be taken in the sense of *cause, argument*. And the word rebellious is bitter in King James Version, and perhaps to be preferred in this place. In spite of the presence and arguments of his three friends, Job's cause was still hard, his suffering bitter and hard to bear.

*Stroke is heavier than my groaning.* Pain continually wrung groans from Job, but the groaning was not in proportion to the severity of the suffering. Job longed to weigh his calamities and vexations, for he knew they would weigh more than the sea. (Job 6: 2, 3.) The word *stroke* suggests that Job knew he was suffering under the hand of God, and he felt that he was bearing the stroke with courage.

*Oh that I knew where I might find him.* Job is anxious to find God. No doubt Job believed in the omnipresence of God that God was near at all times, but he wished to find *some* real, or visible, manifestation of God's presence so that he might lay his cause before him for settlement. He is under suspicion of his friends, and perhaps even his wife entertained doubts about him, so he wished to go before the judgment seat of God to put his case before him. So sure did he feel that he would be exonerated and justified before the world that he was anxious for such a public hearing before God.

*I would set my cause before him.* Here Job seems to imagine what he would do if he had the pleasure of a public hearing before the bar of God. He would set his cause, make known fully his complaint. There was nothing about the case of which he was ashamed, nothing to hide from God. He would arrange the matter in an orderly way; it would not be a poor incoherent mass of facts and pleas, but would be done "in order."

Fill my mouth with arguments. After setting the case before God, Job would then proceed to draw arguments based upon his cause. He would not stop with one or two strong arguments, but his mouth would be filled with arguments. He felt that he had innumerable reasons why he should not be suffering such serious trials.

*I would know the words.* In these words Job expresses a desire to know how God would answer him. He was not so foolish as to think God would be at a loss to answer him; he was sure God would have an answer, but he was anxious to know what that answer would be.

*Would he contend with me?* Job begins now to explore the possible answers he might get from God. Would God contend with him in his great power? In Job 13: 20, 21 he asks that two things be granted him for such a trial. First, he wished the hand of affliction to be removed. A suffering man has difficulty in thinking clearly and logically. Second, Job asked that he not be made afraid by the terror of the Lord. He could easily be overwhelmed by the majesty and glory of God. Here Job is sure that God would not contend with him in the greatness of his power; that is, God would not overawe and embarrass him by mere greatness of power and glory. God would not take advantage of him in his weakness.

*The upright might reason with him.* Job speaks of himself as the upright. This shows again his belief in his integrity; he was conscious of uprightness, and bold to affirm it.

*So should I be delivered for ever.* God would listen to his arguments and would make a just decision. Another thing about that decision is that it would be final. There is no higher court to which our accusers can appeal. When God decides our case, it is done forever, and no one has the power to bring us again into condemnation. (Rom. 8: 31-34.) The judge from whom he speaks of being delivered is not God, but his human critics.

*I go forward, but he is not there.* This is an expression of Job's efforts to find God in such visible manifesta-

tion as to act as a judge before whom he can plead his cause. He goes in all directions. With the oriental people forward was east, backward was west, to the left hand was north, and to the right hand was south. The futility of the search is expressed in varying ways, as "he is not there," "I cannot perceive him," "I cannot behold him," and "I cannot see him." Job failed to see God because he was looking for a material manifestation of him. The world today fails to see God for the same reason. Job was seeking that he might solve the mystery of suffering and be justified from the accusations made against him. The religious world seeks God, but not in his appointed way. They seek him in dreams, visions, and in "experiences better felt than told." Until they are willing to do as commanded by apostles (Acts 2: 38; 22: 16), they will not find him.

## II. Job Affirms His Integrity (Job 23: 10-12)

*He knoweth the way I take.* Despairing of finding God in such manifestation as to be able to argue his case with God, Job took satisfaction from the assurance that God knew and approved of his course in life. This sounds like David when he said, "O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." (Psalm 139: 1-3.)

*When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* This statement manifests great confidence in his good standing before God. Job was so sure of his righteousness that he did not fear a trial; he knew he would react to the trial like gold reacts to fire. In his ignorance as to the reason for his sufferings, Job thought his trial more sore than was justified; but he was submissive in it, and was sure he would prove to be innocent. He had no more doubt as to the outcome than he had as to the outcome of gold in the fire. It is human to avoid hardships. No one should court persecution. Certainly no one should knowingly throw himself into temptations. But neither

should a Christian fear trials. James tells us to count it a joy when we fall into manifold trials. (James 1: 2.) One reason for counting them joys is, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him." (James 1: 12.) Sorrows, trials, crosses to bear, are instruments for God to use in making us into the likeness of Jesus. Those who avoid hardships, refuse to bear crosses in life, never grow into the likeness of their Lord. This is one reason why Jesus said we are not fit to be his disciples unless we are willing to deny ourselves, take up his cross daily, and follow him. (Matt. 10: 34-39; Luke 9: 23-25.)

*My foot hath held fast to his steps.* Barnes gives a fanciful interpretation of this verse, saying that the oriental people, walking bare-foot, learned to use their toes to hold to the ground or to pick up objects much as we use our fingers, and that Job says he had held fast to the steps God had given him. This is an unnatural explanation. All there seems to be in the statement is that Job affirms that he has held fast to the life God commands, that he has followed faithfully in the way, of course, of life commanded. He is simply affirming his integrity. He is not claiming to be sinless, but he is saying that he has lived a faithful life.

*His way have I kept, and turned not aside.* This is another way of saying the same thing he has just affirmed. Emphasis is placed here on the fact that Job had done God's way, not man's way. Man's way is always away from God; it is the path that turns aside. And that is the path which Job affirms he has not followed. Though man's way seems right to him (Prov. 14: 12), the end of that way is death. Solomon said it is the fool who contends that his way is right. (Prov. 12: 15.) It is difficult for man to see his faults, for "all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes." (Prov. 16: 2.) But in spite of the danger of being deceived as to his own condition, Job

was sure of his innocence, and was willing to submit his case to the supreme Judge. Job must have known that "When a man's ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Prov. 16: 7.) So he was anxious for a trial to prove his ways were pleasing to God.

*I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips.* From this we learn (1) that God had given commandments in the days of Job, and that these commandments had to do with the way a man should live. It seems that the commandments had not been written, but were only of the lip. If the language will bear this interpretation, this will go a long way towards determining the date of the book; it would put it before the giving of the law on Sinai, written on tables of stone. (2) We learn that keeping the way of the Lord is done by obeying the commandments of the Lord. There is no such thing as keeping the way of the Lord and doing what we please in work and worship. Those who have little regard for the commandments of God, regarding most of them as non-essentials, have turned aside from the way of the Lord.

*I have treasured up the words . . . more than necessary food.* Spoken law could get away from man so easily that it was necessary to treasure it in the heart with extra care. It was more to Job than necessary food. This suggests that Job loved the word of God more than his life, for necessary food is that which is essential to the preservation of life. This sounds like David, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb." (Psalm 19: 10.) Since the word of God is food for the soul (1\_Pet. 2: 1-3), Job is simply saying that he regarded the life of the soul of greater importance than the life of the body. This should be true of all of us, but many have more concern for the health of the body than for the health of the soul.

Topics for Discussion

1. The sufferings of this life, though greater than Job's, are not worthy to be compared with the glory we shall share with Christ in the life to come. (Rom. 8: 16-18.)

2. The only way for a man to find real happiness in this world and in that which is to come, is to find and hold fast to the way which God has revealed. To turn either to the left hand or to the right hand

is to miss the way and to go astray.

3. Jesus taught us that man is to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4: 4), hence we ought to long for the milk and meat of the gospel. As children who have no appetite for physical food are ill and need a physician, so those who have no desire for spiritual food are spiritually ill and need the great Physician.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Introduction

What did Job and his friends believe about the unity of God?  
Study the eleven characteristics of God as set forth in the book of Job as time will permit.

Golden Text Explained

What good choice had David made?  
Name other men who made such a choice, and relate the circumstances as time permits.  
Name some men who failed to make the good choice, and show the consequences.  
What is necessary to choose and stay in the way of faithfulness?  
Is there a type of shame of which Christians may be proud?  
Name and discuss two kinds of shame to be avoided.  
What is suggested by running in the way of the commandment?  
On what was David's running conditioned?  
In what four ways may one be enlarged?  
What connection is there between this enlargement and prayer?

Job Complains and Searches for God

What is the meaning of the word complaint?  
What was the connection between his condition and his complaint?  
How did his suffering and groaning compare as to weight, or amount?  
Why was Job anxious to find God?  
In what way did Job hope to find God?  
How would Job set his cause before God?

Was Job afraid to hear God's answer to his arguments? Why?  
What two things did Job ask in such a trial?  
What confidence did Job have as to the manner in which God would meet him?  
What might an upright man do in setting his cause before God?  
What did Job think of God's decisions?  
How does this compare with Paul?  
In what directions had Job searched for God? How are they expressed?  
Why did Job fail to find God?  
Why do people today fail to find God as their Saviour?

Job Affirms His Integrity

What did Job believe God thought of his way of life?  
How does this compare with David's statement?  
What did Job think would be the outcome of his trial?  
What should be our attitude toward trials?  
What is the teaching of James, and of Jesus on this subject?  
What did Job mean by his foot holding fast to God's steps?  
What is the end of man's way?  
What did Solomon call the man who contends that man's way is right?  
What will God do for the man whose ways please Jehovah?  
What statement suggests that God had given commandments to Job?  
What is suggested by the commandment being given by lips and not on stone?  
How do we keep the way of the Lord?  
Why should spoken words be treasured? Written words?  
Compare the values of physical and spiritual food.  
What lessons are suggested in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson IV—January 28, 1951

JOB'S PROSPERITY RESTORED

The Lesson Text

Job 42: 1-10

1 Then Job answered Je-ho'-vah, 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 Je-h6'-vah had spoken these words unto Job, Je-ho'-vah said to El'-i-phaz the Te'-man-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 Job hath.  
 8 Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job 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 Job hath.  
 9 So El'-i-phaz the Te'-man-ite and Bil'-dad the Shu'-hite, and Zo'-phar the Na'-a-ma-thite went, and did according as Je-ho'-vah commanded them: and Je-ho'-vah accepted Job.  
 10 And Je-ho'-vah turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: and Je-ho'-vah gave Job twice as much as he had before.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"So Job died, being old and full of days." (Job. 42: 17.)  
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 1: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

|                    |                                      |               |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| January 22. M..... | Job Continues His Reply to Bildad    | (Job 27:1-23) |
| January 23. T..... | Job Recalls His Past Happiness       | (Job 29:1-25) |
| January 24. W..... | Job Affirms His Integrity Again      | (Job 31:1-40) |
| January 25. T..... | Jehovah Replies to Job               | (Job 38:1-41) |
| January 26. F..... | Jehovah's Speech Continued           | (Job 39:1-30) |
| January 27. S..... | Jehovah's Questions and Job's Answer | (Job 40:1-24) |
| January 28. S..... | Jehovah's Speech Concluded           | (Job 41:1-34) |

TIME.—Unknown; probably before Moses.  
 PLACE.—Land of Uz.  
 PERSONS.—Job, his friends, and Jehovah.

Introduction

In this concluding introduction to the book of Job, it may be well to notice some of the teachings of the book on popular Biblical subjects.

1. The existence of angels was accepted as common knowledge. Angels are mentioned in Job 4: 18; they are called "holy ones" in 15: 15; and probably referred to as "stars" in 25: 5. They are called "sons of God" in 38: 7. The parallel line in that verse uses the term "morning stars" in such way as to refer to angels, which gives strength to the idea that the reference in 25: 5 is to angels as stars.

2. Evil spirits were accepted as real. Satan plays a large part in the

book. In 4: 18 we are told that God "charged his angels with folly." This may be a reference to the fact that angels fell. (See Jude 6.)

3. Man is viewed as having fallen, and as being in a weakened and depraved state. If angels are subject to folly, much more is man, we are told in 4: 18, 19. He is regarded as unclean in 14: 1-4. Man is called "filthy," and is said to drink iniquity like water in 15: 14-16. And there seems to be a reference to the sin of Adam in 31: 33.

4. Little is said about heaven as a place of rest. In fact death was the entrance into the unknown, rather dark and gloomy, as pictured in 10:

20-22. Certain expressions in chapters 14 and 19 have been taken by some to refer to the resurrection and life afterwards, but there are serious doubts that such references were intended.

5. There was a belief in future rewards and punishments. The wicked are kept for the "day of destruction," and he is to be brought forth in "the

day of wrath." (21: 30.) It is interesting to note that this information is said to have come from travelers, so we wonder if some other nation had more revelation as to the future than Job's people.

6. God was to be worshipped by the offering of sacrifices, and the offering was done by the father, suggesting this was during the patriarchal age.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Job died in old age. It is appointed unto men to die (Heb. 9: 27), so regardless of how we live, death will eventually come. This appointment was made on account of Adam's sin, for Paul says, "Therefore, as through one man *sin* entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." (Rom. 5: 12.) Again, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15: 21, 22.) So though we have nothing to do but accept the inevitable, we do have the right to determine something about when it shall be, and more to say about the condition of heart in which we die. We are taught that long life is promised to those who honor father and mother. Ex. 20: 12.) And Moses promised long life to the people provided they would walk in the way which Jehovah their God had commanded them. (Deut. 5: 33; 11: 9.) Though a righteous life is not the only condition of living a long time, nor is long life guaranteed to the righteous, but longevity and righteousness have a definite connection in the scriptures; and the ancients believed that ordinarily the righteous would live a long time. They definitely looked upon a serene and prosperous old age as a blessing from God and a reward for having lived a righteous life. Again, the fact that Job lived to a ripe old age is proof that Satan failed in his efforts. Satan tried to force Job through suffering to curse God and die. Satan hoped to afflict Job so that Job would prove unfaithful to God, die in disobedience, and be the servant of Satan for all eternity.

Satan made his supreme bid to gain Job for his service, but the conclusion of the book of Job records Satan's failure. We may gain encouragement and consolation from Job's experience in the assurance that God will not allow Satan to try us beyond our powers to resist, that God will be with us in all our trials, and that he will give us the victory through our faithfulness and crown us with success before men and angels.

2. Job died full of days. The expression "full of days" does not mean that Job was old, for that has just been said. It means that Job was satisfied with the length of life the Lord allowed him. He had lived a full life; he had got all out of life that could be desired; he was ready now to depart this life. During his trial, he prayed that he might die (Job 3: 12; 6: 8, 9), but if he had died then, regardless of his age, he could not have been said to die full of days. He would have died in disappointment. He would have felt that life was most unkind to him. But when he had been exonerated before his family, friends, and the world, and had enjoyed the rewards of patient submissiveness to God, he could depart in peace, feeling that he had received all, and more than a man is entitled to have and enjoy in this world. When a man has accomplished his purposes in life, he may be said to die full of days. And certainly Job accomplished his purposes in life, the glory and honor of God and his own vindication.

3. The length of Job's life. His age at the time of his trial is not known. It has been estimated as low as fifty, which would make him 190 years old at death. But since his property after his trial was double

what he had before his trial, may we not guess that his years after the trial were doubled? If so, he was 70 when he was tried, and 210 when

he died. This is not an unreasonable length of life for men of his time, if we are right in presuming that he lived before the time of Moses.

### Exposition of the Text

#### 1. Job's Confession (Job 42: 1-6)

*I know that thou canst do all things.* This thought had been impressed upon the mind of Job by what Jehovah had said in chapters 38 to 41. If the reader has not read those chapters, it will be worthwhile to do so now with the thought of God's omnipotence in mind. Job was impressed with his own miserable weakness in contrast with the omnipotence of God, and so will each one of us if we give proper attention to the works of God.

*No purpose of thine can be restrained.* This is an acknowledgment of God's power to do whatever he may purpose. Job did not have the conception of good and evil co-existing and engaging in endless struggle. He believed that God was supreme in all things, and that all the universe, even the evil powers, were subject to him.

*Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?* This is the question which Jehovah asked Job in 38: 2. God accused Job of darkening counsel by the use of words without knowledge. Job had talked of things about which he knew but little. "In speaking as he did about God and his transcendently glorious administration of mundane affairs he had simply been babbling in ignorance, talking about sublimities immeasurably beyond his conception." (Pulpit Commentary.)

*Things too wonderful for me.* Here Job makes a beautiful confession, and one that many of us might make over and over. In the heat of his controversy with his friends he had talked wisely and profoundly of things he did not understand; he had not been content to talk of things within his realm of knowledge, but had spoken of things which pertain only to God. So we often spend our opinions as to what God could have done, should have done, or what he might and should do in the future, when it would be more becoming to

us to acknowledge our weakness and ignorance about such things. We have here good evidence of Job's genuine repentance.

*Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak.* In chapter 13: 3, 20-22, Job all but demanded the opportunity of being heard by the Almighty. He asked that God favor him with only two things and he would gladly state his cause before him. But now he uses the language of humble submission. He is beseeching instead of demanding; he is begging, not boasting.

*I will demand of thee.* Barnes says that the word *demanded* implies more than there is of necessity in the original word. The original word means simply *to ask*, and that may be done with the deepest humility and greatest desire for instruction from the one addressed. Having listened to Jehovah, and having been impressed with the greatness and glory of God, Job now realized his utter insignificance in God's presence, and he was willing to listen, to be instructed by him.

*I had heard of thee.* Job means that his views and conceptions of God were gained by mere rumor as compared with this direct message from God. He had gained only a hazy idea of God, but now he says his eye hath seen Jehovah. Since no man hath seen God at any time (John 1: 18), we may be sure Job did not mean to say he had seen God with his physical eye. He means that his present conception of God is clearer than his former conception, as an eyewitness has a clearer understanding than can be gained from rumor.

*Wherefore I abhor myself.* This is the language of deep penitence. In the heat of argument with his friends, defending his righteousness, Job had lost sight of his imperfections and, no doubt, had magnified his goodness and righteousness beyond that which was becoming to him and pleasing



to God. Getting this view of God's power and glory, Job was brought to the true conception of his unworthiness. When men think themselves better than others, it is good for them to look to Jesus that they may see how little they are.

### II. Job's Justification (Job 42; 7-9)

*My wrath is kindled against thee.* This is the language of Jehovah to Eliphaz and his two friends. The lesson which God wished to teach in this book would *not* have been complete without this condemnation of Eliphaz and his friends. Job confesses his wrongs, and if nothing more had been written, we would get the idea that Job was wholly in the wrong, and that his friends were right.

*Ye have not spoke of me the thing that is right.* Eliphaz and his helpers in this debate had contended that Job was suffering on account of some great sin; that his suffering was a punishment sent from God. In this they were wrong. When they should have been comforting Job and helping him to bear his trial, they were accusing wrongfully and making his trial all the more severe. We may easily put ourselves on the devil's side without intending to do it, or knowing that we have done such.

Take unto *you seven* bullocks. Animals were to be offered for their sin, thus teaching them that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb. 9; 22.) And the fact that they were told to take these animals to Job suggests that Job was the officiating priest at this sacrifice. This in itself was a vindication of Job before his friends. And Job's willingness to officiate for them is a faint, but true, picture of Jesus offering a sacrifice for people who had sinned against him.

*My servant Job shall pray for you.* This must have been a humiliating circumstance to these three men. They had confidently accused Job as a great sinner; now they must go to him that he might officiate at their sin offering and pray for them that the offering might be accepted and their sins forgiven. Again we have a picture of Jesus praying for those

who crucified him. "Thus the rudiments of the gospel may be said to have existed in that early age—the work of Christ being clearly symbolized, his great propitiation by the sacrificial victims, his heavenly intercession by the prayer of Job." (Pulpit Commentary.) The fact that God said he would accept the prayer of Job is a clear implication that he would not accept the offering and prayer of these three men. Thus God let them know that Job is more acceptable to him than they were.

That *I deal not with you after your folly.* These *men*, like all humanity, were not in position to ask for justice; they needed mercy. If God had dealt with them according to strict justice, they would no doubt have suffered as much, or more than Job. David said, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him." (Psalm 103; 10, 11.) It is to be noticed that Job's prayer would keep these *men* from suffering the due reward for their deeds. This principle cannot be taken too far, but we are taught that prayer in behalf of others will avail. (James 5: 15, 19, 20.)

*Ye have not spoken the thing that is right.* Jehovah accuses them of being more in the wrong than was Job. We should be warned here that by our words we shall be condemned or by our words we shall be justified. (Matt. 12: 37.)

*And Jehovah accepted Job.* This suggests that Job was responsible for both the offerings and the prayers. He was the mediator between his friends and God. This is proof of his forgiving spirit, and his willingness to do good unto those who had done him wrong. It is difficult for Christians to go beyond the example of Job in this matter.

### III. Job's Restoration (Job 42: 10-12)

Jehovah *turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.* To turn his captivity was simply to release him from suffering and restore him to natural health. He is spoken of as being in captivity to Satan, in

the power of Satan to bruise as he willed with anything short of death; but now he is delivered from that captivity. It is said that this deliverance occurred when Job prayed for his friends. Commentators generally deny that there is any necessary connection between his praying for his friends and his release from captivity, but it seems that the language certainly implies that there is a connection intended. Job's willingness to pray for them was proof of his forgiving attitude towards them. God forgives us only if we are willing to forgive others (Matt. 6: 14), so we may conclude that Job would not have been blessed had he been unwilling to forgive.

*Jehovah gave Job twice as much as he had before.* This was true with reference to his property, but not with reference to his children. Nor are we to conclude that he was given all these riches at once, but according to the wisdom and activity in business Job rapidly accumulated twice as much property as he had before his trial.

*There came unto him all his brethren.* They had been notoriously absent during his suffering, but now that he is well and prosperous they come back to him. They were "fair-

weather" brethren and friends. We cannot but have more respect for Eliphaz and his associates than we have for these of his family and friends who refused to have anything to do with him. Eliphaz was interested in Job enough to exhort and warn him, but these others were not. Someone has called them "swallow" friends, since swallows leave in the bad weather and return in good weather.

*Every man also gave him a piece of money.* It was to their credit that they did not come empty handed. Whether their gifts were enough to give Job a start in business is not stated or implied, but it does denote their willingness to help him. They not only brought money, but they brought rings of gold. Probably these were for ornament only, and had little value.

*Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job.* The fact that God doubled his material possessions does not prove that God is obligated to deal in that manner with all who suffer. But it does teach us that God will not desert us in time of trouble, that he will give us strength to endure, and that he will reward us for our faithfulness.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Man comes to a true understanding of himself only when he comes to know God. If we compare ourselves with others, we are likely to get an exalted opinion, for we usually compare ourselves only with the more imperfect of our acquaintances. When we look at ourselves in the light of what God is, in Christ, we will then see ourselves aright.

2. A good man may make many mistakes without forfeiting the favor of God. Job was wrong in several

things, yet, though rebuked by Jehovah, he was not cast down and rejected. From this we should take courage and comfort.

3. God's plan of salvation has always been the same in all dispensations. Faith in God and a manifestation of that faith in obedience to God's commandments. He has not always commanded the same thing to be done to manifest our faith, but he has always demanded a manifestation in obedience.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What is taught in Job about the angels?  
What is taught in the book about evil spirits?  
What does the book of Job teach about man?

What does it teach about heaven and life after death?

What is taught in Job about future rewards and punishments?

What does Job teach us about how God was worshipped in that time?

#### Golden Text Explained

What appointment must all men keep?  
How do you account for death being in the world?

Do we have anything to do in determining when death shall come?  
 Is there a connection between longevity and righteousness?  
 What proof do we have of Satan's failure with Job?  
 What encouragement can we get from Job's experience with Satan?  
 What is meant by the expression "full of days"?  
 Contrast the death of Job in this lesson with that for which he prayed in his trial.  
 How long did Job live after his trial?  
 How long before?

#### Job's Confession

How did Job learn the lesson that God can do all things?  
 In what way did Job sin against God?  
 Why is it wrong to profess to be wise above that which is revealed?  
 What request denotes Job's repentance and humility?  
 Is it usually better to listen than to engage in much speaking?  
 What was Job's attitude toward himself?  
 What brought Job to this condition of heart?

#### Job's Justification

What was Jehovah's attitude toward Job's three friends?

Why is God's attitude toward them made so plain at the close of the book?  
 Of what did their sin consist?  
 What were they commanded to offer in sacrifice?  
 What part did Job play in this sacrifice?  
 Why was Job to pray for them?  
 What is here pictured in the life and work of Christ?  
 On what principle did God deal with these men, mercy or justice?  
 Does God deal with us on the principle of justice? What if he should?  
 What will our words have to do with our standing in judgment?

#### Job's Restoration

What is meant by the captivity of Job?  
 What did his prayer for his friends have to do with his release from captivity?  
 To what extent did Jehovah reward Job for his faithfulness?  
 What do you think of Job's brethren and friends?  
 What did they bring as evidence *at* their sincerity and good wishes?  
 Are we to conclude that God will double the wealth of all who suffer?  
 What general lessons have you got from the book of Job?  
 What lessons do you get from the Topics for Discussion?

### Lesson V—February 4, 1951

## THE KING OF ZION

### The Lesson Text

#### Psalm 2: 1-12

1 Why do the nations rage,  
 And the peoples meditate a vain thing?  
 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,  
 And the rulers take counsel together,  
 Against Je-ho'-vah, and against his anointed, *saying*,  
 3 Let us break their bonds asunder,  
 And cast away their cords from us.  
 4 He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh:  
 The Lord will have them in derision.  
 5 Then will he speak unto them in his wrath,  
 And vex them in his sore displeasure:  
 6 Yet I have set my king  
 Upon my holy hill of Zi'-on.  
 7 I will tell of the decree:

Je-ho'-vah said unto me, Thou art my son;  
 This day have I begotten thee.  
 8 Ask of me, and I will give *thee* the nations for thine inheritance,  
 And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.  
 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;  
 Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.  
 10 Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:  
 Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.  
 11 Serve Je-ho'-vah with fear,  
 And rejoice with trembling.  
 12 Kiss the son, lest he be angry,  
 and ye perish in the way,  
 For his wrath will soon be kindled.  
 Blessed are all they that take refuge in him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever."* (Heb. 1: 8a.)  
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 4: 23-30.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 29. M..... The Ruler to Come from Judah (Gen 49: 9-12)  
 January 30. T..... The King of Glory to Come (Psalm 24)  
 January 31. W..... Prince of Peace on Throne of David (Isa. 9: 2-7)  
 February 1. T..... All Peoples and Nations to Serve Him (Dan. 7: 9-14)  
 February 2. F..... Triumphant Entry of the King (Matt. 21: 1-11)  
 February 3. S..... All Things Subjected to Him (1 Cor. 15: 20-28)  
 February 4. S..... King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19: 11-16)

TIME.—About 1047 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David giving praises to Messiah, and warning to kings and judges.

### Introduction

The book which we now begin to study is referred to as the Psalms of David, though he by no means wrote all of the one hundred and fifty songs in the book. Nor can he be said to have collected and arranged all the Psalms, for many of them were written long after his death. It is probable that he wrote all of the first division, many of the second division, and collected and arranged all of these first two divisions, comprising Psalms 1 to 72. The entire book falls into five divisions, usually called books. Book I is composed of Psalms 1 to 41; Book II is composed of Psalms 42 to 72; Book III is composed of Psalms 73 to 89; Book IV is composed of Psalms 90 to 106; and Book V is composed of Psalms 107 to 150.

The writers of many of the Psalms are not known, and the inscriptions, obviously of human origin, are not always correct, for some of the Psalms said to be written by David have the captivity and return therefrom as their subject. According to some, David wrote sixty-eight, but according to others, he wrote seventy-three of the Psalms. Moses wrote one, the 90th. Twelve of the Psalms were

written by Asaph, the chief musician in the time of David. Eleven of the Psalms were written by the sons of Korah, but we have no way of knowing who these *men were*. And then there are more than forty Psalms which are anonymous. The general opinion among conservative scholars is that all of these which were not obviously written after the time of David should be attributed to him.

The book is composed of lyric poems suitable for worship. Lyric poetry deals mainly with the feelings, the emotions; an expression of deep emotions to be sung in worship. These one hundred and fifty songs cover the range of human emotions as no other collection in all literature, so that a Psalm can be selected to express any emotions we may have that should be expressed to God as an act of worship. The feelings of trouble, anguish, fear, hope, joy, trust, thankfulness, devotion to God, penitence for sin, and the joy of forgiveness, and many others, are expressed in the choicest of language. It is good for us to lean these Psalms so that we may express these emotions in words of the Holy Spirit.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Christ is God. The purpose of the book of Hebrews is to prove the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant. In doing this, the writer proves Jesus Christ through whom the new covenant was given is greater than the angels through whom

the old covenant was given. He proves this by saying that Jesus is the Son of God, and that the angels worshipped him. Next, he says the angels are ministers while the Son is the King. In speaking of the kingship of the Son, the writer quotes

Psalm 45: 6 in which the throne of God is mentioned. If no inspired writer had used this Psalm, we might well conclude that the reference was to the Father. But the writer of Hebrews uses it in such way as to refer *conclusively* to Jesus Christ. Hence we must conclude that Christ is God.

This agrees with the teaching of the New Testament in a number of other places. John says that in the beginning the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1: 1, 34.) *The Jews* accused him of blasphemy when he claimed to be the Son of God, using the term in such way as to make himself equal with God, hence claimed to be God. (John 10: 33-39.) Jesus asked the Jews who the Messiah was to be, and replied that he was to be the *son of David*. Then Jesus asked how the Christ could be the son of David when David himself called the Christ Lord, saying, "The Lord said unto *my* Lord, sit thou *on my* right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?" (Matt 22: 41-45.) Since Jesus claimed to be the Christ, and Christ *was to be* David's Lord, we conclude that Jesus claimed to be the Lord, Jehovah. The apostle Paul, in speaking of the Jews, said, "Of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed *forever*," (Rom. 9: 5.) *Again* we read, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life," (1 John 5: 20.) From these passages we must conclude that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. (1 Tim. 3: 16.) As God he is worthy of the worship of men and of angels. As God the fulness of the Godhead

dwells in him bodily. (Col. 2: 9.) All men ought, therefore, to accept him, reverence him, worship him, and serve him as their Creator, Preserver, and Judge before whom they must finally answer.

2. According to our text, Christ is king. His throne is said to be forever. Does he have a throne, but is *not* yet crowned king? He is head of the church (Eph. 1: 22), and he is king over his kingdom. The church is his kingdom. (Matt. 16: 18, 39.) Since the church is the kingdom, and he is head of the church and king of the kingdom, it follows that he is king of the kingdom while, *at the same time*, he is head over the church.

But our text also says that his throne is for ever and ever. The kingdom is *to be* delivered up to the Father at the resurrection. (1 Cor. 15: 24, 25.) But we must not make the mistake of thinking Jesus will *cease to reign at that time*, for his throne is for ever. "He shall reign for ever and *ever*." (Rev. 11: 15.) We are said to enter the "eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," if we are faithful here. (2 Pet. 1: 13.) The water of life flows from the "throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22: 1.) "Here, God and the Lamb are named with emphatic distinctness; and the pure river of the water of life is seen flowing from the throne of *both*—from that of God, as the Unseen, Absolute, Eternal Fountain of life and love; from that of THE LAMB, as the visible Channel, throughout eternity, of all gracious and beatific communications from God to the redeemed." (Brown.) This is at once an exaltation of Jesus to the highest honor, and an assurance to the redeemed that their relationship to their Saviour and Lord shall never end; a blessed hope!

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Opposition to the King (Psalm 2: 1-3)

*Why do the nations rage?* That this Psalm refers to Christ is obvious, because (1) the language of the text implies more than David and the events of his reign demand. Possibly it was written to celebrate

some victory of David. Clarke thinks it was written when David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, but this event could not justify ail that is said in the Psalm, especially verse 7. (2) The apostles use the Psalm as a prophecy of Christ. They found comfort in this Psalm when the rulers

in Jerusalem persecuted them. (Acts 4: 25, 26.) And Paul saw in Jesus the fulfillment of this Psalm. (Acts 13: 32, 33.) Some scholars think it had no reference whatever to any event in the life of David, but that it is wholly prophetic in its contents. We prefer to think it has a double application—its primary to some event in the life of David, and its remote application to Christ. The word *rage* indicates an angry tumultuous gathering to oppose something. The nations are pictured as maintaining this attitude toward the Lord's Anointed. They are represented as meditating or planning to do something, but the text suggests that it is a vain, useless, thing.

*The kings of the earth . . . and the rulers.* This would include Herod who killed the infants, and all the other kings and rulers who tried to destroy Jesus and his apostles. Both kings and rulers are represented as counseling together as to how they may destroy the Lord, and this counsel is against Jehovah and his Anointed. Since the Anointed is the servant of Jehovah, it is impossible to rebel against one without disobeying the other. The Jew who curses Jesus of Nazareth cannot love Jehovah. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." (1 John 2: 23.)

*Let us break our bonds asunder.* These are the words of men who were under the dominion of God, those whose duty it was to submit to that dominion. These words denote the rebellious spirit of the world that refuses to allow the Lord to rule. And these words may find fulfillment in people today who refuse to submit to the Lord's way of doing things. Jesus spoke of such as would not have him rule over them, and predicted their utter destruction. (Luke 19: 14, 27.) Nothing can be more foolish than to set one's self up in opposition to the Lord. If the rulers of his day could not prevent his establishment of his kingdom, how can men today hope to succeed in any opposition to him? Both common sense and gratitude suggest that we should cooperate with him rather than oppose him.

## II. God Scorns Opposition (Psalm 2: 4-6)

*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.* This is a poetic way of saying that God is not afraid of the opposition of men. It is more amusing than terrifying. "He looks upon their poor, puny efforts, not only without uneasiness or fear, but he laughs at their folly; he treats their impotency with derision. He knows that he can crush them like a moth when he pleases, or consume them in a moment with the breath of his mouth. How profitable it is for us to be reminded of truths such as these." (Spurgeon.)

*Then, will he speak unto them in his wrath.* It is worthwhile to notice the construction of the poem. In the first division (1-3) the kings did something and then spoke. So here we are told what God will do, and now we are to learn what he has to say about these things. We notice that the opposition of the kings and rulers stirs up the wrath of God, so his speaking will be out of his wrath. We are to be careful how we interpret these words such as *laugh* and *wrath* when they are applied to God. Certainly God does not chuckle in laughter nor boil in anger as men do. This is accommodative language. It is the only way that God's displeasure can be brought to our consideration; it is the only way the thought can be conveyed to our minds. How God will vex his enemies we are not told, but we may rest assured that usually natural means are used so that the world at large would not be conscious of the fact that God was accomplishing his will.

*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill in Zion.* The rulers opposed yet, in spite of that opposition God had set his king in Zion. Since the apostles said this prophecy was fulfilled in the opposition of Herod, Pilate, and the Gentiles (Acts 4: 27), and since God is said to have set his king in Zion in spite of that opposition, we are forced to conclude that Jesus was set in Zion as King at the time the apostles said the prophecy was fulfilled. Herod had attempted to destroy Jesus in Bethlehem, and Pilate had condemned him to death, and the Gentiles, Romans, had crucified

him; but in spite of that opposition God had set, not will in the future, but *had set his king in Zion*. The word Zion refers to Jerusalem. It was a hill in Jerusalem which David bought, to which he brought the ark of the covenant, and on which he built an altar. (2 Sam. 24: 18-24; 1 Chron. 11: 4-8.) It was called the city of David, but Zion soon came to be used for all Jerusalem. It was from Zion that the law was to go forth (Isa. 2: 3), and the law is given by the king; so when the law went forth from Zion we know the king had been anointed and was reigning.

### III. The King Speaks (Psalm 2: 7-9)

*Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son.* This is a very difficult verse. When did Jehovah say this to the Messiah? When did the Messiah become the Son of God? Is he the Son of God by virtue of his humanity, or by virtue of his resurrection?

This day *have I begotten thee*. To what time does this refer? It seems from a study of several passages on this point that *this day* refers to a time before the creation when the plan of scheme of redemption was made, and that the term Son refers to a relation constituted by the plan of redemption; that the term Son could not be applied to the second Person of the Godhead before the day mentioned; and that the purpose was consummated in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Paul's use of the statement in Acts 13: 33 has led some to think that Jesus became the Son of God in the resurrection. But Paul elsewhere states that he was *declared* to be the Son of God by the resurrection. (Rom. 1: 4.) When Peter confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, Jesus said the Father had revealed that truth to Peter. (Matt. 16: 16, 17.) So the resurrection was a declaration of the fulfillment of the promise God made to the fathers; it was proof of the sonship of Christ, and is not necessarily intended as the day when he was begotten as the Son of God.

*I will give thee the nations.* This is still what Jehovah said to the Messiah—this is a part of the decree of verse 7. This decree con-

sisted of two things, (1) that he was to be constituted as a Son, (2) that he was to have the nations for his inheritance. Notice the difference in the tense of the verbs—*this day Have I begotten thee, and I will give thee*. He was made the Son of God before he received the nations for an inheritance.

The uttermost *parts of the earth*. This shows that his inheritance was to be the nations of the earth, and that all the earth is included. Since the apostles say this Psalm is fulfilled in Christ, and his sitting in Zion is his inauguration as King, we must conclude that this verse is a description of his reign as king. The great *commission* is his marching orders to his kingdom, and the power by which he conquers is the gospel sword.

Thou *shalt* break them *with a rod of iron*. This is poetic language for absolute rule. Certainly Jesus is not using now, nor will he ever use, literal iron rods to force men to obey him, or destroy them for disobedience. But he is an absolute monarch in his kingdom, not sharing his authority with kings, popes, councils, or synods. He will reward loving obedience, but punish with everlasting destruction the unfaithful and rebellious.

### IV. Advice to the Rulers (Psalm 2: 10-12)

Be wise, O *ye kings*. These are the words of the psalmist to the kings and rulers who "were opposing the King, and to people in general. He counsels them to act wisely, to receive instruction that they may avoid the destruction which shall surely come to all who oppose this great King. If God has the power to create a universe such as this in which we live; if he has the power to create man, surely he has the power to destroy man if he chooses so to do. In view of this it is most unwise to oppose him, to rebel against his will.

*Serve Jehovah with fear*. We should notice that the writer insists that instruction comes before service. Be instructed, then serve the Lord. Service without information may do a lot of harm. Zeal without knowledge did not profit the Jews. (Rom. 10: 2, 3.)

*And rejoice with trembling*. We

are both to fear and rejoice at the same time. This fear is the holy reverence in which we should hold God at all times. A consciousness of his possession of us, and a recognition of his authority over us which humbles, subdues, and excites the greatest caution on our part lest we offend is the fear all should have of God. Yet there is a joy in the fact that we are his possession, and there is a feeling of safety and security in the fact that we are in submission to his authority that keeps the fear from becoming slavish.

*Kiss the son, lest he be angry.* We are exhorted to embrace the new King, to accept him, to make peace with him, lest in his anger he destroy us. If one is inclined to say that this does not properly represent Jesus as a gentle, loving One who calls the weak and weary to find

rest in him, it is to be remembered that this is not intended as a full representation of the Messiah. But no one can say that this is an untrue representation of him. Paul tells us of the goodness and severity of the Lord. (Rom. 11: 22.) This Psalm speaks of the severity of the King toward all who oppose him.

*His wrath will soon be kindled.* This indicates that the King will not tolerate much rebellion. His wrath soon kindles at such opposition as the kings and rulers manifest in the first part of the Psalm.

*Blessed are they that take refuge in him.* Happiness is to be found by taking refuge in him, but destruction is sure to come to all who oppose him. This is the warning, not only of the Psalmist, but of all inspired writers of all times. He is wise who heeds the warning.

**Topics for Discussion.**

1. What would be the terrible condition of humanity if God did not exercise a restraining and saving influence? The depravity of man is such that in spite of the restraining influence of God through providence and the power of the gospel society is very corrupt. We should be thankful for God's interest in saving the world, and contribute our share toward making the world what the Lord wants it to be.

2. The kingship of Christ rests upon

the sovereignty of God. How foolish in puny man to oppose such a King. One could more easily stop the on-rushing locomotive with a straw or a feather held out before it. Yet the wisest of the earth are busy opposing him.

3. Those who take refuge in the Lord are happy, for (1) he defends them (Psalm 5: 11); (2) they are not condemned (Psalm 34: 22); (3) Jehovah helps and saves them (Psalm 37: 40).

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

Who wrote the book of Psalms? How many songs in the book?  
Give the divisions of the book, and the number of Psalms in each.  
How many Psalms did David write? Moses?  
Who was Asaph? How many Psalms did he write?  
How many were written by the sons of Korah?  
What is the nature of lyric poetry?  
What is the value of the book of Psalms to us?

**Golden Text Explained**

Give two reasons why Jesus is greater than the angels.  
From what Psalm did the writer of Hebrews take our text?

How do we know that this Psalm should be applied to Christ?  
What evidence do we have that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh?  
What teachings of Jesus proves him to be the Son of God?  
Can you prove that Jesus is King in his kingdom now?  
In what sense is the throne of Jesus to last forever?

**Opposition to the King**

How do we know that this second Psalm refers to Jesus Christ?  
Did the Psalm have any reference to David?  
Who are the kings and rulers addressed in the Psalm?  
What are rulers represented as planning? What of their chances for success in their opposition to Christ?

**God Scorns Opposition**

What is meant by saying God laughs?



Does God exercise wrath as men do? Explain.  
 What is Zion? Where located?  
 Can you prove that Jesus was a reigning king in the days of the apostles?  
 What law went forth from Zion?

#### The King Speaks

Read, study, and discuss what is said in the comments on, "Thou art, my son, this day have I begotten thee."  
 Of what two things did God's decree consist?  
 What was the Messiah to have as his inheritance?  
 What are the marching orders of the kingdom of Christ?  
 With what shall the Messiah rule? Is this to be taken literally?

Is the kingdom of Christ a democracy? A monarchy? A republic?  
 What of the authority of councils? Popes? Synods?

#### Advice to the Rulers

What advice does the psalmist give us? What great fact emphasizes the folly of opposing God?  
 What relation between instruction and service?  
 What is the proper meaning of fear as an attitude toward God?  
 What is meant by kissing the son?  
 What side of the nature of Christ is set forth in this Psalm?  
 Who are blessed? Why?  
 What lessons are suggested in Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson VI—February 11, 1951

### GOD'S WORKS AND WORD

#### The Lesson Text

Psalm 19: 1-14

- 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 Je-ho'-vah is perfect,  
 restoring the soul:  
 The testimony of Je-ho'-vah is sure,  
 making wise the simple.
- 8 The precepts of Je-ho'-vah are right,  
 rejoicing the heart:

- The commandment of Je-ho'-vah is pure,  
 enlightening the eyes.
- 9 The fear of Je-ho'-vah is clean,  
 enduring for ever:  
 The ordinances of Je-ho'-vah 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 Je-ho'-vah, my rock, and *my* redeemer.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."* (Psalm 19: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 1: 19-23.

### Daily Bible Readings

|              |        |  |
|--------------|--------|--|
| February 5.  | M..... | Greatness of God's Works (Psalm 104: 1-18)           |
| February 6.  | T..... | God's Great Works, Continued (Psalm 104: 19-35)      |
| February 7.  | W..... | God's Works for Israel (Psalm 105: 1-23)             |
| February 8.  | T..... | God's Works for Israel, Continued (Psalm 105: 24-45) |
| February 9.  | F..... | Jehovah Versus False Gods (Jer. 10: 6-16)            |
| February 10. | S..... | God's Word for the Young (Psalm 119: 9-16)           |
| February 11. | S..... | Love for God's Word (Psalm 119: 97-104)              |

TIME.—Unknown.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Perhaps David wrote the Psalm.

### Introduction

It seems worthwhile to study a little more about the Psalms in general. What is the nature of the material contained in the book? Albert Barnes devotes a portion of his Introduction to this matter, and the following is taken from his remarks:

(1) Hymns in which the praise of God is the principal object, as (a) in general, God is praised as the God of nature and men (Psalm 8, 104, 145); (b) as the God of nature and the Hebrew people (Psalm 19, 29, 33, 65, 93, 135, 136, 147); (c) as peculiarly the God of the Hebrew people (Psalm 47, 66, 67, 75); (d) as the helper and deliverer of his people (Psalm 46, 48, 76, 138).

(2) Psalms pertaining to the Hebrew nation; to its history; to the divine interposition in its behalf; and to its relation to Jehovah. (Psalm 78, 105, 106, 114.)

(3) Temple psalms, or songs of Zion. (Psalm 2, 15, 24, 87, 132.)

(4) Psalms in relation to trial, calamity, distress, whether of individuals or of the nation, such as, Psalm 7, 22, 55, 56, 79, 80, 137, 102, and many others.

(5) Religious and moral psalms,

90, 121, 127, 128, 131, 133, 139, 119, and others.

These Psalms were written for the purpose of stirring the religious emotions of the people. "It is intended to raise the heart and the affections towards God; to lift the thoughts of men from the earth; to inspire confidence in God; to produce consolation as derived from God in times of trouble; to cheer and comfort man in his pilgrimage along the path of sorrow and trouble to a better abode." (Barnes.)

It is a significant fact that Israel had no other kind of poetry. All other nations have folk songs, songs for Bacchanalian feasts, light frivolous songs which have no religious meaning. But Israel had no such songs. All of Israel's poetry is of a deeply religious nature, such as may be used in the worship of God. It is doubtful that this can be accounted for on any ground other than the providence and inspiration of God. If Christians would become better acquainted with Hebrew poetry as preserved in the Bible, they would appreciate this fine contribution more than they now do.

### Golden Text Explained

1. **The power of God.** David says the heaven declare the glory of God, and power is a part of that glory. No one can look at that part of the universe that can be seen with the naked eye without being impressed with the power required to create

and preserve it. Then when we look through powerful glasses which extend our vision to other planets and systems many times greater than this in which we live, we are astonished. Every one should feel subdued in the presence of such wonderful

power. Then when we learn that God simply spoke, and all these things came into being, we cannot but feel a reverent fear in our hearts in the presence of such a powerful word. (Heb. 11: 3.) He not only created them all by the power of his word, but they are upheld, preserved, by his powerful word. (Heb. 1: 3.)

2. **The wisdom of God.** By wisdom we mean both intelligence and the practical use of that intelligence. Spurgeon said, "He who looks into the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar." David said "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The atheist says there is no design back of the universe, no intelligence displayed in making the universe; it just happened. "O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." (Psalm 104: 24.) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11: 33.)

3. **The goodness of God.** There is no attribute of God for which we should be more thankful than his goodness. Having the power he has, there is no limit to the things he can do to us. Having the intelligence we see manifested in him, there is no limit to the things he can devise. A being of such power and intelligence without goodness might delight in the most fearful inflictions of pain and misery he could conceive. But the infinite goodness of God assures us that he will exercise his power and intelligence for the good of his

creatures. "Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good." (Psalm 34: 8.) "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and the hungry soul he filleth with good." (Psalm 107: 9.) "Thou art good, and doest good." (Psalm 119: 68.) Paul told the men of Athens of the goodness of God in that he gives us life, and breath, and all things. (Acts 17: 25.) And James tells us that all good things come from the Father. (James 1: 17.)

4. **The unchangeableness of God.** Power, intelligence, and goodness are not enough in a being to enable us to put our trust in him; he must be unchangeable in all these attributes. If we have no confidence that God will always be good, there is no ground for our trust in him. He is said to be the same yesterday, today, and for ever. (Heb. 13: 8.) "For I, Jehovah, change not." (Mal. 3: 6.) "God is not a man, that he should lie . . . Hath he said, and will he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?" (Num. 23: 19.) Do the heavens teach us this lesson? The sun has never set in the east; it has never risen in the north and set in the south. The stars stay in their places. The sun and moon are so regular in their paths that eclipses can be predicted down to the minute long years before they occur. Surely the heavens declare the unchangeableness of God. From this the *sinner may conclude* that since God has always punished sin in the past, he will continue to do so. The righteous may hope for rest from trials, and a reward for their toils.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. God Revealed in Nature (Psalm 19: 1-6)

The heavens declare the glory of God. The Arabs spoke of ten heavens; the Syrians of ten expanses. God spoke of the third heaven. (2 Cor. 12: 2.) Here the reference is to what man can see, otherwise they would not declare the glory of God to man. Certainly they include the planets and stars; the sun by day, and all a man can see on a clear moonlit night; and all that man can

see with the aid, in this modern world, of powerful glasses.

The firmament showeth his handiwork. This is Hebrew parallelism used for sake of variety and emphasis. The heavens and all that is in them are said to be the handiwork of God, and as such they declare his glory, his power, wisdom, and goodness. Blind is the man who cannot see God's glory, and deaf is he who cannot hear the music of the stars as they sing.

*Day unto day uttereth speech.* We would say, Day after day; each succeeding day tells its story of the glory of God. There is much of repetition in the story told by succeeding days, but if we look for it there is a new story of God's goodness to us. The word *uttereth* suggests the idea of pouring out, so these succeeding days are literally pouring out plentifully a message about God.

*Night unto night showeth knowledge.* More Hebrew parallelism, but as beautiful as can be found in any language. One day takes up where the other left off, and the coming night will continue the work left undone by the one just passed into oblivion. They are "God's traveling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols." (Spurgeon.)

*Their line is gone out through all the earth.* Verses three and four are used to tell us of the extent of the message of the heavens. "There is no speech nor language: their voice is not heard." The King James version says, *Where* their voice is not heard. If our version is preferred, the meaning is that they do not use articulate sounds to teach, but their lesson is effective just the same. If the old version is accepted, it means that their lesson has gone into every place where languages are spoken. The word line has caused much controversy, but since its parallel term is words, we have no trouble in determining the general meaning. Their line, sound or decree, has gone over all the world.

*In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.* In the heavens God set a tent for the sun. The word *tent* suggests a temporary place, and David says of them, "The heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." (Psalm 102: 25, 26.)

*As a bridegroom.* David pictures the sun as a bridegroom getting up of a morning to begin the day. The idea suggested by bridegroom is youth, strength, and gladness.

*As a strong man.* David changes the imagery here to that of a strong man about to run a race. "No other creature yields such joy to the earth as her bridegroom the sun; and none, whether they be horse or eagle, can for an instance compare in swiftness with that heavenly champion." (Spurgeon.)

*His going forth* is from the end of the heavens. The sun begins at one end of the heavens, and his circuit, his course, reaches to the *ends*, plural, of the heavens. The plural is used to denote a complete course, that there is nothing beyond the circuit of the sun.

*Nothing is hid from the heat thereof.* The heat of the sun is a necessary blessing to the world. Neither plant nor animal life could exist without the heat of the sun.

## II. God in His Word (Psalm 19: 7-10)

*The law of Jehovah is perfect.* The law was perfect in that it was complete, and that it served the purpose for which it was given. But it is spoken of as having fault (Heb. 8: 7, 8); it could not make alive (Gal. 3: 21); and it could not justify (Acts 13: 39; Gal. 3: 11). Here the law is said to restore the soul. Obedience to the law was a condition upon which man enjoyed the favor of God, hence it restored the favor of God when man enjoyed the favor of God when he learned and obeyed the law.

*Testimony of Jehovah is sure.* Testimony is another title for the word of God. It is said to be sure; it is reliable; it will never fail. "Every word of God is tried." (Prov. 30: 5.) "Every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever." (Psalm 119: 160.) It is the solid rock of truth, and nothing is more sure and dependable. David continues by saying the word of God makes wise the simple. In Psalm 119: 97-104 we have more on the instructing and enlightening nature of the word of God. The whole Psalm should be read here.

*The precepts of Jehovah are right.* A precept is a commandment intended as a rule of action. And David regarded them as being right. He said, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." (Psalm 119:

128.) Notice (1) all God's precepts are right; (2) all precepts concerning all things are right. If all men had that attitude toward all God's word, we would have a much better world in which to live.

*The commandment of Jehovah is pure.* "The words of Jehovah are pure words." (Psalm 12: 6.) "Thy word is very pure." (Psalm 119: 140.) It is free from impurity, either in content or in its effect and influence. Being pure, it enlightens us as to our duty, and what is best for us.

The fear of *Jehovah is clean.* The word fear is used, by metonymy, to mean the law of God which induces fear or holy reverence for God. "The doctrine of truth is here described by its spiritual effect, viz., inward piety, or the fear of the Lord." (Spurgeon.)

*The ordinances of Jehovah are true.* "The sum of thy word is truth." (Psalm 119: 160.) Jesus said, "Thy word is truth." (John 17: 17.) Not only are they true, but they are righteous. "Thou has commanded thy testimonies in righteousness, and very faithfulness." (Psalm 119: 138.)

*More to be desired than gold.* The value of the word of God cannot be measured. It is a hidden mine of wealth, waiting only to be dug out and applied to bring us salvation from our sins and the happiness of eternal life with God. Much fine gold, even all the wealth of the world cannot compare with this for real lasting value. If people would spend as much time digging in this mine as they do hunting for wealth, how rich they would be!

*By them is thy servant warned.* In precept and example, the Bible is full of warnings to us who live in this age. God warned Israel, but they gave no heed and fell in the way. If we give no heed to his warnings, we will fall after the same example of unbelief. (Heb. 4.)

*In keeping them, there is great reward.* A blessing and a curse is set before each one of us; a blessing is ours if we obey the Lord, and a curse if we disobey. (Deut. 11: 26-28.) There is nothing that pays so well as obedience to God's word.

### III. David's Prayer for Help (Psalm 19: 12-14)

*Who can discern his errors?* Who knows how many sins he has committed? How many thoughts, words, and deeds have missed the mark, have gone astray from the right path? No man has this knowledge concerning himself, but we may be sure God knows every mistake we make.

*Clear thou me from hidden faults.* Faults may be hidden (1) from the world, (2) from the sinner himself. It is human to hide our sins from the world, lest our reputation suffer. David tried to hide his sin. Achan tried to hide his sin at Jericho. "Be sure your sins will find you out." But there are sins of which we are guilty which are hidden from us. They were called "sins of ignorance" under the law. (Lev. 5: 17-10.) Like David, we should pray to be clear of these, and we ought to study to know our duty, and examine ourselves to see where we have missed the mark, that we may not be guilty of such sins—or as few as possible.

Keep back *thy servant from presumptuous sins.* Sins of ignorance and presumptuous sins are mentioned in Num. 15: 27-31 in such way as to suggest there was no atonement for the latter. The presumptuous sinner was to be cut off from the people, and he was to bear his own sin; no offering was allowed for it. Hence David prayed to be kept from that sin. How far we can go in wilful sins, that is, sin against light, sin knowingly, is impossible to know. God will forgive any sin of which we truly repent. But sin against light, sinning when we know we are sinning, destroys one's inclination and ability to repent. It is a dangerous practice, and there is no pleasure so dear as to be worth the price paid for it.

*Let them not have dominion over him.* To have dominion is to rule, to reign. When sin has dominion, it rules the life, determines the course we follow. Paul says sin shall not have dominion over us if we are in Christ and under his grace. (Rom. 6: 14.)

*Clear from great transgression.* David said if he were kept clear of

presumptuous sins, he would be upright and clear from great transgression. This obviously refers to such sins as are mentioned in Num. 15: 27-31. It was bad to be guilty of any sin, but it was more than he could bear to think of being guilty of a sin for which there could be no offering made, and for which he would have to bear his iniquity.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable. This should be the daily morning*

prayer of every child of God. If our words and thoughts are acceptable to God, our deeds will be in line. Out of the heart proceed words and deeds. (Matt. 15: 19, 20.) Many are concerned that their words and deeds be acceptable to people, but are not so careful to make them acceptable to God. Public opinion is often greater than God's opinion. But since God is to be our judge, we ought to be careful to be acceptable to him.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. Study the following table, or arrangement, of things said about God's word:

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Nature</i> | <i>Effect</i>   |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Law         | Perfect       | Restores        |
| Testimony   | Sure          | Makes wise      |
| Precepts    | Right         | Rejoicing heart |
| Commandment | Pure          | Enlightening    |
| Fear        | Clean         | Enduring        |
| Ordinance   | True          | Rewarding       |

2. God is the author of two books, Nature and Revelation. When properly interpreted there is perfect harmony. Science has not proved the point of demonstration that one statement of Scripture is false. Every great discovery of science bearing on the points of difference has contributed to the belief that the Bible is from the God of nature.

**Questions for the Class**

"What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

Name and discuss the different types of material found in the Psalms.  
Discuss the purposes of these Psalms as suggested by Barnes.  
How many kinds of poetry were common in Israel? Why?

**Golden Text Explained**

What is taught by the heavens about the power of God?  
What do the heavens teach about the wisdom of God?  
What is taught in the heavens about the goodness of God?  
Why is it necessary that a wise and powerful God be infinitely good?  
What is taught by the heavens about the unchangeableness of God?  
Can you show how the Scriptures teach the same things the heavens declare?

**God Revealed in Nature**

How many heavens are there?  
What is the firmament? What does it teach?  
What is meant by day unto day? What is meant by days' uttering speech?  
What is the meaning of "their line"?  
How extensive is the teaching of the heavens?  
What has God set in the heavens?  
What is suggested by the word tabernacle?  
What two figures of speech are used to represent the sun? What is their meaning?  
What is said of the circuit of the sun?  
What is hid from the heat of the sun?

**God In His Word**

In what sense is the law of God perfect?  
In what sense was the old law mentioned by David, imperfect, faulty?  
How sure is the testimony of Jehovah?  
What is said of the precepts of Jehovah?  
Define the word precept.  
What confidence did David express in all Jehovah's precepts?  
What is said of the commandment of Jehovah?  
What is the fear of Jehovah here? What is said of it?  
What are the ordinances? What is said of "them"?  
What does David say of the value of the word of God?  
What service did David say God's word rendered?  
What is the benefit of keeping God's word?

**David's Prayer for Help**

Wherein is the difficulty of discerning all our errors?  
What is meant by hidden faults? Hidden from whom?  
What can we do about faults hidden to us?  
From what did David pray to be kept?  
What is a presumptuous sin? Why is it so deadly?  
What provision did the old law make for such sins?  
What is the great transgression David mentions?  
What is the state of a man who is in the dominion of sin?  
What should be our daily prayer? Why the importance of this?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson VII—February 18, 1951

THE SHEPHERD PSALM

The Lesson Text

Psalm 23: 1-6

1 Je-ho'-vah 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.  
 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
 Thou hast anointed my head with oil;  
 My cup runneth over.  
 Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life;  
 And I shall dwell in the house of Je-ho'-vah for ever.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I am the good shepherd." (John 10: 11a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 10: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 12. M.....Shepherds Feed Knowledge and Understanding (Jer. 3: 11-18)
- February 13. T.....Faithful Versus Unfaithful Shepherds (Jer. 23: 1-8)
- February 14. W....."Feed My Sheep" (John 21: 15-23)
- February 15. T.....Shepherds of Israel Condemned (Ezek. 34: 1-10)
- February 36. F.....Jehovah Cares for His Flock (Ezek. 34: 11-24)
- February 17. S.....Elders Are Shepherds (1 Pet. 5: 1-11)
- February 18. S.....Our Eternal Good Shepherd (Rev. 7: 13-17)

TIME.—Unknown.

PLACE.—Perhaps Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David may have written it, though some doubt that he is the author.

Introduction

The term *Shepherd* is used frequently in the Bible to refer to leaders of people in various relationships. (1) It is used of princes and rulers. God said of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure." (Isa. 44: 28.) (2) It is used of the prophets. (Zech. 11: 5, 8, 16.) (3) It is used of teachers of the people. (Ecc. 12: 11.) (4) It is used of elders of the church. (Eph. 4: 11 "pastors," a word which means a feeder of sheep; 1 Pet. 5: 1-4.) (5) It is used of Jehovah in the O. T. (Psalm 80: 1-3), and of Christ in the N. T. (1 Pet. 2: 25; Heb. 13: 20, 21.)

In the beginning of the Hebrew na-

tion, the people were shepherds, and when they went into Egypt they told Pharaoh, "Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers." (Gen. 47: 3.) The occupation of shepherd was held in such honor that a man could go from that to the highest office in the nation. But there came a time, when the nation had developed into a great power, that Amos spoke as if his occupation was a humiliating circumstance, (Amos 7: 14.)

The shepherd's equipment to carry on his work consisted of but few articles. (1) He had a mantle, usually made of sheep's-skin. (2) The shep-

herd's bag, or wallet, used for carrying food and other articles. (1 Sam. 17: 40.) (3) They usually carried a sling, which was used to protect the sheep from wild animals. (4) They carried a staff, which served as a weapon in close combat, and the crook on one end served to handle

the sheep. (5) Sometimes they had a small tent which was easily set up and removed. (Isa. 38: 12.) This equipment and the flock were usually the extent of the property owned by the shepherd, if he cared for his flock. But many shepherds were hirelings, too poor to own a flock.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Christ fulfilled types. There are many types in the Old Testament which are fulfilled in Christ. This is one, "I am the good shepherd." All that is pictured in the Old Testament concerning what a shepherd ought to be and do for his sheep—all that is good—I am that; I meet all those requirements, says Jesus. Next, there are many passages in the Old Testament which speak of Jehovah as the shepherd of his sheep. (Psa. 23; 80.) When Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd," he meant for his disciples to accept him as God, as Jehovah, the one they had read about in their scriptures who was the real, the true, shepherd of the sheep. In proof of this Jesus made the claims that (1) he owned the sheep; (2) that he gave life to the sheep; and (3) he gave his life up for the sheep. The Jews so understood him, for they immediately accused him of blasphemy for claiming to be equal with God, for making himself God. (John 10: 33.) This is a high and holy claim, and one which he is in every way eminently qualified to make. When we believe it in its full implications, it is a source of comfort and courage unsurpassed. Truly the believer finds in it a wealth of meaning which brings a peace and joy beyond the understanding of the unbeliever. He who has Jehovah for his shepherd has no reason to fear; he shall not come to want regardless of how numerous his foes, or how hard the times.

2. Characteristics of a good shepherd. Not every shepherd is a good shepherd. God condemned the shepherd of his people for not being faithful to their duty. (1) A good shepherd is watchful for the good of the sheep. Some shepherds were accused of slumbering. (Nahum 3: 18.) (2) The good shepherd protected his flock. The shepherd not only watched for the

wild beast or the thief, but he protected the sheep from such. Jesus said it was the hireling which fled when danger came (John 10: 12, 13.) The good shepherd gave his life; he laid down his life that the sheep might live. So devoted were the shepherds to their sheep that they actually developed a code which required them to give their life to keep the sheep from harm. Jesus made use of that reputation of the good shepherd to teach his disciples that he would lay down his life that they might live. (John 10: 17, 18.) (3) The good shepherd provided food, water, and shelter for his flock. (Psa. 23.) So Jesus as the spiritual shepherd provides his sheep with all spiritual requirements. He gives the water of life. (John 4: 14.) He is the bread of life. (John 6: 51.) In him and his fold the sheep find shelter from the storms of life. (Matt. 11: 28-30.) (4) The good shepherd is gentle in his treatment of the sheep under his care. The prophet said the mighty Jehovah would come, and "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." (Isa. 40: 11.) Here again we find the idea that it was Jehovah who would come to be the shepherd of the sheep, and certainly Jesus fulfilled this prophecy; so we are to accept Jesus as Jehovah in the flesh. How exalted a privilege we have in being sheep of his pasture, entitled to his love and care.

3. Elders are shepherds under Christ. Peter spoke of Jesus as the "chief Shepherd" and himself and all other elders as being manifested before him in the last day to receive a reward for their labors. If Jesus is the "chief Shepherd," it behooves all who serve under him to imitate him



in every way possible. Hence elders of the churches should study the above characteristics of the good shepherd, and do their utmost to grow into such a shepherd. Unselfish service, giving themselves for the good of others, sums up their relationship to the flock. It is easy to

accept the office, but difficult to accept the duties and responsibilities of the position. It is a sobering thought that they must report to the chief Shepherd, and that they are responsible for the loss of even one sheep which the Master has purchased and left to their care.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. First Proof of God's Care (Psa. 23: 1-4)

Jehovah is *my shepherd*. There is marvelous condescension exhibited in the fact that God is our shepherd. Why should God stoop to care for such unfaithful, ungrateful, sinful creatures as human beings have proven themselves to be? But what wondrous consolation and encouragement may be derived from the truth of this statement! But many of us miss much in the statement because we read it as if it said, Jehovah is the shepherd of the world, or of mankind. David rejoiced to say, Jehovah is *my shepherd*. It was a personal thing with him, an individual relationship in which he rejoiced. True, he did not mean to exclude anybody else who belonged to the Lord, but Jehovah was as much his shepherd as if the Lord did not have another sheep on earth. And such is true of each one today.

I shall not *want*. This is really the subject of the whole psalm, and the *balance of the poem is devoted to proving, or giving the reason why, it is true. But this statement is true because of what has just been said. No want can come to me, said David, because Jehovah is my shepherd. (1) I shall not want for temporal things. He will not withhold from me any good thing. (Psa. 84: 11.) They that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing. (Psa. 34: 10.) And, (2) they shall not want any spiritual good. He gives good things to them that ask him. (Matt. 7: 11.) He will freely give us all things. (Rom. 8: 32.) If God loved us enough when we were sinners to give his Son to die for us, surely he will now give us all we need for spiritual growth since we are his children (Rom. 5: 7-11.)*

*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. (1) This is the picture of calm repose which we find in Jehovah*

our shepherd. Sheep do *not* lie down when they are afraid. We have no right to fear if Jehovah is our shepherd, so we have the peace that passeth understanding. (2) This is a picture of satisfaction. Sheep do not lie down as long as they are hungry, but are up and going to satisfy their hunger. All our wants are supplied in Jehovah. (3) This is a picture of abundance to supply our needs. The sheep are lying down while there is an abundance of grass not yet devoured. So all who have Jehovah for their shepherd are assured of an unlimited and undiminishing supply of good things.

*He leadeth me beside still waters.* There is calm activity in the Christian life; it is not all lying down in an abundance, but activity in peace of mind, peace that passeth understanding guarding our hearts and minds. (Phil. 4: 7.)

*He restoreth my soul.* By many this statement *is* interpreted to mean that God receives back the sinner when he turns in penitence. Certainly Jehovah does that for the sinner, but David is not here viewing himself as a sinner away from God and needing to return. He views himself as the sheep of Jehovah lying in green pastures and being led beside the still waters. As the shepherd cares for the lambs that are tired, and those wounded by wild beasts, so David says Jehovah restores his soul. He "revives and reinvigorates it when it is exhausted and weary." (Pulpit Commentary.) "It refers to the spirit when exhausted, weary, or sad; and the meaning is, that God quickens and vivifies the spirit when it is exhausted." (Barnes.) "When the soul grows sorrowful he revives it; when it is sinful he sanctifies it; when it is weak he strengthens it." (Spurgeon.)

*He guideth me in the paths of righteousness.* The King James ver-

sion says he *leadeth* me; and the word guide in our version is not contrary to that idea. The Lord does not drive us. He set the example for us to follow in his steps. (1 Pet. 2: 21-23.) He leads us in paths that are right. No one ever had cause to regret following the Lord. No one on his death bed ever advised young people to refuse to follow the Lord. The word paths is plural, and may refer to the various commandments, types of service to be performed; it certainly refers to the duties and responsibilities in the Christian life which we are to accept. We should not manifest a willingness to walk in some and refuse to walk in others. Everything the Lord wishes us to do is right, and for our good.

*For his name's sake.* For the sake of his great name; that his name may be honored and glorified. What Jehovah does for us is not done primarily for our sake, but for his glory. The readers should turn to the first chapter of Ephesians, and notice how often it is said that certain things were done "according to the good pleasure of his will"; and, "that we should be to the praise of his glory." Our salvation is important primarily because it contributes to the praise of his glory.

Though I *walk through the valley of the shadow of death.* While the Lord is leading us in the paths of righteousness, we follow though he leads through the dark valley. Here again emphasis may be placed upon a single word. When people are terrified, they run. But David says he walks through the valley. This denotes calm courage, deliberate passage through that dark valley for which most all have more or less dread. And it is good that David called this passage through death a valley. On the mountain there are the storms; down in the valley it is quiet. "The storm breaks on the mountain, but the valley is the place of quietude, and thus full often the last days of the Christian are the most peaceful in his whole career; the mountain is bleak and bare, but the valley is rich with golden sheaves, and many a saint has reaped more joy and knowledge when he came to die than he ever knew while he lived." (Spurgeon.)

*I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.* David did not say there are no evils to fear. He said regardless of how many evils there are, and how real they are, I will not fear them. The reason for such courage is not his own strength, his ability to see the evils and overcome them, but the presence of Jehovah his shepherd. The good shepherd does not desert his sheep when they are in their hour of greatest need. (John 10: 11-13.)

*Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.* It is doubtful if David had in mind two different implements here, though the plural is used; but one implement used for two purposes, the protection and the care of the sheep. "By which thou governest and rulest thy flock, the ensigns of thy sovereignty and of thy gracious care." (Spurgeon.)

## II. Second Proof of God's Care (Psa. 23: 5, 6)

*Thou preparest a table before me.* Here David leaves the imagery of a shepherd with his sheep, and changes to that of a host and his guest, or rather his charge, one for whom he is caring. The host has prepared a table, a feast, for him. It has been prepared; it has not accumulated. Effort and design have been put into this feast. Furthermore, it has been brought before David.

*In the presence of mine enemies.* This feast had been prepared and was being served in spite of enemy activity. The enemy was helpless to prevent it. Certainly the devil would not allow the child of God to enjoy any good thing if he had the power to prevent it.

*Thou hast anointed my head with oil.* It was counted an act of great respect for the host to pour perfumed oil on the heads of guests, and Simon was rebuked for neglecting to show this courtesy to Jesus. (Luke 7: 46.) The pouring of the oil indicated the abundance with which the host provided for his guest. So Jehovah anoints the head to indicate the un-failing abundance of blessings he provides for his people.

*My cup runneth over.* "In the East people frequently anoint their visitors with some very fragrant

perfume; and then give them a cup or glass of some choice wine, which they are careful to fill till it runs over. The first was designed to show their love and respect; the latter to imply that while they remained there, they should have an abundance of everything. To something of this kind the psalmist probably alludes in this passage." (Samuel Burder.)

*Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me.* The preparation and serving of the feast was but a foretaste of what was to come. Jehovah would not prepare a feast for a time and then allow him to starve the balance of his days. Lovingkindness means a tender regard, mercy. Some one has said that mercy is the fountain out of which flows God's goodness. He is good to us because he has mercy upon us. They have been called "twin guardian angels" who follow us to take care of us. David was assured that they would be with him all the days of his life. The Christian has all the assurance David had, and more, in the examples and teaching of Jesus.

*And I shall dwell in the house of*

*Jehovah for ever.* To the Christian these words mean heaven, but likely to David they did not. He used similar language when there is no mistaking his meaning. "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." (Psalm 27: 4.) Samuel's life was peculiarly blessed in that he was brought up in the environs of the tabernacle, and that he was occupied continually in the work of Jehovah. David prays that he may live as if he were continually in the temple and engaged in the holy services which were performed there. "His joy and peace in religion would be *as if* he were always in the immediate dwelling place of the Most High." (Barnes.) Living such a life as long as we are permitted to remain here will make our lives as profitable as they can possibly be made, and it will give us assurance that the Lord will be pleased to accept us and take us to live in that eternal abode prepared for all who so love and serve him.

## Topics for Discussion

1. The rest and peace of the believer as described in this psalm may be said, (1) to come from God—"He maketh me to lie down"; (2) to be deep and profound, and real—"To lie down"; (3) to have solid substance—"In green pastures"; and (4) to be the subject of our constant praise and rejoicing.

2. To the Christian verse 5 may well suggest, (1) as soldiers we are feasted—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies"; (2) as priests we are anointed—"Thou has anointed my head with oil"; and (3) as guests in the house of the Lord we are fully satisfied—"My cup runneth over."

## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

### Introduction

What kind did God call his shepherd?

In what sense were prophets and teachers shepherds?

What officers in the church are called shepherds?

Cite a passage in the Old Testament where Jehovah is called a shepherd.

Give New Testament passages which refer to Christ as a shepherd.

How did the Hebrews look upon the occupation of shepherds?

Name the usual pieces of equipment of a shepherd.

### Golden Text Explained

In what way does Christ fulfill the Old Testament ideas of a good shepherd?

Did Jesus teach that he was the shepherd called Jehovah in the Old Testament?

What three proofs did he give to sustain his claims?

Of what practical benefit is this lesson to the believer?

Name and discuss four characteristics of a good shepherd.

Can you show how Jesus qualifies as a shepherd in all these ways?

Who is the chief shepherd? Who are shepherds under him in the church?

How can elders best qualify themselves for their position and work?

What emphasizes the fearful responsibility of elders?

**First Proof of God's Care**

What suggests condescension on the part of Jehovah?  
 How did David emphasize the personal relationship between him and Jehovah?  
 What is the primary lesson of the whole Psalm?  
 Why was David sure he would never want for anything?  
 Name and discuss two things Jehovah supplies his people.  
 Give and discuss three lessons suggested by the statement, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."  
 In what words is the activity of David suggested?  
 What suggests that this activity is in peace of mind?  
 What is meant by restoring the Soul?  
 Does the shepherd lead or drive his sheep?  
 What lesson is suggested by this?  
 What lesson do you get from the statement, "paths of righteousness"?  
 What is the meaning of the expression, "for his name's sake"?  
 What suggests David's calm courage as he went through the valley?  
 What is suggested by the word valley as contrasted with the mountain?

Did David deny the existence of evils in the valley?  
 Why did David not fear these evils?  
 What is meant by the rod and staff?

**Second Proof of God's Care**

How does the imagery in this division differ from that of the first?  
 What suggests effort and design in that which David enjoyed?  
 In whose presence did David enjoy his blessings?  
 What is suggested by the anointing the head with oil?  
 What is meant by his cup running over?  
 What is the meaning of goodness and lovingkindness?  
 Why did David think these would follow him all his days?  
 What is meant by dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever?  
 Is it possible for us to live such a life as suggested here?  
 What is suggested in Topics for Discussion as to the rest and peace of the believer?  
 What does verse 5 suggest to the Christian?  
 Can you quote this Psalm from memory?

**Lesson VIII—February 25, 1951****DAVID'S PENITENT CONFESSION****The Lesson Text****Psalm 51: 1-17**

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.  
 4 Against thee, thee only, have I  
 sinned,  
 And done that which is evil in  
 thy sight;  
 That thou mayest be justified  
 when thou speakest,  
 And be clear when thou judgest.  
 5 Behold, I was brought forth in  
 iniquity;  
 And in sin did my mother conceive me.  
 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in  
 the inward parts;  
 And in the hidden part thou wilt  
 make me to know wisdom.

7 Purify me with hyssop, and I  
 shall be clean:  
 Wash me, and I shall be whiter  
 than snow.  
 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness,  
 That the bones which thou hast  
 broken may rejoice.  
 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.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness,  
 O God, thou God of my sal-  
 vation;  
 And my tongue shall sing aloud  
 of thy righteousness.  
 15 O Lord, open thou my lips;  
 And my mouth shall show forth  
 thy praise.

16 For thou delightest not in sacri-  
 fice; else would I give it:  
 Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-  
 offering.  
 17 The sacrifices of God are a brok-  
 en spirit:  
 A broken and a contrite heart,  
 O God, thou wilt not despise.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy."* (Prov. 28: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Sam. 12: 7-15.

### Daily Bible Readings

February 19. M..... David's Great Sin (2 Sam. 11: 1-5)  
 February 20. T..... David's Effort to Hide His Sin (2 Sam. 11: 6-21)  
 February 21. W..... Nathan's Rebuke, and David's Confession  
 (2 Sam. 12: 1-13)  
 February 22. T..... David Suffers for His Sin (2 Sam. 12: 14-28)  
 February 23. F..... Sin Separates from God (Isa. 59: 1-8)  
 February 24. S..... Confession and Restoration (Luke 15: 11-24)  
 February 25. S..... Saved by Grace of God (Eph. 2: 1-10)

TIME.—About 1033 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David and the Lord.

### Introduction

Since our lesson is about David's confession of his sin, it is necessary that we review the facts which made such a confession necessary. The story is found in 2 Sam. 11 and 12. David's sin may be laid to the fact (1) that he was not at his post of duty. The people wanted a king that he might go out before them to fight their battles. (1 Sam. 8: 20.) But it is said that when the army went to battle, David remained in Jerusalem. (2 Sam. 11: 1.) And, (2) that David gave favorable consideration to evil. (2 Sam. 11: 2.) We are told to resist and to flee from evil. There is no other way to be safe from evil. The prophet said of God, "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look upon perverseness." (Hab. 1: 13.) This does not mean that God shuts his eyes at sin, and refuses to recognize it as existing; but he is too pure to give any consideration to the idea of committing sin. So man should refuse to consider committing a sin. If man gives sin any favorable consideration, he will be powerless to resist when the temptation comes.

We should notice, too, David's efforts to hide his sin. (1) He called Uriah in from the battle and expected his stay at home to cover up the sin in the sight of the people. (2) When Uriah refused to go home, David made him drink until he was drunk. (3) When the drunk man refused to enjoy the comforts of his home while his fellow-soldiers were denied such comforts, David planned the death of Uriah, which made him a murderer. (4) David used deceit in his dealings with Uriah. (5) David brought reproach upon his office of king and prophet in his efforts to hide his sin. It is impossible for a man of high office to engage in sin without bringing reproach upon that office, and to some degree hurting all others in that office.

The consequences of David's sin are such as were to be expected. The child born of this sinful union died. While we must not look upon this death as being brought upon the child just to inflict punishment upon David, we must realize that the sorrow of David was a consequence of

his sin. If he had never committed the sin, he would never have endured the sorrow. David's son acted shame-

fully, doing the very thing Nathan said would be done in punishment of David's sin. (2 Sam. 16: 20-23.)

### Golden Text Explained

1. Covering transgression. (1) We cover transgression when we deny that we have sinned. When Naaman was healed, Elisha refused a rich gift. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, coveted the gift, so went after Naaman to get it. When he returned, Elisha asked, "Whence comest thou?" Gehazi said, "Thy servant went no whither." (2 Kings 5: 25.) He lied to cover his sin. Men often deny their sins, either practicing deceit or telling a lie as did Gehazi. Solomon says such a man shall not prosper. There can be no spiritual growth for one who has such a heart, and such a conception of good moral standards. Covering sin is keeping sin within our hearts, and is an indication of what the heart really is, what it appreciates. (2) We cover our sins when we justify ourselves in our course of conduct. The lawyer tried to justify himself (Luke 10: 29) for lack of love for his neighbor by raising a question about who was his neighbor. Men often cover their sins in their own eyes, even deceive themselves to feel no guilt, by laying the blame on others. Adam laid the blame on Eve as if her guilt removed the guilt from him. (3) In order to cover sin it is often necessary to commit greater sins. David lied, made a man drunk, and murdered a man to cover up his sin of adultery. God has said to be sure your sin will find you out. (Num. 32: 23.) And regardless of how hard we may try to keep them covered, our sins will find us out, if not in this life, in the judgment. God will bring every secret thing into judgment, whether it be good or bad. (Ecc. 12: 14.) (4) Covering transgression is an indication of pride, self-righteousness, and a lack of penitence.

2. How to obtain mercy. (1) One

must confess his sin. There is a difference between *confessing* and admitting sin. Men often try to cover their sins, denying all guilt, and affirming complete innocence, until a surprise witness is brought in and all hope of maintaining respect of the people is taken away; then comes the break-down and admission of guilt. A full confession on account of pressure of conscience from within is much better, and more to be depended on, than such a break-down and admission on account of pressure from without. Confession should be as public as the sin. If one has brought shame on the church before the world, his sin should be confessed publicly to remove that shame. Otherwise his confession may be made in his private devotions. James tells us to confess our faults one to another. (James 5: 16.) This is to be done for mutual aid in fighting sin. If our faults and weaknesses are known to our brethren, they can protect us, and pray intelligently for us; but if we do not let them know our faults, how can they pray for us? (2) One must forsake his sins. This is the test of one's sincerity. If one is truly sorry for sin, he will sincerely turn away from, forsake, his sin. To turn from sin, one must be genuinely ashamed of his sin. The degree of shame we feel for sin is the measure of assurance that we will not do the same thing again. (Rom. 6: 21.) One may be sorry he got caught in sin, yet never feel ashamed of his sin. Being sorry he got caught will only cause him to exercise more caution next time, but being deeply ashamed of sin will cause one to forsake sin whether he is detected or not. David was not enough ashamed of his sin to confess it without pressure from without.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Specific Confession and Prayer (Psalm 51: 1-4)

*Have mercy* on me, O God. David cries for mercy even before he con-

fesses his sin. This is an indication that he is not going to try to justify himself, much less deny his guilt, nor will he plead that the law was too exacting.

According to the multitude of thy tender mercies. David asks forgiveness according to the measure of two things, (1) the lovingkindness of God; (2) the tender mercies of God. It should be noticed that he did not plead any worth or merit of his own. He did not ask to be given consideration because he was a king, or a prophet, or an inspired man. There was nothing in him, or about him, connected with him or his nature or position, that he could rely upon to gain him any consideration before God. All he could do was to ask for forgiveness according to the goodness and mercy of God. The expression "multitude of thy tender mercies," suggests that God's mercy (1) is tender, easy to be excited, to be moved in the sinner's behalf; (2) the word multitude refers to the number of times it has been excited in the behalf of sinners; and who can count the number of times the mercy of God has been extended to himself? much less how many times to all humanity!

*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.* "The hypocrite is content if his garments be washed; but the true suppliant cries, 'wash me.'" (Spurgeon.) The words *wash thoroughly* convey the idea of washing over and over until the thing is clean.

Cleanse me from *my sin*, David has already used three words to describe his deed. They are, *transgression*, *iniquity*, and *sin*. Transgression comes from a word which means "crossing over the boundary of right and entering the forbidden land of wrong." Iniquity is from a word meaning "a departure from that which is equal and right." Sin means "to miss the mark ... a failure or coming short of that aim which God intended." These words "cover every form of moral evil, and, united together, imply the deepest guilt."

*My sin is ever before me.* David was continually conscious of his sin. This is one of the consequences of sin that the shame and regret one feels lingers long in the mind to torment. Though one has been forgiven, the torments of regret and remorse continue for years, maybe for life. If young people could see all this clearly, they would be more

cautious and refrain from doing so many things that bring regret.

*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* Had David forgotten that he had broken up a home, had murdered the husband and taken the wife? The answer to this question is to be found, (1) in the fact that David is not speaking of the whole of his life, the wrongs he may have done others and the sins he may have committed against God at other times. (2) It is probable that he is viewing the whole transaction from adultery to<sup>1</sup> the murder of Uriah as one sin. True, it was a series of miserable deeds, but he puts them all together and views them as one sin, because they are vitally connected. (3) Though Uriah was hurt and the cause of religion was crippled in that the king and prophet had acted so wickedly, yet David views the offense offered to God, the insult to his holiness, to be so far beyond the injury done to others involved that he could say his sin was against God only. Only those who have the most exalted views of the holiness of God can grasp his thought.

That thou *mayest be justified.* David realized that God would be justified in any condemnation, or any sentence he might impose, (1) from the enormity of the sin, and (2) on account of the just and holy character of God.

## II. General Confession and Prayer (Psalm 51: 5-12)

*I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* This verse has given rise to strange doctrines, and some in their efforts to answer unscriptural dogmas have refused to admit all that is suggested in the statement. We can all say the same thing David said, and with as much truth. Some things not taught in this verse are, (1) that Adam's sin was imputed to David at birth; (2) that David was guilty of sin when he was born; (3) that David's parents were guilty of immorality at his conception; (4) that David's relation to God was any different from that of any other person of his day, or our day, at birth. Some things taught in this verse are, (1) that humanity is depraved and liable

to sin; (2) that men inherit weaknesses and propensities to sin, that such are transferred from parent to child; (3) that such depravity and inclination is humiliating, but does not excuse one for his sins. We must not make the mistake of thinking that since one is depraved in nature, he is wholly and totally depraved so that he is incapable of a good thought, desire, or emotion, so incapable of rendering acceptable obedience to the gospel Of Christ. But while denying total depravity we must not lose sight of the scriptural doctrine of depravity of human nature.

*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* God delights in sincerity in the heart, in purity of soul. David has been quickened to a realization of how far he has missed the mark in this respect, how short he has fallen of what the Holy God expects of him.

*Purify me with hyssop . . . wash me.* Hyssop was "A European mint with highly aromatic and pungent leaves." (Webster.) The hyssop was dipped in blood and used to sprinkle the blood, or in some cases water of purification. David prayed for the cleansing which was to be obtained through the use of hyssop. The washing of this verse is the same as that of a fuller or launderer, whole and effective. Notice the result, whiter than snow, and the faith required in David to expect to be so clean after so great a sin.

*Make me to hear joy and gladness.* He had heard accusation; he had heard the voice of guilt, and the voice of condemnation; now he wishes to hear a voice which will bring joy and gladness, and nothing but the voice of pardon for his sin can bring that. And when he hears that, the bones which have been broken by sorrow will rejoice rather than weep.

*Hide thy face from my sins.* David uses every form of petition possible asking for the forgiveness of his sins. It is not the needless multiplying of words merely for effect, but it is the pouring out of the sorrow for sin, and the pleading for pardon that only a stricken and bleeding heart can offer. On the request to "blot out all mine iniquities," Spurgeon suggests that if all our iniquities are not

blotted out, our names must be blotted out of the book of life. (Rev. 3: 5.)

Create in me a *clean heart*. The word for *create* is the same word used in Gen. 1: 1 which signifies making something to exist where formerly nothing existed. Denominational dogmas have been built on this verse to the effect that God creates when and where he pleases without respect to character. But we must remember that it was done for David in answer to his prayer. Furthermore, the word is not used in its primary sense, for David had a heart, a soul, and was not asking for something to be given him which he did not have in the absolute sense. He did not have a clean *heart*, and when he was given a clean heart, he was given something which he did not have. The parallel line, *renew a right spirit within me*, includes all that is included in the first line. So the creation is no more than the renewal. Perhaps the word should denote no more than an act of deity.

Cast me *not away from thy presence*. David realized he would lose all if he lost the communion of God. The parallel line, *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me*, is another way of making the same petition.

*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*. With the consciousness of sin comes sorrow; now David prays he may have the joy of salvation restored, and that can come only with full pardon. This is the rejoicing in the Lord mentioned by Paul. (Phil. 4: 4.)

### III. Good Resolutions (Psalm 51: 13-14)

*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.* David is *not* trying to dictate terms, but he is manifesting a willingness to do what he can to show his appreciation for blessings he is asking of God. He will use the knowledge gained both from God's word and from his experience to teach sinners the ways of the Lord. And through his teaching he will convert sinners to the Lord.

*My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.* If the Lord will deliver him from bloodguiltiness, from the guilt of shedding the blood of Uriah, he will use his tongue to sing



aloud the righteousness of Jehovah. There are those who say that the righteousness of God demands the punishment of the sinner, but the mercy of God pardons the sinner. The Bible does not make such theological distinctions, for David will sing of the righteousness of God for deliverance from bloodguiltiness. So we may attribute deliverance to the righteousness of God as well as to his mercy.

*Thou delightest not in sacrifice.* By *some this* has been taken to mean that God did not demand sacrifices and offerings. But such an interpretation would compel us to throw out much of the law of Moses. David minimizes the importance of animal sacrifice that he may magnify the importance of a contrite heart. Jesus said, Take *no* thought what ye shall eat, but he did not mean that a woman should not plan a Sunday

dinner. He minimized the importance of material things that he might magnify the importance of seeking the kingdom.

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit . . . and a contrite heart.* Sacrifices and offerings by the thousands without the proper condition of the heart would be useless. But many have made the mistake of thinking that the proper heart without the offerings would have been acceptable in David, and will be sufficient for us. The mistake here is that if David had the proper spirit, he did offer the proper sacrifices; and if we have the proper attitude, we will offer whatever obedience God demands. Those who refuse to obey just do not have the proper attitude, though they may think they have. Those who talk most about it *as* a reason for lack of obedience certainly do not have the proper attitude.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. If a man as great and as fine as David would lie and murder to cover up his sin, can we be sure we would not do as much or more to cover our sins? The safest thing to do is to be sure we are not faced with the necessity of making such a choice.

2. David was a rich man; he had power and influence; people admired him and sought his favors; he had all this world could offer, but he was most unhappy. That for which he longed could not be bought for money, nor given by friends, nor demanded by authority of a king. He longed

for pardon, communion with God, and the joy of salvation. David was the poorest rich man on earth until this prayer was answered.

3. Be sure your sin will find you out; the *way* of the transgressor is hard; the wages of sin is death. These sayings are boring to some people, especially some young people who resent being preached to; but who can imagine David resenting such preaching after this experience? Better learn the lesson from him, not through your own experience.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What two things led to the sin David committed?  
What is to be our attitude toward sin?  
Give and discuss five points under David's efforts to hide his sin.  
Discuss the consequences of David's sin.

**Golden Text Explained**

What is meant by covering transgression?  
Give an Old Testament example.  
Give a New Testament example of covering sin by self-justification.  
What is often necessary in order to cover sin? Illustrate in ease of David.

Of what is our effort to cover sin an indication?  
What two things are necessary to obtain mercy?  
What is the difference between confessing and admitting sin?  
How public should confession of sin be?  
What is the value of confessing our fault to one another?  
What is the test of one's sincerity?  
What assurance do we have that we will not continue in the sin we confess?  
What caused David to confess his sin?

**Specific Confession**

What was David's first petition?  
On what characteristics of God did David depend for forgiveness?  
What is suggested in our text about the mercies of God?

Contrast the hypocrite and the true suppliant in their prayers for cleansing.  
 What three words does David use to describe his sin? What do they mean?  
 What mental anguish comes as a consequence of sin?  
 What did David mean when he said he had sinned against God only?  
 Why did David think God justified in any sentence he might impose?

General Confession

Name and discuss four things not taught in verse 5 of our text.  
 What three lessons are taught?  
 Does the Bible teach that human nature is depraved, or totally depraved?  
 What does God desire in the heart?  
 What was hyssop? For what was it used?  
 What did David pray that he might hear?  
 How many expressions did David use in

this Psalm for the forgiveness of sin? What is meant by creating a new heart? Renewing a right spirit?  
 How highly did David value the presence of God in his life?

Good Resolutions

What three things did David resolve to do if God would pardon him?  
 What connection is there between the righteousness of God and forgiveness?  
 Does God forgive because he is righteous or because he is merciful?  
 What is meant by saying God does not delight in sacrifices?  
 What must accompany the offering of sacrifices to make them acceptable?  
 Can one be right in heart and still neglect or refuse to obey God?  
 What lessons of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson IX—March 4, 1951

**THE EXILES IN BABYLON**

The Lesson Text

Psalm 137: 1-9

- 1 By the rivers of Bab'y-lon,  
 There we sat down, yea, we wept,  
 When we remembered Zi'-6n.
- 2 Upon the willows in the midst thereof  
 We hanged up our harps.
- 3 For there they that led us captive required of us songs,  
 And they that wasted us *required of us mirth, saying,*  
 Sing us one of the songs of Zi-on.
- 4 How shall we sing Je-ho'-vah's song  
 In a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget thee, O Je-ru'-sa-lem,  
 Let my right hand forget *her skill.*
- 6 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,  
 If I remember thee not;  
 If I prefer not Je-ru'-sa-lem  
 Above my chief joy,
- 7 Remember, O Je-h6'-vah,  
 against the children of E'-dom  
 The day of Je-ru'-sa-lem;  
 Who said, Rase it, rase it,  
 Even to the foundation thereof.
- 8 O daughter of Bab'y-lon, that art to be destroyed,  
 Happy shall he be, that reward-eth thee  
 As thou has served us.
- 9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones  
 Against the rock.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The way of the transgressor is hard."* (Prov. 13: 15b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Dan. 9: 3-12.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 26. M.....Jerusalem Destroyed (2 Kings 25: 1-21)
- February 27. T.....Jews Carried to Babylon (2 Chron. 36: 11-21)
- February 28. W..... Why Israel was Exiled (Eze. 33: 21-29)
- March 1. T..... Persecution of Jews in Exile (Dan. 3: 8-27)
- March 2. F..... Plot to Destroy Jews in Exile (Esther 3: 7-15)
- March 3. S. .... Cyrus Releases and Assists Exiles (Ezra 1: 1-11)
- March 4. S. .... Babylon to Be Punished (Jer. 51: 45-58)

TIME.—During or following the captivity.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—The exiles.

## Introduction

Jehovah promised the land of Canaan to the Jews as long as they would obey him, but told them they would be removed from the land if they disobeyed. (Deut. 11: 13-17.) God fulfilled every promise he ever made to Israel. (Josh. 21: 43-45.) Moses foresaw the unbelief and disobedience of the Jews, and foretold it in detail. (Deut. 28.) Prophets were sent again and again to warn the people of the consequences of their disobedience, but they refused to heed the warnings, and persecuted the prophets. (2 Chron. 36: 14-16.) Finally in about 606 B.C. the first captives were taken into Babylon. Daniel was among this first number taken. In 586 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed and the people carried into captivity.

Life for the exile in Babylon was a mixture of good and evil. The Jews were told to accept the captivity and make the best of their condition; they were told to build houses, marry and rear children, cultivate the land, enter business, seek the peace of the city where they lived, and worship Jehovah. • (Jer. 29: 5ff.) They were told to live a normal life and wait on the providence of God to return them to their own land. And there *is no* doubt that many of them did so, and became so attached to the country that they did not care to return to Jerusalem when the opportunity came. But

there was another side of the situation. They were captives and were treated as such by the people who ruled them. "There were the insults of the oppressors, there were the bitter tears which dropped into their daily beverage, the ashes which mingled with their daily bread; there was the tenacious remembrance which clung to the very stones and dust of their native city." (Stanley.) Psalm 102 should be read in this connection. No people were ever so attached to their land as were the loyal and devout Jews, and it was impossible for them to be happy in a strange land, regardless of how pleasant their physical surroundings were made.

In 536 B.C. Cyrus the Persian decreed their return. We are told that 42,360 people, with 7,337 slaves, or servants, returned. (Ezra 2: 64, 65.) We are told that the journey across the desert took about four months. (Ezra 7: 8, 9.) The work of rebuilding Jerusalem, the temple, and the wall about the city consumed many years. The people became weary, or got so busy in their own affairs that they neglected to build the temple, and had to be rebuked and encouraged *by* the prophets. *Finally in 516 B.C.* the temple was completed, and the walls were completed nearly three-fourths of a century later under Nehemiah.

## Golden Text Explained

### 1. Way is hard on the transgressor.

We have but to call the roll of men and women who have violated God's law and check on their lives to learn the truth of our Golden Text. In the anguish of his soul, the first murderer cried, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." (Gen. 4: 13.) The otherwise righteous Lot turned his steps toward Sodom because of his desire for gain, and *as a result* he lost most of his family in that wicked city, and saw his seed perpetuated in shame. (Gen. 19: 30ff.) Israel could have gone into Canaan thirty-eight years before they did, and would have been spared all those years of weary wandering if it had not been for their sin against Je-

hovah. The book of Judges is filled with many examples of transgressions on the part of the people of God and their sufferings brought upon them. The books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are records of God's dealings with his people from the time of the Judges to the Babylonian captivity, and they abound with examples to prove the truth of our text. *One* cannot read the books of the prophets without being impressed with the fact that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Nor is God a respecter of persons in this matter, for Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan on account of his sin, though he was the greatest man on earth. (Num. 27: 12-14.)

Even angels who sinned were cast down to suffer punishment for their sin. (Jude 6.) If God spared not the angels, and the greatest man on earth, from suffering on account of their sins, surely none of us can expect to sin without bringing suffering upon us.

2. **Suffering of others.** If the transgressor were the only one to suffer for his sins, the tale of suffering in this world would be much shorter. When men defy the laws of God and man, we sorrow little that he must suffer. But when others suffer because of their relation to the sinner, our pity and compassion are stirred deeply. If Adam only had suffered on account of his sin, the world would have been spared a lot of sorrow. When Achan sinned, his whole family were involved in sorrow and suffering. (Josh. 7.) David sinned, and we feel it is right for him to suffer. But he was not the only one involved in the suffering. Uriah was killed and his people brought to grief at his passing; Bathsheba was led into shame, and her family given reason to mourn her folly. No man sins to himself. His

family and associates are involved in his sufferings. Surely all who observe things know of some man who has stepped from the path of right to steal, or kill, or commit adultery. The family of that man are put to shame in the community; they cannot face their friends, so they move to another city or another state. Soon the shame of their father becomes known there, and they move again. Young people find themselves caught in the clutches of sin and have to break the sad news to their parents; fathers are ruined financially and mothers turn grey in a few weeks sorrowing for their wayward children. Yes, the way of the transgressor is hard, and almost without exception it is hard on others besides the transgressor. If we would but think of others before we commit the transgression, we would refuse to bring them into sorrow, even if we did not care for ourselves. We deceive ourselves by saying that others will never know, and sorrow is added to suffering when we realize that our sins usually find us out to make, us and our family suffer for our folly.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. A Picture of Life in Exile (Psalm 137: 1, 2)

By the rivers of Babylon, This psalm was written long after David's time. Undoubtedly it was written by someone who was in captivity. Some versions, as Vulgate and the Septuagint, say it was written by David for Jeremiah, which Adam Clark says is "ridiculous enough." It would be easier to think Jeremiah wrote it than to think David did, but it is extremely doubtful if Jeremiah had anything to do with the writing of it, since he was never a captive in Babylon. Regardless of its author, it is accepted as one of the most beautiful of all the Psalms, with the exception of the last division. The rivers of Babylon were Tigris, Euphrates, and Chebar. (Eze. 1: 1.) This last river is mentioned as one along which the captives lived, and Ezekiel was among them. There was also a system of great canals between the Tigris and Euphrates large enough to be called

rivers, and it is thought by some that Chebar was one of these canals. The rivers were gathering places for the Jews in strange lands, even in the time of Paul, for we see Lydia and her helpers going out to the river on the sabbath for worship. (Acts 16.)

We wept when we remembered Zion. It is suggested that the captives had some time for themselves, for social activities and for worship. They went to the river, where it was cool and restful, for relaxation, social activities, and worship. This gives us a picture of their condition while in exile, which seems to have been better than the children of Israel had in Egypt. But when they got together, they did not talk long until something was said about Zion, its condition, the joys they used to know there, and how they longed to return. And they had not talked long until they were in tears about it.

Upon the willows we hanged our harps. We are told that the willow

tree was unusually plentiful in and around Babylon. They grew by the rivers and canals to great size. It is suggested here that they went to the river expecting to enjoy playing their harps and singing their songs, but remembrance of Zion in desolation changed their attitude so that they had no heart to play and sing. Hanging their harps on the willows indicates the mood of the captives; they were sad and dejected. The condition of the church today should be a large factor in determining our attitude. How can people be happy when the church in their community is torn by strife and division, or when it is blind to its opportunities unconscious of its responsibilities?

## II. Unkindness of Their Captives

(Psalm 137: 3, 4)

They that *led us captive required of us songs*. The people of Babylon did not share the Jew's feelings for his home land; they had no idea of the grief that welled up beneath the surface of a face that tried to show contentment. No doubt the Babylonians demanded songs not only for their entertainment, but because they knew it made the Jews unhappy.

They that *wasted us* required of us mirth. The Babylonians not only wanted a *song*, but they wanted mirthful songs. If the Jews ever sang anything but religious songs such as these Psalms, there is no record of it; no other type of song has been preserved. So in reality they did not have the type of song usually relied on for mirth.

*Sing us one of the songs of Zion*. As if some Jew had said, we have no songs but the songs of Zion; and the reply came, Then sing us a song of Zion. Writers through the years have differed as to the reasons they assign for this requirement of the Babylonians. One says they ask for *songs out of simple curiosity*; one says these were sympathetic Babylonians who counselled the Jews to "reconcile themselves to their, inevitable situation, and to resume their former habits in social harmony with the inhabitants of the land"; another says it was "a fresh aggravation of their misery in requiring them to make sport for their new masters."

Two descriptive expressions in the verse, "they that led us captive" and "they that wasted us," seem to suggest that those who asked for songs were not viewed as friends by the Jews. Nor does the spirit expressed in the last verses of this Psalm suggest that the Jews had any respect for the people who asked them for songs.

*How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a foreign land?* There was an incongruity about singing spiritual songs in the land of captivity. One man pictures them as invited to sing at a heathen feast where some heathen god was being honored. How could they sing Jehovah's songs in such a place and under such conditions? It would be like singing "Jesus Lover of My Soul" in a dance hall or in a saloon and other dives of wickedness. "The words would languish upon the tongue, the notes would refuse to sound upon the disused harp. Such psalmody requires its accompaniment and its adaptation—if not actually in the courts of Zion, yet at least in the balmy gales of Palestine and the believing atmosphere of Israel." (Spurgeon.)

## III. Intense Love for Jerusalem

(Psalm 137: 5, 6)

*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill*. This language is capable of two interpretations. First, if I forget Jerusalem so far as to sing and play these sacred songs for heathen entertainment, then punish me by taking away the skill of my right hand. Second, rather than forget Jehovah so far as to sing his songs and play the harp for heathen entertainment may we lose the skill of the right hand. It were better to lose the skill of the right hand than that we should offend Jehovah by singing his songs and playing the harps for heathen entertainment. There is not much difference between the interpretations, but it seems the latter is to be preferred. Both manifest a love for Jerusalem which the Jews did not have when they were in Jerusalem, for if they had loved the city that much they would never have gone into captivity.

*Let my tongue cleave to the roof*

*of my mouth, if I remember thee not.* It were better for my tongue to cleave to the roof of my mouth that I should never be able to speak again than that I should so far forget Jehovah as to sing his sacred songs for the entertainment of the vulgar and curious among the heathen Babylonians.

*If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.* Whether the psalmist referred to some one thing as his chief joy, such as life itself, or whether he simply meant whatever may be of greatest value to me, is difficult to know. But he prefers that his tongue should cleave to the roof of his mouth rather than come to the point where he would prefer any joy above Jerusalem. He knows there will never come a time when he will love something more than he loves Jerusalem; he will never do more for any city than he will do for the holy city. If we could only develop such love and loyalty for the church, we would find ourselves a lot more active in its services. Must we wait until the church is destroyed, or until we are denied the privilege of worship, before we realize how much we love it?

#### IV. Imprecation of Enemies (Psalm 137: 7-9)

*Remember against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem.* It seems that Edom, the descendants of Esau and so related to the Jews, helped in the destruction of Jerusalem when the Jews were carried into Babylon. And they, Edom, shared in the spoils of the country, and came to possess much of it in the east. (Eze. 25: 12.) God warned Edom that she would suffer for such unbrotherly action. (Obad. 11-14.) So the captives are represented as saying the day of Jerusalem, that is the day of its destruction, should be remembered against Edom. This was a wish that Edom might suffer for her wickedness.

*Who said, Rase it, rase it.* The Edomites called for the complete destruction of Jerusalem, when, as brethren of the Jews, they should have been in sympathy with them.

*O Daughter of Babylon, thou art to be destroyed.* Though God used Babylon as a rod to chastise his peo-

ple, yet their wickedness was of their own doing, of their own will, so were subjects of the wrath of God. God used Judas to betray Jesus, but that did not free Judas of the guilt and punishment that rightly followed. So with Babylon. (Isa. 13.)

*Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee.* Is this the expression of a wish on the part of the writer? Or is it simply a statement of a fact that the one who punishes Babylon will be happy in the business?

*That dasheth thy little ones against a rock.* Is this the wish of the writer? There are several such passages in the Psalms. They are called imprecatory psalms. They are the delight of infidels and atheists, and the real difficulty of the believer. (1) They may be regarded as prophetic without any indication of the feeling of the believer, but it is difficult to make out this point with reference to some of the statements. (2) It is possible that the writer was simply saying that whoever punished Babylon would be happy in his grim business, that he could dash infants against a rock and get pleasure from it, so cruel and harsh would their captors be. Yet the setting of this Psalm in our lesson is such that at first reading one naturally gets the idea that the writer wished the Babylonians to suffer because they had brought so much suffering upon the Jews. (3) Others view these imprecations in the light of the age in which they were written, admitting that they do not measure up to the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (4) We are told of the sins of the greatest, Moses, David, Solomon, and others, not with the view of teaching us to do the same as they did, but rather to warn us. So the sinful emotions of these people in captivity, hating their enemies and praying for their punishment, are recorded, not for us to accept as examples, but to warn us lest we follow in their steps. (5) Some of David's imprecations may be charged up to the fact that he was a ruler whose business it was to seek out and punish the wicked, but since this psalm in our lesson was not written by him, we cannot use this as an explanation for it. Since such suffering actually

came upon Babylon when destroyed, we may view this psalm as prophetic

and not as indicating the feelings of the writer.

Topics for Discussion

1. Children seldom learn what will hurt by being told. They must put their hand on the red hot stove before they learn what the word "hurt" means. We are grown-up children. The Jews were told that their sins would hurt them, but they did not believe it. We are told that sin will hurt us, but few of us will profit enough to keep us from trying it just to see for ourselves.

2. The Jews would not sing the sacred songs of Zion for unholy purposes. Our regard for holy things is an indication of the depth and sincerity of our Christian character.

3. It is better to lose our right hand or the use of our tongue than to sin against God; better to go through life a cripple in fellowship with Christ, than having all our limbs to be lost in hell. (Mark 9: 43-48.)

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Introduction

On what condition were the Jews given the land of Canaan?  
Has God fulfilled all promises he made to the Jews?  
What did Moses predict with reference to the Jews?  
When were the first captives taken into Babylon?  
Tell of the fall of Jerusalem. Why? When?  
What did Jeremiah advise the Jews to do while in Babylon?  
What king allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem? When?  
How long did it take them to cross the desert?  
When was the temple finished? When was the wall built?

Golden Text Explained

Who was the first to complain of his punishment being hard?  
Give and discuss examples that prove our text.  
Give examples of people whose sins caused others to suffer.  
Why do people sin, knowing it will cause Others to suffer?

A Picture of Life In Exile

What do you know of the author of this psalm we study?  
Name three rivers of Babylon.

Were rivers common places of gathering for Jews? Why?  
What is suggested in our text about the social life of the captives?  
What was the cause of their sorrow?

Unkindness of Their Captives

What request did the Babylonians make of the exiles?  
Why could they not grant the request?  
Did the Jews have the type of song first requested?  
What incongruity was there in singing songs of Zion in Babylon?

Intense Love for Jerusalem

What did the Jews prefer to suffer rather than forget Jerusalem?  
When did these Jews begin to love Jerusalem so much?  
Are we prone to fail to appreciate things until we miss them?  
Can we say we love the church as much as these Jews professed to love Jerusalem?

Imprecation of Enemies

Who was Edom?  
Of what was Edom guilty when Jerusalem was destroyed?  
Why was this curse pronounced upon Edom?  
What was predicted with reference to Babylon?  
What is predicted with reference to the people who were to destroy Babylon?  
What is the explanation and justification of these imprecatory psalms?  
What lessons of interest are suggested in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson X—March 11, 1951

**THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON**

The Lesson Text

Prov. 1: 1-10

1 The proverbs of Sol'o-mon the son of David, king of Is'-ra-el:

2 To know wisdom and instruction;  
To discern the words of under-

- standing;  
 3 To receive instruction in wise dealing,  
 In righteousness and justice and equity;  
 4 To give prudence to the simple,  
 To the young man knowledge and discretion;  
 5 That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning;  
 And that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels:  
 6 To understand a proverb, and a figure,

- The words of the wise, and their dark sayings.  
 7 The fear of Je-ho'-vah 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."* (Prov. 1: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 1: 11-19.

### Daily Bible Readings

- March 5. M....."Jehovah Giveth Wisdom" (Prov. 2:1-22)  
 March 6. T. . . "Happy Is the Man that Findeth Wisdom" (Prov. 3:1-35)  
 March 7. W....."Wisdom Is the Principal Thing" (Prov. 4:1-27)  
 March 8. T....."My Son, Attend Unto My Wisdom" (Prov. 5:1-23)  
 March 9. F.....Practical Advice on Various Subjects (Prov. 6:1-35)  
 March 10. S....."Keep My Commandments and Live" (Prov 7: 1-27)  
 March 11. S....."Wisdom Is Better Than Rubies" (Prov. 8:1-36)

TIME.—About 1,000 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his son.

### Introduction

Of the writings of Solomon, the Holy Spirit reveals that "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." (1 Kings 4: 32, 33.) There are not three thousand proverbs in the book we are to study, so a selection has been made by Solomon and others (Prov. 25: 1) from the total number. Chapters 30 and 31 are said to be the word of Agur and King Lemuel. Who these men were no one knows. Some have thought these names were assumed by Solomon, and that these chapters are as truly his as the rest of the book. But since there is no good reason for him to use assumed names, we see no good

reason to think they are his writings. At what time they got into his collection, and who put them there, no one knows. There are guesses, but they are not worth the space.

For convenience the book may be divided into five sections, or books, as follows:

Book I—1: 1—9: 18. This consists of fifteen admonitory discourses addressed to youth on the subject of wisdom, and encouraging the ardent pursuit of it, while counselling against acts of folly and vice. "This part is varied, elegant, sublime, and truly poetical: the order of the subject is, in general, excellently preserved, and the parts are aptly connected." (Lowth.)

Book II—10: 1—22: 16. This is a series of proverbs, unconnected sentences, "containing ideas moral, re-



ligious and social, political," expressed with much neatness and simplicity.

Book III—22: 17—24: 34. In this division wisdom is again recommended, and the one addressed is given various precepts concerning "duty to the poor, anger, suretyship, cupidity, intemperance, impurity, and to urge the young to avoid evil men,"

Book IV—25: 1—29: 27. These are

said to be proverbs which Hezekiah had copied out of the writings left by Solomon. They are similar to those in Book II, and there is some repetition of what is in Book II.

Book V—30: 1—31: 31. This division is composed of the words of Agur to two unknown persons, Ithiel and Ucal, and the words of King Lemuel, being a record of what his mother taught him.

## Golden Text Explained

1. Parents as teachers. Parents have a great opportunity as well as responsibility in teaching their children. Their opportunity lies in the fact that they have an unfilled yet very responsive mind with which to work. With such diligent care as the Jew was commanded to use (Deut. 6: 4-9), and that demanded under the new covenant (Eph. 6: 4), parents may make just about anything they wish to make out of their children. When a child is a failure in life, much of the blame may be rightly placed on the parents. (Prov. 22: 6.) The reasons why parents should be good teachers are, (1) they love those they are attempting to teach, hence will put time, effort, patience, and understanding into their work. (2) They have the opportunity not only to give the children information, but they can set a good example before them illustrating the principles they teach. (3) There *is* a difference between teaching and training, and parents have a better opportunity than anybody else to give the child the training he should have. (4) "The father and the mother should combine in this work—the father to train the young mind to principle, the mother to inspire pure sentiment. The masculine influence deals with the general, with law and relation to life, with the logic or mathematics of conduct; the feminine, with the particular, with the details of behaviour, with the concrete expression of right thought and feeling." (Pulpit Commentary.)

2. Children owe submission to parents. There is nothing more fundamental in the relationships of life than that children should honor and obey their parents. The reasons are

obvious. (1) Parents give us our being. (2) Parents feed, clothe, and shelter us when we are unable to take care of ourselves. They nurse us in sickness; they counsel us with reference to the problems of life; they stand by us with understanding and sympathy when we have made the common mistakes of youth. (3) Parents give us an education to prepare us for life, making great sacrifices if necessary. (4) Obedience to parents is demanded by the Lord. (Eph. 6: 2; Ex. 20: 12.) Young people old enough to be Christians should remember that they are obligated to God to obey their parents. To obey parents as long as they are looking, and then do as you please when they are not looking, is a disobedience to and disrespect for God's law for which you must answer to God. It is more serious than the average young person thinks. Bible teachers can assist parents *at* this point by proper teaching.

3. Beauty of honoring parents. Children in their teens often think obedience to their parents will be embarrassing to them in their association with others. Young men especially think it "ungraceful if not disgraceful" to obey their mothers. A young man's attitude toward his mother is a good index to his character. Great men have been outspoken in their gratitude to and love for their mothers. No one can be great, in the true sense of that term, who does not obey and respect his mother. There is nothing that commends young people more to God and right thinking people than humble, loving submission to their parents, and constant thoughtfulness for their welfare. Children are prone to be

selfish, imposing on their parents enjoying the best of everything because parents are willing to sacrifice for the happiness of children. There

is nothing more beautiful, and nothing that commends a child more highly than to see a reversal of this order to make parents happy.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Purpose of the Proverbs (Prov. 1: 1-6)

*The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David.* Solomon was the son of David by Bathsheba. (2 Sam. 12: 24, 25.) David gave him the name Solomon, but Nathan was sent by the Lord to name the child Jedidiah's meaning, *Beloved of Jehovah*. Bathsheba got a promise from David that her son should be the next king, and she, with the help of Nathan, saw to it that the other sons of David did not take the throne from him. (1 Kings 1: 11ff.) Solomon reigned forty years over Israel. He was known far and wide for his wisdom and wealth, but the latter part of his reign was ruined by his marriage to so many foreign wives, and his following them into idolatry. (1 Kings 11: 1-13.)

*To know wisdom and instruction* A proverb is: "1. A profound maxim; in scriptural use a parable; a truth couched obscurely. 2. A brief epigrammatic saying that is a popular byword; a maxim; adage." (Webster.) These proverbs are said to be written so that we may know wisdom and instruction. The word *wisdom*, as used in the Old Testament, means, (1) the power of judging (2) the insight into that upright dealing which pleases God—a knowledge of the right way which is to be followed before God, and of the wrong way which is to be shunned it is an appreciation of what God requires of us and what we owe to God; it combines the ideas of knowledge and insight as to the application of that knowledge. Instruction in this verse comes from a word which signifies chastisement, correction; it precedes wisdom, and is essential to true wisdom. *To discern the words of understanding*, "To comprehend the utterances which proceed from intelligence, and give expression to it."

*To receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, equity-*

This is a continuation of the purpose of the proverbs. The writer wants us to deal wisely with one another. This wise dealing as set forth in the next three words. Righteousness suggests that our dealing is right or proper; "in the ordinary usage justice implies the strict and judicial rendering of what is due; *equity* emphasizes rather the idea of fairness or even-handed impartiality." (Webster.)

*To give prudence to the simple.* Prudence here means "skill or sagacity in the management of practical, especially business, affairs; provident use of resources." If the Psalms were written to help people worship, the Proverbs were written to help people in their everyday life, in business and social relations.

*To the young man knowledge and discretion.* Though all may learn, the proverbs here are especially for the youth. The writer wishes young men to have discretion, which means, "power of free decision; individual judgment; undirected choice." The power to use good judgment in conduct without having to take time out to study the matter for a long time.

*That the wise man may hear.* The writer is not going to direct all his attention to the young and unwise, but some of it will be directed to the wise and the aged. The wise will hear and will be yet wiser, and if you teach a righteous man, he will increase in learning. (Prov. 9: 9.)

*That the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsel.* Men of understanding are in position to give counsel to those of less learning and experience. But man cannot just keep on giving and giving without replenishing his store of information. A lake must receive in order to give water to the dry land below. So teachers must have some source from which to draw information and wisdom that they may give wise counsel. Preachers and teachers sometimes make the mistake of ceasing to replenish their store of information,

thinking they can keep on giving out what they have. But our buckets seem to leak, and soon we have very little to give, and it is mighty stale. Solomon realized that the wise man who is able to give counsel to others, needs a source to which he can go to restock his store from time to time. So he states it as one purpose of his book to furnish the wise man with instruction that he may attain unto sound counsel. The word *sound* is important. It means, "Free from flaw, defect, or decay. . . . Founded in truth or right; not fallacious or faulty." (Webster.) Paul was careful that we maintain sound doctrine, in the form of sound words. (1 Tim. 1: 10; 6: 3; Titus 1: 9; 2: 8.) Sound counsel cannot be given without exercising care with reference to sound doctrine in the form of sound words.

*To understand a proverb, and a figure.* Someone has said that a proverb or a parable is an uncracked nut. Those who speak them wrap up their meaning in a statement which the hearer must break through to get the sense. Jesus said he spoke in parables so that the people might hear and yet not understand unless they had sufficient interest to make a careful and thorough investigation. His disciples had that interest, so inquired of him the meaning of his parables. But worldly people did not have that interest and made no effort to learn the true meaning. (Matt. 13: 10-17.) Solomon wished to furnish such, information as would help people to understand such sayings, and see through figures of speech used by teachers. It is said that Eastern princes spent much time in making and solving riddles and dark sayings. Samson gave one which was difficult to solve. (Judg. 14: 12ff.)

## II. Example of Sound Counsel (Prov. 1: 7-10)

*The fear of Jehovah.* The word *fear* is to be understood of that reverence and holy fear which are to characterize all who love God, and not that servile or abject fear or terror which seizes upon all who do not love God. One has said that this "fear of Jehovah is in invariable union with love and in invariable

proportion to it. We truly fear God just in proportion as we truly love him." (Pulpit Commentary.)

*The beginning of knowledge.* The word beginning here does not mean that it is the first thing one must learn. The Hebrew word, we are told, may be used to mean the initial step; the most excellent or principal part; and the origin or basis of a thing. The second definition is the one to be given the word here; the principal thing. The margin has the chief part.

*The foolish despise wisdom.* There are several Hebrew words translated by our English word fool. There is one word which means a boaster (Prov. 75: 4); one that means a self-confident man, and is used 41 times in Proverbs (1: 22, 32; 3: 35); another that means an empty person (Prov. 17: 7, 21); and another means a thickheaded person (Ecc. 2: 19; 10: 3). The word used in our text is stronger than any of these, and means an evil person. (See Young's Concordance.) It takes an evil person to despise wisdom. A thickheaded person might never grasp wisdom, but he would not despise it; a self-confident man, or a boaster, might feel no need of wisdom, but he would not be mean enough to despise it. It is worth thinking about that God here teaches us that our character is determined by our attitude toward the wisdom and instruction which are found in the writings of inspired men.

Hear *the instruction of thy father.* Having just said that the foolish despise instruction, Solomon uses that as a lever to lead his son to hear his instruction. In other words he would say, My son, don't be a foolish person by refusing to hear the instruction of your father. The word *instruction* suggests disciplinary education, correction, while the word *law* used in connection with *mother* is a "milder term" suggesting the different spheres in which father and mother operate. But the son is to have as much respect for the one as for the other. This verse suggests that parents will be careful to exercise discipline and give proper instruction, but we are forced to realize that the average parent in the nation

today does not do his duty. It is safe to say that the average church parents do not discipline their children as much as they should. Churches should furnish a course of instruction for parents, teaching them the duty as enjoined by scripture. Next, this verse lays upon all young people the duty of giving proper regard to parents. This will usually be done, if parents give proper instruction to their children, so the greater responsibility rests upon the parents.

A *chaplet of grace unto thy head*. The word chaplet means "a garland or wreath to be worn on the head." (Webster.) Proper obedience to parents is a chaplet of grace, or a gracious chaplet, a beautiful wreath, a thing of ornament to the child. This is an inducement to the young to render obedience to their parents. Instead of obedience being "old-fashioned and out of date," and having an unseemly appearance to others, Solomon says it is a beautiful ornament to young people. The commandments of parents are also looked upon as forming the wreath of beauty. "My son, keep the commandment of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thy heart; tie them

about thy neck." (Prov. 6: 20, 21.)

If *sinners entice thee, consent thou not*. The word sinners here is used, not of all who make mistakes, but of people who sin wilfully and habitually, wicked people. And the word entice means, "to draw by exciting hope; to allure; tempt, seduce." (Webster.) It is suggested here, (1) that sinners will entice young people into sin with them. Certainly the devil is not asleep on the job. He does not allow young people to go long beyond the age of accountability before he sets his traps to get them. He uses mean people who love to have company in their meanness. (2) But it is also suggested here that young people must give their consent before the devil can reach them. They are not taken into sin by a force beyond their power to resist, or their understanding to realize and comprehend. This being true, we go into sin of our own choice. If young people will hear the instruction of their fathers, and forsake not the law of their mothers, they will have a good chance of refusing to consent to go very far astray with sinners when they entice them. If parents wish to save their children from sin, they must instruct them as suggested.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Solomon wrote that the wise may hear and increase in learning. The wise increase, but the foolish despise instruction. Paul prayed that the church might "increase in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1: 10.) This amounts to praying that the church may be composed of people wise enough to receive instruction instead of people who are so foolish as to despise instruction. In which class are you?

2. Solomon wrote that the man of understanding might attain unto sound counsel. Paul said if a man does not consent to "the sound words" as preached by the apostles, he knows nothing and is the cause of strife. (1 Tim. 6: 3, 4.) The only "sound counsel" that can be given people

today is found in the Bible. Those who preach things not taught in that book are the cause of all the strife and division in the world today.

3. What duty does the church have to parents to help them to give proper instruction to their children? What can the church do for young people to influence them to receive the instruction of parents? There is a three-cornered relationship, the church, the parents, and the children, which is not what it should be. Whose fault is it? What can be done to remedy the situation? If it were working properly, we would not lose so many children of Christian parents from the membership of the church.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson?

## Introduction

How many proverbs? How many songs did Solomon write? On what different subjects did he write? What do you know of the divisions of the book of Proverbs? Are any of the chapters written by others than Solomon? If so, who?

## Golden Text Explained

Why does a child present a great opportunity to parents? Give and discuss four reasons why parents should be good teachers. Give and discuss four reasons why children should obey their parents. Why is the child's disobedience to parents so serious? By what is a young person's character indicated? In what way may children be selfish with parents?

## Purpose of the Proverbs

Who was Solomon's mother? What name did Jehovah give him? By whom was the name given? By what was the latter part of Solomon's reign characterized? What is a proverb? What is the purpose of Solomon's proverbs? What is the meaning of the word wisdom? Instruction? Define the words righteousness, justice, equity. What is the meaning of prudence?

Contrast the purpose of Psalms and Proverbs.  
What is discretion?  
Does Solomon direct any of his proverbs to the wise? Why?  
Why do men of understanding need to continue to study?  
What is the meaning of "sound counsel"?  
What did Paul teach about sound doctrine and sound words?  
Did Jesus use proverbs, or parables, like Solomon? Why?

## Example of Sound Counsel

Distinguish between holy fear and servile fear of Jehovah.  
In what sense is fear the beginning of knowledge?  
Discuss the meaning of the word foolish as used in the Old Testament.  
What does Solomon say the foolish man does concerning wisdom?  
Contrast "instruction of the father" with "law of the mother."  
Does the average parent in this church exercise proper discipline in the home? What can the church do to help parents and children solve this problem?  
What is a chaplet? Why is obedience of children called a chaplet of grace?  
From what source may young people expect enticement to sin?  
What in this text suggests that people sin of their own choice?  
What lesson of interest is there in Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson XI—March 18, 1951

## THE CURSE OF STRONG DRINK

## The Lesson Text

## Prov. 23: 19-31, 29-35

19 Hear thou, my *son*, and be wise,  
And guide thy heart in the way.  
20 Be not among winebibbers,  
Among gluttonous eaters of  
flesh:  
21 For the drunkard end the glut-  
ton shall come to poverty;  
And drowsiness will clothe a  
*man* with rags.  
29 Who hath woe? who hath sor-  
row? who hath contentions?  
Who hath complaining? who  
hath wounds without cause?  
Who hath redness of eyes?  
30 They that tarry long at the  
wine;  
They that go to seek out mixed  
wine.  
31 Look not thou upon the wine  
when it is red,

When it sparkleth in the cup,  
When it goeth down smoothly:  
32 At the last it biteth like a ser-  
pent,  
And stingeth like an adder.  
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange  
things,  
And thy heart shall utter per-  
verse things.  
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that  
lieth down in the midst of the  
sea,  
Or as he that lieth upon the top  
of a mast.  
35 They have stricken me, *shalt*  
*thou say*, and I was not hurt;  
They have beaten me, and I felt  
it not:  
When shall I awake? I will  
seek it yet again.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise."* (Prov. 20: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 31: 4-9.

### Daily Bible Readings

- March 12. M..... Strong Drink Brought Shame and a Curse (Gen. 9: 20-29)
- March 13. T..... Enemies of Israel Born of Drunkenness (Gen. 19: 30-38)
- March 14. W..... Strong Drink Destroyed a Nation (Dan. 5: 1-9)
- March 15. T..... Strong Drink Brings a Curse (Isa. 5: 11, 12, 18-23)
- March 16. F..... Wine Takes Away Understanding (Hosea 4: 6-14)
- March 17. S..... Drunkenness a Work of the Flesh (Gal. 5: 16-24)
- March 18. S..... Overcoming Through Christ (1 Cor. 6: 1-11)

TIME.—About 1,000 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his son.

### Introduction

Through a prophet of old, Jehovah rebuked the people because they had "given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink." (Joel 3: 3.) Children had been taken prisoners of war, and soldiers sold them to satisfy their passions for lust and drink. We look upon this as a terrible shame, and say that we would not have any part in such wicked ways. But it is possible that such has recently been done in our nation. We have legalized the sale of strong drink, and have brought it within reach of young people. Why? People did it so that they might drink without violating the law. Young people who learn the drink habit and are lost because it was made easy to get are as surely sold for wine as were the children of Joel's day. Sold to satisfy the thirst of people for drink; sold that people may drink all they want and still be classified as law-abiding people. Which is more disrespectful, to drink in violation of the law, or to sell a boy or a girl into sin and misery that they may drink?

Writing of liquor, Ex-Governor Patterson of Tennessee said: "If we have no sorrows, it creates them; and if we have them, it increases them and makes them harder to

bear. It blights the young men as lightning does the tree, and leaves him stripped of his heritage. It is the thief of character. It turns men into monsters and women into harlots. It invades the ballot box to corrupt it.

"If you would know more of its black and blighting record, look at the long and sad procession of its victims. Go to the courts and see the crimes it has caused and the criminals it has made. Go to the prison and read the story of its tragedies in the listless eyes and hopeless faces behind the bars. Go to the divorce courts and hear the causes which dissolve the holy bands of wedlock and send families adrift. Go to the homes where the serpent has left its slimy trail on the lentils of the doors. Hear the oaths and the curses, the revelings and imprecations from thickened tongues and maddened brains. See the wife and mother as she pales in terror, with a bruised and broken heart. See the children as they huddle and shiver in fright, like birds before the hunter's gun. See the sweet milk of concord sour and turn into the very broth of hell. Liquor! How I hate it."

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Wine is a mocker.** The word mocker means, "One who scorns, condemns; derides; ridicules; one who deceives." Solomon gives wine the characteristics which it creates in the

people who use it, so he says wine mocks, scorns, derides, ridicules, and deceives. (1) Those who drink usually scorn things pure and spiritual. Strong drink robs people of their

respect for things sacred. (2) Those who drink usually ridicule those who abstain. They make light of religion and all who are devoted to holiness. They boast of their freedom from fettering rules of religion, and their ability to use what quantity they desire and keep free from excess. (3) Wine is a deceiver. It leads men to practice deceit, lying, and cheating. But the habit itself is a deceiver, one of the greatest on earth. Young people are led to believe it is smart to learn to drink. They are told that the best in the social world use a reasonable amount of it, and that if they wish to be able to associate with the best it will be necessary to learn to drink. Many young people are thus deceived, and when they have become the victims of the habit, their friends (?) throw them down. Others learn to drink, being told that drink will drown their troubles and worries. Certain types of trouble are forgotten for the moment, but other types more lasting and dangerous are brought in. That is like cutting off one's finger to get rid of a hang-nail. Others are told to use it for their health, and such may be done if extreme care is exercised. But some have contracted a habit that ruined their lives and sent them to hell just to try to gain their health in body. It is not worth the price. The only safe thing to do is to let it alone.

2. **Strong: drink Is a brawler.** A brawler is one who quarrels noisily; one who picks a quarrel, a fight. This is one of the most common effects of strong drink. The average man will get loud and make a dis-

play of his courage by loud boasts and threats if given a few drinks of liquor. Many have taken strong drink to give them the nerve to commit crimes they felt they could not commit without that stimulant. They lose their sense of reason and distinction, and start a quarrel with the family when they get home. Wives and children are often beaten, sometimes killed, while the husband and father is under the influence of liquor. Young people are told that liquor will quicken their wits and make them more brilliant in conversation, but they usually find out that it just makes them coarse, vulgar, and loud in conversation.

3. **The use of liquor is unwise.** Solomon says whosoever erreth thereby is not wise. That is a mild statement. He is not wise because, (1) liquor takes away one's reasoning power; he cannot think clearly; (2) it robs one of health and shortens life if it is used to excess, and no one knows whether he can keep from going to excess until he has tried; (3) it takes food from hungry children and brings grief to loved ones. Children bring sorrow to parents; husbands grieve their wives and shame their children; wives and mothers neglect their families, ruin their children by a bad example, by drinking liquor; (4) young people under its influence have their passions excited, and their reason is drugged so that they lose all sense of decency and modesty, and sins are committed which will ruin their lives here and their souls in eternity. One is a fool to tamper with a thing which does such things to so many people.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Exhortation to Temperance (Prov. 23: 19-21)

*Guide thy heart in the way.* Solomon makes an appeal to his son. Whether by this word son we are to understand Rehoboam, or whether it is meant for any and every young man, we cannot determine. Certainly the counsel given is applicable to all. He exhorts us to be wise, and in this wisdom guide our hearts into the way, meaning, of course, the right way. (1) This implies that

there is a right and a wrong way to live. (2) It implies that we have ability to determine which is the right and which is the wrong way to conduct ourselves. (3) We are exhorted to guide our hearts in the way, not just any way that seems right "and good to us, but that way which the Lord has determined for us, and has taught us about in his word. (4) It is important to observe that Solomon said we are to guide our *heart* in the right way. If we

get the heart right, our life will be right. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The heart is composed of intellect, emotion, and will-power. If the intellect is enlightened by the facts of the gospel, the emotion stirred by the promises of the gospel, and the will-power brought into submission to the commandments of the gospel, the heart will be in the right way, and the life will be lived in the right way.

Be *not among winebibbers*. This is suggested as one thing a young man should do to guide his heart in the right way, and certainly no one can disregard this advice and maintain a right course in life. A winebibber was one who drank much wine, a tippler. The form of the exhortation is important. Solomon said, Be not among winebibbers; be did not say, Do not drink much wine. This suggests that the only way to keep from taking up the habit is to refuse to be among those who have the habit. Young people are apt to think they can associate with people who drink and refrain from taking up the habit. It is better to take Solomon's advice and refrain from the company of people who drink.

*Among gluttonous eaters of flesh*. Gluttony and drunkenness often keep company, they are often found in the same person. Intemperance in eating is a sin, it is the abuse of the body which belongs, not to us, but to the Lord. (1 Cor. 6: 13ff.) One may cheat himself out of several years of happy successful living, and the Lord may be robbed of several years of service just by eating to excess, or eating things not agreeable to the body. The suggestion here is to keep away from feasts and places of public carousals. To go to such places is to expose one's self to danger.

*Drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty*. This is given as a reason why young people should stay away from winebibbers and gluttons. Certainly this is not the only reason, nor is it the most important reason. Solomon says such habits contracted by keeping such company will lead one to poverty. This is simply a financial reason for refraining from the sins mentioned. One criticism

of the Proverbs is that the writer is not spiritually minded, that he advises righteous living for moral and financial reasons only. This is not strictly true, but Solomon does *emphasize* the temporal side of life more than any other writer. And one who is at all observant will agree that drunkenness and gluttony certainly tend toward, lead to, poverty. (1) It does so because money spent for drink could be better spent. (2) Drunkenness, and extreme gluttony, clog the brain and decrease one's ability to think clearly, so that he will make less money. (3) Drunkenness robs one of good health and keeps him from his work. (4) Drunkards are not fit for responsible positions, so they must take jobs which pay less. (5) Drunkards cannot hold jobs at all with many companies, and must be changing jobs often if they can get them, so will be out of work much of the time. Liquor manufacturers and dealers paint beautiful pictures of people in perfect health drinking their wares. They use the means of wealthy people who use their products to advertise them to others. But these are the exceptions. If they would give real pictures from the lives of the average drinker, their advertising value would be very low.

*Drowsiness will clothe a man with rags*. Drowsiness is the result of gluttony and drunkenness. The man who indulges until late hours at night will not be alert in mind the next morning. If he is working for himself, he will neglect his business. If he is working for another man, he will lose his job before long. In either case he will soon be clothed in rags. If he were the only one to suffer such a consequence of his sins no one would feel like doing anything more than to pity the poor wretch. But too many times there are a wife and several small children who are clothed in rags too. They must go hungry and cold and be denied the finer things of life just to make it possible for a man to satisfy his desire for drink and the coarse and vulgar life that goes with it. By that time, pity for the man is not enough. It is time for stronger action on the behalf of innocent sufferers.



## II. Warning: Against Drunkenness (Prov. 23: 29-35)

*Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?* In this verse (29) we have six consequences of drunkenness suggested. They are woe, sorrow, contentions, complainings, wounds without cause (or unnecessary wounds), and redness of eyes. This is a rather good picture of the beginning of habitual drinking, but not in its last stages. Men drink to find happiness, but sorrow comes instead. The drinking man is usually contentious. There are exceptions to this rule, but contention and fighting are all too common among people who drink. Wounds without cause come from fights provoked when there was no sufficient cause even for a difference. Nothing is more common than two drunks arguing over something of no moment and having a fight.

*They that tarry long at the wine.* This is Solomon's answer to the questions of the preceding verse. Tarry long is his way of expressing excess in drinking.

*Seek out mixed wine.* This "mixed wine" was especially fitted to make men drunk. We are told that wine was commonly mixed with "certain spices or aromatic substances."

*Wine when it is red.* The wine of Palestine was chiefly red, though there was some white wine. It is said that people of the East preferred red wine, and the redder it was the better they liked it. *One* authority (Harmer) says white wine was colored to make it bring more money.

*When it goeth down smoothly.* This suggests wine when it is at its best, when there is no harshness or roughness on the throat, but goes down easily.

*At last it biteth like a serpent.* The bite of a serpent is not so painful as it is harmful. So drinking liquor when it is smooth to the taste is not painful, rather delightful when the taste has been cultivated, but the harmful effects are there. And the fact that the poison spreads to the whole body is suggested. As the poison of the serpent spreads to the whole body, so "at last," finally, the poison of liquor spreads to the whole body to impair its usefulness and finally destroy it.

Thine eyes shall behold strange things. *It the wording of the text is right, this may refer to the condition of men in extreme cases where they think they can see snakes and all kinds of wild animals chasing them, a case of delirium tremens.* But the King James Version has "strange women," and so does the margin of our American Standard Version. If this is the correct translation, it refers to the excitement of the passions of men who go looking for strange women to satisfy their lust. This is so commonly associated with drunkenness that it is possible that Solomon intended to suggest it here. And since this idea is not suggested anywhere else in this connection, this is all the more probable interpretation. Certainly no one can say that it is not in harmony with what happens in real life.

*Thy heart shall utter perverse things.* Why the word heart instead of *mouth*? Certainly every one knows that men utter foolish things when they are drunk. They are incapable of thinking straight, so their mouth utters the perverse and foolish things their stunned minds furnish. But here the heart is said to utter perverse things. If "strange women" is the correct translation in the preceding verse, we can understand why Solomon would speak of the "heart" uttering perverse things. With their passions excited, these drunken men would make perverse and unholy statements of their love for these strange women.

*As he that lieth down in the midst of the sea.* This is a description of the dazed unconscious condition of one when drunk. He is as unconscious of things going on about him as one who lies down in the midst of the sea.

*As he that lieth upon the top of a mast.* The mast is a pole on the ship which holds the sails. The top of the mast is the most dangerous place on a ship. This is used to suggest the dangers to which the drunkard is exposed. And lying down on the mast is to suggest that the drunkard is unconscious of the dangers to which he is exposed. Any one who has seen a drunken man reeling around in a busy street can see how

such men expose themselves to dangers of a physical sort, to say nothing of the moral and spiritual dangers to which they needlessly expose themselves.

*They have beaten me, and I felt it not.* He is represented as talking to himself in this verse. When he becomes conscious, he knows that he has been beaten, but he has no idea who did it.

*I will seek it again.* These are

Topics for Discussion

1. Should a nation which spends several times as much for liquor as it spends for religions of all kinds and for education of all ages be called Christian? How long can a nation continue to exist in spite of the fact that it is teaching its youth by every conceivable means to drink, smoke, and carouse in night clubs and road houses?

2. Can a church render the service it should render in its community unless it stands solidly and stoutly and boldly against such sins as are common in the world? What is wrong with a church when the majority of

the saddest words of the lesson. He has not the good sense to quit it; or he has not the moral courage to break off from a habit which he may hate, and for which he loathes himself. Young people say they can quit their habits, and they can now; but when they have continued long in them, they will be unable to break off so easily. Habits are like cords that bind the more as they are wound around us.

its voting members will vote a "wet" ticket?

3. The state derives some tax money from the sale of liquors when the sale is legalized, and this money goes for education and the support of the aged, and perhaps a few other things. The records will show that the sale of liquor makes it necessary for the state to spend more money to police the drunkards, incarcerate the criminals made by liquor, and care for the orphans and derelicts made by liquor, than is received in taxes, to say nothing of the sorrowing hearts and damned souls left in its path.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Introduction  
For what did Joel rebuke the people?  
How are boys and girls sold today that people may drink?  
Read and discuss, as time permits, the statement by a prominent Tennessean.

Golden Text Explained

What is a mocker? Why is wine called a mocker?  
In what way is wine a deceiver?  
What is a brawler? Why is wine called a brawler?  
State and discuss four reasons why it is unwise to use liquor.

Exhortation to Temperance

Give and discuss four things implied in guiding our heart in the way.  
Why is it important to guide the heart in the right way?  
Of what is the heart composed? What in the gospel is suited to change it?  
What is a winebibber?  
Why did Solomon say for us not to be among winebibbers?  
What sin which keeps company with

drunkenness is mentioned in our lesson?  
Why is gluttony a sin?  
To what end do drunkards and gluttons come?  
Give and discuss five ways in which these sins lead to poverty.  
What does Solomon say will clothe a man in rags?  
In what way do these sins cause others to suffer?

Warning Against Drunkenness

What six things does Solomon charge to drunkenness?  
Why is mention made of mixed wine?  
Why is mention made of red wine?  
What is meant by wine biting like a serpent?  
What two lessons may be suggested by the eye beholding strange things?  
What is meant by the heart uttering perverse things?  
How is the drunkard's unconsciousness described?  
What is said to indicate the danger to which he is exposed?  
What are the saddest words of the lesson?  
Are young people more able to quit bad habits than old people?  
What ought this very fact to suggest to young people?  
What lessons of interest are in Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson XII—March 25, 1951

## THE WORTHY WOMAN

## The Lesson Text

Prov. 31: 10-23

- 10 A worthy woman who can find?  
For her price is far above rubies.
- 11 The heart of her husband trusteth in her,  
And he shall have no lack of gain.
- 12 She doeth him good and not evil  
All the days of her life.
- 13 She seeketh wool and flax,  
And worketh willingly with her hands.
- 14 She is like the merchant-ships;  
She bringeth her bread from afar.
- 15 She riseth also while it is yet night,  
And giveth food to her household,  
And their task to her maidens.
- 16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it;  
With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
- 17 She girdeth her loins with strength,  
And maketh strong her arms.
- 18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable;  
Her lamp goeth not out by night.
- 19 She layeth her hands to the distaff,  
And her hands hold the spindle.
- 20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor;  
Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
- 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household;  
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
- 22 She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry;  
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
- 23 Her husband is known in the gates,  
When he sitteth among the elders of the land.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"A worthy woman who can find? For her price is far above rubies." (Prov. 31: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 31: 24-31.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| March 19. M..... | Ruth, a Worthy Woman (Ruth 1: 6-18)          |
| March 20. T..... | Hannah, a Worthy Woman (1 Sam. 1: 9-28)      |
| March 21. W..... | Abigail, a Worthy Woman (1 Sam. 25: 18-42)   |
| March 22. T..... | A Worthy Woman in Shunem (2 Kings 4: 8-16)   |
| March 23. F..... | Esther, a Worthy Woman (Esther 4: 1-17)      |
| March 24. S..... | Mary and Martha, Worthy Women (John 12: 1-8) |
| March 25. S..... | Dorcas, a Worthy Woman (Acts 9: 36-43)       |

TIME.—About 1,000 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—King Lemuel and his mother.

## Introduction

When man and woman were created it seems that no discrimination or inequality whatsoever was intended. But when woman sinned, she was made dependent upon and subject to her husband. (Gen 3: 16.) Paul recognized this fundamental relationship, and based some important

teaching upon it. (1 Tim. 2: 8-15.) But as time went on, man went to extremes in this matter, and in many countries woman amounted to little more than a slave. However, it can be safely affirmed that the closer humanity lived to God, the better was the condition of women. In Abra-

ham's day the women had their rights. Sarah did not hesitate to stand for what she believed to be her rights in the matter of sending Hagar and her son away. (Gen. 21: 8ff.) Nor is she regarded by New Testament writers as being out of her place. (1 Pet. 3: 6.) Rebekah and her mother talked with the servant of Abraham freely, and Rebekah traveled across the desert in the company of the servant and his helpers without her veil on. (Gen. 24: 16, 55, 65.) Rachel was free to come and go among the shepherds who watered their sheep at her father's well, and when Jacob first saw her he kissed her. (Gen. 29: 11.) And Sarah went about freely without keeping her face covered with the veil while she was in Egypt. (Gen 12: 14-19.)

By some it has been thought that the law of Moses tended to make slaves of women. But it can be demonstrated that the lot of women under the law was easier than the lot of women of other nations of that time. The legislation of the law tended more to protect women from unjust treatment than it did to gain and maintain definite rights and privileges of women. The divorce law protected her from cruelty. (Deut. 24.) Severe punishment was pro-

vided for a man who outraged a maiden in the open field. (Deut. 22: 25-27.) This not only shows protection to girls, but it shows that girls were free to come and go unprotected in the fields of the country. Miriam was a prominent figure in the affairs of the people in the wilderness. Deborah was a judge of the people after they entered Canaan. Huldah was a respected prophetess in Israel, and was consulted by the king. (2 Kings 22: 14.) Hannah came to worship without having her face covered, for the high priest saw her moving her lips, but hearing no voice, thought she was drunk. (1 Sam. 1: 12-18.) Ruth, following the counsel of Naomi, went into the fields to work among the young men; and in attracting the attention of Boaz she exercised a freedom which would certainly be questioned today, but seemed entirely within her rights at that time. (Ruth 3: 1-5.)

Under the gospel women are still in subjection to their husbands, but their lot is made easier. Polygamy is not allowed, and divorces are allowed for only one cause. (Matt. 19.) Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5: 25), and count them equal sharers of the favors of this life (1 Pet. 3: 7).

### Golden Text Explained

**1. In her home.** It is not possible to calculate the value of a "worthy woman" in her home. Very few girls get through their teens without entertaining the thought, or an ambition, to be an actress, or some other public figure. But the Lord gave the woman her home as her sphere of labor (Titus 2: 5), and she will be happiest there, and will make her greatest contribution to humanity if she will do her work well there. What greater contribution could Hannah have made to Israel than giving the nation her son? Deborah was a judge of the nation, but would any one say that she was worth more to Israel than Hannah was? Esther was a queen and served her nation in a very unusual way, but surely no one would say that she made a greater contribution to Israel than did the slave mother Jochebed who gave to Israel Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Mothers who spend their time working quietly in the homes of the world are the unsung heroines; few people see or appreciate what they do. But the "eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," and the woman who performs her work well in the home will receive as great reward in heaven as any man receives for his work well done.

**2. In the church.** The "worthy woman" is of great value in the church. Though there is enough work in the home to consume all a woman's time and energy, she is expected to make some sacrifice of time and energy to do some church work, as teaching, visiting and nursing the sick, and helping the poor. (1 Tim. 5: 9, 10.) This is a worthy work, and possibly nothing the church can do will attract more favorable attention in the community than such work. People are made to realize the

value of the church to the community; they are made to know that the church is actually engaged in the work Jesus came to do. Many souls have been saved by such ministry of love when they would not listen to the preaching of the gospel before seeing such good works. The "worthy woman" can be worth much in the church by teaching the young women of the church how to be good wives and mothers. (Titus 2.) Many marriages fail because young people have not been taught properly before entering the union. Worthy women can fill a great need just here.

3. In the community. The "worthy woman" is of great value in the community in which she lives. In the

first place she is worth much to the community in doing the church work mentioned above, and can well spend all her time in such work. But there are works to be done which are not strictly church activities, but of a civic nature. Women can work with the teachers of public schools for the welfare of the young people. Youth needs recreation, and Christian women can help supervise the entertainment of the young people. She can open her home for wholesome entertainment, and keep young people off the streets and out of the road-houses where entertainment is not wholesome. In this way she not only provides wholesome recreation, but she may find multiplied opportunities to lead them to Christ.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. General Statement of Character (Prov 31: 10-12)

*A worthy woman who can find?* The word translated *worthy* suggests the idea of power both of body and mind. "The expression combines the ideas of moral goodness and bodily vigor and activity." (Pulpit Commentary.) A worthy woman is said to be the crown of her husband. (Prov. 12: 4.) And Ruth is said to have been a worthy woman. (Ruth 3: 11.) The manner in which the question is put in our text suggests that a truly "worthy woman" is difficult to find. It is necessary for a woman to have a knowledge of the essential characteristics of the "worthy woman," and to make diligent effort to build these into her life before she can hope to reach that degree of perfection attained by the woman of our lesson.

The *heart of her husband trusteth in her*. "A man trusts a woman with his name, his honor, his blood, and his earthly goods when he marries her." (Sewell.) Our text suggests that the husband of the "worthy woman" has no cause to fear for the safety of anything he entrusts to her care. His home, his children, his honor are all in safe hands and wise keeping. She is completely trust-worthy.

He shall have *no lack of gain*. Her conduct of the affairs of the home

is such that she contributes to his prosperity. It is said that some women can throw more out the back door than their husbands can bring in at the front; they are wasteful with the fruits of the labor of their husbands. But the worthy woman makes good use of what is provided by her husband.

*She doeth him good and not evil*. She seeks to promote the welfare of her husband in every good work. Some women are spoken of as "rottenness in the bones" of their husbands. (Prov. 12: 4.) The business of the husband is paramount, and the wife is to lend every effort to make him a success, rather than looking upon her career as paramount and expecting her husband to cooperate with her in making good in her field. It is said she will do him good all the days of her life. She will be constant and consistent, not helping for a while and then quitting for a while. She takes her marriage vow seriously, and devotes all her life to the keeping of it.

### II. Characteristics of Worthy Woman (Prov. 31: 13-23)

*She seeketh wool and flax*. In verse 13 we learn that the worthy woman is industrious. She even works with her hands, not because she is poor and has to work to earn a living, for she is pictured as being

financially independent, but because she regards industry as being honorable and necessary. Paul teaches that we must work that we may "walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing." (1 Thess. 4: 12.) Those who regard work as the badge of poverty and the curse of humanity are mistaken. It is necessary to good health, true happiness, real contentment, and the greatest usefulness. Notice the word *willingly*, suggesting that she does not work because she is forced to do so, but because she regards it as the best course to follow.

*She is like the merchant-ships.* This verse pictures the worthy woman as being *thrifty*. The second line of the verse about bringing her bread from afar is not a second characteristic, but rather tells us why she is like the merchant's ship. As the merchant sends his ships where he can get goods at the best price, so she is thrifty in her purchases. And it may also be suggested here that as the merchant-ship takes goods on the way out to trade for goods on the return trip, so she makes things at home to trade for things she needs but cannot make. Thrift is an essential characteristic of a good wife and mother.

*She riseth also while it is yet night.* The worthy woman is *energetic*. She is not as the sluggard who says, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," and sees poverty come as a robber. (Prov. 6: 10, 11.) She is up before day going with energy at her tasks.

*Food to her household, tasks to her maidens.* She is capable and systematic. This pictures the worthy woman as getting an early breakfast and getting the workers out to their work at an early hour. She has system in her work. She does not leave her maidens to determine what and how much they will do for the day, but she gives their task, or portion, which is to be done that day. There is no indication that she is a slave-driver, that she is hard on her maidens, but she gives them capable supervision, known to be necessary by all who have had any experience in handling hired help.

*She considereth a field and buyeth it.* She is capable of *prudent management*. The word *consider* suggests that she does not do things without giving careful thought. She learns whether the field is suited to her needs, if it will produce necessities for her household. She determines whether it is worth the price the owner is asking for it, whether she can get a clear title. She shows good business judgment. She manages her affairs wisely. This is more than can be said of many men who call themselves good business men.

And on this new field she has bought, she plants a vineyard. She determines what it will grow best, and plants accordingly. All of this verse is meant to emphasize her good common sense in managing her affairs. It takes much thought.

*She girdeth her loins with strength.* The worthy woman has a *strong healthy body*. Weakness has become a sign of femininity and strength a sign of masculinity. Women are not by nature as strong as men, but that does not mean that they are not to cultivate physical strength. Bearing children with strong healthy bodies requires strength in a woman. Doing the work connected with rearing and training children requires strength of body as well as of mind.

*She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable.* She has a sense of appreciation of that which is good. She knows the value of that which she has made, so that she will not sell for less than its true value. She knows the worth of merchandise on the markets so that she will not be deceived into paying two prices for what she buys. Success or failure depends upon this ability in people. Many people work hard and waste nothing, but they are not able to become prosperous because they do not know the value of that which they sell and that which they buy; they sell low and buy high.

*Her lamp goeth not out by night.* The worthy woman is *watchful*. This may suggest the idea of watchfulness, or of preparedness. With the lamp burning she was ready in a moment to go to the aid of any member of the family at any hour of the night. And the burning lamp would give

her husband the necessary light to protect the home against thieves.

*She layeth her hands to the distaff.* The worthy woman -was skillful. She did not consider herself too good to work. She knew a trade and was willing to use her time at it. A woman with maidens to direct might well have used her time in overseeing others, but she gave the workers a good example by putting her hands to the distaff. The distaff was an instrument used to hold wool or flax while spinning. The use of it denotes skill, and may be used as a figure of speech to suggest a skillful person.

*She stretcheth out her hand to the poor.* The worthy woman is charitable. She does not enrich herself by withholding from the poor and needy. She is not of the kind "that coveteth greedily all the day long," but is like the righteous who giveth and withholdeth not. (Prov. 21: 26.) Maybe there is some significance to be attached to the fact that the word hand is singular in the first line of this verse and plural in the second line. She stretcheth out her *hand* to the poor, but she reacheth forth her *hands* to the needy. The needy are the "afflicted poor." It is bad to be poor, but to be poor because of affliction is worse, and puts one in need of both sympathy and help. The worthy woman is one who sees the situation and reaches her hands forth to give whatever is needed.

*She is not afraid of the snow for her household.* The worthy woman is prepared. She makes preparation for any and all eventualities. And in this preparation she has all the things necessary for her household. She is not like the grasshopper that lets all the summer go by in idleness, but she is like the ant that makes preparation for the time when she will have the greatest need. (Prov. 6: 6ff.) The word scarlet describing the kind of clothing worn by her household

denotes a type of material especially suited to winter weather.

*She maketh herself carpets of tapestry.* The worthy woman appreciates comfort and beauty. Whether the word should be carpets or cushions is debated. The Pulpit Commentary says this should be "pillows for the beds." But since people of the East sat on the floor, it is probable that carpets or cushions to sit upon is the meaning. After providing the necessary things for her household, and caring for the needy, the worthy woman provides some of the comforts of life for her house. It should be noted that there is no mention of extravagances along this line. Ivory couches and similar furniture would be out of line with what we are told of the character of this worthy woman.

*Her clothing is fine linen and purple.* This type of clothing was the best known in that day for service and beauty. It was the clothing of the rich. (Luke 16: 19.) It was not a sign of extravagance to dress in this material, but none except the wealthy could afford this kind of clothing. It is worthwhile to note that the worthy woman is not said to have worn a lot of expensive jewelry which can serve for little but show. Good, expensive, clothing may be the most economical, but expensive jewelry is difficult to justify while the world is lost in sin and helpless children are starving for food.

*Her husband is known in the gates.* The worthy woman has a good reputation in the city. It is implied that the husband is honored somewhat on account of the reputation of the wife. And her management of the affairs at home gives the husband time to sit in the gates of the city to attend to civic affairs. Court was held at the gate of the city. (Ruth 4: 1.) The way she kept his clothing added to his honor when he sat among the elders.

## Topics for Discussion

1. What has Christianity done for women? How does the position of women in heathen lands compare with the position of women in other lands?
2. Has the teaching of Paul with

reference to the subjection of women to their husbands retarded the progress of women? Has it robbed women of any rightful freedoms?

3. What is there in the teaching

and training program of this church to help young women to become "worthy women" such as is described

in our lesson? Is the church obligated to give girls special attention along this line?

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

When and why did woman become subject to man?  
To what extremes has man gone in subjecting woman to himself?  
What freedoms were enjoyed by women before the law of Moses?  
What was the effect of the law of Moses on the rights of women?  
Name some women of this period, and discuss their freedom under the law.  
What peculiar blessings does the gospel guarantee women?

**Golden Text Explained**

According to the gospel, what is the peculiar sphere of woman?  
How may woman make her greatest contribution to humanity?  
Who are the "unsung heroines" of our age?  
What can women do in the church? What its peculiar value?  
How may such work by women contribute to the salvation of the lost?  
What is the duty of worthy women to the young women of the church?  
How may a worthy woman be valuable to her community?  
How may she render a service to the young people of the community?  
What is being done? What can be done, by women in this church to help young people?

**General Statement of Character**

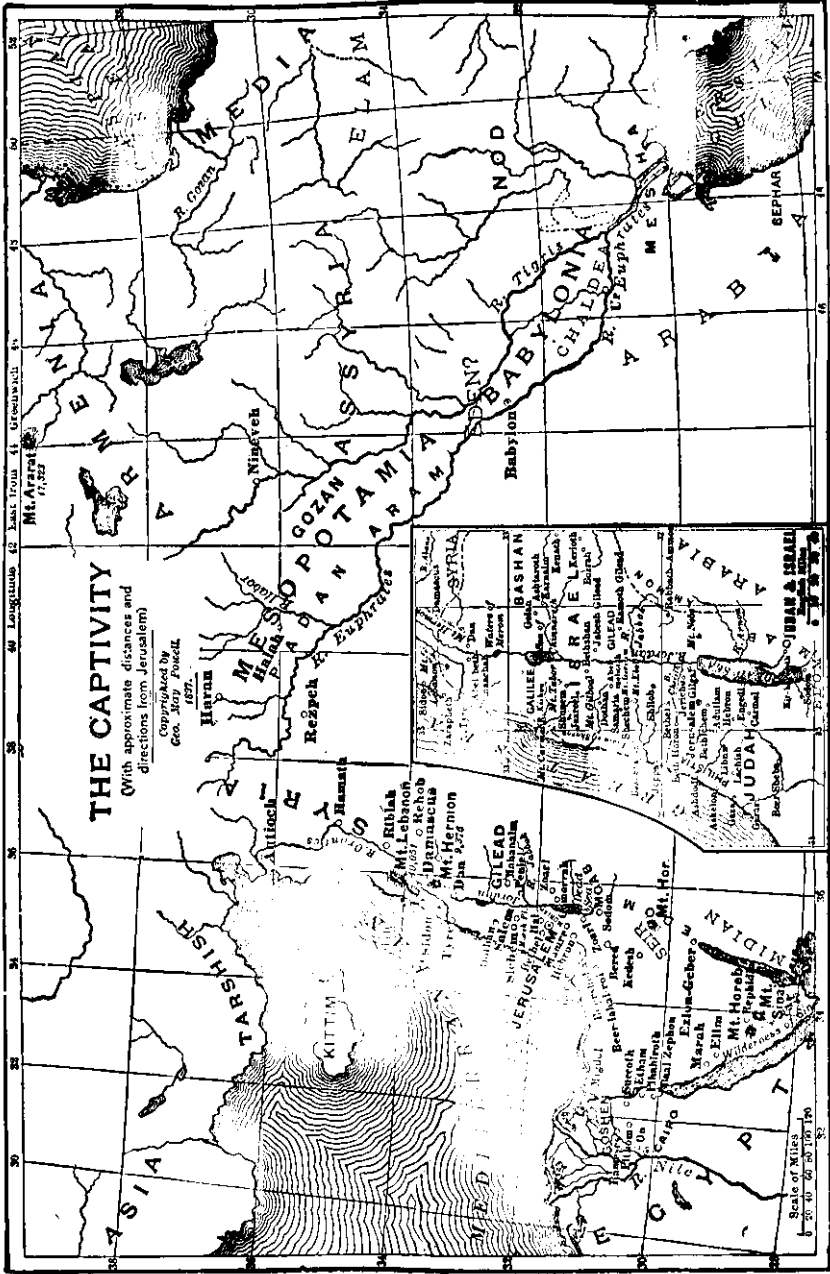
What does the word "worthy" in our text suggest?  
What does Solomon say a worthy woman is?  
What Old Testament woman was called a worthy woman?

With what does a man trust a woman when he marries her?  
Why will the worthy woman's husband have no lack of gain?  
In what ways does she do her husband good?  
What denotes the constancy and consistency of the worthy woman?

**Characteristics of Worthy Woman**

In what way does the worthy woman show her industry?  
What does Paul teach about the honor of hard work?  
Why is work necessary to the average individual?  
Why is the worthy woman like a merchant-ship?  
How does the worthy woman show that she is energetic?  
How does she show that she is capable and systematic?  
What is said of the prudent management of the worthy woman?  
Why does the worthy woman need physical strength?  
What is said of the worthy woman's ability to buy and sell at right prices?  
What denotes the watchfulness of the worthy woman?  
What suggests the skill of the worthy woman?  
What is a distaff? For what was it used?  
What is said of the charitableness of the worthy woman?  
What preparation does she make against winter weather?  
What is said of her sense of comfort and beauty?  
Is the worthy woman an extravagant person? Tell why.  
Is there a difference between extravagant and expensive clothing?  
How does the worthy woman's good reputation help her husband?  
In what ways may a wife today help, hinder her husband in the community?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?





40 Longitude 42 East from 41 Greenwich 43

McAraet  
 11,327

THE CAPTIVITY  
 (With approximate distances and directions from Jerusalem)

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Scale of Miles  
 0 25 50 75 100 125

SECOND QUARTER

THE MINOR PROPHETS

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

Lesson I—April 1, 1951

HOSEA PLEADS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Lesson Text

Hos. 6: 1-11

1 Come, and let us return unto Je-ho'-vah; 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 Je-ho'-vah: 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 E'-phra-im, what shall I do unto thee? O Ju'-dah, 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.

8 Gil'-e-ad is a city of them that work iniquity; it is stained with blood.

9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward She'-chem; yea, they have committed lewdness.

10 In the house of Is'-ra-el I have seen a horrible thing: there whoredom is found in E'-phra-im, Is'-ra-el is defiled.

11 Also, O Ju'-dah, there is a harvest appointed for thee, when I bring back the captivity of my people.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." (Hos. 14: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL REAPING.—Isa. 55: 6-14.

Daily Bible Readings

|                  |                                 |                |
|------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| March 26. M..... | Hosea's Family Teaches Israel   | (Hosea 1:1-11) |
| March 27. T..... | Israel Unfaithful to Jehovah    | (Hosea 2:1-23) |
| March 28. W..... | Hosea Takes His Wife Back       | (Hosea 3: 1-5) |
| March 29. T..... | Jehovah Accuses His People      | (Hosea 4:1-19) |
| March 30. F..... | Both Israel and Judah Rebuked   | (Hosea 5:1-15) |
| March 31. S..... | Sinners Invited to Return       | (Hosea 6:1-11) |
| April 1. S.....  | Israel's Iniquity and Rebellion | (Hosea 7:1-16) |

TIME.—About 740 B.C.

PLACE.—In Israel, probably in the city of Samaria.

PERSONS.—Hosea and the people

## Introduction

The date of the work of Hosea is very uncertain. If Hosea 1: 1 be taken as inspired, Hosea's work extended over a period of about sixty to seventy years. Some commentators, including Adam Clarke and several more modern scholars, think this first verse was added later as a title to the book, and that Hosea's period of work lasted for only a few years from about 745 to 734 B.C. Some think his work continued to near the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., but that it definitely closed before that date.

Hosea was a native of the northern kingdom, or kingdom of Israel, and most of his prophecies relate to that kingdom, though he definitely mentions Judah a number of times. "The scope of this prophet's prediction is: 1. Partly to detect, reprove, and convince the Jewish nation generally, and the Israelites in particular, of their many and heinous sins, especially of their gross idolatry; the corrupt state of the kingdom is also incidentally noticed; 2. Partly to denounce the imminent and utter rejection, final captivity, and destruction of the Israelites by the Assyrians (if the former persisted in their wicked career), notwithstanding all

their vain confidence in the assistance *to be* afforded them by Egypt; and 3. Partly to invite them to repentance with promises of mercy, and evangelical predictions of the future restoration of the Israelites and Jews, and their ultimate conversion to Christianity." (Home, Vol. IV, p. 171.) The book of Hosea is divided into two unequal parts. The first, chapters 1 through 3, tell of Hosea's marriage to Gomer who was untrue to him, of their separation, and finally how he brought her back. All this family life is told to show how God *loved Israel* in spite of her spiritual adultery. The second division consists of chapters 4 through 14, composed of a series of discourses, with no logical arrangement, on the sins of the people and their priests and princes, God's love for them and his desire for them to return from idolatry to the worship of the true God, and warnings of destruction in spite of alliances with the nations around them if they continue in sin. We are told that Hosea is more frequently quoted by New Testament writers than any other of the Minor Prophets. More than thirty direct and indirect quotations are to be found in the New Testament. (Calkins.)

## Golden Text Explained

1. The blessed invitation. In the preceding chapters of Hosea "Wave after wave of threatened wrath had rolled over Israel," but in this last chapter "offer after offer of grace is made to them." (Pulpit Commentary.) This invitation suggests, (1) That sinful man is responsible for his condition, and that he has the ability to forsake his evil ways and return to God. Certainly God would not invite *men to return to him* if he knew they had no ability to do so. The promise of forgiveness if man will forsake sin, and the punishment threatened if man remains in sin prove that man has within him the ability to quit sin and return to God. (2) That God is willing to receive man regardless of how far he has gone into sin. It would be difficult to paint a darker picture of sin than that which Hosea gives of

Israel's sin, yet he assures Israel that God is willing to forgive them and take them back into his loving presence. (3) It is implied that Israel would quit their sins as a condition upon which Jehovah would receive them. The word *return*, when used with reference to Jehovah, implies a reformation. The people had gone away from Jehovah in their sins, they must return to him in righteousness. *Unless people are* willing to forsake sin, there is no possibility of returning to Jehovah.

2. Their fallen condition. They had fallen (1) from the state in which they were created. (2) They had fallen into a state of impurity and rebellion against God. No man can leave God without becoming unholy. (3) They had fallen of their own choice and against the will of God. The Lord does all he can in right-

eousness to keep people from falling away from him. He cannot use physical force to keep them in line. He cannot miraculously take away from man the power or inclination to sin in order to save him from falling away. God sent prophets warning the people of the destruction which would follow sin, and promising blessings if they would remain faithful. This is the kind of power God uses to influence men. (Rom. 1: 16.) If they refuse to be directed by such power, there is no salvation for them. (4) Their fall is said to be by their own iniquity. Men teach that man is in sin because of Adam's transgression, that all mankind is estranged from God on account of his sin. But Hosea told these people they had fallen away from God on account of their own iniquity. (5) Sin separates man from God and deprives him of the fellowship and communion

of God. The invitation to return to Jehovah implies that man is away from him, and that he is denied the blessings to be enjoyed by those who are in fellowship with him. Isaiah said the Lord's arm is not shortened that he cannot save, nor is his ear dull that he cannot hear; but the sin of the people had separated between them and God so that he would not listen to them when they prayed. (Isa. 59: 1, 2.) It was not because God could *not*, but because he *would not* hear them pray when they were separated from him by sin. So the fallen condition of these people to whom Hosea wrote was such that it was impossible for God to bless them. Hosea begged them to return to Jehovah so that they might enjoy again the blessings God was anxious to give them, but could not as long as they were in sin.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Hosea Pleads with Israel (Hosea 6: 1-3)

*Come, let us return unto Jehovah.* The fifth chapter closes with Jehovah saying that he would destroy Israel, that he would return to his place until Israel acknowledged their sin, until such time as they should seek earnestly for forgiveness. Then our lesson begins with this exhortation. It is difficult to know whether these first three verses are the language of Hosea or the language of the people. Adam Clarke says it is the language of the people. The Pulpit Commentary suggests that it is Hosea's exhortation to the people. This seems more in harmony with the sinful condition of the majority of Israel.

*For he hath torn, and he will heal us.* This is an echo from the song of Moses, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." (Deut. 32: 39.) God had torn, or punished, them for their sins; but he would heal, or forgive, them if they would return unto him. His punishments are given in love, and his healings are done in mercy. Israel had often been punished through drought, famine, and invasion by foreign armies. In this way Je-

hovah had torn and smitten them. Now, if they will only repent, he will heal and bind them up. We may never know how great invading armies might have been kept away if Israel had repented, but we certainly have no right to question either Jehovah's sincerity in making the promise or his ability to perform it. The final destruction of Israel came solely because they were not willing to repent.

*After two days he will revive us.* This language has given commentators trouble, but we can be sure that Hosea means to suggest to Israel that Jehovah's power is so great that he can revive and restore them quickly. When we wish to indicate a relatively short period of time, we say, "Two or three days." So the words *two days* are used here.

*And on the third day he will raise us up.* This is to be taken in connection with the above statement of two days as indicating the power of Jehovah to restore the nation to a perfect state of health spiritually provided the people would return to Jehovah. But scholars generally see in this statement the possibility of a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ. Paul speaks of Christ's

resurrection on the third day "according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15: 4.) If this place was not in Paul's mind, we know of no other scripture to which he could have referred. So it is possible that its primary application was to Jehovah's power to restore Israel provided they repent, and its remote application to the resurrection of Christ on the third day.

*And we shall live before him.* That is, we shall live in his presence, under his watchful care. Jehovah had just said he would leave them to go back to his place, and they would have to seek his face. (Hosea 5: 15.) Now Hosea exhorts them to turn in righteousness so that the face of the Lord may shine upon them, that they may live in his presence.

*Let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah.* There was little knowledge of Jehovah among the people. Hosea had said the people were perishing for a lack of knowledge. (Hosea 4: 6.) So here he exhorts them to get and keep on getting a knowledge of God. "We know in order to follow; we follow in order to know. Light prepares the way for love. Love opens the mind for new love. The gifts of God are interwoven. They multiply and reproduce each other, until we come to the perfect state of eternity." (Pusey.)

*He will come to us as the rain, as the latter rain.* The first word *rain* refers to what was called the former, or early, rain. This was the rain that fell at sowing time and brought the grain up and gave it a start in its growth. The latter rain fell just before time for the heads to mature. So when Jehovah is spoken of as the former and latter rains, he is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the all in all to his people. "Wonderful likeness of Him who is the Beginning and the End of our spiritual life; from whom we receive it, by whom it is preserved unto the end; through whom the soul, enriched by him, hath abundance of all spiritual blessings, graces, and consolations, and yieldeth all manner of fruit, each after its kind, to the praise of him who hath given it life and fruitfulness." (Pusey.)

## II. Jehovah Pleads for Righteousness (Hosea 6: 4-11)

*O Ephraim . . . O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?* By Ephraim is meant the northern kingdom, and Judah was the southern kingdom. So all Israel is addressed here.

Your *goodness is as a morning cloud.* This language is used to express the momentary fleeting nature of the goodness of the people. They would make good resolutions and begin to live right, but soon relapsed into sin again. The morning cloud and the early dew last no longer than when the first rays of the bright sun beam upon them to chase them away. So Israel's resolutions to do good lasted no longer than when the first temptations to do evil came upon them. If a king arose who loved Jehovah and did that which was right in his sight, his successors quickly tore down all the good he had done and soon lost more ground than he had won.

*Therefore have I hewn them by the prophets.* This and the following phrase are figurative language to describe the severe character of the work of the prophets. Their word *therefore* indicates that this work by the prophets is the consequence of the sinful inconstancy and lack of faithfulness of the people. This language refers to the continual work of God through the prophets to make out of Israel what God wanted his people to be.

*Thy judgments are as the light.* Since this is the language of Jehovah, and the judgments referred to are evidently those of Jehovah, the word *thy* should be *my*, as is suggested in the margin. The judgments are the punishments God sent upon the people. They are like light in that they are swift and sure, and in that they are revealing. They reveal the sinfulness of man and his inability to escape or resist God; they reveal the wisdom, power, and mercy of God; and sometimes they reveal the holiness of God, and his severity in his dealings with people who persist in sin. They should be taken as a foretaste of that eternal punishment that shall be brought upon all who are finally lost.

*I desire goodness, and not sacrifice.* God does not here speak contrary to the law that required many sacrifices. This and similar statements of God have been misused to prove that the outward ordinances of religion are of no importance. Goodness has been taken to mean all the inward or spiritual part of Christianity, and sacrifice has been taken to mean all outward or formal part of religion. And the conclusion has been that man can ignore and leave undone all the outward forms of religion, if his heart is right. It seems never to occur to such reasoners that if a man's heart is right, he will wish to do all that God commands. (John 14: 15; 15: 14.) There could be, and was in Hosea's day, sacrifice without goodness in the heart; but there could not be goodness in the heart without sacrifice on the altar of God. The form of language we have in the text is used to emphasize the necessity of goodness with the sacrifice not apart from it.

*Knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.* This is parallel to the foregoing phrase. Knowledge of God was essential to goodness. One may know something about God without being good, but one cannot really know God in the true sense of that term without being good. To know God and him whom God sent into the world is life eternal. (John 17: 3.)

*They like Adam have transgressed.* There is a similarity between Adam and these people in their relations to God. Adam was placed in a garden and told to do certain things and to refrain from a certain thing. He sinned against light, of his own free choice, tried to justify himself by laying the blame on another. But being inexcusable, he was driven out. The people of Israel were brought into the land of Canaan under the protection of God, and were told to obey certain laws. They sinned against light. They broke the covenant they had with Jehovah, and dealt treacherously time after time. And as Adam was driven out of his God-given home, so these people were shortly to be driven out of their home into captivity never to be known as a nation again.

*Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity.* Hosea now turns from a general charge to a specific instance of transgression on the part of the people. He refers to a portion of the people widely known as sinners. If Gilead here means an actual city, its location has been lost; no city by that name is known. It is probable that the section east of the Jordan river, south of the sea of Galilee and north of the Dead sea is intended. But if a certain city is intended, it is probably Ramoth-Gilead. (McClintock and Strong Ency.)

*It is stained with blood.* Gilead was known for its sinfulness generally, but here it is specifically charged with shedding of blood. As an instance of this, Pekah and fifty Gileadites slew a king for the purpose of usurping the throne. (2 Kings 15: 25.)

*The company of priests murder in the way to Shechem.* Shechem was a city of refuge, and as such was to be safe and accessible to all people at all times. The priests were God's servants, and as such were to help people at all times. But the priests of Gilead formed themselves into bands like soldiers to murder people. It has been supposed by some that these were priests of the northern kingdom, not Levites, who murdered Jews on their way to Jerusalem to worship.

*Yea, they have committed lewdness.* This word for lewdness may mean unnatural sin, or it may mean any premeditated enormity. Hosea meant his readers to get the idea that this section was a good example of the extreme sinfulness of Israel. Hence his plea for them to turn from sin and turn to a life of righteousness to avoid terrible punishment of God.

*I have seen a horrible thing.* And this horrible thing Hosea saw is said to be Whoredom in Ephraim and defilement in Israel.

O Judah, there *is a harvest for thee.* A harvest may mean either retribution for sin, or blessing for righteousness. Judah was involved with Israel in sin, so might expect her just punishment. But perhaps Hosea meant a harvest of blessing when Jehovah returned them from captivity. In this they were to be more blessed

than Ephraim (northern kingdom), as they were never promised such a return as was promised to Judah at a certain time.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. God's promise of forgiveness extends right up to the time set for punishment, provided man will only turn from his wickedness.
2. The depth of sin to which man, made in the image of God, can go is appalling. And the speed with which man can descend from righteousness to wickedness, from the heights of

- purity to the pits of shame, is terrifying. Consider David as an example.
3. When man has fallen into sin, he can turn a deaf ear to all God's pleas to turn from sin back to righteousness. How can man be so hard to reach when he has once known the way of righteousness, has once known the joys of salvation?

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of this lesson?  
 Repeat the Golden Text  
 Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson. ...  
 Discuss the aim of the lessons of this quarter.

Introduction

What do you know of the date of the writings of Hosea?  
 Where did Hosea live? What is known of his family?  
 What do you know of the scope of the book of Hosea?  
 Of what does the first three chapters of the book treat?  
 What is the general subject of the last division of the book?  
 How many times is Hosea quoted by New Testament writers?

How does Hosea express God's power to punish and bless?  
 In what terms is God's swift action described? What is its remote meaning?  
 What was Israel's condition as pertains to the knowledge of God?  
 What did Hosea plead for concerning the knowledge of God?  
 What lesson is suggested by the reference to former and latter rains?

Golden Text Explained

Give and discuss three things suggested by the invitation of our text.  
 What does the word return imply?  
 From what had the people fallen?  
 Into what state had they fallen?  
 Do men fall of their free choice?  
 What caused these people to fall away from God?  
 According to Isaiah, what is the consequence of sin? Whose sin?  
 When is it impossible for God to bless people?

Jehovah pleads for Righteousness  
 What two nations were included in this plea?  
 How was the goodness of God's people described? How does that compare with our goodness?  
 How did God deal with the people? What figure is used to teach this?  
 Why are God's judgments like light?  
 Did God desire sacrifices of the people?  
 Could the people have been good and refused to offer sacrifices?  
 Can people be righteous today without observing outward ordinances of Christianity?  
 What is more than burnt-offerings? What is meant by the statement?  
 In what ways were the people's sins like that of Adam?  
 What do you know of Gilead?  
 With what great sin was this place charged?  
 With what sin were the priests charged?  
 What of the moral character of the priests?  
 What horrible thing did Hosea see?  
 What was the harvest awaiting Judah?  
 When was it to come?  
 What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Hosea Pleads with Israel

What had Jehovah threatened to do to Israel?

Lesson II—April 8, 1951

**GOD PARDONS PENITENT ISRAEL**

**The Lesson Text**

**Hos. 14: 1-9**

1 O Is'-ra-el, return unto Je-ho'-vah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2 Take with you words, and re-

turn unto Je-ho'-vah; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks *the offering of* our lips.

3 As-syr'-i-a 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.

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-el; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots at Leb'-a-non.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Leb'-a-non.

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 Leb'-a-non.

8 E'-phra-im *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 Je-ho'-vah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him."* (Hos. 14: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Dan. 9: 3-15.

#### Daily Bible Readings

|          |        |  |                 |
|----------|--------|--|-----------------|
| April 2. | M..... | Israel Hath Forgotten His Maker          | (Hosea 8:1-14)  |
| April 3. | T..... | Israel to be Wanderers Among the Nations | (Hosea 9:1-17)  |
| April 4. | W..... | Israel's Sin Reaps Retribution           | (Hosea 10:1-15) |
| April 5. | T..... | Jehovah Yearns Over Israel               | (Hosea 11:1-12) |
| April 6. | F..... | Jehovah Rebukes Ephraim                  | (Hosea 12:1-14) |
| April 7. | S..... | Samaria Shall Bear Her Guilt             | (Hosea 13:1-16) |
| April 8. | S..... | Jehovah Invites Israel to Return         | (Hosea 14:1-9)  |

TIME.—About 734 B.C.

PLACE.—In Israel, probably in the city of Samaria.

PERSONS.—Hosea and the people.

### Introduction

As one studies the book of Hosea he must keep in mind the political and religious conditions of the time when Hosea lived. Israel (the northern kingdom) had become so corrupt that God could no longer permit them to continue as a nation. The prophet said that Jehovah had a controversy with the people "because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood." (Hosea 4: 1, 2.) In chapter five, Hosea charges the priests, the king, and the princes with being responsible for the terrible state of affairs in Israel. The priests were guilty of murder and lewdness, and they had not taught the people a knowledge of God. He charged the princes with being greedy and covetous, taking from the poor and weak that which

they coveted. The kings of Hosea's time were murdering usurpers of the throne, one of them holding the throne for six months, and another for only one month until he was removed by assassins. Added to all this, we must remember that Israel started out as a calf-worshipping nation in the days of Jeroboam, and that they never were free from idolatry. Elijah dealt idol worship a mighty blow when he had over four hundred of the prophets of Baal killed at the brook Kishon (1 Kings 18), but the people were not cured of their practice of idolatry. Hosea presented two ideas which the people needed. (1) The inward spiritual nature of religion. He taught that God preferred goodness to sacrifice, and knowledge of God in the heart was better than burnt-offerings on altars without an understanding heart. (2) Hosea presented the idea of Jehovah's lingering love for his



people in spite of their infidelity, other early prophet. Only Isaiah His message approaches the gospel in and Jeremiah equal Hosea in this this respect more than that of any respect.

### Golden Text Explained

#### 1. "I will heal their backsliding."

Backsliding was the characteristic sin of the Jews, and, we might say, of all humanity. From the time of Adam in the garden of Eden down to the present day the history of humanity has been a record of backsliding, begging for mercy, being forgiven, and then backsliding again. When Peter asked if he should forgive seven times, and was told that he should forgive seventy times seven (Matt. 18: 22), we think that an indication of great mercy and forgiveness; but God's dealings with humanity in healing their backslidings is a much greater demonstration of unwearied love and unailing forgiveness. To heal them of backsliding meant (1) To forgive the sins of which they were guilty. This, of course, depended upon their repentance. A holy God cannot forgive where there is no repentance, a turning from the sin which is to be forgiven; but it does mean forgiveness regardless of how great is the sin, or how long it has continued. (2) It means cleansing from the pollution of sin. One cannot indulge in sin without becoming defiled, unholy. Sin is moral corruption, and there is no such thing as practicing sin without becoming morally corrupt. It eats as doth a gangrene, says Paul. (2 Tim. 2: 17.) And, (3) to heal their backsliding meant to give them strength to overcome their temptations. There is little good in being forgiven if we have not the moral courage and strength to overcome the temptation. So God does not allow a temptation to come upon us that we are not able to bear.

2. "I will love them freely." There are three things we must notice about this promise. (1) That God would love them at all; that God would love sinful human beings, is beyond our comprehension; truly it "passeth knowledge." (Eph. 3: 19.) (2) That God loves men freely. This word freely combined two ideas. First, God is not forced by any necessity

in the case; there is no quality in man which impels him to love sinful man. Second, there is the idea of bountiful, plentiful, overflowing love. (3) God's love, as strong and enduring as it is, can be repelled, refused. "Now this surely is the awfulness of God's love—that it can be resisted; that even as it is manifest in Jesus Christ we men have the power, not only to remain, as so many do outside its scope, feeling it far-off and vague, but having tasted it to fall away from it, having realized it to refuse it, having allowed it to begin its moral purposes in our lives to baffle and nullify these; to make the glory of heaven ineffectual in our own characters; and to give our Saviour the anguish of rejection." (Smith.) This love, like the healing of their backsliding, was promised on condition that they turn from sin.

3. "Mine anger is turned away from him." In spite of a modern tendency to do away with God's anger, we read about him being angry with the sinner, the wicked, and those who walk not uprightly. The inspired historian spoke of these very people to whom Hosea wrote, saying, "Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight." (2 Kings 17: 18.) And Hosea spoke for God, saying, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them: because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house; I will love them no more; all "their princes are revolvers." (*Hosea 9: 15.*) Yes, God hates sin; he even says he hates the sinner. He hates the sinner for what he does, and loves the sinner for what he is, God's offspring, all at the same time. If it is impossible for man to do that, and so difficult for us to understand how God can do it, let us remember that we are not God, and not capable of doing some things God can do. This should teach us how terrible sin is, and what a great blessing it is for God to turn away his anger from us and love us freely.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Exhortation to Repentance (Hosea 14: 1-3)

*Return unto Jehovah thy God.* This last chapter of Hosea, though written before the nation was taken into captivity, is written just as it would have been after the nation was taken captive. Hosea showed the destruction of the nation in the 13th chapter, and closed by saying that Samaria should bear her guilt for rebelling against God. Therefore, it seems, we must take this invitation to repentance, and the offer of mercy in our present lesson, as made to individuals of the captivity. Some commentators have said that the 14th chapter is misplaced because it is an offer of mercy after the final denunciation which is given in the 13th chapter. But if we look at the offer of mercy in this chapter as being extended to the individuals of a condemned nation, we avoid a difficulty and give an interpretation entirely in harmony with the known character and practice of Jehovah.

*Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* All have sinned, therefore all have fallen. If we could see the terrible consequences of sin before we commit the sin, no doubt many sins would never be committed. Surely Eve would never have eaten of the forbidden fruit if she could have had a vision of all the sorrow and suffering sin would bring upon the world. David would have denied himself a little pleasure and satisfaction if he could have seen all the grief and pain his sin with Bethsheba would bring upon him and his family. We ought to be warned by the experiences of others. Do we deceive ourselves to think that suffering will not follow sin now as it did in the old days? Do we think that God will not visit sin upon us even to several generations (Ex. 34: 7), as he did of old? Consider to what depths people of old fell because of their iniquity, and be warned to resist the temptation to indulge in fleeting pleasures of sin.

*Take with you words.* Hosea did not command great sin-offerings, though he certainly would not advise them to ignore the law of Moses with reference to such; he did not tell

them to make restoration for their sins, though he realized the value of the teaching of the law on this point. But he told them to take words with them as they returned to God. These were to be words of confession and contrition for their sins, words of promise and determination to refrain from sin, words of praise and thanksgiving for the mercy of God. The poor might not be able to make proper offerings, but none are too poor to take words to God. None can do enough good works to atone for his sin, but all can confess their sins and promise to refrain from them in the future. None can pay God for his goodness, but all can thank him and praise his holy name for his mercy in forgiving us of our sins.

*So will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.* Some of this chapter seems to look beyond the time of the law of Moses. Even the taking of words instead of offerings may be so interpreted. And this statement of rendering the offering of our lips in the place of bullocks is definitely a spiritual view of worship beyond that of the law. Hosea was not the only one to get such a glimpse of spiritual worship. David said, "I will praise the name of God with song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. And it will please Jehovah better than an ox, or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs." (Psalm 69: 30, 31.) The fruit of our lips is said to be a sacrifice of praise with which God is pleased. (Heb. 13: 15, 16.)

*Assyria shall not save us.* This is a sign of the turning of people to God. This means that they have come to realize that world-powers cannot save them; God is their only hope for salvation. And until people come to a realization of this fact, there is no hope that they can be saved.

*Neither will we say to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.* This is a renunciation of idolatry. They had learned their lesson when they got to the point they could see that idols were not God, and that they were not able to defend the fatherless and extend mercy to people entangled in sin. The world today

needs to learn some lessons here. Israel had depended upon alliances with great world-powers, upon their power to raise great armies and equip them with instruments of war, and they had depended upon idolatry for satisfaction to their souls. What a picture of world conditions today!

II. God Promises to Forgive (Hosea 14: 4-9)

*I will heal their backsliding.* We must remember that the words of verses 2 and 3 were put into the mouth of Israel, or individuals in Israel who were penitent. This is not a historical record. It was an offer of mercy to rebellious people in the hope they might be encouraged to repent. That the ten tribes carried into Assyria ever so repented we have no evidence. But certainly God would heal the backsliding of any individual, or any number of individuals, among them provided there was evidence of penitence.

*I will be as the dew unto Israel.* This and several similar passages are relied on by some to prove that Israel is to be gathered back in Palestine and will yet enjoy the blessings of God as a nation. But it is to be remembered the penitence of verses 2 and 3 was not actual, but only what Hosea was exhorting them to feel and express. So the promise of this section is what Jehovah makes provided the people will actually repent. Dew in the arid land of Canaan had a refreshing and reviving effect on vegetation. So Jehovah would refresh and revive the souls of all who would turn to him. Dew sustained the small vegetation from day to day. God's blessings are like that. We are told to pray for daily bread, not a year's supply all at once.

*He shall blossom as the lily.* Hosea now begins to describe the condition of any and all who return to God in penitence and receive his forgiveness. And as there is no one image which is rich and full enough to serve his purpose, Hosea passes from one image to another. Here we have the lily which is an emblem of purity and beauty. Those who strive for beauty of character should remember that an inspired writer teaches that the penitent but forgiven soul is as pure and beautiful as the lily.

*Cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* Whether this refers to the roots of the mountain by that name, or the cedars of Lebanon we have no way of knowing, but either interpretation will give us the lesson of sturdy stability and immovable uprightness of character. Those who turn to God find in him the strength of character which is deep rooted and lasting. Strength and beauty are not often viewed as being associated together, but in the man of God the only real beauty of character is that which is strong to do right and to resist that which is wrong.

*Shall be as the olive-tree.* Here we have growth and beauty. This beauty is not quite of the nature of the beauty of the lily. This is the beauty of symmetry. The person who lives near to God will be a well-balanced person, lacking in no quality essential to godliness. This is what is called the perfect man in scripture. The reference to the olive-tree may also indicate fruitfulness, as the olive was a popular fruit in the east.

*His smell as Lebanon.* This is another image used by Hosea to describe the person that turns in penitence to God, or all Israel provided they should all repent. This suggests the fragrance of a life lived in fellowship with God. Lebanon was known for its cedars, spices, fruits, flowers, and aromatic shrubs, and traveler's were impressed with the fragrance as they went along the roads. As their fragrance was pleasant, so the soul that lives in fellowship with God is pleasant in the society in which he moves.

*They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* The Jews understood this to refer to the Messiah. If the word *his* refers to Israel, who is it that dwells under his shadow? The word *they* refers to those who have been healed of their backsliding. They dwell under the protection of God. The word *return* has no reference to the land of Canaan, for such a return is not mentioned in the chapter, and can hardly be read into it.

*They shall revive . . . and blossom.* Here we have another series of images describing the blessings of forgive-

ness and fellowship with Jehovah. As grain revives after a rain, so the penitent is refreshed after he is forgiven by Jehovah. New life is sent into his whole being; he is a new man. Blossoms beautify the vine, and they are an indication, and the beginning, of the fruit to be borne. So the soul forgiven blossoms like the vine. It is made beautiful, and fruitful. Forgiveness is the beginning of fruit-bearing. There can be no fruitage as long as one remains in sin. Only when one is forgiven and allowed to enjoy the fellowship of God is there a possibility of bearing fruit.

*What have I to do any more with idols?* These are the words which Hosea puts into the mouth of Ephraim, on condition that Ephraim would turn to God. Keep in mind it is not a historical record, for it was written before Ephraim went into captivity. This is what Hosea exhorted Ephraim to say. The statement means a complete renunciation of idolatry. And we learn that the captivity cured the Jews, both Israel and Judah, of their idolatry; they

ceased to worship idols even though they did not all return to the pure worship of Jehovah.

*I am like a green fir-tree.* This is the language of Jehovah to all who turn to God. He is an ever-green, a never failing source of life to all who penitently turn to him.

From me *is thy fruit found.* Men do not bear fruit spiritually of themselves; their fruitfulness depends upon their connection and fellowship with the Lord. (John 15: 4, 5.)

*Who is wise, that he may understand these things?* The things referred to here are all that Hosea has written about, not just the things of this chapter. He indicates that only those who yearn for true knowledge will understand. The high and mighty never know the things of God; only the babes, the humble, can discern the things of God. (Matt. 11: 25-27.)

*The just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall.* Hosea closes with a warning that only the just shall be safe; the transgressors of God's law shall fall.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. If God was willing to heal the backsliding of Israel and love them freely, surely all may take courage today to expect him to forgive our sins if we sincerely repent.

2. As Israel's punishment in captivity cured them of idolatry, so ought men to be stopped from their sins today by (1) such examples as these in the scriptures; (2) by observing people about us; and (3) by their own experiences.

3. Hosea concludes his book by saying the just shall walk in the ways of Jehovah and enjoy his forgiveness, but those who transgress the law of God shall fall and be punished for his sins. Salvation is an individual matter, not a national. Eternal salvation was never promised to a nation as such, but only to individuals. The only way a nation can be saved is for every individual in that nation to walk uprightly.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

Why did Jehovah have a controversy with Israel?  
Of what were the priests guilty?  
With what did he charge the princes?  
The king?  
Tell of the beginning of idolatry in Israel.  
Who checked the progress of idolatry in Israel? How?  
What two great ideas were stressed by Hosea?

**Golden Text Explained**

What was the characteristic sin of the Jews?  
Give and discuss three things implied in healing their backsliding.  
Why is God's love for man past understanding?  
What is implied in the fact that God loves man freely?  
What is "the awfulness of God's love"?  
Is God ever angry with the sinner?  
How can God love and hate the sinner at the same time?

**Exhortation to Repentance**

What caused Israel to fall?

Is Hosea's invitation to repentance to Israel as a nation, or to individuals? Though we can't see the consequence of our own deeds before we act, how may we be warned as to the fearful consequences of sin? What did Hosea tell the people to bring to God? What were these words to express if they were acceptable to God? What was to take the place of bullocks as a sacrifice? How does this approach the spiritual worship of the gospel? What had the people of Israel learned about depending on world-powers for salvation? What did they learn about their idols? How are these lessons applicable to present day conditions?

God Promises to Forgive

What promises did Jehovah make to the people of Israel?

What is meant by being as the dew to Israel? What blessing is promised under the image of the lily? What is promised under the image of Lebanon? Of what blessings was the olive-tree a figure? What does the smell of Lebanon suggest? Who were to dwell under the Lord's shadow? How are the blessings of forgiveness described? In what words is idolatry renounced? Were the Jews permanently cured of this sin? In what way is God like a green fir-tree? On whom are we dependent for our power to bear fruit? Who can understand the teachings of God? How does Hosea close his book? What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

### Lesson III—April 15, 1951

## JOEL PROMISES FUTURE BLESSING

### The Lesson Text

#### Joel 2: 23-32

23 Be glad then, ye children of Zi'-6n, and rejoice in Je-ho'-vah your God; for he giveth you the former rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first month.

24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

26 And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of Je-ho'-vah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame.

27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Is'-ra-el, and that I am Je-ho'-vah your God, and there is none else; and my people shall never be put to shame.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Je-ho'-vah cometh.

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Je-ho'-vah shall be delivered; for in mount Zi'-6n and in Je-ru'-sa-lem there shall be those that escape, as Je-ho'-vah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Je-ho'-vah doth call.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 2: 14-21.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| April 9. M.....  | Isaiah Promises Future Blessings (Isa. 2: 1-4)            |
| April 10. T..... | Ransomed of Jehovah in Zion (Isa. 35: 1-10)               |
| April 11. W..... | Jeremiah Promises New Covenant (Jer. 31: 31-37)           |
| April 12. T..... | Daniel Promises Everlasting Kingdom (Dan. 2: 36-45)       |
| April 13. F..... | Micah Speaks of the House of God. (Micah 4: 1-8)          |
| April 14. S..... | Zechariah promised a Priest on His Throne (Zech. 6: 9-15) |
| April 15. S..... | Fulfilment of Blessings (Acts 2: 1-13)                    |

TIME.—Uncertain, probably about 700 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Joel and the people of Judah.

### Introduction

There is little that can be said of this prophet. He says he was the son of Pethuel, but nothing is known of him. Mention of Judah and Jerusalem and Zion so often in the book makes it certain that he was a native of that section, and that his ministry was for that division of the people. Some say that he was a priest, but there is no certain evidence of priestly connections.

The date of the book is very uncertain. All late scholars are agreed that it was written after the exile, and some of the early scholars admit the possibility of so late a date. Joel says judgment shall be executed upon the nations for God's people "whom they have scattered among the nations." (Joel 3: 2.) This certainly sounds like it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the people among the nations. Again, Joel threatens judgment upon those who sold children of Jerusalem to the Grecians. (Joel 3: 6.) It is a known fact that Jewish slaves were in demand in Greece in

the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. No mention is made of Greece by any other prophet before the exile. A good discussion of this matter may be found in "The Book of the Twelve Prophets," Vol. 2, by George Adam Smith, and "The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets," by Raymond Calkins. The case for the early date may be read in "The Pulpit Commentary," and "The Minor Prophets," by E. B. Pusey.

The contents of the book may be divided into two parts. (1) Things present. A plague of locusts, probably real insects, from which profitable lessons are drawn. However, some take the locusts to mean the Assyrians. Joel used this plague to arouse the people to a realization of their conditions, and to bring them to repentance. (2) Things to come. Joel told of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which finds fulfilment of the first Pentecost after the death of Christ. He also speaks of the coming of the day of the Lord.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Whosoever. Paul quotes the language of the prophet Joel in our text. For Joel to make such a statement in his day was a bold departure from the accepted view. The Jews were exclusive. They believed they were the people of God, destined to be saved because of their relation to Abraham and the covenant God made with the Jews at Sinai, and that no other people were entitled to such blessings. Only occasionally did prophets arise with a broader vision, and that was undoubtedly due to the influence of inspiration upon them.

Isaiah had such a vision of the world-wide reach of the reign of the Lord. (Isa. 2.) Peter quoted this prophecy of Joel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 17ff.), and said that the blessings he was offering were for "all that are afar off." But he did not really understand that the gospel was free to all nations apart from Jewish ceremonies, for later when the Lord sent him to the house of Cornelius a miracle had to be performed to get him to preach the gospel to Gentiles. (Acts 10.) One of the glories of the gospel is that it is offered to all

nations, races, and colors of people regardless of the financial, social, or political standing, and that it is suited to their needs, and satisfies all who sincerely accept it.

2. **Call on the name of the Lord.** We hear much today about being saved by calling on the Lord, and the most of it is as unscriptural and unsafe as can be. "Just bow down by your radio and say, Lord save me," we are told is all one must do to be saved. To the average religious teacher that is calling on the name of the Lord. But much more than this is involved. (1) One must have a knowledge of God. Certainly no one can call upon a God whom he does not know about, and of whose character he is entirely ignorant. (2) One must have faith in God before he can call upon him for salvation. Many have a knowledge of God, but do not have faith in him as a Saviour. The demons certainly know about God, and they believe Jesus is the Son of God, but they are not saved by faith only. (3) One must have a desire for salvation before his call will be made sincerely, and before God will answer the call. This will indicate that the one calling is tired of sin, that he hates it and is ready to quit it. It indicates that he believes in the Lord's ability to save, his willingness to save, and that desires such a salvation as is offered in the gospel. (4) One must trust the Lord for salvation before his call will be worth anything. Trust is a part of faith. There is such a thing

as intellectual faith that lacks the element of trust; it is worthless. (5) Close akin to, in fact a part of, trust is a readiness to obey the Lord. There is no need to call on the Lord unless one is willing to obey. Trust makes possible this obedience, and gives to it all the value it has in the plan of salvation. Jesus taught there is no need to call him Lord without obedience. (Luke 6: 46.) Ananias taught Paul to obey as he called upon the name of the Lord. (Acts 22: 16.)

3. **Shall be saved.** (1) This implies that men are lost, all men, for the statement is made to all, whosoever. (2) This implies that God wishes all men to be saved. If some are predestined to be lost, God could not make this invitation sincerely to all. (3) This implies that sin is destructive. It will ruin the soul in this life, and doom it to eternal misery in the world to come. Salvation from sin is the greatest gift man can receive, for sin is man's greatest enemy. To be saved from sin means much. (1) Salvation from the *power* of sin. (Col. 1: 13; Rom. 6: 14.) (2) Salvation from the pollution of sin when we are washed in his blood. (Acts 22: 16; 1 John 1: 17; Rev. 1: 5.) (3) Salvation from the *guilt* of sin when he forgives us. (Acts 2: 38; Eph. 1: 7; Heb. 8: 12.) (4) Salvation from the state of sin when we are translated into his kingdom. (Col. 1: 12-14; 1 Pet. 2: 9, 10.) (5) And finally salvation from the *presence* of **sin** when he takes us to heaven. (Rev. 21: 27; 22: 10-15.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Prosperity for Israel. (Joel 2: 23-27)

*Rejoice in Jehovah your God.* The people had just gone through a terrible experience and were in need of comfort and consolation. Joel proceeds to call their attention to God as a source of comfort. And surely there is no better or more faithful source. Some people do not realize what a source of comfort God is until they are driven by circumstances to lean upon him. This seems to have been the case here, and Joel uses the circumstances of the people to bring them to rely upon God for their

necessities. Those who find their happiness in the Lord never worry, for their source of joy is unending.

*He giveth you the former rain in just measure.* Since Judah depended on fruits and sheep for their prosperity, they were all the more in need of rain. So when the prophet wished to assure them of prosperity, he promised rain in just measure and at the right time. So in this verse he tells them they can depend on the former and latter rains as in former times, as it should read instead of "in the first month." (Clarke.)

*Floors shall be full of wheat.* This verse is taken up with promises of material prosperity. They shall have all the wheat they need, and their vats shall overflow with new wine. This was an expression of prosperity like we use when we say that the gin-yards are full of cotton, the grain elevators are running over, and the pastures are well stocked with cattle. But in times of depression or of continued drought it might take a lot of faith for us to believe that such conditions can prevail immediately. This was Joel's problem, to get the people to believe that such would soon be their condition, while their present circumstances made it difficult for him to get over the idea.

*I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.* The first part of chapter 2 is given to an account of the devastation wrought by an army of locusts. Some commentators think these locusts were real, others think they were used to symbolize an enemy army. But nothing is said of the destruction that could not be accomplished by locusts. They came in such numbers that they darkened the sky. They ate every green herb and plant and left the ground as bare as the sea shore. Historians relate that on occasions strong winds have blown them into the sea, and their dead bodies were swept back upon the beach in such quantities that literally hundreds of thousand of people died from a pestilence caused by them. One historian relates that a bank of them four feet high and fifty miles long was washed upon the Mediterranean shore. (See "Pusey's Minor Prophets.") The canker-worm mentioned is something like our measuring worm injuring shade and fruit trees. The caterpillar is a long larva of butterfly or moth. And the palmer-worm is of the caterpillar family. From the plural of "years" in the text we conclude that these destructive agents had been used of the Lord for a long period. God said he had sent them among the people. The reason is not mentioned, but we may be sure it was to bring them to feel dependence upon him.

*Ye shall praise the name of Jehovah.* From this we conclude that the plagues were brought upon the

people that they might learn to praise Jehovah. And they would be inclined to do so when he had driven out the destroyer, and had filled their barns with grain and their vats with new wine. We often take such reverses as a natural happening only and fail to see God in them. Some even go so far as to say that God does not use such things to bring glory and honor to himself. But Joel said people should know that God had dealt wondrously with them when they had gone through such experiences. We are in the habit of passing such things off as being in the Old Testament, as if the God of the New Testament were an altogether different God from that of the Old Testament.

*Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel.* People are inclined to think of God as being far away and with little interest in the things of this earth. Joel wished them to know that Jehovah was in their very midst, not simply and solely when they went to worship, but in the ordinary affairs of life. Paul had the same idea when he talked with the great scholars of his day in Athens, for he said, "He is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17; 27, 28.) Few people are conscious of God's presence with them in the office, the shop, the kitchen; they think of him as being present only when they worship. Our lives would be purer and better if we would cultivate the consciousness of God at all times and in all places.

*My people shall never be put to shame.* This is true, not because of their great wisdom and strength, but because of his presence with them. As long as Israel's armies enjoyed the presence of God, they were victorious; but when their sins made it impossible for him to be with them, they were defeated. (Josh. 6: 7.) So today we may have him with us whose presence guarantees victory in every encounter. We need never come off the battlefield with our heads hung down in shame unless we go on that field of battle alone. We should never undertake anything without being sure that God can take part in it with us.



## II. Future Blessings for Israel. (Joel 2: 28-32)

*It shall come to pass afterward.* The Jews understood this expression to refer to the days of the Messiah. And Peter so used it in Acts 2 when he said, "It shall be in the last days, saith God," taking it from this very statement of Joel. There has been some argument as to whether it means the last days of the Jewish dispensation, or the Christian dispensation. But the coming of the Holy Spirit for his work in the Christian dispensation ought to settle that argument. If the Holy Spirit was to be poured out in the last days, and he did his work in a peculiar way in the Christian dispensation, we should conclude that the term "last days" refers to this dispensation.

*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.* Certainly the Holy Spirit had been in the prophets, inspiring them in their preaching and writing, yet God promises to send him. And when Jesus was on earth he spoke of the Holy Spirit being not yet given (John 7: 39), and of the Spirit not coming unless and until he went away. (John 16: 7.) So we must conclude that God meant he would send the Spirit in a measure and for a purpose he had not sent him before. The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost and his work in Christians, when properly understood, will be sufficient explanation of this promise to send the Holy Spirit.

*Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.* The word prophesy must not be limited to foretelling events; it means to speak by inspiration, and it may serve to exhort, console, or edify. (1 Cor. 14: 3.) It will be noticed that "daughters," women, were to receive such a measure of the Spirit as would enable them to speak to edification, exhortation, and consolation. The New Testament limits the sphere of woman's operation, but it is a mistake to deny her any sphere of operation at all. (1 Cor. 14: 34; 1 Tim. 2: 12; Titus 2: 4.)

*Old men shall dream dreams, young men shall see visions.* Whether we are to try to distinguish between dreams and visions, and see why old men should enjoy one and young men

another is doubtful. We must allow some room for poetic play. The main idea is that God through the Holy Spirit will reveal himself to young and old. Peter had a vision on the house-top. (Acts 10: 17-19.) Paul saw a vision of a man calling for help. (Acts 16: 10.) And Paul mentioned visions in proof of his apostleship. (2 Cor. 12: 1.)

*Upon my servants and my handmaids will I pour out my Spirit.* In verse 28 it is said he will pour out the Spirit upon all flesh. That cannot mean every human being for that would include the wicked. So we conclude that all flesh means Jew and Gentile, and when he had given the Spirit to Jews on Pentecost and to Gentiles at the house of Cornelias, the promise was fulfilled. Here it is said the Spirit will be poured out upon servants and handmaids, or men and women. Philip's four daughters received the Spirit and prophesied. (Acts 21: 9.) Other women worked with Paul in teaching the gospel, but whether they did it by inspiration or not we cannot know. (Phil. 4: 2, 3.)

*I will show wonders in heaven and earth.* Joel said these were to be in the last days, and Peter said the things Joel spoke of were being fulfilled. So we may look for the fulfillment of them, though we may not be able to identify all of them. And it is possible that these things are not meant to be understood literally. Certainly the moon was not turned into blood. Even if we say it took on a blood-like color, we must admit that the term is not to be taken literally. So it seems best to take all these as suggesting great changes, upheavals, in world affairs. Blood suggests the unprecedented slaughter of people in the destruction of Jerusalem. Fire suggests the burning of the city. And pillars of smoke the extent of the damage done by the fire.

*The Sun shall be turned into darkness.* Some have taken this to refer to the darkness at the crucifixion, but if it does, we must look for a similar effect on the moon, and none is mentioned. It probably refers to political and religious changes that were to come. The Jewish nation was destroyed, what was left of it. The Jewish system of worship was

destroyed when the temple and city were sacked and burned.

*Great and terrible day of Jehovah.* Days of judgment, when judgments are visited upon people, are days of Jehovah. Zephaniah said the great day of Jehovah is near. (Zeph. 1: 14.) And Malachi speaks of the day of Jehovah as a day of judgment upon Israel. Mal. 4: 1, 5.) The Holy Spirit was to be sent, and these great changes were to be made before the great and terrible day of Jehovah, and since the Holy Spirit came about forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, we know of no judgment of God which fits the case better.

In *Zion and Jerusalem there shall be those that escape.* There shall be those that escape the judgment of God on that occasion. Jesus gave his disciples instructions how to escape (Matt. 24: 15ff), and Eusebius says they fled to Pella to safety, and not one perished. (See "Barnes Notes," Vol. I, p. 225.) The prediction of these things hundreds of years before they transpired is positive proof of inspiration. This is one proof which infidels of all ages have not been able to meet. It should cause us to have greater faith to study them.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. The providence of God in the ordinary affairs of life is illustrated in the life of Joseph, Daniel, and so many of the people of old that it seems difficult to believe that anyone could doubt that he is interested in our affairs today. A realization of his presence with us at all times will do much to keep us from sin.
2. Great wonders and signs accompanied the establishment of many great movements in the past. There were such in connection with the de-

liverance of Israel from bondage and the giving of the law. The early prophets, Elijah and Elisha, worked many miracles and wonders. And the establishment of the church was accompanied with miracles of Jesus and his disciples before, and by his disciples after Pentecost. The eternal kingdom will be ushered in with still greater judgments and signs of God's power in the destruction of the world, and the establishment of new heavens and a new earth.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What do you know of the prophet Joel?  
Discuss the probable date of the writing of the book.  
What do you know of the contents of the book?

**Golden Text Explained**

What did the average Jew think about salvation for all people?  
What shows that Joel had a broader view of this matter?  
What other prophets had such a view? Where did these men get this view?  
When did the apostle Peter get this view of salvation for all?  
What is the ordinary view of "calling on the Lord" for salvation?  
Name and discuss five things involved in calling on the name of the Lord.  
May one believe in the Lord and yet not trust the Lord? Can one trust without believing?  
What three things are implied in the promise that men shall be saved?  
Name and discuss five aspects of sin from which we are saved.

**Prosperity for Israel**

In whom did Joel say for Israel to rejoice? Why?  
What gifts of God did Joel mention as grounds for rejoicing?  
What expression did Joel use to denote plenty?  
What do you know of the devastating power of locusts?  
What other destructive insects had hurt Israel? How long?  
What was the purpose of these plagues being brought upon Israel?  
Is God working in depressions and droughts, wars and famines today as he was in Joel's day?  
Is God "in the midst" of us today as he was in the midst of Israel in Joel's day?  
Why will God's people never be put to shame?  
Can you give an instance of God refusing to be with his people? Why?

**Future Blessings for Israel**

How do we know that Joel spoke of the time of Christ and his apostles?  
To what dispensation does the term "last days" refer?  
In what sense was Joel's promise of the Holy Spirit new or different?  
What is meant by prophesying?

Were women to prophesy? In what way were they limited?  
 Can you give instances of God giving revelations in visions?  
 What is the meaning of "all flesh" in connection with the promise of the Spirit?  
 Can you give proof that women prophesied through the power of the Spirit?  
 Are the wonders in heaven and earth mentioned to be taken literally?

What Is meant by the great and terrible day of Jehovah?  
 What did Jesus say of the destruction of Jerusalem?  
 Who were able to escape from that destruction? Why?  
 What is the value of such prophecies and their fulfillment?  
 What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson IV—April 22, 1951

**AMOS REPROVES ISRAEL**

**The Lesson Text**

**Amos 5: 4-15**

4 For thus saith Je-ho'-vah unto the house of Is'-ra-el, Seek ye me, and ye shall live.

5 But seek not Beth'-el, nor enter into Gil'-gal, and pass not to Be'-er-she'-ba: for Gil'-gal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth'-el shall come to nought.

6 Seek Je-ho'-vah, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, and there be none to quench it in Beth'-el.

7 Ye who turn justice to worm-wood, and cast down righteousness to the earth,

8 *Seek him* that maketh the Ple'-ia-des and O-ri'-on, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth (Je-ho'-vah is his name).

9 That bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.

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 Je-ho'-vah, 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 Je-ho'-vah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*" (Amos 5: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Amos 5: 16-23.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- April 16. M..... God's Judgment on the Nations (Amos 1: 1-15)
- April 17. T..... God's Judgment on Judah and Israel (Amos 2: 1-16)
- April 18. W..... Samaria and Bethel to Be Cut Off (Amos 3: 1-15)
- April 19. T..... "Prepare to Meet Thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4: 1-13)
- April 20. F..... Woes Pronounced Upon Israel (Amos 6: 1-14)
- April 21. S..... A Plumb-line Set in Israel (Amos 7: 1-17)
- April 22. S..... The End Is Come Upon Israel (Amos 8: 1-14)

TIME.—About 750 B.C.

PLACES.—In Israel, perhaps Samaria and Bethel.

PERSONS.—Amos and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

Amos had no intention of being a prophet. He was a herdsman and a keeper of sycamore-trees. (Amos 7: 14, 15.) This tree is not what we think of as sycamores. By some it is called a mulberry, or more correctly a fig-mulberry. (See Smith's Bible Dictionary.) Its fruit was not highly prized by the rich, but was depended on by the poor, and especially people who lived on the fringe of the desert. Perhaps Amos lived at Tekoa, about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. But he was sent to Bethel and Samaria to preach to the prosperous and wicked nation of Israel. He says he prophesied in the days of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. (Amos 1: 1.) Jeroboam died in 744 B.C. The conditions of society and religion described in Amos are such as are known to have existed during the last days of Jeroboam. There was a period of peace and prosperity, and the people forgot God, oppressed the poor, went to almost unbelievable depths of shame in immorality. They even adopted the old Canaanitish rite of "sacred prostitution" which they practiced openly in their sanctuaries.

Amos astonished the Jews by preaching that God would punish the Jew the same as he would punish the heathen nations for their sins. With Amos God was no respecter of persons, but to the average Jew God was a respecter of persons. There are some lessons taught in this book which we should notice. (1) Righteousness is a universal principle, and

since God is a God of righteousness, there can be but one God. To Amos the God of Israel was not simply the greatest and most powerful God in the universe, but he was the only God. (2) Since God is a God of righteousness, he will not defend his people while they live in sin. Unrighteousness will be punished in Israel the same as in Edom or Damascus. (3) Since God is righteous and he demands righteousness in his people, it follows that sacrifices and offerings which come from unrighteous people will be rejected. This was a new idea in religion to these people of the northern kingdom. They thought their offerings would be accepted regardless of how they lived. This idea is needed in the religious world today. (4) Since God is universally a God of righteousness, the Jew must revise his ideas of God's relation to the heathen nations. God punished the heathen nations because he was righteous and they were unrighteous, therefore the heathen nations were accountable to God, to be blessed if they did right and to be punished if they did wrong. And this was a new idea to the Jew. Speaking of Amos one man has said: "He was one of the greatest preachers the world has ever known. In his command of language, forms of expression, effective illustration, and well-chosen images, in the directness of his addresses, and in the variety of presentation, he ranks among the masters of human speech." (Calkins.)

## Golden Text Explained

1. The necessity of justice **and** righteousness. Speaking for God, Amos had just said that he despised the feasts of the Jews, that he would not accept their offerings; he told them to take away the noise of their songs and the melody of their viols. These things were an abomination to Jehovah. But had he not commanded such things? Why then would he reject them when offered to him? The answer is found in the fact that they obstructed justice and righteousness. They hated him that reproved them, and abhorred one who spoke

uprightly. They trampled upon the poor by exacting tax and interest which were not due. They afflicted the just, took bribes, and defrauded the needy in the gate. (Amos 5: 10-13.) They lay upon beds of ivory and stretched themselves upon fine couches; they ate the best lambs of the flock and the fatted calves of the stall; they sang idle songs to the sound of the viol, and invented to themselves instruments of music like David; they drank wine from golden bowls and anointed themselves with the best oils, "but they were not grieved for

the affliction of Joseph." (Amos 6: 3-6.) Such was the condition of heart of the worshippers, so Jehovah despised their worship. He told them to let justice roll down as water, and righteousness as a mighty stream, and then he would be pleased with their worship, he would accept it. In this figurative language is suggested, (1) that there is a spreading and refreshing influence of justice that is like the effect of water spreading out over thirsty land. As a flood of water rolls forward it spreads out as much as the elevation of the surrounding land will allow. So justice and righteousness have a tendency to spread out through the exercise of them. *One man's* exercise of them will cause a dozen others to exercise them. (2) As water spreads over the thirsty land it refreshes and invigorates the vegetation, and causes other seeds to germinate and grow. So justice and righteousness refresh and give strength and beauty to all who exercise them, and to all who are touched by them. (3) Amos said let justice and righteousness roll down as a mighty stream. We are told

that this word mighty is from a word which means "ever-flowing." In fact we have that word in the margin of the Bible. Amos did not want spasmodic righteousness. There are some who will be brought by persecution, or sorrow, or some calamity, to be righteous for a while, but soon forget their lesson and go back into the old rut of sin.

## 2. Application of this to our day.

If Amos or Elijah or John the Baptist were to visit us and see our wealth consisting of fine homes, clothes, and automobiles; if they should see *us* entertaining our friends at our parties—if they were then to go down to the poor section of the city and see the great needs of charity, and if they were to view the great unsaved portions of humanity who have never heard the gospel, would they not say that our offering of worship on Sunday is an abomination to God? The pitiful amount we give on Sunday when compared to what we spend living on the plane we do might cause Amos to tell us to let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Seek Jehovah and Live (Amos 5: 4-9)

*Seek ye me, and ye shall live.* This statement was made just about thirty years before Israel was carried into captivity. How near they were to destruction, and yet how willing God was to save them if they would seek him in his appointed way! This surely is ample proof of his great mercy, of his lingering love for his wayward children. Notice that spiritual life is conditioned upon man seeking Jehovah. Man has the ability to seek him, even when man is in sin, when he is away from God. And because he has this ability, and God has furnished ample evidence of his love, man is condemned for not seeking Jehovah.

*Seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal.* Bethel was the place where Jeroboam I erected his altar at the beginning, when the ten tribes pulled off from Judah. (1 Kings 12: 29ff.) He told the people it was too far for them to go to Jerusalem to worship,

so he made idols for them in Bethel and Dan. Gilgal was just east of Jericho, near the Jordan river. It was not really in the territory of Israel, but rather in Judah. However it was associated with idolatry by more than one of the prophets. (Hosea 4: 15; 9: 15; 12: 11.) The mention of Beersheba here is interesting. This place was more than fifty miles south of Jerusalem. Bethel was twelve miles north of Jerusalem, hence about sixty miles north of Beersheba. It was too far from Bethel to Jerusalem for the people to go to worship Jehovah, but it was nothing for them to go four or five times that far to engage in the idolatrous worship at Beersheba. How human that sounds! It is too hot, too cold, too rainy to go to worship Sunday, but we can go to work, or to a ball game, or a picture show regardless of weather conditions. Following this, Amos says these towns shall be destroyed, meaning that the worship carried on there was vain, dis-

pleasing to God, and that it was not of the type to save them.

*Lest he break out like fire.* The people are admonished to seek Jehovah lest he break out like fire and consume them. Amos was in the class of Elijah and John the Baptist when it comes to using strong figures with reference to the vengeance of God. The fire devours and there is none to quench it. The idols they worshipped were powerless. Their only hope for safety was to turn to Jehovah to avert the fire of destruction. By the house of Joseph here is meant Israel. Ephraim, the son of Joseph, was one of the leading tribes among the ten, so was often called Ephraim. Ephraim's house would, of course, be Joseph's house.

*Ye who turn justice to wormwood.* This is an expression denoting a perversion of justice. To cast down righteousness to the earth was to dethrone righteousness. These people had enthroned injustice and oppression; they had exalted sin and unrighteousness.

*Seek him that maketh Pleiades and Orion.* Pleiades is a loose cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus; usually said to be seven, six of which are visible to the naked eye, but in reality there are hundreds more. Orion is a constellation on the equator east of Taurus, represented on the charts by the figure of a hunter with belt and sword. (Webster.)

*That turneth the shadow of death into the morning.* This is an expression which means that Jehovah has power to save from death. When death casts its dark shadow, Jehovah can save. The shadow of death and destruction had already been cast upon Israel, but if they would turn to him in repentance and seek his favor, he would bring the morning of joy and life.

*Maketh the day dark with night* Some take these statements to mean that God controls the sequence of day and night, which, of course is true, but it seems a rather weak statement in this connection. He turns the darkness into light for those who love him, and he can turn the day into night of despair and destruction for the rebellious.

*That calleth for the waters of the*

*sea.* Some have thought this to refer to God's gift in the rain. But since this is a series of judgments upon the wicked for the purpose of causing men to turn to Jehovah, it is better to refer this to the flood which came as a judgment of God upon the wicked. Israel is urged to seek Jehovah because of his power, as evidenced in the creation of the great constellations Pleiades and Orion; because he has the power to turn darkness of death into the light of life for all who seek him; because he has the power to turn light into darkness of destruction for all who oppose him; and because he one time called for the waters of the sea and poured them upon the world of the ungodly.

*That bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong.* This seems to sum up all that has gone before, to show that they are to be taken as figures of destruction. And we have the added idea that he can bring destruction upon people no matter how strong they are. If people take refuge in their great armies, impregnable fortresses, or great wisdom, they but show how foolish they are. The God who created and preserves the world can certainly use this great power for the destruction of frail weak creatures such as men are. Those who do not fear God do not know his great power.

## II. A Rebuke and a Call to Repentance (Amos 5: 10-15)

*They hate him that reproveth in the gate.* The gate of the city was the usual gathering place for court, for transaction of any legal business, and for prophets to deliver their messages. The gate of Samaria was spacious enough to accommodate more than four hundred prophets and others who gathered to decide whether the king should go to war. (1 Kings 22: 5-12.) The people were so set in their wicked ways that they hated anyone who reproved them for their sins, and anyone who spoke uprightly upon any subject was abhorred. Amos likely did not refer to his own experience alone, but he learned how much they hated a man who would stand for the right and against the wrong. (Amos 7: 10ff.)

*Ye trample upon the poor.* This refers to the general mistreatment of the poor by the rich. God has always been a friend to the poor and the weak and helpless. He has never allowed injustice to these classes to go unpunished.

*Take exactions from him of wheat.* The word translated *exactions* here is in many places translated *presents*, indicating that the lender, though forbidden by law to take interest, required a *present* instead. It was their way of evading the law, which said, "Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother; interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of anything that is lent upon interest." (Deut. 23: 19.) Or this could also mean that a judge would not render a just decision to a man until he was brought a present. In any way that exactions could be made unjustly, Amos rebuked the Jews for making such exactions. The poor are to be assisted, not robbed; they are objects of charity, not chances for the enrichment of those in power.

*Ye have built houses of hewn stones.* Houses were usually made of sun-baked bricks, or adobe of the west, but these had built houses of hewn stones. This denotes wealth and luxury, and the connection shows that the wealth was derived from exactions from the poor. As punishment for this wrong treatment of the poor, they were told that they would not be allowed to live in these houses. America enjoys a period of prosperity while millions in other lands live in poverty and die without knowing God. Do we enjoy our prosperity by withholding from the needy that which God expects us to use for their salvation?

*I know how manifold are thy transgressions.* This is a sobering thought. God knows all our thoughts and emotions. David thought upon the omniscience of God, and exclaimed, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." (Psalm 139: 6.) When writing to the seven churches of Asia, God reminded them over and over that he knew their works. (Rev. 2: 2, 19.)

*And how mighty are your sins.* The sins of the people were both many and mighty. What a recommen-

ation this is for the mercy of God. The sins of the people were many and mighty, yet he would freely forgive if they would turn to him and learn his ways. And not only would he forgive, but he would not bring upon them the destruction which their sins deserved. In such mercy we find our only hope of salvation.

*Ye that afflict the just, and take a bribe.* By afflicting the just is meant that the just must stand the exactions mentioned above in order to get their dues in court. And the taking of a bribe here, from the use of the word translated bribe, means taking a ransom. It probably refers to accepting a bribe from a murderer to allow him to go free. The law plainly states that a rich murderer could not ransom his life. (Num. 35: 31.) But Amos seems to accuse these people of accepting such a payment, calling it a bribe. In these and every other conceivable way they turned aside the needy in the gate from his right. This accusation of mistreatment of the poor and needy runs all through these rebukes of Amos. It was one of the outstanding sins of his day. It was one of the sins God hated then, and he still hates it. Those who mistreat in any way the poor, must answer to God who is their protector.

*He that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time.* This may mean that the poor would keep silence, seeing there was nothing he could do to better the situation. Jesus said little during his trial, knowing the end was determined by those in power. But for a prophet to keep silence when God had given him a message of rebuke against such sins would not have been prudent in him at all. Or this could mean that in such a time as God punishes the wicked for such sins, the prudent shall keep silence, knowing that God's ways are right. Man has no right to criticize the Judge of all the earth when he punishes sin.

*So Jehovah will be with you.* The Jews claimed that Jehovah was with them, but Amos told them to seek good and not evil so they could truthfully say it.

*Hate evil and love the good.* In these parting exhortations Amos sums

up his former teachings, and promises that God will be gracious to them in spite of their sins if only they will follow his teaching. Our

whole duty may be put into this one statement, hate the evil and love the good. It is Paul's advice to the Romans. (Rom. 12: 9.)

Topics for Discussion

1. Solomon said the man who hates reproof is brutish, that is, he is like a brute. Reproof is hard to take, but when taken it is medicine to the soul. At first it tears and breaks the soul, but its final effect is to heal and strengthen the soul. The more we fight it, the less good we get from it.

2. Goodness and life are inseparable. What God has joined, man cannot put asunder. So if we wish to live in the highest sense of that term, we must be good and do good.

3. The power of God in creation, and the severity of God in providence are used by Amos to teach people the futility of rebelling against God. The God that created all can destroy all. The God that hates sin will not save those who love sin, hence we must learn to hate the evil and love the good. That lesson must be learned here; we cannot wait until we get to heaven to learn it. If we never learn it here, we will never get to heaven.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Introduction

What do you know of the private life of Amos?  
What do you know of sycamore trees?  
Where was Tekoah?  
In whose reign did Amos do his work?  
What were the conditions of society and religion in his day?  
Read and discuss four lessons Amos taught about righteousness.

Golden Text Explained

Were the Jews keeping the commandments with reference to offerings?  
Why would God not accept their worship?  
What is suggested in our text about the spreading influence of righteousness?  
What other effect does righteousness have that is like water?  
What does our text teach about continuous influence of righteousness?  
To what other prophets is Amos compared? Why?  
Discuss the application of the lesson in the Golden Text.

Seek Jehovah and Live

What in this first section emphasizes the mercy of God?  
Upon what is spiritual life conditioned?  
Where was Bethel? For what is it noted in scripture?  
Where was Gilgal? Why mentioned in this place?  
Where was Beersheba? Why mentioned here?

What inconsistency of the Jews is mentioned here? What application in our day?  
What is suggested with reference to the vengeance of God?  
What is meant here by the house of Joseph?  
What is meant here by turning justice to wormwood?  
What is Pleiades? Orion? What use is made of them here?  
Into what can God change the shadow of death? For whom?  
In what way, and for what purpose, is the flood suggested?  
Upon whom can God bring sudden destruction?

A Rebuke and a Call to Repentance

Whom did Amos say the people hated?  
What do you know of the gate of a city as a place of business?  
What was the law concerning interest?  
How does Amos charge these people with violating that law?  
What statement suggests the wealth and luxury of the people? What the source of their wealth?  
What did David say of the knowledge of God?  
What did God know about the sins of these Jews to whom Amos was sent?  
What is meant by taking a bribe?  
What seems to have been the outstanding sin of these Jews?  
What is said of the prudent?  
How does Amos sum up man's duty to God?  
In what words does Paul teach this lesson?  
What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?



## Lesson V—April 29, 1951

## OBADIAH PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT ON EDOM

## The Lesson Text

## Obad. 1: 1-12

1 The vision of O-ba-di'-ah. Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah concerning E'-dom: We have heard tidings from Je-ho'-vah, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, saying, Arise ye, and let us rise up *against* her *in* battle.

2 Behold, I have made thee small *among the* nations: thou art greatly despised.

3 The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring *me* down *to* the ground?

4 Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Je-h6'-vah.

5 If thieves came *to* thee, if robbers by night (how art thou cut off!), would they not steal *only* till they had *enough?* if grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some glean-  
ing grapes?

6 How *are the things of* E'-sau searched! how are his hidden treasures sought out!

7 All the men of thy confederacy

have brought thee on thy way, even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; *they that eat* thy bread lay a snare under thee: there is *no* understanding in him.

8 Shall I not in that day, saith Je-ho'-vah, destroy the wise men out of E'-dom, and understanding out of the mount of E'-sau?

9 And thy mighty men, O Te'-man, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one may be cut off from the mount of E'-sau by slaughter.

10 For *the violence* done to thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Je-ru'-sa-lem, even thou wast as one of them.

12 But look not thou on the day of thy brother in the day of his disaster, and rejoice not over the children of Ju'-dah in the day of their destruction; neither speak proudly in the day of distress.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thy dealing *shall return upon thine own head.*" (Obad. 1: 15b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Num. 20: 20, 21; Jer. 49: 7-13.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 23. M..... Edom At the Destruction of Jerusalem (Psalm 137)  
 April 24. T..... A Day of Vengeance for Edom (Isa. 34: 5-15)  
 April 25. W..... Edom's Sin to Be Uncovered (Lam. 4; 17-22)  
 April 26. T..... Edom Punished for Sin Against Judah (Eze. 25: 12-14)  
 April 27. F..... The Conqueror Rejoices Over Edom (Isa. 63: 1-6)  
 April 28. S..... Jehovah's Face Against Mount Seir (Eze. 35: 1-15)  
 April 29. S..... Indignation Forever Against Edom (Mal. 1: 1-5)

TIME.—Probably 585 B.C.

PLACE.—Uncertain, somewhere in Judah.

PERSONS.—Obadiah and the Edomites, descendants of Esau.

## Introduction

We know less about Obadiah than any other of the Minor Prophets. He tells us nothing of himself, and there is no mention of a man by that name in any other book that we can connect with him. The time in which he lived is disputed as much as that of any other prophet, and the possibility of setting the date is perhaps more difficult. The whole of his short prophecy is directed against Edom, a land to the south of Judah, and inhabited by the Edomites, Idumeans, who descended from Esau. There was continual enmity between the Edomites and the Jews. When the Jews wished to cross Edom in their march from Egypt, they promised to do no damage and to pay even for water they drank, but Edom refused them the privilege. (Num. 20: 14-21.) Edom was never strong enough to be a real threat to Israel, but they could join other nations, which they did frequently, and were probably present when Jerusalem was captured during the reign of Jehoram. (2 Chron. 21: 16, 17.) The Jews defeated the Edomites a number of times, but were never able to subdue them. (2 Kings 14: 7.)

The prophecy of Obadiah is one of vengeance. The old national enmity

and hatred between Israel and Edom are manifest in nearly every verse. Yet the book has some great spiritual lessons, even for us today. If we look at Edom as the personification of sin, those sins we can hardly control and can never completely subdue without the help of God, we will get some good lessons. (1) We must have an undying hatred for these sins, Israel hated Edom with an undying hatred, and though she could defeat Edom, she could never destroy her. (2) We must never let our spirit of defiance be broken. Obadiah lived and wrote long after the two people became enemies, but his spirit of defiance had not weakened. He was still as ready to destroy Edom as ever. So we must never weaken in our defiance of those sins in our life which are ever ready to destroy us. (3) We have assurance of the final victory over these sins through Jesus Christ. Obadiah was sure of Edom's destruction, though he knew the Jews would never be able alone to accomplish it. He said Jehovah would bring them down from their impregnable heights. (Verse 4.) So Jehovah will give us the victory over these sins we could never conquer alone. (1 Cor. 15: 57.)

## Golden Text Explained

1. The principle stated. Obadiah was not the first to announce the principle that those who injure others will suffer for it. David said, "The nations are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. . . . The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." (Psalm 9: 15, 16.) Again, "He hath made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violence shall come down upon his own pate." (Psalm 7: 15, 16.) And Solomon said, "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him." (Prov. 26: 27.) And coming into the New Testament, we have the same principle taught by our Lord in these words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye

judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measures ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." (Matt. 7: 1, 2.) And Paul says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 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." (Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

2. The principle illustrated. A Canaanitish chief, Adonibezek, found that the principle worked, for he said, when captured by Judah, that seventy kings had lost their thumbs and great toes at his hands, and concluded, "As I have done, so God hath requited me." (Judg. 1: 4-7.) Jacob also learned that his deeds would be visited upon his own head. He lied to his father and brought grief to him when he received the bless-

ing. Then in later life his own sons lied to him about what had become of Joseph and brought sorrow to him. The sons of Jacob sold Joseph into Egyptian slavery, and not many years later they went into the same country where before many generations had passed they were all in bitter bondage. The Egyptians found that their dealings could be returned upon their own heads when they dealt with the Israelites. To keep them from increasing too rapidly the Egyptians decided to kill all the male children. Not many years afterwards they awoke one morning to find the first-born son in every home dead, not even the king's home was excepted. They had dealt sorrow and suffering to others and they reaped the same thing with interest. One of the most classic examples of a man's dealings returning upon his own head is found in Haman. He was a high official in the court of Ahasuerus. He hated the Jews who were brought as captives into that land. He planned to destroy them. He would have succeeded had it not been for the work

of Mordecai and Esther. Haman hated Mordecai because this Jew refused to give him what he thought was due honor. So he had a gallows prepared on which he planned to hang Mordecai. But when Esther revealed Haman's plot to destroy her and her people, and Haman was found in an embarrassing position before her pleading for his life, he was accused by the king of unseemly conduct and hanged on his own gallows. (Esth. 5, 6, 7.) Again, when Darius would honor Daniel above his fellows, their envy was stirred so that they laid their plans to destroy him. They got the king to sign a decree which they knew Daniel could not obey, and secured his conviction and sentence to the lion's den. But the Lord preserved Daniel from death, and these enemies were cast into the den and destroyed. They-dealings returned upon their own heads, and very swiftly. This should teach us not even to entertain the thought of doing evil to others lest we suffer the same evil.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Destruction of Edom Foretold (Obad. 1: 1-4.)

*Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning Edom.* Obadiah received his message in a vision. But the things he saw in that vision he declares to be the word, the message, of God. And he identifies the people to whom the message was sent as the people of Edom. Soon after Jacob returned from Paddanaram, Isaac, his father, died, and Jacob and Esau buried him. (Gen. 35: 29.) Then it is said that the substance of Jacob and Esau was too great for the land to bear, so Esau gathered all his possessions together and moved southward into a section of country called Mount Seir. (Gen. 36: 8.) And that chapter closes with this statement, "This is Esau, the father of the Edomites." So Obadiah's prophecy was directed against the sons of Esau, near relatives of the Jews.

*We have heard tidings from Jehovah.* Again Obadiah affirms that his information is from Jehovah. He is not the only one who has heard

these tidings; others, perhaps other prophets are meant, have had similar information on the subject.

*Arise ye, and let us go up against her in battle.* This is the message Obadiah and others had heard. An ambassador was being sent among the nations to stir them up to declare war on Edom.

*I have made thee small among the nations.* Nations are spoken of as being in the hand of God, who determines their rise and fall, their prosperity and adversity. (Jer. 18: 5-10.) And Nebuchadnezzar learned that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." (Dan. 4: 32.) So Jehovah is here said to have made Edom a small nation. Not only was Edom small, but she was greatly despised. They were deceitful and untrustworthy, hence despised.

*The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee.* From this we learn that Edom was not only deceitful, but they were proud. This added to the reasons why they were despised. No one loves the proud and haughty.

Who *shall bring me down to the ground?* This was the source of pride in the Edomites. They lived in a mountainous country. In the sides of these mountains and in the faces of great chasms these Edomites had dug caves, or rooms, where they lived. There was no way of getting to them except through narrow defiles. A small group of soldiers could defend these approaches from great armies. There are ruins today described by travelers which accommodated as many as 40,000 inhabitants. So, dwelling high up on the face of a mountain whose approach was easily guarded, they felt they were secure, that no army could take their cities.

*I will bring thee down . . . saith Jehovah.* Though they might make their cave on the highest mountain, or like the eagle make their nest among the stars, they could not get beyond the power of Jehovah. This is a lesson for all who are proud today to learn. Pride goes before a fall is still as true as it was in days of old when Jehovah moved the prophet to say it.

## II. Allies Forsake Edom (Obad. 1: 5-9)

*If thieves came to thee.* Here Obadiah draws a contrast between the work of petty thieves, who steal and run, and of robbers, who are more violent, with the terrible end to which Edom was to come. If thieves come they will take a little, leave much; but those who will come upon Edom will take all.

*How art thou cut off!* Was this said in sympathy, or was Obadiah exulting over the loss of his old enemy? If there is any sympathy in this statement, it is the only one in the prophecy which betrays a brotherly feeling. Their rock fastnesses which they thought made them so safe would be like a trap to hold them for complete destruction. The narrow passages which they thought no army could force would make their escape impossible, and their destruction complete.

*How are the things of Esau searched!* Obadiah speaks of that which is to happen as if it were already happening. The houses of Esau, so high on the cliff that Edom-

ites felt secure, are now being searched and plundered. Even the hidden treasures are being brought out and carried away by the enemy.

All (the *men of thy confederacy . . . have deceived thee.* These confederates were Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, people who had been allies in days before. Those who think Obadiah was written at a late date think this refers to Assyria whom the Edomites assisted in the destruction of Jerusalem, and this is a possible explanation.

*They that eat thy bread lay a snare under thee.* In the East the eating of bread together was a sign of undying friendship. So Obadiah tells Edom that their closest friends will turn against them and help their enemies to destroy them.

*There is no understanding in him.* Pride and self-confidence caused Edom not to see what was going on between their friends and enemies; Edom had no understanding. Then when his closest friends turned against him, Edom was so stupefied that he had no understanding.

*Shall I not . . . destroy the wise men out of Edom?* Edom was celebrated for wisdom. They knew the secrets of the desert and of the mountains. They knew how to take care of themselves. They knew how to plan forays upon their neighboring districts to get provisions, which they frequently did with very little trouble or loss of life to them. "But God said he would destroy their wise men; he would take away from their wisdom, and turn their counsels into foolishness. All the wisdom this world has, like all our abilities, is of God. Man is wholly dependent upon God for all his abilities. If man abuses these gifts by using them in sinful ways, God will withdraw his blessings. God destroyed the wisdom of Egypt so that Pharaoh had not any wise counsellors. (Isa. 19: 3, 11, 12.) The wisdom of Judah was taken away in like manner. (Jer. 19: 7.)

*Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed.* Teman was the southern portion of Edom. Whether this is the same Teman mentioned in Job 2: 11 is difficult to say, but perhaps it is. Eliphaz was Job's friend from Teman, and was by far

the wisest of the three. Notice that their wisdom was to be destroyed "to the end that" the Edomites might be slaughtered. They would lose their cunning; they would not use wise tactics in protecting themselves from the enemy. From all that has been said we may gather that Obadiah foresaw that the Edomites would not be wise in their battle strategy, and that an enemy would come in upon them, plunder their house, and slaughter the inhabitants.

### III. Reaping What They Sowed

(Obad. 1: 10-12)

*For the violence done to thy brother Jacob.* This is one of the passages relied upon to date the prophecy of Obadiah. By some this is thought to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, but by others it is thought to have occurred earlier. But at some time when the Jews needed help the Edomites refused to give it. And for this unbrotherly act the Edomites are to be covered with shame. Their sins will return upon their own heads.

*In the day that thou stoodest on the other side.* At some time in the past from Obadiah's time the Jews were being attacked, and the Edomites either stood by in unconcern, or may have actually taken part in the attack. The prophet says, "Even thou wast as one of them." This can hardly be construed to mean that they actually took part in the attack. But their failure to come to the help of their brethren was as criminal on a brother's part as the actual attack was on the part of the enemy.

*Carried away his substance.* This description of the attack upon Jerusalem has been said to be too mild to refer to the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, and so by some is said to refer to an attack made in the days of Jehoram. (Pulpit Commentary.) About the only thing more that could be said is that the city was burned, which Obadiah does not say. The carrying away of the vessels of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25: 13-17) may well be

in the mind of the prophet when he speaks of the enemy carrying away the substance of Israel. However this cannot be relied on to prove the late date, for in 2 Chron. 21: 17 we learn that the Philistines, Arabians, and Ethiopians attacked Jerusalem, and "carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives." It is true that the Edomites are not mentioned here as taking part in the attack, but neither are they anywhere mentioned as taking part in the attack when the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, unless we interpret the statement that they were "as one of them" to mean that they were taking part in the attack.

*And cast lots upon Jerusalem.* This suggests that in the attack under consideration there was more than one nation. Individual soldiers would hardly cast lots for the spoil of a city. But it would be reasonable to suppose that where three nations joined in an attack they would cast lots for the spoils, or divide the spoils by lot. So this seems to favor the early date for the prophecy.

*Look not thou on the day of thy brother.* If verse 11 refers to the attack in the time of Jehoram, verse 12 points forward to the attack by Nebuchadnezzar, and warns Edom not to look with satisfaction upon Israel's calamity. To do so would betray the hatred in their hearts, and their desire that evil should befall the Jews.

*Rejoice not.* A day of destruction is coming upon Judah, but Edom is warned not to be glad when it comes. Do you have enemies whom you would not harm, but would rejoice to see harmed by others? There is little difference between actually harming a person and rejoicing when someone else harms that person.

*Neither speak proudly.* It is natural to express our joy. If Edom rejoiced in the destruction of Jerusalem, they would likely speak to others about it. Obadiah warns them not to speak of that destruction with satisfaction.

### Topics for Discussion

1. We are in God's hands, whether individuals or nations, and he labors

in vain who does not recognize God and give him his proper place.

2. Pride and self-sufficiency may seem for a time to be well founded, but in the end they can lead only to destruction. No man or nation can become so powerful as to oppose God successfully.

3. Edom refused to help God's people in the day of their distress; Edom

rejoiced in the suffering of God's people in the day of their destruction. For this they were solemnly rebuked. When we sin against the Lord's people, we sin against him. We must learn to weep with God's people when they weep, suffer when they suffer.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What do you know about Obadiah?  
Against whom is his prophecy directed?  
Who were the Edomites? Where was their country?  
Why could not either one of these nations destroy the other?  
What is the general tone of Obadiah's prophecy?  
State and discuss three lessons we learn from Obadiah.

#### Golden Text Explained

What does David say about the principle stated in our text?  
What did Solomon say about it?  
What did Jesus teach on this principle?  
What did Paul say about it?  
How did Adonibezek illustrate the principle?  
How was the principle illustrated in Jacob and his sons?  
Tell how Haman illustrated the principle of the text.  
How was it illustrated in the enemies of Daniel?

#### Destruction of Edom Foretold

How did Obadiah gain his information about Edom?  
What were the nations planning with reference to Edom?  
Discuss God's part in the growth and prosperity of nations.  
Of what sinful disposition was Edom guilty?

On what did Edom base their security?  
What do you know of the formation of the country in which they lived? Of their cities?  
What threat did Jehovah make to Edom?

#### Allies Forsake Edom

How does Edom's destruction compare with what thieves and robbers do?  
In what statement may Obadiah show sympathy for Edom?  
What is suggested as proving the undoing of Edom?  
With whom was Edom a confederate?  
What would be the action of these confederates in her day of trouble?  
What denotes that Edom's closest friends would forsake her?  
For what was Edom noted?  
What would God do concerning this wisdom of Edom?  
What wise man do you know of who perhaps came from Edom?

#### Reaping What They Sowed

What violence had Edom done to Jacob? Do you think Edom actually took part in an attack against Judah?  
In the days of what king was Judah attacked in such way that Obadiah might here make reference to it?  
Who led in that attack? What is said of the way they treated Jerusalem?  
What is suggested by casting lots upon Jerusalem?  
What warning did Obadiah give the Edomites?  
How does harming a person compare with rejoicing when another harms him?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson VI—May 6, 1951

## JONAH PREACHES IN NINEVEH

### The Lesson Text

#### Jon. 3: 1-10

1 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto Jo'-nah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nin'-6-v6h, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jo'-nah arose, and went into Nin'-e-veh, according to the word of

Je-ho'-vah, Now Nin'-e-veh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.

4 And Jo'-nah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nin'-e-veh shall be overthrown.

5 And the people of Nin'-e-veh

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'-e-veh, 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'-e-veh 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 ways; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"They repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here."* (Matt. 12: 41b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 12: 38-41.

### Daily Bible Readings

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| April 30. M..... | Jonah Prophesied Concerning Israel (2 Kings 14: 23-27) |
| May 1. T.....    | Jonah Sent to Nineveh (Jon. 1: 1-11)                   |
| May 2. W.....    | Jonah Thrown Overboard (Jon. 1: 11-17)                 |
| May 3. T.....    | Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance (Jon. 2: 1-10)          |
| May 4. F.....    | Jonah Angry and Disappointed (Jon. 4: 1-5)             |
| May 5. S.....    | Jonah Learns His Lesson (Jon. 4: 6-11)                 |
| May 6. S.....    | Jesus Endorses Jonah's Story (Luke 11: 29-32)          |

TIME.—Probably 862 B.C.

PLACE.—Nineveh.

PERSONS.—Jonah and the people of Nineveh.

### Introduction

As with all the other books of prophecy, there is difference of opinion as to when this book of Jonah was written. But the difference here stems from a little different source. If it be allowed that there was a prophet by the name of Jonah, and that he went to Nineveh to preach, it will be difficult to deny that he was swallowed by a fish and cast upon the shore three days later. If some points of the book's history are accepted, it is difficult to explain why other historical statements are not to be accepted. So the critics who refuse to believe the "fish story," refuse to admit there is any historical value to the book at all.

Probably after Elisha's death Jonah came into greater prominence as a prophet of the Lord, and his words were treasured up and remembered. From these considerations we are warranted in setting his date at B.C. 800 or a little earlier, among the first

of the minor prophets, somewhat senior to Amos and Hosea." (Pulpit Commentary.) And it is known that the condition of Nineveh at this time was favorable to such a message as Jonah preached. The Assyrian monarchy had been weakened by revolt, famine, and plague. All historians agree, as well as scientists, that on June 15, 763 B.C. there was a total eclipse of the sun, which to all heathen nations was an omen of evil. If Jonah's visit to Nineveh was at that time, or shortly afterward, he would have had *no trouble in getting* a hearing. Those who deny the historicity of the book give it a late date around 350 B.C., while those who accept its history date it from 750 to 860 B.C. Nineveh was destroyed, never to be rebuilt, in 612 B.C. If the book has any historical value it had to be written before that date, or the events recorded in the book transpired before that.

The purpose of the book is to teach God's care for his creation, whether they be Jew or some other people. The Jews were exclusive, not wishing other people to enjoy the

blessings of God unless they would accept Jewish circumcision. Hence when Jonah was told to preach repentance to Nineveh, he did not wish to do it.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The people of Nineveh repented.

(1) From this clear statement of fact we get a good idea of what is meant by repentance. Jesus says they repented. When we turn back to the record of Jonah, we find him saying, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way." (Jon. 3: 10a.) So we learn that repentance is turning from evil ways. Sorrow for sin is not repentance, for we are told that godly sorrow worketh repentance. (2 Cor. 7: 10.) We should notice, too, that there are two kinds of sorrow. Godly sorrow works a repentance unto salvation, or life. (Acts 11: 18.) But the sorrow of the world works a repentance that issues in death. Judas had such sorrow, regret or remorse, which caused him to repent; but his repentance was not unto salvation, but unto death. (Matt. 27: 3-10.) Next, repentance is not reformation of life; it produces reformation. Hence we have this order: sorrow for sin, turning from sin, and reformation. Repentance is turning from sin. (2) We learn that repentance is a work. Jonah 3: 10 says, "God saw their works, that they turned. . . ." The turning is repentance. Hence repentance is a work. Those who oppose the idea of baptism for the remission of sins, do so because they say baptism is a work, and no work can be essential to salvation. Nobody ever denied that repentance is essential to salvation, and yet repentance is a work. There are two types of works mentioned in the Bible; one is of God and the other is of man. Anything commanded of God is a work of God; that which is commanded of man, all human tradition, is a work of man. Peter says we must work righteousness to be accepted of God. (Acts

10: 35.) Paul says a faith that works by love avails. (Gal. 5: 6.) And James says we are justified by works like Abraham was justified by works when he obeyed God in offering Isaac. (James 2: 20ff.) Hence we must perform those works commanded of God in order to be saved. But the works of man have no power to save, but they have power to condemn. Many people make the mistake of thinking that anything a man does is, in scripture language, a work of man. Repentance is something a man does, but it is not a work of man; it is a work of God.

2. Greater opportunities make greater responsibilities. Jesus preached to the people of his day and they did not repent. He was greater than Jonah. He was a greater preacher than Jonah. So the opportunities of the people were greater than were the opportunities of the Ninevites. The people of Nineveh under inferior circumstances and opportunities did better than the Scribes and Pharisees under superior circumstances and opportunities. Therefore the condemnation of the Pharisees would be greater. We today have fearful responsibilities on account of our great opportunities. The circumstances under which we live in America multiply our responsibilities over that of the people of other lands. America is the richest nation on earth. Is it using its wealth? America is now the intellectual center of the world. Is it using its superior intelligence so as to discharge its responsibilities? The church of our Lord is bigger, richer, and better informed at this time than at any other time in its history. Will it use these blessings, or suffer the curse of unused talents?

### Exposition of the Text

**I. Jonah Sent to Nineveh** (Jon. 3: 1-4)

*Word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time.* How much time

elapsed between the first call and this second call we have no way of knowing. On first thought it seems that Jonah would have gone to



Nineveh as soon as he was thrown out of the fish upon the shore, but from the form of this second call he must not have done so.

*Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city.* This is a word for word repetition of the first call. (Jon. 1: 2.) Hence his actions made necessary a second call. Why was Jonah slow to heed the call? From the latter part of the record we learn that Jonah said, "For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." (Jon. 4: 2.) Jonah knew that if the Ninevites repented, God would forgive them. He apparently wished to see them destroyed. It is difficult to believe that a man can have that sort of feeling toward any nation or race of people. But is that any worse than indifference? God says to the whole world, "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned." But they cannot believe without a preacher, and he has said to us, *Go, preach!* If we neglect to preach, the world will remain in unbelief, and be damned. If we refuse to go and preach, the unbelievers of the world will be lost. We neglect to go preach because we do not care whether the world is saved. We are fine Christian people!

That great city, Nineveh was called great, not only by Jonah, but by the Lord. (Jon. 4: 11.) There were 320,000 persons in the city not old enough to know right from wrong. This leads us to the conclusion that the population of the city must have been about 600,000. There are but few descriptions of the city with any details given by ancient writers, and they contain so many exaggerations that it is needless to repeat them. But they do agree in one point with Jonah, and that is the distance around the city. Jonah says it was a city of three days journey, which is approximately sixty miles in circumference.

*Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.* Jonah was told what to preach. He was not to add to it or take from it. He was not to substitute something of his own wisdom for what God bid him preach. He was not to tell them something he thought would do just as well as

that which God gave him. Something else might have been a lot more pleasant to the people, and Jonah could have been a lot more popular by telling them a few nice rib-tickling jokes. Jonah did not care to repeat his experience with the "great fish," so this time he was ready to go.

*Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey.* This seems to mean that Jonah began his preaching sometime during the first day after entering the outer edge of the city. As all cities, the outer edges of the city were sparsely settled so he probably waited until he was in thickly settled parts of the city before he began to preach.

Yet forty days, *and Nineveh shall be overthrown.* God's mercy can be seen in that he gave them ample time to consider the matter. It would take some time for Jonah to attract the attention of the people. They would need some time to determine whether he was a crank, a fanatic, who wished to attract some attention to himself, or whether he was actually a man of reason and good sense. Having determined that he was of the latter class, they would next look inward to see if they were guilty of such sins as would merit such action on the part of God. The average city would not have to look long to find conditions which would convince them that they were in dire need of reformation. It should not take more than half of the forty days for any city in our nation to find enough wickedness to merit dire punishment, if not total destruction. The form of Jonah's message left no room for doubt about what would happen if the Ninevites did not repent. We are told that a literal translation of the Hebrew is, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown." That simply means that at the end of the fortieth day Nineveh would be a heap of ruins. There was not anything man could do to save Nineveh from that destruction. God was the only one who could save the city. Man's only chance was to throw himself upon the mercy of God in genuine repentance. If in mercy the city could be spared without violating the holiness and righteousness of God, it would

be done; but if not, it would be overthrown. But the fact that God sent a warning at least implied that the city could be saved by repentance. God's warning to us is certainly an indication that he is willing to save all who will turn to him.

## II. Nineveh Believed and Repented

(Jon. 3: 5-10)

*The people of Nineveh* believed God. It is suggested here (1) that the people accepted Jonah as God's messenger. It is not said that they believed Jonah but that they believed God, so they must have recognized Jonah as sent from God. (2) They believed that God had the power necessary to destroy their city. This was a marvellous step for the people to take. They had their national gods in which they placed their trust. We are not told that he worked a miracle; but it is rather implied that he did not, and yet they believed. No wonder Jesus, after working the miracles he did, rebuked the people for not believing him. (3) They believed that God would be merciful, as is evidenced by what they did.

*They proclaimed a fast.* This was the reaction of the people in general. The message had not yet reached the king. This action on their part shows their faith. Faith without works is dead. (James 2: 20.) Their faith was not dead. The sackcloth they put on was made of coarse hair, and was such as would irritate the flesh. If men were not accustomed to it there was considerable suffering connected with it.

*And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh.* This shows that the preaching was having an effect among the people before the news reached the king. Jonah did not go to the king first, a thing which human wisdom of today would likely dictate. He began preaching where he found people, regardless of their station in life.

*Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.* This is the decree published by the king and his nobles. Since the king had all authority in the kingdom, the association of the nobles with him in this matter was a sign of humility on the part of the king. It is said

that he laid aside his royal robes and put on sackcloth. This shows the utmost humility on the part of the king, inspired by sorrow for their sins and fear for their safety. To show further their fear, they forced the dumb animals to join them in their fast. And the fast was not merely partial abstinence, but total abstinence. How long they continued this total fast we do not know.

*Let them turn every one from his evil way.* This is a part of the king's decree. He realized that there was much wickedness in the city, and that for this wickedness they were about to be destroyed. So he decrees that men must turn from their wickedness. The fact that there was so much wickedness in the city testified to his poor government of the people. Is not the wickedness which abounds in our nation a testimony to the poor moral government we have? Our Juvenile problem testifies to the poor moral government of the homes of the nation. Our high rate of divorces for so many trivial causes testifies to the fact that we have poor moral government in the courts of the land.

*Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent?* They had not read many promises of God's mercy and forgiveness as we have. Jonah did not plead with them to turn with the assurance that they would be saved. They decided to throw themselves upon the mercy of a God, in the hope that perhaps he would turn and repent of the destruction he had threatened. How much more deserving were they than men today who spurn an offer of mercy backed by the bleeding Son of God on Calvary! No wonder Jesus said the men of Nineveh will condemn the people who lived in his day, and we could well add those of our day who refuse to accept the message of Christ. Does God repent? Is his repentance caused by sorrow? This is accommodative language. There is no implication here that God did not know what the people of Nineveh would do. There is no doubt that he did know what they would do, and for that reason he compelled Jonah to take the message to them. The change in God's action from destruction to salvation, is similar to the

change in man from sin to righteousness, so that change in God is called repentance.

And *God saw their works*. God saw their turning from their evil way; it was their repentance which God saw. The fasting and sackcloth were only outward signs indicating the change within. God looks at the heart. If they had not been sincere, the fasting and dressing in sackcloth would not have availed anything. And so our works today do not merit

anything from God, and they are worthless unless the heart is sincere. That does not mean that we can refuse to do the good works God has commanded, but it does mean that we must do them from the heart. (Eph. 6: 6.)

And *God repented of the evil*. That is, he refrained from doing what he threatened to do to Nineveh. This was in harmony with God's unchangeable principles to forgive the penitent.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Repentance is deepened by fear and sweetened by hope. The Ninevites feared destruction and they hoped God would be merciful. Their hope was all the more commendable because of their lack of knowledge of God.

2. Jesus endorsed the story of Jonah when he said the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. To deny the truth of Jonah's record is to deny the divinity of Jesus. If he was divine, he knew whether the story is true or false. If the story is false and he spoke of

it as true, he deceived the people. If he did not know whether it was true or false, he was *not* divine as he claimed.

3. Since all are sinners, and sin merits destruction, all are dependent upon the mercy of God for salvation. Salvation is conditioned upon repentance. Since all have sinned, all are bound to repent if they expect to be saved. Have you turned to God? Do you still have your face turned in that direction? Yet a while and you shall be destroyed if you do not turn to God.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson? Repeat the Golden Text. Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Why do the critics refuse to admit the historicity of Jonah? Near the time of what other prophets is Jonah to be placed? What conditions in Assyria helped to make the work of Jonah possible? When was Nineveh destroyed? Was it ever rebuilt? What is the general purpose of the book of Jonah?

#### Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of repentance? Contrast the repentance of Judas with that of the Ninevites. What is the difference between repentance and reformation? Can you prove that repentance is a work we must perform? Can a work to be performed by us be essential to salvation? Contrast the work of God which we must do with the work of *man*. What is the measure of our responsibility? Why were the Ninevites more pleasing to God than the generation in which Jesus lived? In what ways is America and the church obligated to perform great services?

#### Jonah Sent to Nineveh

Did Jonah go to Nineveh as soon as he got out of the fish? Does his refusal to preach make him a worse character than our neglect to preach? What do you know of the extent and population of Nineveh? What choice did Jonah have as to the message he preached? Where did Jonah begin his preaching in Nineveh? What was the message Jonah delivered to Nineveh? What is indicated by Nineveh being given forty days in which to repent?

#### Nineveh Believed and Repented

Whom did the people of Nineveh believe? What is implied in the fact that they believed God? What demonstration of their faith did they make? With what class of people did the movement to repent begin? How inclusive was the king's decree with reference to fasting? What did the king tell the people to do? What does this indicate with reference to his moral government? Are there indications of a lack of moral government among us today? Explain. What hope did the Ninevites entertain as a result of their repentance? Did God know whether the Ninevites

would repent when he sent Jonah?  
 What did God see that pleased him? What  
 is the value of works alone?

What is meant by God repenting?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for  
 Discussion?

Lesson VII—May 13, 1951

MICAH FORETELLS THE KINGDOM

The Lesson Text

Mic. 4: 1-8

1 But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Je-ho'-vah'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* Je-ho'-vah, 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 Zi'-6n shall go forth the law, and the word of Je-ho'-vah from Je-ru'-sa-16m;

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 Je-ho'-vah 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 Je-ho'-vah our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith Je-ho'-vah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted;

7 And I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Je-ho'-vah will reign over them in mount Zi'-on from henceforth even for ever.

8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zi'-on, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Je-ru'-sa-lem.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 2: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 7. M..... David's Throne Established Forever (2 Sam. 7: 8-17)
- May 8. T..... David's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1 Chron. 17: 16-27)
- May 9. W..... David's Throne to David's Son and Lord (Psalm 110)
- May 10. T..... Daniel Foresees the Kingdom (Dan. 2: 36-45)
- May 11. F..... The Kingdom is at Hand (Mark 1: 1-15)
- May 12. S..... Jesus to Have David's Throne (Luke 1: 26-38)
- May 13. S..... Translated Into the Kingdom (Col. 1: 9-25)

TIME.—About 750 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Micah and the people of Judah.

Introduction

The name Micah is a short form of Micaiah, and the original form is Micaihu, and it means, "Who is like Jehovah?" He says he was a Moras-

thite, which means a citizen of Moresheth. This seems to have been a suburb of Gath, for the names are coupled together in Micah 1: 14 as

being one place. Were it not for this we would not know the location of Micah's home, for the place is not mentioned elsewhere, nor identified otherwise. This town was in a rich agricultural section, and on the highway from Egypt to the north and east. Invading armies often plundered the rich section.

The time of Micah's prophecy is not so difficult as others, though we *cannot* be sure how long his prophetic labors lasted. He says he prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Jotham came to the throne in 757 B.C., and Hezekiah died in 697 B.C., making a total of 60 years. It is hardly probable that he began the first year of Jotham's reign and ended his work with the death of Hezekiah, so we may well conclude that his ministry was somewhat less than sixty years.

Micah has nothing to say about idolatry and the terrible immoralities with which Hosea and Amos were so concerned. Micah is the prophet of social righteousness. "He condemns the rich, the nobles, for their inhuman practices which deprive the

small landowner of liberty, security and economic well-being. He flays judges who permit themselves to be bribed by the wealthy, and false prophets who are governed by expediency and self-interest rather than by ethical insight and moral principle. Micah is the prophet of the people, and he denounces the social wrongs from which they suffer." (Calkins.) Business men should study this book to learn how to treat their customers. Employers should study Micah to know how God expects them to deal with the people they employ. Manufacturers should study this book to know how to provide good working conditions for their employees. If the truths taught in this book were accepted in America, there would be no problem between Capital and Labor. Micah also charged that organized religion of his day was on the side of the oppressor (Mic. 3: 11), and that the priests did their work for hire. So it is good for preachers to study this book to learn their relationship to God and the people they serve.

### Golden Text Explained

1. **The kingdom of heaven.** There is much difference of opinion as to what the kingdom of heaven is. The fact that both John and Jesus said it was at hand indicates that it was something different from anything in the world at the time they made the statement. Those who say the kingdom is simply the rule and reign of God over men are obligated to tell us why John and Jesus said it is at *hand* instead of saying it is already here. Certainly there is an element of rule and authority in the kingdom; it cannot exist without that. But the kingdom of heaven is more than the rule of God in the affairs of men. (1) There must be a king. Jesus is crowned both lord, ruler, and Christ. (Acts 2: 36.) (2) There must be subjects, citizens, who are ruled by the king. All who have been born again are subjects of the kingdom. (John 3: 5; Phil. 3: 20.) (3) A kingdom must have laws. The gospel, teaching of Christ, that furnishes us unto all good works is the

law of the kingdom. (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) (4) There must be a central place in the kingdom where the king resides and to which the subjects look for protection and guidance. Paul says our citizenship is in heaven. (Phil. 3: 20.) For this reason it is called the kingdom of heaven; it is not a kingdom of earth.

2. **Is at hand.** In the days of John and Jesus it was said to be at hand, near, about to appear. Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God *is* at hand." (Mark 1: 15.) Those who say the kingdom is yet to come must explain why Jesus made this statement. From this statement it is evident that Jesus thought the time for the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the kingdom had arrived. If he missed the date more than two thousand years, we lose faith in him as the all-wise Son of God. If he intended to establish the kingdom, but his rejection by the Jews made it impossible, and he established the church instead, two

conclusions follow. (1) We lose respect for him for not knowing beforehand of the opposition he would meet, and not having ability to meet it successfully. (2) We must think of the church as an after thought in the mind of God, a thing to last only until something better can be done, not a glorious institution the climax of all God's purposes and plans. Jesus died to purchase the church with his blood. (Acts 20: 28.) Just as long as the death of Jesus has been in the plan of God, that long has the church bought with his blood been in the purpose of God. (2 Pet. 1: 19, 20.) In the establishment of the church over which Jesus is the head, we have the kingdom over which he is king. The church and kingdom have the same head; they have the same law; they are composed of the same subjects or members; they are entered in the same way; and they both have the Lord's supper. (Luke 22: 29,

30; 1 Cor. 11: 20ff.) We conclude, therefore, that they are two terms for the same institution.

3. Repent ye. The Jews thought they were ready for membership in the kingdom on the ground that they were children of Abraham. But both John and Jesus taught that family ties, race, nationality, or social, financial, or political standing have nothing to do with our entering the kingdom. One must repent, turn from sin to God, from trust in such material things to humble submission to the ways of the Lord to be a citizen of the kingdom. Hence citizenship in the kingdom of heaven is conditioned upon turning from worldly mindedness to heavenly mindedness. Worldly mindedness leads to death; heavenly mindedness leads to eternal life. (Rom. 8: 5-8.) So citizens of the kingdom love not the things of this world, but they love, or set their affections on, things above, (1 John 2: 15; Col. 3: 1-3.)

### Exposition of the Text

I. Kingdom in the Latter Days (Mic. 4: 1-5)

*In the latter days it shall come to pass.* The expression "latter days" is used in scripture to refer to the days of the reign of the Messiah. Daniel showed what was to be in the latter days when he gave the interpretation of the king's dream of the image, in which he spoke of the kingdom to be established and never to be destroyed. (Dan. 2: 28ff.) Hosea uses the expression when he speaks of the people under David their king, using the word David for the Son of David, the Messiah. (Hosea 3: 5.) And Isaiah uses it in the exact language of Micah, referring to the same time as our text. (Isa. 2: 1-3.) There has been much discussion as to whether Micah copied Isaiah, or Isaiah copied Micah, or they both copied from a common source, or the Holy Spirit gave them identical messages. It would do no more than satisfy our curiosity if we should learn which is the truth. So long as we have the truth we should not be so concerned about such things. We are told that this expression "latter days" is from a

Hebrew phrase which is literally translated "the end of the days." King James version says "the last days." We will get the idea better if we say, the last dispensation, the last division of time. Beyond these days of Messiah there is not going to be any more time. Time ends with the end of the Messianic reign. Eternity sets in when this kingdom of the Messiah ends, or is delivered up to his Father. (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) The child knows when he eats the last piece of candy in the sack that there is no more candy; so people ought to learn that there are not; going to be any more days after the last days. The dead are to be raised on the last day (John 6: 40; 5: 28, 29); the world is to be judged the last day. (John 12: 48; Matt. 25: 31ff.) So after the resurrection and judgment of the good and evil there will be no more days, for they are on the last day.

*The mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established.* Some say that the word mountain means government, but whether we are to assign each word a figurative meaning is doubtful. We are to try to learn.

what was in the prophet's mind and be content with that. Undoubtedly Micah saw the kingdom of the Messiah established and exalted above everything else. This kingdom was to be established in the latter days. And Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream shows that it was to be established in the days of the fourth world-power, which was the nation of Rome. (Dan. 2: 36ff.) The establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) is the only event during the life of the nation of Rome to which the prophet could possibly refer. Those who believe that the church is not that kingdom to which the prophets pointed should point out some event, some institution that was established during the life of the Roman nation, to which the prophets referred. If the prophets pointed to its establishment during that period, but the Lord was *not* able to fulfill the prophecies, it follows that the prophets uttered false predictions.

*Many nations shall go and say.* This kingdom was to be composed of people of all nations. There were to be no national lines of distinction, no racial barriers. The church is the only institution which had its beginning in the days of the Roman empire in which men of all nations may hold membership.

The *mountain of Jehovah . . . the house of the God of Jacob.* All nations are said to go to this which is called a "mountain" and a "house." The word house means family. But the house of God is the church. (1 Tim. 3: 15.) So the mountain of Jehovah to be established in the top of the mountains is none other than the church which Jesus built. (Matt. 16: 18.)

*He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* Here we learn that it is the peculiar blessing of the mountain of Jehovah and the house of God that all nations can be taught the ways of God, *can be led to walk in God's ways.* The church of Christ is the only institution on earth which had its beginning in the days of the Roman empire in which these blessings are to be enjoyed by people of all nations.

*Out of Zion shall go forth the law.*

Zion is another name for Jerusalem. This is seen in the fact that the parallel phrase says, "and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." The "word of Jehovah" is the law which went forth from Zion, therefore Zion is Jerusalem. This law is none other than the law of the kingdom which the prophet said was to be established. This law is the "law of liberty" (James 1: 25), the "law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 2), which is none other than the gospel which is God's power to save from sin. (Rom. 1: 16.) This is the gospel which Jesus said was to be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24: 46-49.) Undoubtedly Jesus had this text and that in Isa. 2: 1-4 in mind when he opened the minds of the disciples that they might "understand the scriptures," and then told them that these things the prophets had in mind were to start in Jerusalem. There are three points of agreement between the prophecies and fulfillment in the church that must be noticed. (1) The time. Prophets said "latter days" and Peter said Pentecost was in that time. (Acts 2: 16fl.) (2) The place. The prophets said in Jerusalem; Jesus said his gospel was to begin in Jerusalem; the Spirit came and the church began in Jerusalem. (Acts 2.) (3) The people. The prophets said all nations; Jesus said all nations (Luke 24: 47); and Peter on Pentecost said the blessings were offered to every nation under heaven, and all that are afar off.

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares.* Too many people think this means a complete cessation of war between nations immediately following the establishment of the kingdom under consideration. But no one can take the words of this text and prove they mean this. It simply means that as people learn of Jehovah's ways and walk in his paths they become peaceful and peace-loving people. And to the extent they learn of Jehovah they will change from war-like people to peace-loving people. This is true of individuals. Those who walk in the paths of Jehovah are peacemakers, not war mongers. They turn the

other cheek when slapped; they do good unto them that persecute them. This is also true of nations. When an idolatrous nation receives the gospel they immediately give themselves more and more to peaceful pursuits. They cease to live from plunder of neighboring nations and begin to cultivate the soil, tend their herds and flocks, develop business and commerce. This is invariably the influence of the gospel, even in perverted forms, wherever it has gone. This is a sufficient influence to be the fulfillment of the prophecy.

*They shall sit every man under his vine.* Instead of plundering for what he eats, he will tend his vineyard. And the blessings of security and plenty are suggested here. Perhaps this is to be given a spiritual application, teaching that the kingdom would afford every man all the soul desired for its growth and happiness.

*The mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it.* This is the basis of Micah's confidence. Jehovah has said it. What further need have we of proof? What better, firmer, ground of rejoicing could man desire? Nor does God have to say a thing twice for us to have a firm foundation for our hopes.

*All peoples walk every one in the name of his god.* The life and society of nations are determined by the nature and influence of their gods. Let the nations choose the many gods if they wish, but for Micah and the kingdom he foresees "we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God forever and ever." The nature and influence of Jehovah shall determine our life, worship, society, our all.

## II. Jehovah Blesses and Prospers

(Mic. 4: 6-8)

*I will assemble that which is lame.* This is the promise of Jehovah. Prophecies often, usually, have a near and a remote application. These words would give encouragement to a weak and dispersed people, but even then it could not be taken in the literal sense of the words. Here he says he will assemble the *lame*. Did God bring none back to Jerusalem but the lame people? The remote application of this prophecy is ful-

filled in saving men from their sins; people who have been made lame, and blind, and sick through sin. These God will gather into his house and bless them with all their soul desires.

*I will make that which was lame a remnant.* Paul speaks of these Jews which received the gospel of Christ as a remnant of election. (Rom. 11.) Micah probably refers immediately to the remnant of Jews who would return from captivity to Jerusalem—and it was certainly a remnant only that returned. The majority of Jews were so well situated, and so well pleased with their social and financial connections, that they did not care to return to Jerusalem and bear the hardships of rebuilding the city and the temple.

*A strong nation.* Again we must not give this a literal material application, for if we do we will find ourselves making Micah *say* what was never true. Israel was never what the world would call a strong nation, even in the days of David and Solomon; it was never a world power. And certainly restored Israeli was never a strong nation from a material point of view. But for the purpose of blessing the world no nation was ever so strong. Being cured of idolatry, Israel taught the world of the unity of God. Israel kept the fires of hope for the Messiah burning. Israel *gave* the world its Saviour. In a spiritual sense Israel was a strong nation. The remote application of the verse may find its fulfillment in the spiritual strength of the church to bless the world; and surely no institution has ever been so strong to help the sin-sick world as the church Jesus built.

*Jehovah will reign over them in Mount Zion.* There can be little doubt that this refers to the reign of the Messiah over the kingdom he was to establish. It sounds like the words of the angel to Mary, "And the Lord God shall give Unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1: 32, 33.)



## Topics for Discussion

1. Jesus said, "it is written," meaning in the Old Testament, that the gospel was to be preached in his name unto all nations, and that this preaching was to begin in Jerusalem. (1) If the prophecies of Micah 4 and Isaiah 2 are not what Jesus had in mind, what prophecies did he have in mind? (2) This preaching which began in Jerusalem resulted in the establishment and growth of the church. Did God have the church in mind as the result of such preaching when he inspired the prophets to give utterance to such predictions? If not, God is proved to be ignorant

of some things; his omniscience is disproved. If he did have the church in mind as the result of such preaching when the prophet uttered the prediction, the church is a subject of prophecy.

2. The strength of the church to bless the *world* lies in, and is measured by, its ability to reproduce the life of Jesus and the teachings of Jesus before the world. If we depend upon worldly philosophies and methods, we will be as weak as these things are; but if we depend upon the Lord, we will be as strong as he is to bless the world.

## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

### Introduction

What other forms of the name Micah do you know? What is its meaning?  
Where did Micah live? Tell something of its location?  
During the reigns of what kings did Micah prophesy? How long?  
What subjects are found in Micah's prophecies?  
What classes of people will be blessed by a study of Micah? Why?

### Golden Text Explained

What suggests that the kingdom was something new in the world?  
Name and discuss four elements of a kingdom.  
What is the meaning of the expression "at hand"?  
Why would we lose respect for Jesus if the kingdom was not established near his time?  
Discuss the idea of the church being an afterthought in the mind of God.  
What identical elements do we find in the church and in the kingdom? What is your conclusion from these parallels?  
Discuss the repentance as a condition of membership in the kingdom.  
Contrast worldly mindedness with heavenly mindedness.

### Kingdom in the Latter Days

What is the meaning of the "latter days"?  
Can there be a day after the last day?  
A dispensation after the last dispensation?  
What did Micah see in the latter days?

In the days of what world-power was the kingdom to be established?

What is the only institution established in the days of that world-power which could possibly be the kingdom spoken of by the prophets?

Into what institution are all nations invited?

What institution established in those days is called the house of God?

What does the church teach all nations in fulfillment of Micah's prophecy?

From what place was the law to go forth? What is that law?

Discuss the three points of agreement between the prophecies of Micah and Isaiah and the teaching of Jesus in Luke 24: 46-49, and the fulfillment in Acts 2.

What is meant by beating swords into plowshares in individuals? In nations?

What is meant by every man sitting under his own vine?

What assurance do we have of the truth of these prophecies?

What is meant by walking in the name of Jehovah?

### Jehovah Blesses and Prospers

What is meant by assembling the lame?

To what did Micah refer by the word remnant?

Was Israel ever a strong nation in the eyes of the world?

During the reigns of what kings was Israel the strongest?

In what way was Israel strong? In what way is the church strong?

Who is said to reign in Mount Zion? What is meant by this statement?

What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Give special attention to Daily Bible Readings this week.

Lesson VIII—May 20, 1951

**NAHUM FORETELLS THE DOOM OF NINEVEH**

The Lesson Text

Nah. 3: 1-10

1 Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not.

2 The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots,

3 The horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies; they stumble upon their bodies;—

4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

5 Behold, I am against thee, saith Je-ho'-vah. of hosts, and I will uncover thy skirts upon thy face; and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

7 And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nin'-e-veh is laid waste; who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

8 Art thou better than No-a'-mon, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about her; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea?

9 E-thi-o'-pi-a and E'-gypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lu'-bim were thy helpers.

10 Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the head of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them".* (Nah. 3: 18b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Nah. 2: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 14. M..... Nineveh Built by Nimrod (Gen. 10: 6-14)
- May 15. T..... King of Assyria Dwelt at Nineveh (Isa. 37: 33-38)
- May 16. W..... Nineveh's King Captures Israel (2 Kings 17: 1-13)
- May 17. T..... Nineveh's King Defeated at Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32: 9-23)
- May 18. F..... Doom of Assyria Foretold (Isa. 10: 5-19)
- May 19. S..... God's Goodness and Severity (Nahum 1: 1-15)
- May 20. S..... The Utter Ruin of Nineveh (Nahum 3: 11-19)

TIME.—About 660 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Nahum and the Assyrians.

Introduction

There is no agreement as to the exact date of this book. The older authorities put the date around 715 B.C. Some late scholars place the date at 614 B.C. In this case the late writers have a chance to be more nearly correct, for some evidence has come from the excavations of

archaeologists. The destruction of Thebes, called No-amon in our text, is spoken of as being in the past. (Nah. 3: 8.) It is now known that this city was destroyed in 661 or 664 B.C. The destruction of Nineveh is said by Nahum to be imminent at the time of his writing. The destruc-

tion of *that city* occurred in 612 B.C. So sometime between these dates the prophecy of Nahum was written. And it is generally conceded, especially by the critics, that it was written within a few years of the destruction of Nineveh.

Nahum is called an Elkoshite, a citizen of Elkosh. But no one knows where that city was. Some say it was in Assyria, and that Nahum was one of the Jews carried into captivity. Others say Elkosh was a city of Galilee. The tomb of Nahum may be *seen* in either place, being shown by guides who make their living in that way. The whole of Nahum's prophecy has to do with the destruction of Nineveh. That city repented in the days of Jonah and was spared. But their repentance seemed not to have lasted very long, probably two generations, and the cup of their iniquity soon ran over.

Nahum has been accused of using language hardly fit for publication, and the objectionable language is found in our Lesson Text. Space forbids a full discussion of the problem, but it must be remembered that Old Testament language of the time is exceedingly pure when compared

with pagan literature of the *same* period. Next, Nahum was dealing with an ugly situation and pretty words do not get the job done when one has to deal with sin. Assyria had sinned to the extent that God had to destroy her, and the destruction was a savage affair. It could not be pictured with nice parlor language of our time. Again, there is evidence of hatred and vengeance, and a thirst for blood and destruction in Nahum. Assyria destroyed Israel. Jonah refused to preach to Nineveh because that city was the personification of iniquity. Furthermore, Assyria was for a long time a real threat to Judah. (2 Chron. 32.) Jerusalem or Nineveh had to be destroyed. To Nahum, and other prophets, it was a fight between two religions; between the god Asshur and Jehovah; between the forces of evil and those of righteousness. We have a similar situation today. Moscow is the head of communism, which is opposed to everything good and heavenly. Nahum would exult over the destruction of Moscow, not because a lot of people would be killed, but because a death blow had been handed to Communism, the enemy of Christianity.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Nineveh reaps what she sowed. Our text says the people shall be scattered. Nahum had just said that the nobles, the shepherds of the people, slumbered. They had *been* overcome and rendered incapable of taking care of the people, so that they were scattered upon the mountains. How often Assyria had done just that very thing to so many nations! Now she is going to reap what she had been sowing for *more* than two hundred years. "Assyria herself (and herein lies the pathos of the poem) had made Western Asia familiar with their horrors for two centuries. As we learn from the prophets and still more from herself, Assyria was the great Besieger of Men. It is siege, siege, which Amos, Hosea and Isaiah tell their people they shall feel: siege *and* blockade, and *that right round the land!* It is a siege, irresistible and full of cruelty, which Assyria

records as her glory. Miles of sculpture are covered with troops marching upon some Syrian or Median fortress. Scaling ladders and enormous engines are pushed *to the walls* under cover of a shower of arrows. There are assaults and breeches, panic-stricken suppliant defenders. Streets and places are strewn with corpses, men are impaled, women led weeping, children dashed against the stones. Israel had felt these horrors for a hundred years, and it is out of their experience that Nahum weaves his predictions. The Besieger of the world is at last besieged; every cruelty he has inflicted is now turned upon himself." (G. A. Smith.) This principle is as applicable to individuals as to nations. No one can continue in sin and selfishness for a long period of time without suffering the due reward of his deeds. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

## 2. There is none to gather them.

When the nobles were scattered, there were none to be shepherds of the people. So innocent people suffered because the nobles were suffering the due rewards of their deeds. The rulers of Israel and Judah were guilty of the same sin. No set of rulers of a nation can go wrong without bringing suffering upon its people. Our nation is regarded as a Christian nation. Its rulers are good men when compared with the rulers of many other nations. But when we read almost daily of officials being tried for one crime or another we must realize that there is much more crime undetected. Such crime cannot go on forever without the nation being brought to suffer for the sins

of its men in high places. And when they are made to pay for their *crimes*, most likely the people ruled by them will have to suffer with them as did the people of Assyria. This principle works in smaller units of society. When Achan sinned, his family suffered on account of it. (Josh. 6, 7.) When David sinned, his family had to suffer on account of it. When the rulers of a church do wrong, the whole church suffers. Usually the membership is scattered and there is none to gather them for the leaders are in trouble. Sin, whether in the individual, or the family, or the church, or the nation, will cause the people involved to suffer. If there were no other reason for abstaining from sin, this is enough.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Nineveh's Past (Nah. 3: 1-3)

*Woe to the bloody city!* If translated literally this would read *city of bloods*, Nineveh had come to power, and had retained its supremacy over the world, by the shedding of blood. "The cruelty of the Assyrians is attested by the *monuments*, in which we see or read how prisoners were impaled alive, flayed, beheaded, dragged to death with ropes passed through rings in their lips, blinded by the king's own hand, hung up by hands or feet to die of slow torture. Others have their brains beaten out, or their tongues torn out by the roots, while the bleeding heads of the slain are tied around the necks of the living, who are reserved for future torture." (Pulpit Commentary.)

*Full of lies and rapine.* The Assyrians are accused of being covenant breakers. When they were about to invade Judah, Hezekiah offered to pay them a price to leave him alone. The Assyrians asked 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. Hezekiah raised the amount, though he had to take the gold from the doors of the temple. (2 Kings 18: 13-18.) Not satisfied with this, the Assyrians planned an attack, but the Lord interfered and 185,000 Assyrians died in their sleep, and the king returned in shame to Nineveh. Such dealing was common with them. They

offered the people great blessings if they would rebel against their king. (Isa. 36: 16-20.) But if the people had accepted their offer, the best they could have hoped for was a life of slavery. Rapine means "A plundering; spoliation; pillage." (Webster.) Nahum says Nineveh was full of this kind of work.

*The noise of the whip.* In this verse we have a description of the attack of the great Assyrian army upon a city. There was first the noise of the whip as they urged on their horses at full speed. And when hundreds of thousands of horses coming in great waves rush upon another army there is death and destruction coming full speed. We can hear the rattling of the chariot wheels, the prancing of the horses; we can hear the groan of men as they are being overrun, and we hear the noise of frightened and dying horses mixing with the noise of thousands of men as they perish together. This is written to give us some idea of the cruelty of the Assyrian; of the merciless slaughter of men in battle, all to satisfy the lust for power, their greed for gain in money and territory.

*There is no end of the bodies.* This is given to show the cost in human lives of such an attack. Nahum says multitudes were slain; there was a great heap of corpses; and there was no end of the bodies, so that they

stumbled upon them when they walked. But such has ever been the record of great wars. Men are forced to die that some ruler may get what his lusty heart desires.

## II. Nineveh's Shameful End (Nah. 3: 4-7)

Because of *the multitude of the whoredoms of a well-favored harlot*. Nineveh is called a well-favored harlot, guilty of a multitude of whoredoms. This word whoredom is used of those nations which turned from God to worship idols, and some have seen a difficulty here since Assyria had always worshipped idols. That is hardly true since Jonah caused Nineveh to repent and turn to Jehovah at least for a time. However Jezebel is spoken of as guilty of such spiritual whoredom, and she was never a worshipper of Jehovah. (2 Kings 9: 22.) This sin consisted of forcing idolatry upon people who had once worshipped Jehovah.

*Mistress of witchcrafts*. This suggests that Nineveh used witchcraft to gain the people she captured to the worship of her idols. This included all the deceitful practices of which eastern witchcraft and the black arts were capable of using. And the peoples of the east were especially learned in such branches of learning in that day.

*Selleth nations and families*. Through her political intrigues, Assyria had sold whole nations. She did not scruple to sell a nation to an enemy power if she thought she could thereby better her own position. We saw such traffic in nations during the last world war. She sold families into slavery, taking them from their homes and kindred. This suggests that Assyria had no mercy, no human kindness, no consideration for the happiness of people.

*I am against thee, saith Jehovah*. God is against all wrong, regardless of who is guilty. He was against the prophets who did wrong. (Jer. 23: 30-32.) So we would certainly expect God to be against a nation as wicked as was Assyria. It is good to notice that God expected these heathen nations to observe certain rules of morality, so he must have had some laws known to them. He punished them for their idolatry, so

they must have had some way of knowing that they were violating a law of God on the point. God does not punish people for doing a thing they have *no* way of knowing is wrong. So we might well study the question, Why, or on what grounds, could God punish these nations for their sins?

*I will uncover thy skirts upon thy face*. In many countries it was a custom to strip a harlot naked and send her home, or to tie her skirt over her head in the streets. This was to warn *innocent* people of her character and to put her to shame, if she was capable of such, Nahum says Nineveh shall be treated like the harlot that she was among the nations, so that she might be humbled for her sins.

*I will cast abominable filth upon thee*. This may refer to a custom, known to have been practiced in later times, and may have been practiced in the days of Assyria in some form, of placing the criminal in stocks and allowing people who came by to throw mud, rotten vegetables, or any kind of filth they might wish to throw. Certainly it suggests making Nineveh a thing to abominate because of her sins.

And will set *thee as a gazing-stock*. This seems to agree with the above suggestion that people were placed in some public place where they might be seen and abominated by all. Nineveh was to be made a gazing-stock among the nations; God would teach all nations to respect him and his laws by the treatment to which he would subject Nineveh. But, alas! neither men nor nations will be benefited much by the sins and sufferings of others. These are the verses for which Nahum has been criticized. They are said to be too coarse to serve any spiritual ends. The criticism has some point, but to say that they are of no spiritual benefit is to miss the point. Both individuals and nations may benefit from a study of this section as an example of reaping what we sow.

*Who will bemoan her?* Nahum says when God makes Nineveh a shame and disgrace among the nations it will be difficult to find one who will bemoan her. Why? There

was not a nation which had not felt the heel of oppression; there were none that had not had to scrape the bottom of the barrel to get enough money to pay the exorbitant demands of Assyria in taxes. Assyria had been brutal and cruel in her treatment of all the nations, and now when she is humbled, there will be none to weep at her funeral. Individuals may so conduct themselves that when they die there will be few, maybe none, to weep. The cruel and selfish who never serve others but are always mistreating them will have few if any to weep when they pass.

### III. An Example for Nineveh (Nah. 3: 8-10)

*Art thou better than Noamon?* This is a city about which the people of Nineveh knew. The prophet asks if they think they are any better than this city which was destroyed for its sins. If God spared not this city, how think the people of Nineveh that they will be spared for sins as great, or greater. But what city was this? Another prophet said God would "punish Anion of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt." (Jer. 46: 25.) This connects Amon of No, or Noamon, with Egypt. So does Eze. 30: 14-16. Our text brings in Ethiopia and Egypt in this connection to suggest that this city is in that section. We are told that this city was the ancient city of Thebes in Upper Egypt. The god Amon was worshipped in that section; his temple was in that city. The Greeks called the city Diospolis, and made it the head of the worship of Jupiter-Amon, a mixture of Grecian and Egyptian idolatry. It was built on the Nile river, the greater portion on the east side. It was in a particularly rich part of the Nile valley, and had much natural military protection. This is perhaps

the reason Nahum calls the attention of Nineveh to this particular city.

Waters round about *her*. The Nile river branched and circled so that this city was surrounded by water. It was difficult for an army to get to the city to make an attack of the type which armies of that day depended upon to capture a city. The sea, or branches of the Nile which largely covered that section, were as a wall to the city.

*Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength*, Noamon, or Thebes, relied upon the whole of Ethiopia and Egypt. It is said that they numbered some seven millions of people. Egypt had great armies in that day, and there are records dug up by archaeologists showing that her armies foraged as far away as Babylon, bringing in treasures from her victories.

*Put and Lubim were thy helpers*. The word *thy* refers to Noamon, instead of Nineveh, for these countries were the allies of Noamon. Put seems to have been at least a part of what was later called Arabia. Lubim was Lybia, west of Egypt, but how great a section of that country is not known.

*Yet she was carried away*. Regardless of all this infinite power Noamon had, she fell into captivity, and no one knew better than Nineveh, for Noamon fell to the Assyrians in about 664 B.C.

*Her young children were dashed in pieces*. In this last verse Nahum describes the terrible cruelty Assyria heaped upon Noamon. This was to remind Nineveh of her cruelty and to suggest that such would be repaid to her in her destruction. It was common to cast lots for the nobles of a city, and for the rich men. This was done by Assyria. And the great ones they put in chains without mercy. Such was to be done to Nineveh. Her doom came shortly.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Nineveh was a city of blood; made so by its lust for wealth and power, and for its forgetfulness of God. If striving for these things ruined Nineveh, will it not destroy our own nation? Will the love of such things not destroy us as individuals?

2. Nineveh's punishment came swiftly. Sometimes sentence against evil is deferred, and for that reason people continue to live in sin. (Ecc. 8: 11.) Though sin may not be speedily punished, it shall surely be punished unless we repent and ask God's forgiveness.

3. The military strength of Nineveh, and the situation of Noamon among the rivers of Egypt, the greatest resources of civilization in their day, could not avert the judgments of

God; they were powerless defenses against the artillery of heaven, it is foolish for man to hope to get by with sin when no nation or individual of the past has done so.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

What is said about the number of the slain in battle?  
For what purpose was all this carnage?

#### Introduction

What city of Egypt is mentioned in our lesson? What do you know about it? What do you know of Nahum? His home? About how long did Nineveh's repentance under Jonah's preaching last? Is there any justification for the strong language of Nahum in our lesson? What two great forces were represented by Nineveh and Jerusalem? What similar situation do we have in the world today?

#### Golden Text Explained

What had become of the shepherds of the people of Nineveh?  
What do you know of Assyria's treatment of other nations?  
According to what principle was Assyria to suffer punishment?  
Is that principle as true with reference to individuals as with nations?  
Why did innocent people suffer? Who were the guilty ones in Assyria?  
Are there indications of crime among leaders of our nation? What the result?  
Do units of society smaller than the nation suffer when their leaders sin? Illustrate.

#### Nineveh's Past

What did Nahum call Nineveh? Why? Give a sample of the lies of Assyria. What is rapine? Show how Assyria was guilty.  
How did Nahum describe the attack of an Assyrian army?

#### Nineveh's Shameful End

To what did Nahum compare Nineveh? What is the meaning of the term? What devices did Assyria use to win her captives over to her religion? What is said of Assyria's treatment of nations and families? What is God's attitude toward all who sin? Will he punish all without partiality? What punishment of unchaste women did Nahum use to describe Nineveh's punishment? In what way was Nineveh to be made abominable in the sight of other nations? What is the spiritual lessons of this section of harsh language? Why would there be none to bemoan Nineveh's condition?

#### An Example for Nineveh

To what city did Nahum point Nineveh as an example?  
What do you know of this city?  
On what did this city depend for protection?  
Upon what other nations did this city depend for help?  
What is said of the combined strength of these allies?  
When did the city fall? By whom defeated?  
What do you know of the cruelty of the Assyrians in the destruction of this city?  
What lesson did Nahum intend for Nineveh to get from this city?  
What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson IX—May 27, 1951

# HABAKKUK DENOUNCES THE WICKEI

### The Lesson Text

#### Hab. 2: 9-20

9 Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!

10 Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul.

11 For the stone shall cry out of

the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, is it not of Je-ho'-vah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary them-

selves for vanity?

14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Je-ho'-vah, as the waters cover the sea.

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, *to thee* that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look *on* their nakedness!

16 Thou art filled with shame, and not glory; drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Je-ho'-vah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory.

17 For the violence done to Leb'-anon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and

for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.

18 What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he that fashioneth its form trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is *no* breath at all in the midst of it.

20 But Je-ho'-vah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for what his hands have done shall be done unto him."* (Isa. 3: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Hab. 1: 5-11.

### Daily Bible Readings

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| May 21. M..... | Woes Pronounced Upon the Unjust (Jer. 22: 13-19) |
| May 22. T..... | Chaldeans to Be Punished (Isa. 47: 1-11)         |
| May 23. W..... | Woe to Him that Builds with Blood (Nan. 3: 1-7)  |
| May 24. T..... | Woes Pronounced Upon Drunkards (Isa. 28: 1-10)   |
| May 25. F..... | The Curse of Strong Drink (Prov. 23: 29-35)      |
| May 26. S..... | Jehovah Contrasted with Idols (Psalm 135: 1-21)  |
| May 27. S..... | Israel Shamed for Her Idols (Jer. 2: 26-37)      |

TIME.—About 600 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—The prophet and his people.

### Introduction

Critics are divided as to the date of Habakkuk's prophecy, but they do not differ as much with respect to him as they do with others. There is little more than fifty years between the date given by the conservatives and the modernists. Many modern critics try to set a date for these prophets which will allow for their predictions on the ground of keen insight into national movements instead of prophetic visions by the Holy Spirit, or inspiration. The Chaldeans were already on the march when Habakkuk wrote. They did not begin *to* be active until after they joined the Medes and destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. By a marriage between Nebuchadnezzar and the daughter of the king of the Medes a great part of Assyria and all of

Palestine fell into the hands of the Chaldeans. Egypt tried to take Palestine, but was defeated at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Palestine was the buffer state between two great powers, and so was the battleground for centuries.

The burden of Habakkuk's prophecy was that God had raised up the Chaldean to chastize the Jews for their sins. The prophet was troubled that sin was rampant in Judah and God seemed to be doing nothing about it. When the prophet understood that the Chaldeans were being raised *up to* chastize the Jews, *his sou*] revolted again that such a wicked instrument should be used by the holy God to accomplish his purposes. The Chaldeans were worse than the people of Judah, so the prophet could



not understand why they could be used. In Hab. 2: 1-4 we find the prophet sitting in his tower waiting to learn what Jehovah would do to answer his problem. In verses 3 and 4 two answers are given him. First, he is told that the time is appointed in God's plan for the overthrow of all evil. God does not hurry and half do things like men do, but he works surely. Someone has said that God's train is never late; it always runs on schedule, though the schedule is not always what man would make it. Next, it is suggested that evil carries with it the seed of its own destruction. Nations may appear to

be strong, but if they are evil at heart they are rotting within and bringing about their own downfall. If there is any lesson our nation needs today, this is it. We think our atom bombs, battleships, and mighty bombers indicate our strength, and by these we are measured as the strongest nation on earth. But the moral and spiritual strength of a nation are the real indicators of a nation's ability to stand. Habakkuk learned that God is running the universe, punishing the wicked in his own good time and way, rewarding the righteous, and that his duty was to live daily by his faith.

### Golden Text Explained

1. **Woe unto the wicked.** No lesson is more plainly taught in all the Bible than that the wicked shall suffer for their sins. David had trouble with this problem when he saw the righteous man suffering and the wicked about him prospering. (Psalm 37.) He was like Habakkuk; he was too anxious, in too much of a hurry for the laws of retribution to take effect. He thought that if a few wicked individuals prospered materially for a few years God's law of blessing the righteous and punishing the wicked had failed. We are so shortsighted that we cannot understand the rules by which God governs his universe. Solomon seemed to grasp the principle when he said, "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." (Ecc. 8: 12, 13.) He may do evil a hundred times and prolong his days as men count time, but as God measures time and success the wicked shall neither do well nor prolong his days.

Material prosperity has often been mistaken for a sign of God's approval. Job's friends felt sure he had committed some great sin because he had lost all his property and was suffering from a horrible disease. But we have learned that neither material poverty nor wealth is a sign of God's approval or disapproval.

2. **What his hands have done shall be done unto him.** At times this rule has been applied in such way that men may observe its wording. Adonizedek felt that he had been rewarded according to his doings. (Judg. 1: 7.) Haman was hanged on the scaffold which he made for Mordecai. (Est. 6.) But others have committed as great crimes and we see no sign of the application of the rule of suffering for sin. Some have come to doubt the rule because they cannot see its application. The rule does not say that the person who sins shall suffer in this life. Men reap what they sow, but not always in this life. Furthermore, men often suffer for their sins in this life and yet the suffering is inward and not such as can be observed by others.

The fact that sins are not fully punished in this life is an argument for suffering on the part of the wicked in the next life. If there is no suffering for the wicked in the next world, then we do have reason to doubt the truth of the principle, for certainly not all sins are given due punishment in this life. But who can say that a hell of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21: 8) is not sufficient to make up for all the lack of suffering in this life, regardless of how wickedly a man has lived? The same God that says the righteous shall be happy forever says the wicked shall suffer punishment forever. If my faith in the punishment of the wicked is destroyed, I must also lose hope of the happiness of the righteous, seeing

they are promised by the same God in the same terms, and in the same

passage of scripture. (Matt. 25: 41-46.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Woe for Avarice and Violence (Hab. 2: 9-11)

*Woe to him that getteth an evil gain to his house.* This is directed to the king of the Chaldeans. God was using them to punish other wicked nations, including Judah, and their successes were giving them an exalted opinion of themselves. But the prophet looks into the heart to see the real purposes. The king was doing evil that he might establish his family in high places; that he might be rich in power, influence, and money.

*That he may set his nest on high.* This refers to the ambitions of the king. He would do evil in order to accomplish his ambitions. Rulers of nations are doing such today. And we are not free from temptations to do such in our church and social activities. Men often have ambitions to rule the church, and will do things sinful to accomplish their ends. Such actions might well be spoken of as setting their nest on high.

*Thou has devised shame to thy house.* In man's ignorance he thinks material wealth and power are the greatest things in life, and he has unholy ambitions to gain such. He thinks it will bring honor, but Habakkuk says it will really bring shame to his house. In his efforts to gain power and wealth he had cut many nations, destroyed people; instead of his house being enriched by such methods it had been put to shame.

*Has sinned against thy soul.* Instead of bringing him lasting joy and satisfaction his soul had been destroyed. Men often work for what they think are the greatest things in life, and when they gain them they wake up to the fact that they have traded their souls for them. They have sinned against their soul's best and eternal interests while gaining the fleeting pleasures of the flesh. Are you trading your soul for pleasures? For wealth? For social popularity? The most insignificant person can trade his soul for such things as surely as a king can trade his soul for power over many nations.

*The stone shall cry out of the wall.* This is a figurative language; a proverbial expression of the time. Inanimate nature will cry out against things if men refuse to stand for the right. When the Jews asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples for calling him King, he said if they held their peace the stones would cry out. (Luke 19: 40.) So Habakkuk said the stones in the wall would cry, and the beams from the roof would answer, condemning the king for his sinful acts. None in his kingdom could or would condemn the great king, so inanimate nature would speak out against such wickedness.

#### II. Woe for Shedding Blood (Hab. 2: 12-14)

*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood.* Nebuchadnezzar enlarged, fortified, and beautified Babylon. He built great walls about the city. He built great gardens for his wife. State buildings of almost unbelievable dimensions were built during his reign.- But the money to build all these things came from other nations which he was oppressing. The work was done by men who were his slaves. His was a city built by blood, the life-blood of men and nations. Habakkuk saw the injustice of this, and pronounced a curse upon him for such wickedness. If the reader does not see that this lesson is applicable in the lives of men, corporations, and nations today, his time studying this lesson will have been lost. To work men and refuse to pay them justly for their time is to build your city with blood. Hitler had his slaves. Russia is working countless thousands of people today with no more pay than what they eat and wear. She is making a great show of strength, but in God's own time she shall suffer for building with the blood of the weak and helpless.

*Peoples labor for the fire.* When a city is built in this way, the people are only laboring for the fire. What they built will be consumed by destructive fire. The nation that

builds in this manner may be making a great show, but after all it is in reality a vain show; it is vanity. Jeremiah saw such an end for Babylon, saying, "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly overthrown, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the peoples shall labor for vanity, and the nations for the fire; and they shall be weary." (Jer. 51: 58.) And men who build up great fortunes through unjust methods which rob the poor and oppress the laborer usually live to see these fortunes squandered, or consumed by litigation. That which is gathered by sinful methods never serves to bless those who gather it, and rarely ever blesses others.

*The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah.* The heathen gods were measured by their power to protect and bless the people who worshipped them. So when Jehovah destroyed great Babylon his glory would extend to all who knew Babylon's strength. And this may refer to the spread of the knowledge of God's glory in the times of the Messiah, during the Christian dispensation when the gospel went to every creature under heaven. (Col. 1: 23.) But its primary application was to the glory God should get from the destruction of such an evil power as Babylon. He would be honored above the gods of Babylon because they were not able to prevent the destruction of their city by Jehovah.

### III. Woe for Degrading Nations (Hab. 2: 15-17)

*To him that giveth his neighbor drink.* This language can hardly be taken literally. It is said to a nation which mistreated its subjugated peoples like one would do who giveth his neighbor drink. Babylon forced nations to follow courses which brought them to shame, and then Babylon gloated over them. Like a man who offers drink to his neighbor until he is drunk and doing things foolish, and the man laughs at his foolishness.

*That thou mayest look on their nakedness.* Babylon looking shamelessly upon the nations they had subjugated as a man would look upon

the nakedness of one whom he has made drunk.

*Thou art filled with shame, and not glory.* Babylon was glorying over her victories and over the great multitude of people she had subjugated. But Habakkuk said it was cause for being ashamed rather than glorying. Men often glory in that of which they should be ashamed. Paul speaks of some who do that, and says they are enemies of the cross of Christ. (Phil. 3: 19.) This comes about by a failure to recognize the true values in life. Men who are worldly minded and value material things highly may easily fall into the sin of glorying in that of which they should be ashamed. The preacher who boasts that he split a church rather than be fired by the elders glories in that of which he ought to be ashamed.

*And be as one uncircumcised.* The prophet tells Babylon to drink also, or partake in the same shame that she forces upon other nations, and share in the shame like one uncircumcised.

*The cup of Jehovah's right hand.* In this expression the prophet says the retributive vengeance of Jehovah shall overtake such a nation, and the glory of that nation shall be turned into shame, and her joy into mourning. Babylon had given the nations the cup of shame to drink, but now Jehovah shall press the cup of vengeance to Babylon's lips.

*The violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee.* The prophet takes only one work of destruction done by Babylon to serve as an example of what she may expect to come upon her. As she had destroyed and put to shame Lebanon, so she might expect to suffer. This is another illustration of the truth of our Golden Text. Babylon had done violence to both man and beast, and even the land, and the cities. Nothing escaped the fury of her destruction. Now that her day of victories is about over, in the vision of the prophet, she may look to reap what she has sowed in so many nations.

### IV. Woe for Idolatry (Hab. 2: 18-20)

*What profit the graven image?* The prophet begins this woe by asking a question. Could Babylon point to any profit she had received from the

worship of idols? He asks if it was worth the making. Had she benefited enough from it to pay for the work in making it?

The *teacher of lies*. Habakkuk says the image is a teacher, but not of truth; it is a teacher of lies. Of course Habakkuk does not mean to say that the piece of wood carved by man into an idol can teach anything. It was the use made of this idol by the priests under control of Babylon that did the teaching. And it was for this reason that the woe was pronounced upon *Babylon* instead of upon the idol.

He *that fashioneth its form trusteth therein*. This statement is meant to ridicule those who both made and trusted in an idol. The idea that man can make his God is ridiculous. Those who worship money should take a lesson here. Man makes money; he controls money; he can destroy money. Why make a thing your God *when* you can do such things to it? How can men respect a God whom they can handle like that? The man who worships money is as foolish as the man who carves him an image and bows down to it.

*Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake*. Here is the woe pronounced upon Babylon, and upon all

other idolaters. People who treat a piece of wood or stone like they are supposed to treat Jehovah are here placed under the curse of God.

*Shall this teach?* This is a searching question for all idolaters. Can wood or stone teach man the way of life? Is it possible that matter can be the God of spirit? Can matter teach spirit? No wonder idolatry is a degrading religion! When people put themselves lower than sticks and stones, they degrade themselves, and there is none to lift them up.

*There is no breath at all in the midst of it*. This is said to emphasize the lifelessness of an idol. Can a lifeless thing be the God of one that is alive? Can the lifeless give life? Preserve life? Save life eternally?

*Jehovah is in his holy temple*. Habakkuk contrasts idolatry with Jehovah and his people worshipping before him. The temple here is heaven. All the earth is looked upon as his creation prostrated in worship before him. He cannot be made or controlled by man, hence is worthy of the worship of man. He has life and power to give and take life, therefore man worships him that he may live. The silence commanded here by the prophet is an act of reverence on the part of creation.

### Topics for Discussion

1. We should learn from this lesson the folly and sin of unholy ambition. The ambition is a sin. That which is gained through unholy ambition cannot be kept, and it will be a source of trouble as long as it is held. All that is gained through such ambition is temporal and will be destroyed; when it is gone, what have we for our trouble?

2. A woe was pronounced upon Babylon for the moral overthrow of other nations. No greater damage

can be done to one than to destroy his moral standards and principles. The enormity of the sin of seduction is in the destruction of moral standards. Balaam taught Balak that he could destroy Israel by destroying their moral standards.

3. Man's good in life and his final glorification is made possible *by* the fact that Jehovah is in his holy temple, and that he rules in the affairs of men. Be silent before him that we may hear what he has to say to us.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson? Repeat the Golden Text. Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What is said by the author on the problem of setting dates of the prophets? Who were the Chaldeans? When did they become active *in world* affairs?

What gave the Chaldeans power over Palestine?

Between what great powers was Palestine the buffer state?

Why was Habakkuk troubled?

What lessons did Habakkuk learn about God's government of the world?

What is there about a nation which indicates its real strength and weakness?

**Golden Text Explained**

What problem troubled David? What do you know of his solution of it? What was Solomon's solution of that problem?

What mistake did Job's friends make? What lesson have we learned about these matters? Give examples of men suffering the wrongs they did to others. What argument do we have in this lesson for punishment of sin after death?

**Woe for Avarice and Violence**

What sin was Nebuchadnezzar guilty of with reference to his family? How was he setting his nest on high? How many men do that today? What was the king really bringing upon his house? For what was Nebuchadnezzar trading his soul and men today? What is meant by the stones crying out?

**Woe for Shedding Blood**

How was Nebuchadnezzar building his town with blood? How do men, corporations, and nations today build with blood? What is meant by people laboring for fire and vanity?

How was the earth to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah? How can this be made to apply to the Christian dispensation?

**Woe for Degrading Nations**

What is meant by giving his neighbor drink as used in this lesson? With what did Habakkuk say Babylon was filled? What are men today who glory in that of which they ought to be ashamed? What is meant by the cup of Jehovah's right hand? What country was used as an example of those destroyed by Babylon? What lesson did Habakkuk teach Babylon by this use of Lebanon?

**Woe for Idolatry**

What question did Habakkuk ask about the graven image? What did he call the idol? How did he ridicule people for worshipping an idol? Wherein is the sin of idolatry? What effect does it have on people? How did Habakkuk emphasize the lifelessness of an idol? How did Habakkuk contrast idolatry with the pure worship of Jehovah?

**Lesson X—June 3, 1951**

## ZEPHANIAH FORETELLS ISRAEL'S RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

**The Lesson Text****Zeph. 3: 9-80**

9 For then will I turn *to the* peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Je-ho'-vah, to serve him with one consent.

10 From beyond the rivers of E-thi-o'-pi-a my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

11 In that day shalt thou not be put to shame for all thy doings, wherein thou has transgressed against me; for then I will take away out of the midst of thee thy proudly exulting ones, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain.

12 But I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall take refuge in the name of Je-ho'-vah.

13 The remnant of Is'-ra-el shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither

shall a deceitful tongue be found *in* their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

14 Sing, O daughter of Zi'-6n; shout, O Is'-ra-el; be glad and rejoice with, all the heart, O daughter of Je-ru'-sa-lem.

15 Je-ho'-vah hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Is'-ra-el, even Je-ho'-vah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not fear evil any more.

16 In that day it shall be said to Je-ru'-sa-lem, Fear thou not; O Zi'-on, let not thy hands be slack.

17 Je-ho'-vah thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.

18 I will gather them that sorrow

for the solemn assembly, who were of thee; *to whom* the burden upon her was a reproach.

19 Behold, at that time I will deal with all them that afflict thee; and I will save that which is lame, and gather that which was driven away; and I will make them a praise and a

name, whose shame hath been in all the earth.

20 At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you; for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I bring back your captivity before your eyes, saith Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." (Jer. 29: 14b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Zeph. 3: 1-8.

### Daily Bible Readings

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| May 28. M..... | Isaiah Foretells the Return (Isa. 11: 11-16)       |
| May 29. T..... | King Cyrus Named As Deliverer (Isa. 44: 24; 45: 7) |
| May 30. W..... | Jehovah Returned to Zion (Isa. 52: 1-12)           |
| May 31. T..... | Return After Seventy Years (Jer. 29: 1-14)         |
| June 1. F..... | Ezekiel Foretells Return (Eze. 34: 20-31)          |
| June 2. S..... | Joel Comforts the People of Judah (Joel 3: 14-21)  |
| June 3. S..... | Jehovah Will Bless Judah (Zech. 14: 1-21)          |

TIME.—630 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Zephaniah and the people of Judah.

### Introduction

Since Zephaniah says he wrote during the reign of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, there can be little question as to the date. Josiah's reign began in 640 B.C., and he reigned thirty-one years. The only question as to the date is whether Zephaniah prophesied in the early or latter part of Josiah's reign. And it is generally agreed that the prophet did his work before Josiah began the great reformation in 621 B.C. Since the prophet foretells the destruction of Nineveh (Zeph. 2: 13), We can be sure it was written before (112 B.C.

We are given a little more information about this prophet than we have about some others. The meaning of the word Zephaniah is variously explained as, "The Lord hath hid," or "The Lord hath guarded," and "The Lord's Watch-tower." The prophet says that he was a descendant of Hezekiah, who was one of the good kings of Judah. (2 Chron. 31: 20, 21.) There is some doubt that King Hezekiah is the one mentioned, and the King James version has the name Hezekiah, which adds to the uncertainty.

Zephaniah lived in the time of Jeremiah, who has been called the

"Weeping prophet." He, too, was a weeping prophet. His people were in sin. Idolatry was rampant everywhere. The Lord was warning the people through all his prophets of a quick and terrible destruction for their sins. How could the man of God be cheerful when he knew of so much misery and suffering soon to come upon his nation? In this situation we have a lesson for today. "We need a fresh, keen realization, a piercing sense of the sheer and sinister power of sin in human life; its hard resistance, its inexhaustible versatility, its infinite disguises, the way in which it enters into and corrupts everything. The world has been given in these days an awesome exhibition of the power of sin to produce human misery, to destroy all that men hold dear, to evoke the savage instincts in man himself. Nothing is clearer than that all the dreadful calamities that have befallen our race have their origin in the corrupting power of sin, its destructiveness of moral sense, its unlimited reach into the very center of man's moral being. Such is the message of Zephaniah to his time, to our time, and to all time." (Calkins.)

## Golden Text Explained

**1. The severity of God.** Our text suggests the severity of God against sin, in that God allowed his people to be taken into captivity on account of their sins. He says he *caused* them to be carried into captivity. In spite of all God's efforts to save the people from sin, it is said that 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, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed: he gave them all into his hand. . . . And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfill the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years." (2 Chron. 36: 16, 17; 20, 21.) Such sin as the people engaged in cannot be tolerated indefinitely by a moral governor of the universe, so it became necessary, not only for the good of the people, but for the moral reputation of the governor of the world, to administer punishment. Such was the case in the days of Noah. The world had corrupted itself to such an extent that it could not be allowed to continue, so God destroyed the wicked. The severity of God may be seen also in the fact that finally he will destroy forever the wicked. There are those who doubt the destruction of the wicked because they think such is contrary to the nature of God. But the destruction of the world in Noah's day, the punishment of the Jews for their

sins, and the plain statements of God to the effect that the disobedient will suffer eternal destruction (2 Thess. 1: 8-10) should be enough to convince the most skeptical that God is severe in his dealing with sin.

**2. The goodness of God.** God's goodness is equally suggested in our text, in that he promised to bring back his people from the land of the captivity and allow them to live in their own land. He would punish them enough to purify them from their sins. He would chastise them that they might be partakers of his holiness. (Heb. 12: 10.) The captivity did not render all the people sinlessly perfect, but it did cure them of their idolatry. After they returned from captivity they never again worshipped idols. Since the Jews had broken their covenant with Jehovah, he would have been within his rights to have destroyed them; or he might have left them in captivity, never to be gathered back into their own land. There was no obligation on God's part to bring them back into their land. But for the sake of his promise to the patriarchs, and because it is his nature to be good and to do good unto his creatures, he did more for them than they deserved. Hence an illustration of the goodness of God. Paul said, "Behold then the goodness and severity of God." (Rom. 11: 22.) We have countless evidences of his goodness about us every day, and Paul asks us to give our bodies a living sacrifice to God on account of the mercies, or goodness, of God. (Rom. 12: 1.) One who will not respond to the goodness of God so abundantly manifested should not expect to escape a demonstration of the severity of God in dealing with sin and sinners. So those who despise God's *goodness now* will experience his severity in the world to come.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. A Promise of Restoration (Zeph. 3: 9-13)

Then *will I turn to the peoples a pure language.* After God accomplished the work of judgments outlined in the preceding paragraphs, then he would give to the peoples a

pure language. Two things are suggested here. (1) There was a time when all people spoke the same language, but God confounded their tongues because their purposes were evil. (Gen. 11.) Since that time they have spoken different languages.

Zephaniah did not intend to leave the impression that all peoples would again speak the same language, but that as they once spoke the one language so God will give them one speech, one message. (2) This one speech would be pure. Whereas they had defiled their lips with praises to idols, their lips would be purified and their speech would be a language pleasing to Jehovah. According to our text, this pure language is to be given "that they may all call upon the name of, Jehovah." This shows that the "pure language" was not such as Greek or Hebrew, but a pure speech, the speech of praise, prayer, and adoration regardless of the national tongue used.

*To serve him with one consent.* The literal translation is "one shoulder." "The metaphor implies that all will help to carry the same burden, and to accomplish the same work, bearing the gospel throughout the world, and being all of one mind in the service of Jehovah." (Pulpit Commentary.) It is probable that this prophecy has a remote fulfillment in the days of the Messiah.

From *beyond the rivers of Ethiopia*. This is an expression which denoted the farthest known limits of civilization. So the prophet looks even beyond the remotest bounds of the then known world, and says that people shall come to worship Jehovah.

*Shall bring mine offering.* God says his suppliants, those who worship him, shall come out of those remote places bringing offerings to him. That people came from such distances to worship God we know from the fact that the eunuch whom Philip baptized was the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia. (Acts. 8: 26ff.)

*Thou shalt not be put to shame for all thy doings.* This is assurance of forgiveness of their sins so that they would no longer feel ashamed on account of their sins. It implies a restoration to their former place of peace with God, for as long as they were in captivity they were subjected to a feeling of shame for their transgressions.

*Take away thy proudly exulting ones.* This refers to a time when people shall worship God in true humility, when they shall no longer

be haughty in God's holy mountain. This undoubtedly reaches on beyond the temporal restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem, for they were as exclusive as ever right on down to the time of Christ. Their pride and exclusiveness caused them to reject Christ, refuse to believe the apostles, and to try to make the church a Jewish institution into which Gentiles would be allowed to come only after they had received circumcision. (Acts 15: 1ff.)

*I will leave an afflicted and poor people.* This is the prophet's way of describing a people who will be submissive to the Lord. By *afflicted* is suggested a patient people; those who through affliction have developed a willingness to wait on the Lord. By *poor* is suggested those who realize they are unable to save themselves, hence those who are dependent upon the Lord. These are the poor in spirit. (Matt. 5: 3.) Of these the prophet says that they shall take refuge in the name of Jehovah. Jesus said he had not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He came not to those who were whole, but to the sick. So the afflicted and poor of Christ's day flocked to him; they took refuge in Jehovah.

*The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity.* The language of our text is too strong to be taken literally, for certainly Zephaniah did not believe people would be perfectly sinless. Nor can we think his words have a complete fulfillment in the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. The remnant sounds like Paul's term for Jewish Christians. (Rom. 11: 5.) The statement that "they shall feed and lie down" cannot be taken literally in a physical sense either in the return from Babylon, or in the time of Christ. Hence the language of the whole paragraph may well be taken in the same sense in which this phrase is taken, and may well have a remote fulfillment in the spiritual restoration under Christ.

## II. Song of Joy in Prospect (Zeph. 3: 14-17)

*Sing, O daughter of Zion.* At the prospect of such a restoration as has been promised, the prophet



breaks forth in an exhortation to Israel, the daughter of Zion, Jerusalem, to Let her rejoicing be known. The word Israel here is used not of the northern kingdom which had already gone into captivity, but of Jerusalem, or the people of Jerusalem.

*Jehovah hath taken away thy judgments.* The people had been forgiven their transgressions and for that reason they should sing and be glad. God had said he would execute judgments in the midst of the people (Eze. 5: 8), and he had done so for their sins. But they had suffered sufficiently at the time of which Zephaniah spoke, so Jehovah was taking away those judgments.

*Even Jehovah is in the midst of thee.* Jehovah is spoken of as their king. They had no king after they were taken into captivity. Even when they returned from Babylon they were not allowed a king. The Herods were called kings, but they were not in the line of David, and could in no sense be looked upon as being on David's throne. No doubt this verse finds its fulfillment in Jesus as king of his kingdom reigning in the midst of a willing people. And because Jehovah is their king it is said they shall not fear evil any more. With very little adaptation this language can be applied to us today as being the subjects under King Jesus. If it be objected that the term Jehovah is used of the king here, the reader is reminded that Jesus was God in the flesh, and worthy to wear the name Jehovah; and that the second person of the Godhead is called Jehovah many times in the Old Testament.

*Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee.* Adam Clarke says this means, "The self-existent and eternal Being, who is in covenant with you." The two most sacred words of their language were used by the prophet here to describe the One who would dwell in the midst of his people. Surely he wished to convey the idea of the greatest possible blessings to be enjoyed by the people of Jehovah when this prophecy is fulfilled. As a result of his presence with his people they may expect four things. (1) He will save. Taken in its most comprehensive sense, this term includes all the

blessings we receive from God. (2) He will rejoice over thee. They will no longer be outcasts, but something over which the Lord can rejoice. Notice they are that only after the Lord has saved them. (3) He will rest in his love. This is an expression denoting a quiet peaceful love between parties which needs not to be expressed to be appreciated. (4) He will express his joy in singing. There is joy in heaven over the return of God's children. (Luke 15: 7.)

### III. Promise of Exaltation (Zeph. 3: 18-20)

*I will gather them that sorrow.* God promises to gather the people who sorrowed because they were deprived of the privileges of worship. To the faithful Jew his inability to go to the temple for worship was a source of real grief. It made it impossible for him to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. (Psalm 137.) The reproach of Jerusalem in ruins was a burden to the devout Jew which was hard to bear; the thought of it brought tears of sorrow.

*I will deal with all them that afflict thee.* This likely refers first to Babylon which was to be punished for carrying Judah away into captivity. Chapters 50 and 51 of the prophecy of Jeremiah are taken up with the reciting the punishment of Babylon for this sin. And since the language of this section refers to the times of the Messiah, no doubt this verse is to be given the remote application to God's protection of his people under Christ.

*I will make them a praise and a name.* Those who are to have a great name are those who were lame and those who had been driven out. There are two pictures suggested here. First, the picture of weary foot-sore sheep being gathered to safety; those who might have perished by the way if left alone. Next, those driven away presents the picture of a wife who has been driven out by her husband, but who is bringing her back into his love and care. When they are brought back into God's love and fellowship they will have a great name, and will be worthy of praise. Though their shame has been in all the earth because of their separation from Jehovah, he will forgive

them, admit them back into his fellowship, and his presence with them, and acceptance of them, will give them a name to be admired by all.

*At that time I will bring you in.* Since this was written to encourage a people scattered in captivity, we may be sure they understood from it that God had promised to gather them, and by other prophets it was said to be at the end of seventy years. So no doubt it meant at the end of seventy years to the Jews. But the language includes more than can be seen in the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity.

*Among all the peoples of the earth.* As a nation the Jews were never so great a power after their return as they were before their captivity. They were never allowed to be a

free people with their own king. They were never known to all the peoples of the earth as a nation, or as a power among nations. How then could they be known for their name and their praise throughout all the earth? There is but one thing for which the Jews are so widely known, hence this must be that which Zephaniah had in mind. They are known for their contribution to the spiritual betterment of the world. Wherever the Bible goes the Jews are known for their contribution to the morals of the world in the law as given by Moses, for the gift of Christ who, according to the flesh, was a Jew. The Jews will never be forgotten for these contributions. They deserved to be remembered gratefully for these gifts.

### Topics for Discussion

1. God is pictured in our lesson as (1) the covenant God of his people; (2) their rightful King; and (3) their mighty Saviour.

2. God's work for his people is to save them (1) from the guilt and power of sin; (2) from the danger

of ignorance and error; (3) from the temptations of the world; and (4) from the fear of death.

3. God's delight in his people is (1) true and tender; (2) full and deep; (3) perfect and abiding; and (4) expressed and manifested.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Why did God bring the Jews back from captivity?  
How should we respond to the goodness of God today?

#### Introduction

During the reign of what king did Zephaniah write?  
How long did this king reign? What of his character and work?  
Before the fall of what city did Zephaniah write his book?  
What is the meaning of the name of Zephaniah?  
What was the disposition of Jeremiah and Zephaniah? Why?  
What is the heart of the message of Zephaniah for the world today?

**A Promise of Restoration**  
What did God promise to give his people?  
What is meant by giving them a pure language?  
For what purpose was this pure language to be given?  
From how great a territory were his people to be gathered?  
Does this not suggest a greater gathering than bringing the Jews from Babylon?  
What assurance did God give his people of forgiveness of their sins?  
How is the lesson of humility taught?  
What types of people are said to take refuge in Jehovah?  
What is said of the purity of life of the remnant of the people?

#### Golden Text Explained

What two characteristics of God are suggested in our text?  
In what sense did God cause the Jews to go into captivity?  
Why was it necessary for God to punish the people of Israel?  
On what other occasions has the severity of God been manifested?  
What will be the supreme manifestation of the severity of God?  
To what degree does God punish his people? For what purpose?  
From what *certain sin* were the Israelites cured by their captivity?

**Song of Joy In Prospect**  
By what names are the people of God called in this text?  
What is meant by taking away their judgments?  
When did the Jews cease to have a king? Is Jehovah our King today? In the person of whom?  
What two sacred words are used to reveal God's presence? What is their meaning?  
What four *lessons* are suggested by the presence of God with his people?

Promise of Exaltation  
 Why did the people of God sorrow in the strange land?  
 What was God's attitude toward the nations that afflicted Israel?  
 Is there a suggestion of God's protection of his people today?  
 What lessons are suggested in the prom-

ise to make his people a praise and a name?  
 Were the Jews important enough as a nation after their return from captivity to have a great name?  
 For what are the Jews worthy of remembrance?  
 What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson XI—June 10, 1951

**HAGGAI EXHORTS THE PEOPLE**

The Lesson Text

Hag. 1: 1-11

1 In the second year of Da-ri'us the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month; came the word of Jĕ-ho'-vah by Hag'-gai the prophet unto Zĕ-rub'-ba-bel the son of She-al-ti-el, governor of Ju'-dah, and to J6sh'-u-a the son of Je-hoz'-a-dak, the high priest, saying,

2 Thus speaketh Je-ho'-vah of hosts, saying, This people say, It is not the time *for us* to come, the time for Je-ho'-vah's house to be built.

3 Then came the word of Je-ho'-vah by Hag'-gai 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 Je-ho'-vah of hosts: Consider your ways.

6 Ye have sown much, and taring 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 Je-ho'-vah 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 Je-ho'-vah.

9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith Je-ho'-vah 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Now therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways.*" (Hag. 1: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Hag. 2: 10-19.

Daily Bible Readings

June 4. M..... Cyrus Makes Possible the Return (Ezra 1: 1-11)  
 June 5. T..... They Built Their Altar First (Ezra 3: 1-7)  
 June 6. W..... Enemies Cause Work to Cease (Ezra 4: 7-24)  
 June 7. T..... Prophets Urge Renewal of Activities (Ezra 5: 1-17)  
 June 8. P..... Work on the Temple Completed (Ezra 6: 1-15)  
 June 9. S..... A Prophet's Influence on People (Hag. 1: 12-15)  
 June 10. S..... The Latter Glory of the Temple (Hag. 2: 1-9)

TIME.—520 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Haggai and the people.

### Introduction

The Jews were returned to Jerusalem from Babylon in 536 B.C. by Cyrus. They first built their altar so they might worship God. Then they began to lay the foundation of the temple. Their enemies sent an evil report to Cyrus and were able to command enough influence in the court to "weaken the hands of the people," and "to frustrate their purpose." (Ezra 4: 4, 5.) This continued for about fourteen years, until the time of our lesson. Ezra says, "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius, King of Persia." (Ezra 4: 24.) And Haggai begins by saying that his message came to him in the second year of the reign "of Darius. So the date of this prophecy is so well fixed that there can be no uncertainty, and consequently no disagreement, even among the critics about the date of this book.

Of Haggai we know but very little. He is mentioned nowhere except in his book and twice in Ezra 5: 1 and 6: 14. Both times in Ezra he is called "Haggai the prophet." And he usually speaks of himself as the prophet. Some commentators think Haggai was an old man, and that he was among those who had seen

the temple before its destruction and the captivity. This would make him about eighty years of age, so is entirely possible, though we have no proof that he included himself among those who had seen that building- (Hag. 2: 3.) He was the first prophet among the people after their return from captivity. Zechariah was the next, and a fellow-laborer with Haggai for some time.

The critics have said that Haggai's writings is "tame, and destitute of power," and that it is lacking in imagination and "prophetic inspiration." But the style of a prophet, like that of any other writer, is determined somewhat by the subject with which he is dealing. Haggai was a practical prophet. The people had ceased to work on the temple, and were giving all their time and money to building houses for themselves. They had turned from fervent interest in things spiritual to interest in things material. It was Haggai's job to get them back to work on the temple. Only the last four verses of his book are thought to have any Messianic import. Since his subject was commonplace, we may expect his style of writing to be somewhat prosaic.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Man's privilege. So far as we can know man is the only creature on earth that can consider his ways. Animals are endowed with memory and can exercise some judgment, but the power of self-introspection and reflection belongs only to man. Only man can analyze himself and feel happy for doing good and feel remorse of conscience for doing evil. So when the prophet says for us to consider our ways he is recognizing within us a God-given and a God-like quality. And since God has plainly marked out the way we should live, we ought to appreciate this God-given ability of considering our ways, comparing them with that which God requires of us. Furthermore, this privilege makes it possible for us to know at all times whether we are acceptable to God or not.

People who depend upon their feelings for their assurance of pardon and fellowship with God have a very insecure foundation. But when they consider their ways and find them to be in harmony with that which God requires, they have the assurance of God's word that they are right with him.

2. Man's duty. It is not only man's privilege to consider his ways, but it becomes his duty to do so. Paul says, "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate." (2 Cor. 13: 5.) And again, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5: 15, 16.) The world and the

devil have so many things to offer, and our flesh craves so much that is not acceptable to God, that it is necessary for us to give careful consideration to what we do, what we say, and what we think. We may walk as unwise people, we may be reprobates and unfit for the indwelling Christ without being conscious of having departed so far. This is especially true of people whose knowledge of the Lord and the things which please him is rather limited. So it becomes our duty not only to consider our own ways, but to give careful consideration to the Lord's ways. Since *his ways are higher than ours* as much so as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. 55: 8, 9), we need to give a lot of time to learning his ways, and learning to enjoy living by his ways.

3. **Man's safety.** Our safety depends on our considering our ways. First, if we give daily consideration to our ways in the light of God's revealed way for man to live, we will detect the slightest departure and can easily make correction. But if we allow ourselves to go for months without checking to see if our ways are in harmony with God's ways, we may find that we have drifted so far from the right that we will find it difficult to make the change. The

writer of Hebrews warns us "lest haply we drift away" from the right. (Heb. 2: 1.) The most common sin of humanity is drifting from the right. People wish to do right, and they intend to do right, but they give attention to other matters for a time and soon they find that they have drifted from the right course. The world and its affairs, life with its duties and responsibilities concerning material necessities and luxuries, calls for so much of our time that we often fail to give time for consideration of our ways. And soon we find that we have drifted from God. *So our safety depends on considering our ways daily.* Next, our moral and spiritual advancement depends upon giving some time to the consideration of our ways. There are things to put off, and there are things we must put on (Col. 3: 5-14), if we hope to be free from worldliness and grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Since our safety in eternity depends on becoming like him, and we become like him only as we consider our ways, we conclude that it is a most important thing that we give a lot of time to consideration of our ways to see that they are in harmony with God's way revealed in the Scriptures.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. **Reproof for Indifference** (Hag. 1: 1-6)

*In the second year of Darius the king.* There are three kings mentioned in the Bible who wore the name Darius. (1) The king who was a friend to Daniel. (Dan. 9: 1; 11: 1.) This one is known as "the Mede," and came to the throne when he was sixty-two years old. (Dan. 5: 31.) It is difficult to identify him with known Median kings, but according to Smith's Bible Dictionary he was Astyages, the last king of the Medes. (2) Darius Hystaspis was the fourth Persian ruler, counting one usurper of the throne. He came to the throne in 521 B.C. and died in 485 B.C. This is the Darius of our lesson. (3) Darius the Persian of Neh. 12: 22. And here again we cannot be sure of identifying this king. The Pulpit commentary says it is without doubt

Codomannus the adversary of Alexander the Great. But Adam Clarke agrees with Archbishop Usher that it is Darius Nothus; and Smith's Bible Dictionary agrees with this and gives the date of his reign from 424 to 405 B.C.

*In the sixth month.* The Jews could not count time by the year of the reign of their own kings, seeing they were still a subject people, but they could enjoy their own calendar. So according to their sacred calendar the sixth month would be Elul, which answers to parts of our August and September. And Haggai says this was on the first day of the month, which was the time for the regular festival of the new moon. And they had regular and appropriate religious ceremonies for such occasions. (Num. 10: 10.)

*Unto Zerubbabel, governor of Ju-*

*dah.* This man was of the family of David, and would have been king if the Jews had been a free people. He is called Sheshbazzar in Ezra 1: 8 and 5: 14. This was his Persian name. The word Zerubbabel means "born in Babylon," or "shoot of Babylon." The word for governor here is a foreign term and means the ruler of a district. It shows that though the rightful descendant of David in command, he is subject to foreign rule and holds his office by the grace of a foreign king.

*Joshua the high priest.* This man was of the priestly family, the son of Jehozadak whose ancestry is traced back to Aaron in 1 Chron. 6: 3-15. So with legal descendants of both David and Aaron in their places, the Jews were doing their best to keep up their forms of church and state.

*This people say, It is not time.* This is the language of Jehovah to the rulers of the people. It is a complaint which God has against his unfaithful people. They were saying that it was not time for the house to be built. Just what they based their statement on we do not know. But it could have been a calculation of time from the destruction of the old temple in 586 B.C. Seventy years from that date would be 516 B.C. Since Haggai says this was the second year of Darius, or 520 B.C., it lacked four years being time for the temple to be built. They could have had in mind the opposition of the kings who followed Cyrus which had held them up in their work. Or they may have used both these reasons and so made a rather good looking argument.

*Is it time for you yourselves?* The people were using their time and money building fine houses for their own use. The Lord accused them of building "ceiled houses" for their own use, while his house lay in waste. Human nature has not changed since that day. We still can make good arguments why we should have the best of the material blessings of this life while the house and the work of the Lord take second place, or worse. They could say they were too poor to build the house of God, but they had plenty for their own use, even for luxuries. So we say we cannot take

the gospel to all the world for lack of funds, yet we have money to live in fine homes, drive fine automobiles, and take expensive vacations. Like the people of old, we put material things first.

*Ye have sown much, and bring in little.* By a series of five proverbs, Haggai put over the idea that God is not blessing them, and will continue to withhold blessings, because they are not putting him and his work first in their hearts and lives. They sowed, but got little in return because God sent "blasting and mildew" as well as hail to consume the natural produce of the land. (Hag. 2: 17.) They ate and drank, but were not satisfied. This was in keeping with what God said would be a consequence of disobedience. (Lev. 26: 26.) Man does not live by bread alone, so they were not satisfied with material blessings. Men who earn wages and put their money in bags with holes will never get rich. People who live for enjoyment of material things alone are like the man who puts his money in a bag with holes in the bottom. Such happiness serves but for the moment; it is soon gone. When we need something to lean upon, something to comfort and strengthen in times of trouble, our worldly pleasures and material fortunes either have slipped away or they have no power to satisfy our needs. Yes, the man who is giving his time and talents to material things alone is putting his money in a bag with holes in it.

## II. Encouragement to Build (Hag. 1: 7-11)

*Consider your ways.* This admonition is repeated from verse 5. Certainly they needed to give consideration to the ways they were living. God had sent them back to Jerusalem to build his house, but they had allowed the enemy to discourage and stop their work. They had not been persistent; they had not overcome their obstacles. When we allow anything to keep us from doing something the Lord has commanded, it is time for us to consider our ways. We allow the weather, business, pleasure, social and political engagements to keep us from doing what the Lord commands us to do, and excuse our-

selves *on the ground* that such things have to be done. They neglected to build the house of Jehovah, and excused themselves on the ground that they had to have houses in which to live. They simply put themselves first; we allow these material interests to take first place in our lives. It is not wrong to do them, but it is wrong to allow them first place, and to allow the doing of them to keep us from doing what the Lord commands.

*Go up to the mountain, and bring wood.* Haggai could hardly mean Mount Lebanon here as the command was to all the people, and it was such as they could obey at once. There were mountains close by with fine timber. The king's forest was not far from Jerusalem.

*I will take pleasure in it.* Jehovah encouraged them to build his house, and he assured them that he would take pleasure in the house which they should build. It is very likely that some had made the excuse that the Lord would take no pleasure in what they were able to build. They knew they would not be able to build such a house as Solomon built in days gone by, and in their discouraged condition they likely felt that the Lord would not find pleasure in an inferior house. God is pleased with any service which is representative of our ability, but displeased with any service, regardless of how fine it is, if it is not the best we can do. The five talent man was required to do more than the two talent man, and God would have been displeased if the five talent man had brought only two. (Matt. 25.)

*And I will be glorified.* Regardless of how weak and poor they were, God would be glorified in what they did provided they did the best they could. It is an encouraging thing to realize that we can glorify God. The Maker and Preserver of the universe can be glorified by weak, frail, and ignorant man. We should spend *all our days* and all our ability in humble efforts to glorify him who saves us and guards us from evil.

*Ye looked for much.* This refers to their crops and investments. Whatever they looked to for increase came to little, and they were disappointed. And when they had gathered their in-

crease, God said, "I did blow upon it." The margin has *blow it away*. The meaning is that they sowed and got little increase; and what increase they got was wasted in one way or another and did not satisfy their needs. They no doubt accounted for their lack of increase *on the* lack of fertility of soil as compared to that of Babylonia. And they accounted for the wasting away of their increase on natural grounds. They did not wish to acknowledge God as having anything to do with it.

*Because of my house that lieth in waste.* Haggai represents Jehovah as asking why they had reaped little, and why he had blown upon it, and then gives this as the answer, that his house was in waste. He would not bless them in their private undertakings as long as they were unconcerned about the condition of his house.

*For your sake the heavens withhold the dew.* This was in punishment for their lack of concern for the work of the Lord. He would resort to drought to bring them to realize the importance of building his house. The earth would withhold its fruit; it would not yield in the abundance of which it was capable. This shows God's sovereignty over all his creation. He can rule in the natural world in such way as to bring about his purposes in the spiritual world. How much he uses such methods today we have no way of knowing. The Bible is a book to tell us what to do, and not to tell us all about how God operates.

*I called for a drought upon the land.* In this last verse we see how complete is God's control of our affairs in this world. The land, the mountains, the grain, the wine, the oil, men and cattle, and even the labor of their hands were to be controlled so as to bring them into submission to God. As an enemy, man is helpless before God; but as a suppliant, man *is* powerful before God. When man refuses to obey, God controls all nature to work against him; when man obeys God, all nature is called upon to support and contribute to his success. Man's success and happiness come from humble obedience to God.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Self-interest as compared to interest in God and others is one of the greatest sources of sin there is. We must exercise some care and foresight to provide for our own, but what is essential and what is serving our lusts and pleasures is a big problem for the most of us. Much study and prayer are in order.

2. Reasonable excuses are easy to have and offer for our self-interest. The Jews in Haggai's day were quick

to offer excuses which seemed reasonable to them. Their excuses do not appear so reasonable to us, but probably our excuses will not seem reasonable to the next generation.

3. True religion, deep spirituality, is the best defense against hard times for either the individual or the nation. Genuine repentance and sincere prayer will do more to relieve us of worry and fear when the way is dark and difficult.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Who gave the Jews permission to return from captivity? When?  
What was the first thing they did when they reached Jerusalem?  
What did their enemies do? For how long?  
What do you know about Haggai the prophet?  
What do you know of the style of Haggai the prophet?

#### Golden Text Explained

What God-like quality does Haggai call into action in our text?  
How can man know that he is right with God?  
How does Paul teach us the duty of considering our ways?  
Can people be unfit for the Indwelling of Christ and be unconscious of it?  
Why should we give time to comparing our ways with God's ways for us?  
What is the benefit of considering our ways daily; instead of annually?  
What is a most common sin in humanity?  
What keeps us from giving time to considering our ways?  
How does considering our ways contribute to our moral and spiritual advancement?

#### Reproof for Indifference

Name and identify three men who wore the name Darius in the Bible.  
In what month of the year did Haggai give his prophecy?  
Who was governor of Judah? What does the term governor suggest?

Who was the high priest mentioned by Haggai?  
What excuse did the people give for not building the temple?  
What arguments could they have made to sustain their excuse?  
How did the Lord answer their excuses? With what did he accuse them?  
In what ways are we liable to be guilty of the same mistakes they made?  
Discuss the five proverbs Haggai used to teach them their failure in giving attention to material affairs in preference to spiritual.

#### Encouragement to Build

When, in the light of this lesson, is it time for us to consider our ways?  
What was the source of the material they put into the temple?  
With what promise did God encourage the people to build the best they could?  
When is God pleased with our services?  
In what way did God say he would be glorified?  
In what way were the people's expectations not fulfilled?  
What reason did God give for disappointing the people?  
How were the people punished for their failure to build God's house?  
How complete was God's control of the elements to punish the people?  
To what extent do you think God works through nature now to bless or punish people? This is a matter of private opinion, so do not be dogmatic.  
When is man helpless before God? When is he a great power?  
On what do man's success and happiness depend?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?



Lesson XII—June 17, 1951

**ZECHARIAH AND THE HIGH PRIEST**

The Lesson Text

Zech. 3: 1-10

1 And he showed me Josh'-u-a the high priest standing before the angel of Je-ho'-vah, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary.

2 And Je-h6'-vah said unto Satan, Je-ho'-vah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Je-ho'-vah that hath chosen Jeru'-sa-lem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

3 Now Josh'-u-a was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the angel.

4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take the filthy garments from off him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel.

5 And I said, Let them set a clean mitre upon his head. So they set a clean mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the angel of Je-ho'-vah was standing by.

6 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah protested unto J6sh'-u-a, saying,

7 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and halt also keep my courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by.

8 Hear now, O J6sh'-u-a the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men that are a sign: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch.

9 For, behold, the stone that I have set before J6sh'-u-a; upon one stone are seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

10 In that day, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, shall ye invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig-tree.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."* (Zech. 6: 13b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Zech. 1: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 11. M..... All Jews Urged to Leave Babylon (Zech. 2: 1-13)
- June 12. T..... Messiah to Be Priest and King (Zech. 6: 9-15)
- June 13. W..... Jerusalem to Prosper Under Jehovah (Zech. 8: 1-13)
- June 14. T..... Israel Wasted by Evil Shepherds (Zech. 11: 1-17)
- June 15. F..... Jehovah Shall Defend Jerusalem (Zech. 12: 1-9)
- June 16. S..... A Fountain for Sin and Uncleaness (Zech. 13: 1-9)
- June 17. S..... Universal Worship of Jehovah Demanded (Zech. 14: 16-21)

TIME.—520 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Zechariah, Joshua, Angel of Jehovah, and Satan.

Introduction

The time of Zechariah's first prophecy was just two months after that of Haggai. The eighth month of the sacred calendar was Marchesvan, or sometimes called Bui. It corresponds to parts of our October and November. The second portion of his proph-

ecy came to him in the eleventh month which is called Shebat, and corresponds to parts of our January and February. (Zech. 1: 7.) And a third portion of Zechariah's prophecy came to him two years later, the fourth year of King Darius, in

the ninth month which is called Chislew, corresponding to parts of our November and December. (Zech. 7: 1.) There can be little argument over the time of Zechariah's prophecy since he gives such exact dates, even to the day of the month on which he received the word of the Lord. But, as usual, the critics find portions of this book which they think could not have been written at the time indicated by Zechariah. All scholars accept the first eight chapters as being the work of Zechariah, but later critics reject the last six chapters. It started in an effort to account for Matthew saying that Jeremiah predicted the Messiah would be sold for thirty pieces of silver, when the statement is manifestly from Zechariah. (Matt. 27: 9; Zech. 11: 12, 13.) "It cannot be denied that the opposition to the opinion of the unity of the book is of quite modern growth. It was absolutely unknown to antiquity. Neither Jew nor Christian ever disputed the genuineness of these six chapters until some two

hundred years ago. It must be remembered that the sacred canon was fixed soon after Zechariah's death, when the question of authorship could most easily have been settled, and there is no proof whatever that the book was not then such as it has reached our hands, and such as all the versions make it to be. The care exhibited in assigning the other prophetic works to their rightful authors, even in the case of the brief prophecy of Obadiah, would surely not be wanting in the case of this long and important oracle." (Pulpit Commentary.) The fact that critics are divided as to the time and authorship of these last six chapters proves that they are guessing, that they have no solid ground upon which to base their conclusions. Until they discover facts upon which they can agree, facts so weighty and obvious as to compel unanimity among themselves, we may well continue to accept all fourteen chapters as being the work of Zechariah.

### Golden Text Explained

1. A priest upon his throne. The one who was to be a priest upon his throne is identified by Zechariah (1) as the man whose name is the Branch. Front Paul's use of Isa. 11: 1, we learn that Christ is the one called the Branch. (Rom. 15: 12.) See also Jer. 23: 5-7. (2) He says the Branch shall build the temple. This can hardly refer to anyone in Zechariah's day for the temple was then in process of being built, and the Branch was future to that day. So this refers to Christ as the builder of the church, the spiritual temple, in which he was to sit and rule as priest and king. The fact that he was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was both priest and king (Gen. 14: 18), helps to identify the Branch as Christ.

Since Jesus is to be a priest upon his throne, we conclude that his reign is coextensive with his priesthood. He was called of God to be a priest when he had been made perfect through suffering. (Heb. 5: 9, 10.) He appeared before God to do this priestly work when he ascended into heaven. (Heb. 9: 23ff.) He arose

and ascended that he might be Lord, king, and Christ, and head of the church.

Since Christ is to be both priest and king at the same time, and he is priest in heaven (Heb. 9: 24), it follows that he is king in heaven. He cannot be a priest on the earth (Heb. 8: 4), but since he is to be priest and king at the same time, it follows that he cannot be a king on earth. Those who look for Jesus to come again to be crowned king on earth, must show how he can be a priest upon earth in spite of the fact that the writer of Hebrews says he cannot. Furthermore, if he is to be a priest upon his throne, and his throne is not yet established, it follows that he is not yet a priest. This is manifestly false and absurd, so we must conclude that since he is priest now, he is king now, and upon his throne.

Zechariah says he is to be a priest upon his throne. An effort has been made to prove that he is on God's throne now, but that he will sit on his own throne during a reign of a thousand years following his second

coming. If we allow this distinction to be made between his throne and his Father's throne, it still is necessary for these millennial reign advocates to explain why he is a priest upon the Father's throne instead of his own throne. He is priest now, all agree; millennial reign advocates say he is now on his Father's throne; so, according to them, he must be priest upon his Father's throne. But Zechariah says he is to be priest upon his own throne.

He is priest *now*; he *is* priest upon his throne, so his throne must be in heaven where he is now doing his work *as* priest. He *cannot be* priest on earth (Heb. 8: 4); he must be priest on his throne, therefore his throne cannot be on earth.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Jewish Priesthood Restored (Zech. 3: 1-5)

He *showed me Joshua the high priest*. This was the first high priest after their return from captivity, and the rightful heir to that office. He was the son of Jehozadak who was high priest when the people were taken into captivity. (1 Chron. 6: 15.) In this vision of the prophet Joshua the priest stands for the whole priesthood, and maybe for the whole group of people who had returned from captivity.

*Standing before the angel of Jehovah*. The angel of Jehovah is a term used many times in the Old Testament of the second person of the Godhead. In Exodus 3 we read that the angel of Jehovah appeared unto Moses in the burning bush (verse 2), and when Moses asked him his name he told him "I AM THAT I AM." He also identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Verse 16.) Jacob wrestled with the angel and prevailed; he made supplication unto him; he found him at Bethel, but when we turn to his experience at Bethel, we find him called Jehovah. (Gen. 28: 13-17.) But Hosea says this angel was Jehovah the God of hosts, and that Jehovah is his memorial name. (Hos. 12: 2-6.) So this Being before whom Joshua the priest stood was none other than Jehovah. Standing before him suggests that

### 2. Counsel of peace between them.

To whom does the word *them* refer? Some say the Father and the Son in the Godhead. But it seems better to say the word refers to the two offices which are combined in Christ. As priest he has power to prevail with God in our behalf; as king he has all authority to rule over us for God. Exercising his great power in both offices, he is able to reconcile us to God and keep us in union and fellowship with him. We may safely conclude that he could not accomplish this if he were only a priest, or only a king; but being both priest and king he is able to accomplish his purposes in us. Hence we may rejoice that he has both offices in his glorious person.

Joshua was on trial; that he had something for which to answer. And being a representative of the people, he was undoubtedly pictured as standing trial for all the people's sins.

*Satan standing at his right hand*. Satan is the accuser of God's people. He accused Job. (Job 1: 9; 2: 4.) It has been suggested that since Satan was standing on Joshua's right hand, the place of an advocate and helper, we are to conclude that Joshua stood alone with no one to plead his case. Reader, how would you feel if you had to stand before God alone to face him against whom you have sinned, and with Satan standing there to accuse you? This should help us to appreciate Jesus who promises to plead our cause for us. Satan's accusation of Job was false, but he had plenty of ground on which to base truthful accusations of Joshua and his people. The sins for which they were carried into captivity, and the sins of negligence in rebuilding the temple since their return. Joshua could not make an answer worth anything; the best he could do was to look to Jehovah for mercy.

*Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee*. After hearing the accusations of Satan, Jehovah's answer is in these words, a rebuke. Adam Clarke thinks this is what Jude refers to when he said Satan and the archangel disputed over the body of Moses. (Jude 9.) He takes the

body of Moses to mean "the body of laws given by Moses." But Jude says it was Michael the archangel disputing with Satan, and here it is the angel of Jehovah, God himself, with whom Satan is disputing. The thought in this verse is that Jehovah has chosen Jerusalem, the city standing for the people, and he will not abandon his gracious purposes with reference to them though they have been guilty of sin.

A brand plucked from the fire. Israel had been in the fire of punishment. She had suffered sufficiently for God's purposes, and God has plucked her from that fire lest she be completely consumed.

*Joshua was clothed with filthy garments.* Being dressed in filthy garments signifies his sinfulness. This is not intended to present him as a sinner personally, but as a representative of his people. They were unclean before their God, and were being accused of the sins for which they had no answer. Their case was indeed hard.

Take the filthy garments off from him. This is the language of Jehovah. And the removing of the filthy garments signifies forgiveness on the part of Jehovah. This is obviously the meaning, for these gracious words follow: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel." If Joshua made a plea for himself and his people, no mention is made of it. They were guilty of sin, and they preferred not to make any excuses. He stood in humble silence while Satan accused him to Jehovah. There was nothing for him to say. But God reads the heart, and undoubtedly he saw there penitence sincere, and a desire to serve God.

*Let them set a clean mitre upon his head.* These are the words of Zechariah. It is a little strange that the prophet should break in on such a scene as this, so some have claimed that this is no part of the original text. — But Isaiah puts himself into his visions in a similar way (Isa. 6: 5), and John does the same. (Rev. 5: 4.) The mitre was a covering for the head of the high priest. It was made of linen, and upon it was writ-

ten the words, "Holiness to the Lord" (Ex. 28: 36-38), meaning that he was qualified to intercede for the people. And when this mitre was put upon Joshua it signified that he was not only forgiven of his sins, signified by the change of garments, but that he was now made holy and a fit representative of the people belonging to Jehovah. This also suggests that the priests, of which Joshua was head and representative, had been restored to their place in the worship of Jehovah. For seventy years they had not functioned according to all the Law of Moses required of them. They had been separated from the central altar where all offerings were to be made. (Ex. 20: 22-26; Deut. 12: 1-7.) But with new garments and a clean mitre they are accepted and restored to the work to which they had been called.

II. Promise of Greater Blessings (Zech. 3: 6-10)

*If thou wilt walk in my ways.* This is the language of Jehovah to Joshua and through him to all the people, promising great blessings if they will do his will. To walk in the ways of Jehovah is to keep his commandments. "And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days," (1 Kings 3: 14) is a promise made to Solomon, showing that the keeping of God's statutes and his commandments is to walk in God's ways.

*Then thou shalt judge my house.* It was the duty of the priests to teach the people of God their duty. Moses said for people to bring their matters to the priests for judgment, and he said, "And thou shalt do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show thee from that place which Jehovah shall choose; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they shall teach thee: according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left." (Deut. 17: 10, 11.) So Joshua and his assistants are being given the regular

duties of priests when they are told to judge the house of Jehovah.

Shalt also *keep my courts*. It was the duty of priests to guard the temple from abuse of every kind. They were not to allow idolatry. They were to keep the shewbread in its place. The lights of the candlestick were to be trimmed and kept burning. Impurity was not to be allowed. Eli was at fault for allowing such in his sons. (1 Sam. 2: 22ff.) So these priests are being given responsibilities as well as position and honor. God requires that we be willing to accept responsibilities, otherwise we will receive no blessings.

*I will give thee a place of access*. This is access to God. If they would be faithful to Jehovah to walk in his way, judge his people righteously, and keep his courts holy, he would give them a place of access to God. That is, they would always find God accessible; he would not hide from them, nor be far from them when they needed him. The principle is applicable today. We all are priests unto God (Rev. 1: 6), and if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and are cleansed by the Wood of Christ (1 John 1: 7), and through him we have access unto the Father. (Eph. 2: 18.)

*For they are men that are a sign*. Jehovah tells Joshua that he and his fellows who sit with him are a sign. By this he means what we would call a type; they are figures of something to come. Zechariah intends for us to get the idea that God's dealings with them were typical of his dealings with us in the gospel age. They (1) had been forgiven; (2) they had been qualified for service; and (3) they had been given responsibilities provided they would walk in the ways of the Lord. This was a type of his dealings with us.

### Topics for Discussion

1. As Satan stood by Joshua to accuse him, so he stands as the accuser of all men of all time. None of *us* escape his notice. *None of us* are able to resist him alone. If the Lord does not help us, we will be lost.

2. Joshua as the representative of

*I will bring forth my servant the Branch*. Joshua himself as high priest is used here as a type of the Branch, which is Jesus Christ, our high priest. The Branch is mentioned in Isaiah a number of times. In Isa. 4: 2-6 we have a beautiful passage concerning him and his work among the nations of the earth. In Isa. 11: 1-5 is another passage concerning the Branch which tells us he shall come from the stock of Jesse, who was the father of David, therefore he is to be a son of David. Paul quotes from this passage (Rom. 15: 12), and applies it to Jesus Christ. So we are not left to wonder whom Isaiah has in mind by the term Branch. Jeremiah uses the term at least twice when it cannot refer to any one except Jesus Christ. (Jer. 23: 5; 33: 15.) In the last reference he is said to be out of David, which links him with the Branch of Isa. 11: 1 whom Paul identifies as Christ. Hence Jeremiah and Isaiah must have had the same person in mind. To say they are different is to affirm that two such persons would spring from David, and doing such work as to be rivals.

*The stone that I have set before Joshua*. It is difficult to identify this stone, or what it represents. Clarke says it represents Christ. Another says it is the kingdom, and cites Daniel as picturing the kingdom as a little stone cut out of the mountain. (Dan. 2: 45.) The seven eyes on that stone tells us of the infinite watch-care Jehovah places upon his kingdom.

*I will remove the iniquity*. This likely applies first to Israel, but it surely has a remote application to God's acceptance of people from all the world. People shall invite others regardless of race or nationality to share with them the wonderful blessings of the Branch, as suggested by the reference to the vine and fig tree.

his people had no answer to the accusations of Satan. The people had sinned, and it was useless, even wicked, to *deny they* had sinned. Their only hope lay in the pardoning mercy of Jehovah. So does our hope rest there.

3. Zechariah suggests some of the

world's wants and God's provision for them. (1) The world wants a moral helper; God provides his servant the Branch with his gospel. (2) The world wants divine guardianship; God provides the stone with its

seven eyes—the kingdom with its infinite providential care and protection from evil of all kinds. (3) The world wants moral purification; God provides forgiveness and sanctification through the gospel.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What months of the Jewish calendar are mentioned? To what months in our calendar do they correspond?  
Can you show that Zechariah and Haggai were contemporary prophets?  
What portion of Zechariah is questioned as being written by another man?  
What reasons can you give for accepting all the book as the writing of Zechariah?

**Golden Text Explained**

In what two ways does Zechariah identify the man called the Branch?  
What is the temple to be built by the man called the Branch?  
When was Jesus made our high priest? When was he made king?  
Can you prove that Jesus is to be king in heaven? That he cannot be king on earth?  
Since Jesus is to be a priest on his own throne, can you prove that his throne is also God's throne?  
Can you prove that Christ's throne is now in heaven? That it cannot be on earth?  
Where is the counsel of peace to be found? Why should we rejoice that Jesus is both priest and king?

**Jewish Priesthood Restored**

Who was the high priest in Zechariah's time?  
Who was the angel of Jehovah? What is suggested by Joshua standing before him?  
What is implied in the fact that Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua?  
Why was Satan standing there? What ground did he have to accuse Joshua?

Do you think Jude refers to this incident when he speaks of a dispute about Moses?  
What was Jehovah's attitude toward Satan? Toward Joshua?  
What is suggested by Joshua being clothed in filthy garments before Jehovah?  
What implied the forgiveness of Joshua and his people?  
Why did Joshua not make a defense for himself?  
What suggestion did Zechariah make concerning Joshua?  
What was the mitre? What was signified by placing it on Joshua's head?  
How long had the priesthood been unable to function according to the law?

**Promise of Greater Blessings**

What is meant by walking in the ways of Jehovah?  
What special duties did the law lay upon the priests?  
What is meant by keeping the court of Jehovah?  
What is meant by giving them a place of access to God?  
Are we priests today? How do we have our access to God?  
What did the prophet mean when he said Joshua and his men were a sign?  
In what three ways were they types of God's dealings with us?  
Of whom was Joshua the high priest a type?  
Can you show that the Bible refers to Jesus Christ as the Branch?  
What was the stone? and what the eyes on it? How many eyes on it?  
What did God promise with reference to their iniquity?  
What invitation were people to give? To whom?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson XIII—June 24, 1951**

**MALACHI FORETELLS MESSIAH'S MESSENGER**

**The Lesson Text**

**Mal. 3: 1-6; 4: 5, 6**

1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

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

3 And he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Le'-vi, and refine them

as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Je-ho'-vah offerings in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Ju'-dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem be pleasant unto Je-ho'-vah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his

right, and fear not me, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

6 For I, Je-ho'-vah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

5 Behold, I will send you E-li'-jah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Je-ho'-vah come,

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God." (Luke 1: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 17: 8-13.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- June 18. M..... Jehovah Displeased with His People (Mal. 1: 6-14)
- June 19. T..... Priests of Jehovah Unfaithful (Mal. 2: 1-9)
- June 20. W..... Israel's Divorce and Remarriage Problem (Mal. 2: 10-16)
- June 21. T..... Israel Rebuked for Robbing God (Mal. 3: 7-12)
- June 22. F..... Respect for Them That Fear Jehovah (Mal. 3: 13-18)
- June 23. S..... Wicked to Be Destroyed As Stubble (Mal. 4: 1-3)
- June 24. S..... The Coming of Elijah (Mal. 4: 4-6)

TIME.—About 420 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, his prophet, and his people.

**Introduction**

Nothing is known about Malachi but that which may be gleaned from his book. In fact many even doubt that there was a man by that name, since the word simply means "My Messenger." But since all Bible names have such meanings this is no proof that Malachi was not a person. "Malachi, therefore, is certainly a real person; and though there is no description of him in his book, neither his parentage nor his birthplace being mentioned, yet the same omission occurs in the case of Obadiah and Habakkuk, of whose personality no doubt has ever arisen. That the histories of Ezra and Nehemiah contain no notice of him or his prophetic work is easily accounted for by the fact that he exercised his ministry on or just before Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem, of which we have only the barest and most summary account." (Pulpit Commentary.)

As Haggai and Zechariah assisted Zerubbabel the governor, so Malachi

was the spiritual counselor and assistant of Nehemiah and probably a minor Persian governor during the absence of Nehemiah from Jerusalem. Religion was at a low ebb in the time of Malachi. The people expected a glorious period following the completion of the temple, and when it did *not* come in the form they expected, they lost interest in religion. "The priests were slovenly in the sacrifices they offered. The people neglected their temple dues. Immorality became rampant. Life in Jerusalem became sordid and corrupt. Conditions presented the aspect of mud flats at low tide." (Calkins.)

Proof that Malachi lived *at* the same time, and dealt with the same problems, as Nehemiah is seen in the following comparisons: (1) Both denounce the sin of marrying alien wives. (Mal. 2: 11; Neh. 13: 23.) (2) Both speak of failure in tithes. (Mal. 3: 8; Neh. 13: 10.) (3) Neglect

and dishonor of the temple. (Mal. demand respect for the law of Moses. 1: 12, 13; Neh. 13: 4, 5, 11.) (4) Both (Mal. 4; 4; Neh. 8.)

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Conditions which made his work necessary.** The language of our text is used of John the Baptist. He was the forerunner of Jesus. So far as we know he was the first inspired man since the days of Malachi, about four hundred years. (1) The scribes and chief priests had worked out a system of traditions which they honored above the law of Moses. (Matt. 15.) Some of their traditions contradicted the law, relieving people of self-denial and sacrifice demanded by the law. In other ways the traditions were a greater burden than the law, dealing with the minutest details of life, such as the washing of hands and cups, and beds. (2) Religion had degenerated into formality; they were careful to maintain correct forms, but neglected the spirit and power of religion. They tithed strictly such worthless things as mint and rue, but they passed over such important matters as justice to their fellowman and love to God. (Luke 11: 42.) They kept up the form of daily sacrifices and the annual feasts, but they oppressed the poor and took property from the widows. Jesus accused them of whitewashing the outside of a tomb when it was filled with corruption. (Matt. 23: 27.) (3) God had rejected his people on account of their sins and their refusal to regard his covenant with them (Heb. 8: 7-9), and determined to make a new covenant. Preparation for the making of this covenant and the establishment of the kingdom had to be made. These things made necessary the coming and the work of such a man as John.

**2. Turning: people to the Lord is a great work.** The angel who announced the birth of John the Baptist said he would be great in the sight of the Lord. (Luke 1: 15.) "He who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (James 5: 20.) John was to save many from death, so cover a great multitude of sins, by turning many people to the Lord that they might be saved. "They that

are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." (Dan. 12: 3.) John was to turn many from sin to righteousness, therefore to be listed among the wise and great of the earth, and his name will shine as the stars forever and ever. We see him as he began preaching in the wilderness, calling people to repentance. The conditions we noticed above were such in their nature and so widespread among the people that repentance had to be John's main topic for sermons. "And there went out unto him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the the river Jordan, confessing their sins." (Mark 1: 5.) He was a great man from many points of view. (1) He was great in his character; (2) great in his connection with Jesus as his forerunner; (3) great in the number of people he prepared for the Lord; and (4) great in that he gave his life for telling the king the truth,

**3. Living for the good of others.** The greatest life ever lived was that life which did most to bless others. Living to turn others to the Lord is the highest type of life that one can live. Some men live that they may accumulate great fortunes. But if all the great fortunes for which men have lived their lives were added together, the value would not compare with the value of the life of John the Baptist. Men have spent their lives studying, trying to become wise. But if all the human wisdom of the world could be put into one brain, it would not equal the wisdom of one who lives to "turn many to righteousness." Parents have been known to discourage their sons in their desire to become preachers of the gospel, and have turned their interest into medicine, law, business, and other lines. These are honorable lines of activity, but boys who can preach, and who desire to preach, should be given every encouragement.



### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Messenger to Prepare the Way (Mal. 3: 1-6)

*I send my messenger.* From the preceding chapter (Mal. 2: 17) we learn that the speaker is Jehovah, so it is Jehovah who sends the messenger. But he says that the messenger will "prepare the way before me." Jehovah's messenger will prepare the way before Jehovah. So here is another place where Jesus Christ is referred to as Jehovah. Who was the messenger who was to be sent? When talking about John the Baptist, Jesus said, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." (Matt. 11: 10.) So without doubt John the Baptist is the messenger who was sent before the face of Jehovah to make ready for him. The preparation is described by Isaiah in the following words: "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. 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; and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." (Isa. 40: 3-5.) Here again it is said that he was to prepare the way of Jehovah, who was Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit speaking through John's father, said of his work, "Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins. ... To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1: 76-77, 79.) Matthew also tells us that John was the one Isaiah had in mind when he spoke of one to go before the Lord to prepare his way. (Matt. 3: 1-5.)

*The Lord will suddenly come to his temple.* Here again the word for Lord is one that is never used of any but Jehovah. The temple is spoken of as belonging to that Lord

who was to come suddenly, hence Jesus Christ was Lord of the temple. And when did he come to his temple? His first appearance there was when his mother presented him before the Lord according to the law. (Luke 2: 22.) The reference to his sudden coming as a refiner's fire may have been fulfilled when he cleansed the temple. (John 2: 13-22.)

*The messenger of the covenant.* Notice the parallel between these statements: "The Lord whom ye seek," and "The messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire." In the first part of the verse the word messenger referred to John, but here is used of Jesus Christ. He is the messenger, or angel, of the covenant. He was also called the "angel of his presence." (Isa. 63: 9, see Ex. 33: 14.) In Exodus 23: 20, 21 he is called the angel in whom is the name of Jehovah and who has the power to forgive sins. Malachi says this messenger of the covenant is coming, and uses this as a means of correcting the lives of his people.

*Who can abide the day of his coming?* These Jews had been desiring the coming of the day of the Lord, thinking it would be a day of punishment to the heathen nations, and a day of great victory for themselves. But Malachi tells them they are unprepared for the coming of the Lord, and that none of them could abide, or stand, if he should come.

He is like *refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.* These are terms used to describe the nature of the work to be done by the Lord when he comes. Refiner's fire was symbolic of judgment; the ore is put through the fire to take away the dross and leave the pure metal. A fuller was a launderer, and soap was a cleansing agent. So the Lord was to come to do a work of cleansing and purifying.

He will *purify the sons of Levi.* The tribe of Levi was the tribe from which the priests were taken. Certainly Jesus Christ would not show partiality in cleansing the Levites and refusing to cleanse Jews of other tribes. And we know that he made no distinction between tribes in his work. But since all of the people of

God in the new covenant are to be priests this expression is used. And, too, the priests were the teachers and leaders of the people. "Like people, like priests." (Hos. 4: 9.) And if the teachers of the people are purified, the people will become pure through their teaching and influence. The Lord is pictured as sitting before the refiner's fire watching each piece of ore, and giving each one that degree of trial necessary to make it what he wishes it to be.

*Offer Jehovah's offerings* in righteousness. Though such words are used here as are in harmony with the law of Moses, priests making their offerings, they are not to be taken in this literal sense, for they are used with reference to worship offered to Jesus Christ under the new covenant. When the refiner has done his work of purifying, the offerings will be righteous offerings, and they will be offered in the proper spirit. And they will be pleasant to Jehovah as in the old days, as in the days before they had fallen so far in sin that they were carried into captivity. This is a reference to the days of their glory, the days of David and Solomon.

*I will come near to you* in judgment. They had asked, "Where is the God of justice?" (Mal. 2: 17.) They had desired his coming, thinking that Jehovah would deal with the heathen and justify them because they belonged to Abraham. But now Jehovah says he will come near to them in judgment.

I will be a swift witness against *the sorcerers*. The word *swift* suggests going directly and surely to the point; there will be no evading the issue, no covering up for the sake of appearance; and there will be no respect of persons. The Jews had learned the magical arts from the East. The law forbade the practice of such. (Deut. 18: 10, 11.) And during the captivity, no doubt, they had renewed their acquaintance with such sinful arts. Simon used such magic to impress the people in the early days of the church. (Acts 8: 11.)

*Against the adulterers*. This had its weight in the days of Malachi with reference to those who had

put away their wives in order that they might take younger heathen wives. (Mal. 2: 10-16.) Malachi said they had covered the Lord's altar with the tears of forsaken wives who had gone there to lament and to pray for justice. He said they had dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth, and covered their garments with violence. If God hated "putting away," divorce, in that day when the law was rather lax, how much more now when the requirements have been restored to their original pattern? (Matt. 19: 4-9.) If the Lord is to be a swift witness against adulterers, how can people today expect to evade his judgment for divorcing and remarrying as they are doing? Churches are careless about this sin, allowing adulterers to live in the church without reproof.

*Against false swearers, and those that oppress the hireling*. The Lord is a swift witness against all forms of evil. Those who swear falsely will suffer. Those who keep back wages of the hireling will have to answer to the Lord of Sabaoth. (James 5: 4.) Those who oppress the widow and the orphan will have to deal with the Lord who is their friend. (Ex. 22: 22-24.)

*For I, Jehovah, change not*. God is not a man that he should change. (Num. 23; 19.) With him there can be no variation, no change. (James 1: 17.) He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb. 13: 8.) The immutability of God is the source of comfort to the godly, but a reason for the wicked to tremble. Malachi says God's immutability was the reason that the people of his day were not consumed. God was merciful, and his mercy extended over a long period of time. Had' God been changeable he would have ceased being merciful to consume them.

II. *Elijah the Prophet to Come* (Mal. 4: 5, 6)

*Behold, I will send you, Elijah*. Some standard commentators take the position that the messenger of Mal. 3: 1 refers to John the Baptist, and that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare for the Lord's first coming. But they say this text, Mal. 4: 5, refers to the second coming of Jesus, and that the

Elijah here must refer to the prophet, the Tishbite himself. (Pulpit Commentary and Pusey's Commentary.) It is true that many old commentators such as Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, Cyril, and Gregory the Great all held the same opinion. (See Pusey on Minor Prophets.) But our Lord's statement on the subject seems conclusive. "And they asked him, saying, *How is it that the scribes say that Elijah must first come? And he said unto them, Elijah indeed cometh first, and restoreth all things. . . . But I say unto you, that Elijah is come, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they would, even as it is written of him.*" (Mark 9: 11-13.) And when the angel told John's father of his coming, he used the very words of our text to describe the work he should do. "And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him." (Luke 1: 17.)

*Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come.* It is not wise to

be dogmatic where great scholars differ as to the time some of these *expressions* refer to, but since those on hand are about equally divided as to whether this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem or the final judgment day, we prefer the destruction of Jerusalem. Those who think it refers to the final judgment generally hold to the opinion that Elijah himself is to return shortly before that time to convert the Jews, which is obviously unscriptural. Malachi was simply saying Jehovah would send Elijah, which was John in the spirit and power of the great prophet, to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, and that it would be before the terrible destruction of the Jewish nation.

He shall *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.* He shall bring fathers and children to one mind, and that the mind of the Lord. See Luke 1: 16. This was to be done lest *I smite the earth with a curse*, which means the destruction of the Jewish people. They rejected the Lord, as a nation, and were destroyed never to be dealt with as a nation again.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Great preparation is in order when great things are to be accomplished. So a great man, John the Baptist, was sent to prepare the way of the greatest undertaking this world knows anything about, the establishment of the kingdom of heaven.

2. Our Lord uses the refiner's fire of chastisement to purify us. If we resist its purifying force, there is

nothing left for us except the consuming fire of hell.

3. The immutability of God guarantees us that he will continue to be merciful to the weak and erring, that he will forgive the penitent, and bless the faithful. It warns us that he will resist the proud, condemn the rebellious, and destroy the wilfully disobedient.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What is the meaning of the word Malachi?

Do you think there was a real person by that name who wrote this book?

What relation was there between Malachi and the governor?

What other prophets sustained that same relation to the governor?

What was the condition of affairs in Judea in the time of Malachi?

What problems did Malachi and Nehemiah both deal with?

#### Golden Text Explained

Who was the first inspired man after Malachi? How long after?

Give and discuss three conditions making necessary the work of a forerunner?

Why was John the Baptist great in the sight of the Lord?

What was the subject on which John preached?

What were the results of his preaching?

In what four ways was John the Baptist great?

What is the greatest life? Who lived it?

Why was it the greatest?

What is the truly wise way to spend one's life?

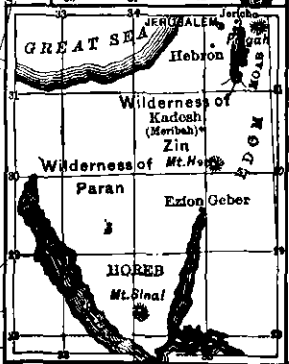
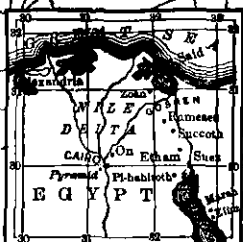
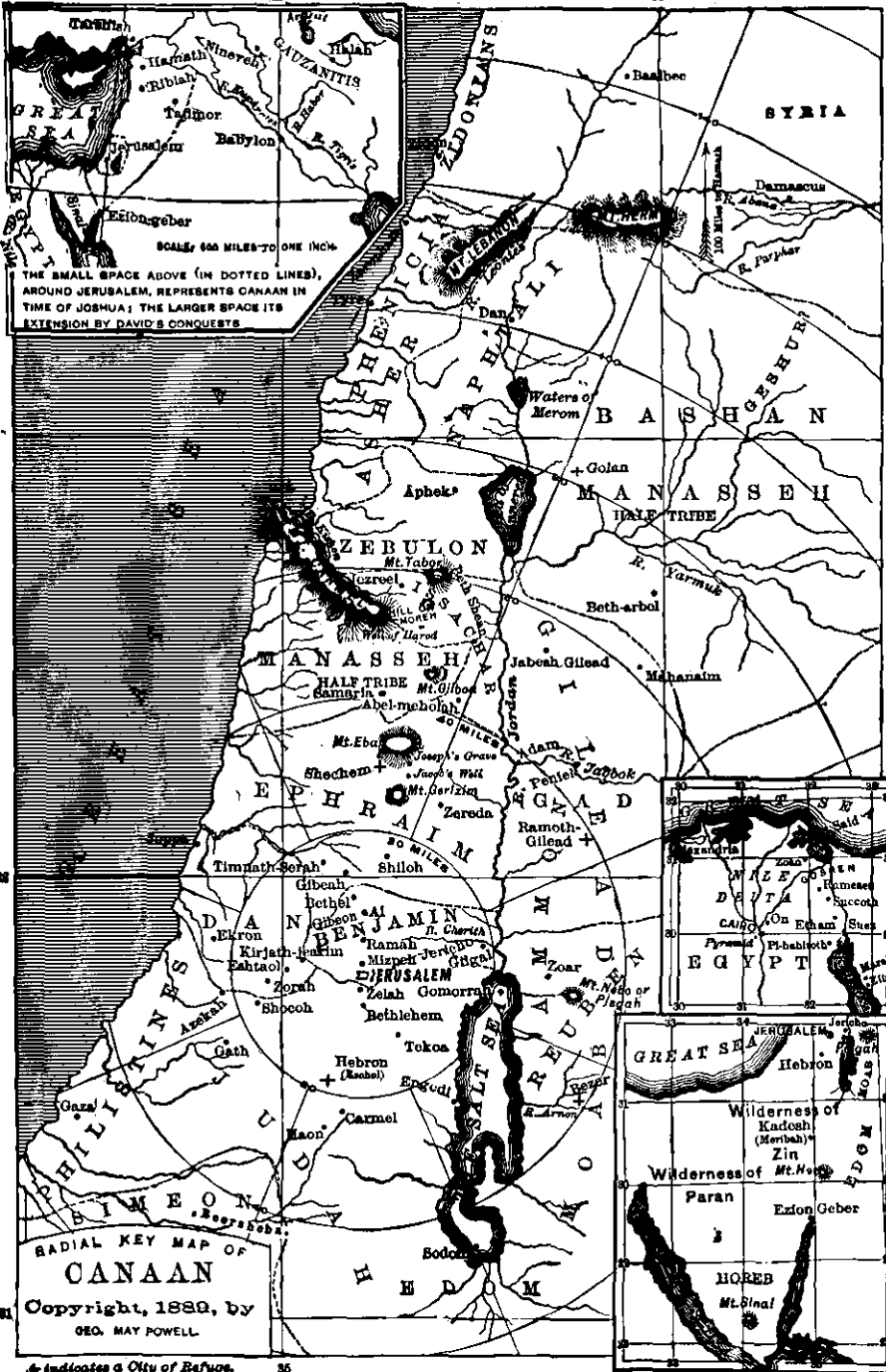
**Messenger to Prepare the Way**

Can you show that the name Jehovah applies to Jesus Christ in this text?  
 Who was sent before Jehovah? For what purpose?  
 How did the prophets describe the work to be done?  
 On what occasions did the Lord come to his temple?  
 Who is the messenger of the covenant?  
 What do you know of the angel of the covenant?  
 Why was his coming difficult to abide?  
 Whom was he to purify? Why this use of the term, sons of Levi?  
 What was the purpose of the Lord's purifying work?  
 Did the Lord promise to come in the way the Jews expected him? Explain.  
 What is meant by being a swift witness?  
 Who is this swift witness?

In what way were the Jews adulterers?  
 In what form does that sin exist now?  
 Against what other forms of sin was the Lord to witness?  
 What is taught in our text of the immutability of God?

**Elijah the Prophet to Come**

Who was to come before the terrible day of Jehovah?  
 Can you prove that this refers to John the Baptist?  
 What is meant by the great and terrible day of Jehovah?  
 What is meant by turning the hearts of the fathers to their children?  
 Why was this work to be done?  
 Was the work done sufficiently to save the Jewish nation from destruction?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?



## THIRD QUARTER

### THE CHRISTIAN'S SOCIAL LIFE

AIM.—*To create and deepen individual fellowship with Christ and to quicken the conscience of Christians that they may carry the spirit of Christ into all their activities and relationships.*

Lesson I—July 1, 1951

## THE CHRISTIAN AND MARRIAGE

### The Lesson Text

Gen. 2: 18-24; Matt. 19: 3-9; 1 Cor. 7: 39, 40

18 And Je-ho'-vah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground Je-ho'-vah- God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20 And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him.

21 And Je-ho'-vah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof:

22 And the rib, which Je-ho'-vah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

3 And there came unto him Phar'-i-sees, trying him, and saying, Is it

lawful *for a man* to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made *them* from the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?

6 So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why then did Mo'-ses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put *her* away?

8 He saith unto them, Mo'-ses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.

39 A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

40 But she is happier if she abide as she is, after my judgment: and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matt. 19: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 10: 2-12.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 25. M.

Duties of Husbands and Wives (1 Pet. 3: 1-7)

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| June 26. T..... | Husband Made Head of the Wife (Eph. 5: 22-33)            |
| June 27. W..... | Duties Of Men and Women (Titus 2: 1-8)                   |
| June 28. T..... | Duties of Husband and Wife to Each Other (1 Cor. 7: 1-7) |
| June 29. F..... | Marriage to Last Until Death (Rom. 7: 1-6)               |
| June 30. S..... | Jesus on Divorce and Remarriage (Matt. 5: 27-32)         |
| July 1. S.....  | Moses on Divorce and Remarriage (Deut. 24: 1-5)          |

TIME.—4004 B.C. for Genesis; A.D. 29 for Matthew; A.D. 58 for 1 Corinthians.

PLACES.—Garden of Eden, Judaea beyond Jordan, and Corinth.

PERSONS.—Adam and Eve, Jesus and the Jews, Paul and the Corinthians.

## Introduction

Marriage is the second most important relationship known to man. Being a Christian is the most important. But since it is possible for one to form such an unholy marriage relationship that it will be impossible for that one to live the Christian life, a proper marriage becomes all the more important. There is need for much plain teaching on this matter. Churches should provide special instruction for young people on the subject. And young men should be taught by godly men some things about the sex phase of marriage, and young women should be taught by godly women these things in preparation for their marriage. It is true that young people know much more about such matters now than their parents and grandparents knew at a much older age, but the trouble is that they have learned from evil sources, and they do not have the Christian viewpoint. The facts about sex from the Christian viewpoint are more holy and ennobling than the same facts learned from the sources open to the average youth in sex

magazines and picture shows.

Two things need to be stressed today with reference to marriage. First, we must cause young people to regard marriage *as* a permanent union; they must realize that they are going to live together until death parts them. If they can be made to realize this, they will be more cautious and act with greater wisdom in selection of their mates. Next, we must get elders and teachers in the churches to realize what constitutes an unscriptural marriage, an unholy union, and get them to exercise discipline to keep the church free from that type of adultery. There is hardly a church in the land today which does not have at least one couple remarried, a second or third marriage, where one or both had no scriptural right to marry, so living in adultery. It is the duty of elders to teach these people the truth and urge them to live by it. And it is their duty to the church to keep it pure lest others be led away after such error, and lest enemies blaspheme the good name of the church.

## Golden Text Explained

**1. What God hath joined.** Marriage is a divine institution; it is God-given. God joins man and woman in that holy union. It is the work of God, therefore holy. Since marriage is of God for man, it is a universal institution, and the laws that govern it are universal in their application. Men *sometimes say* (even a few preachers among us) that the marriage law is given to the church and for those who are in the church, and that God does not join aliens in marriage. This position has serious moral, rather immoral, implications. If God does not join aliens,

what of the children? Are they not illegitimates? And when alien parents obey the gospel, would they not have to have a marriage ceremony? Marriage was an institution before the church was established. Jesus said the laws which governed marriage from the beginning are to be observed. So the church is bound to observe the laws of the institution of marriage as given by the Lord. When a man and a woman observe those laws, God recognizes them, joins them, so that their union is pure and their offspring legitimate.

**2. Let not man put asunder, (1)**

This forbids either party to the union to terminate the union. Jesus said if a man puts away his wife, he makes her an adulteress. (Matt. 5: 32.) Of course putting her away does not make her an adulteress unless she remarries, or falls a victim to the desire of the flesh and commits adultery. But if she does either, the man who put her away bears his part of the responsibility; he caused her to sin. If a woman puts away her husband who is not able to practice continence, she bears her portion of the responsibility for his sin. For this reason man must not put asunder that which God has joined. (2) This also applies to the law of the land, and to those men who administer the laws. No state or nation has any right to legalize divorce contrary to God's law. Nations in the past which have disregarded God's laws have suffered for their sin, and there is no reason to think nations will not now suffer for such disrespect of God. Courts put asunder what God has joined for the most trivial reasons today. Divorce is so common now that we must confess that we have adopted "trial marriage," which several years ago was rejected in theory. People marry

with the idea that if they do not care for each other, or if living together proves to be unpleasant, they will get a divorce and look for other partners. We no longer regard marriage as a lifetime contract. Laws are made for the convenience of people who do not wish to continue unpleasant contracts, and judges issue divorces by the thousands. A Christian cannot administer a law which disregards the authority of Christ as the divorce laws of our land do.

3. **They are no more two.** Jesus here emphasizes the fact that the union is indissoluble. He later mentions one exception to this rule, but this one exception is not to be taken as weakening the rule. Men may refuse to live up to their contract; judges may allow divorces for trivial causes; and society generally may approve separations, but God still holds them as married. To God they are still one flesh, so that if either one is joined to another the union is unholy. Laws must not be changed or interpreted to suit human convenience, but we must adjust our affairs to conform to the laws of God if we expect to be blessed here and happy in eternity.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Institution of Marriage (Gen 2: 18-24)

*It is not good that the man should be alone.* When God had made all the lower animals with mates, it remained only that a help meet for Adam should be created. God said it is not good for the man to be alone, that is, without a mate. Those who believe in celibacy of the priests and nuns say it is better for them to be alone, while God says it is not good for man (any person) to be alone. Paul said the unmarried would be free from certain responsibilities, especially in the time of persecution such as was suffered in his day, if they would remain unmarried. (1 Cor. 7.) But he did not recommend such a life for all men, nor for any certain class of individuals. Much less did he make a law requiring celibacy, but said such doctrine was from the devil. (1 Tim. 4: 1-4.)

*Man gave names to all cattle.* All the beasts and birds were brought before Adam that he might give them their names. And whatever he called them, that was to be their name. There is not a college professor outside of those special fields, and perhaps few in those fields, who could name all the different birds and beasts. And if they were required to give them names, no doubt many would have names all out of harmony with their nature and characteristics. But Adam was able to give them all their proper names. This suggests that Adam had an education equal to, or beyond, that of a man trained in our best universities. Yet our scientists tell us that man came up through a savage state of ignorance and superstition, learning his language slowly. We prefer to take the Bible account of man's state.

*God caused a deep sleep to fall*



upon *the man*. In verses 21 and 22 we have the account of the creation of woman. There are several questions about which men have wrangled for centuries which we will not be able to settle. Was Adam created with an extra rib, or did he go through life with one rib less than other men? Why did God use Adam's rib instead of creating Eve from the dust of the ground as in the case of Adam? But these matters are of little importance compared to the lesson we should get from this history of man. In this act was given to man his mate, a help meet for him, to share his joys and sorrows.

*Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.* Adam recognized the woman as being a part of himself. This was the distinguishing feature between her and all the rest of creation, and for this reason Adam took her for his own.

*She shall be called woman.* The word woman is the feminine form of man, or she-man. This name was intended to give us the idea of the close relationship between the man and the woman, that the one is of the other. (1 Cor. 11: 8, 9.) And Moses adds that she was called Woman because she was taken out of man.

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother.* It is difficult to determine whether these are the words of Adam or of God. Jesus seems to suggest that *they* are the words of God. (Matt. 19: 5.) But in them we have the law of marriage, and the institution of marriage for mankind. There are certain practical lessons all should learn from them. (1) Man should leave his parents for his wife. And a woman is by the same authority to leave her parents. Families will do better if they live separate from parents. And if there is a clash of interests between the new family and their parents, the husband and wife are to forsake parents and work together for the interest of each other. (2) Man is to cleave to his wife; and wife to cleave to her husband. They are not to allow parents, selfish interests, hardships, poverty, or anything else come between them to separate them.

## II. Jesus Teaches on Marriage (Matt. 19: 3-9)

*Pharisees came trying him.* Jesus had spoken on the subject twice. (Matt. 5: 32; Luke 16: 18.) Did the Pharisees wish to see if he would teach the same thing again? Or did they wish to make him take sides with the school of Hillel who allowed divorce for every cause, or with Shammai who allowed divorce for fornication or some act of unchastity.

*Have ye not read?* Jesus pointed them to the scriptures. Many mistakes are made because people have not read. A little later Jesus accused the Sadducees of error because they did not know the scripture. (Matt. 22: 29.) People make serious blunders today with reference to marriage just because they have not read their Bibles. And many of them have not the courage or strength to make things right when they find themselves in error.

*Made them male and female.* Jesus points to creation to teach the lesson of one man for one woman, and one woman for one man. When Malachi rebuked the men of Israel for divorcing their wives, he pointed to the creation, saying that God made but one woman for Adam, though he had the residue of the spirit and could have made many. But he made only one because he sought a godly seed. (Mal. 2: 14-16.) This teaching forbids polygamy as well as divorce and remarriage.

*The two shall become one flesh.* No one seems to be sure what is meant by *one flesh*. Clarke thinks it may include the idea of unity in the offspring. McGarvey says: "That by it the pair become one flesh, so that a man is as much joined to his wife as he is to his own body." Paul says, "He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh," and then quotes this verse. (Eph. 5: 28-29.) This seems to indicate that in marriage a woman becomes bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh as much so as Eve became a part of Adam. Is someone ready to say that is a mysterious position? So said Paul. (Eph. 5: 33.)

*Why then did Moses command a bill of divorcement?* Did Moses

*command this?* No, and Jesus made correction by saying Moses suffered, allowed, it on account of the hardness of the hearts of the men with whom he dealt. In Deut. 24: 1-4 we are told all we know about this legislation of Moses. It obviously allowed divorce for many causes, though it is difficult for us to be sure what is meant by "some unseemly thing." However we may be sure it was not (1) adultery, for the woman guilty of that was to be stoned to death. (Lev. 20: 10.) It was not (2) suspicion of unchastity, for in Num. 5 we read of a test husbands were to give suspected wives. (3) If a man suspected his bride of fornication before his marriage to her, there was a test of virginity to which he might subject her. (Deut. 22: 13-21.) So the unseemly thing seems to be that which was unsatisfactory in the sight of the husband. This Moses allowed for the protection of the wives, who might otherwise have been killed or tortured to drive them away.

*From the beginning it hath not been so.* This refers to the law of marriage from the creation, which we have just studied from Gen. 2: 18-24. And this suggests that Jesus is about to restate the law from the beginning; he is going to take away the legislation of Moses on the subject, and this will itself place the matter back where it was before Moses made divorce easier on account of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews.

*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication.* In this verse Jesus says no man may put away his wife and marry another without being guilty of adultery, unless his wife has been untrue to him. Some deny the exception, but Jesus taught it. The fact that it is mentioned but once does not disprove it. Jesus does not have to say a thing twice to make it true. If this exception is not now in force, when was it, or when will it be? It could not have been in force at the time he made it, for it was different from the law of Moses, and Jesus did not make laws contrary to Moses' law. It will not be in force in the dispensation following this one, for there they neither marry nor give in marriage.

(Matt. 22: 30.) So if it is not in force during this Christian dispensation, Jesus did not tell the truth. So people who divorce for trivial reasons and remarry are guilty of adultery. What must they do to be saved? Repent of their sin, which means quitting it, and, if aliens, be baptized, but if erring children confess their sin and ask forgiveness, If the polygamist, one kind of adulterer, must quit his polygamy to be saved, must not the remarried person who married contrary to this law quit his adultery to be saved?

### III. Paul Teaches on Marriage (1 Cor. 7: 39, 40)

*A wife is bound.* Paul teaches that marriage is for life. He does not contradict Jesus when he allowed one to divorce an unfaithful mate and remarry, though he makes no mention of the exception. Some say that if a teaching of Jesus is not mentioned by an apostle after Pentecost it is not binding. But Jesus' teaching on settling trouble in Matt. 18: 15-20 is not mentioned by an apostle, and all allow it to be binding. Jesus said call no man father, and no apostle mentions that after Pentecost, but all accept it as binding on us. (Matt. 23: 9.) Jesus taught that a man who puts away his wife for any cause except fornication makes her an adulteress, and no apostle mentions that after Pentecost, but all accept it as binding on us now. (Matt. 5: 32.) So the exception of Matt. 19: 9 is binding, though no apostle mentions it.

*Free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.* If the husband be dead, she may marry. This applies to the husband also. The two are bound as long as they live, and they must not allow anything to come between them. Their eternal destiny is at stake. People have their troubles, and instead of taking them to the Lord for settlement in his divine way, they take them to the divorce court for settlement in man's way. Few can live without a mate, so they are soon in love with others and are married again contrary to the Lord's will. And from such an entanglement there is rarely ever a release. But what is meant by *only in the Lord?* So far as *is* known

to the writer there is but one way of getting into the Lord, or into Christ, and that is by being baptized into Christ. (Rom. 6: 3; Gal. 3: 27.) How serious is the sin of marrying out of the Lord? I do not know, but

surely not the same type of sin as marrying a divorcee who in the sight of the Lord is married to another. One is an unholy union; the other is a holy union formed contrary to God's counsel.

### Topics for

1. A Christian should observe the laws of marriage (1) for his own safety, (2) for the good example he sets before others, and (3) out of respect for the authority of Christ.

2. Parents should teach their children to respect the law of the Lord on marriage because they can easily form unions which will make it practically impossible for them to live the Christian life.

3. Preachers, teachers, and elders

### Discussion

have the responsibility of instructing the people with reference to marriage. If people are not taught, the teachers are at fault; if they are taught but refuse to obey, the people are at fault. But regardless of who is at fault, the elders have the duty of keeping the church free from the sin of unscriptural marriage relations. Churches are not free of this; someone is at fault. Who is at fault where you worship?

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What is the general subject for lessons this quarter? What is the aim?

What are the two most important relationships in life?

Why is the marriage relationship so important to man?

What is the duty of the church to young people? How may it be discharged?

What two lessons need to be stressed with reference to marriage?

#### Golden Text Explained

Is marriage a universal or a church institution? Give your reasons why.

In what sense does God join man and woman in matrimony?

Who is forbidden to put asunder what God joins?

In what sense, and to what degree, do people generally practice "trial marriage"?

How did Jesus emphasize the permanency of marriage?

Will God recognize the action of a court which dissolves a union contrary to his law?

#### Institution of Marriage

Does God favor celibacy above marriage for any class of people?

Did Paul recommend celibacy? What did he say about forbidding people to marry?

What act of Adam shows his education? What of man's alleged ascent through savagery to his present state of civilization?

What did Adam see in Eve which he did not see in any other creature?

What did Adam call his mate? Why?

What two things are suggested in a man leaving his parents for his wife?

#### Jesus Teaches on Marriage

What did the Pharisees hope to gain by tempting Jesus on this subject?

To what did Jesus point the Jews as a source of information on the subject?

What did Malachi teach on the subject of monogamy and polygamy?

What is meant by two becoming one flesh?

Are we to reject this lesson because it is mysterious?

Did Moses command divorce? What did he teach on the subject?

What is meant by the unseemly thing for which Moses allowed divorce?

Why did Moses allow divorce for many causes?

What is the general rule taught by Jesus concerning the permanency of marriage?

What is the exception to this rule? Is it binding today? Give proof.

When people violate this law and are guilty of adultery, can they be saved? How?

#### Paul Teaches on Marriage

What did Paul teach concerning the permanency of marriage?

Did he mention an exception to the rule? Did Paul contradict the teaching of Jesus with reference to the exception?

What is meant by marrying in the Lord? Is the act of living in an adulterous union more serious than disregarding the counsel of God with reference to marrying in the Lord?

Would any one say it is good, or safe, to disregard the counsel of the Lord on 3ny subject?

What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson II—July 8, 1951

## THE CHRISTIAN AND THE FAMILY

The Lesson Text

Eph. 5: 22-25; 6: 1-4; 1 Pet. 3: 1, 7

22 Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body.

24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives also be to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up *for* it.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise).

3 That it may be well with thee,

and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

1 In like manner, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your *own husbands*; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of *their* wives;

7 Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with *your wives* according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Train up a child in the way *he* should go, and even when *he* is old *he* will not depart from it." (Prov. 22: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 1: 7-19.

### Daily Bible Readings

July 2. M..... Jesus as a Member of the Family (Luke 2: 40-52)  
 July 3. T..... Jesus Visits with a Family (Luke 10: 38-42)  
 July 4. W..... Be Not Unequally Yoked (2 Cor. 6: 14-18)  
 July 5. T..... Duties of Parents and Children (Col.: 3: 18-25)  
 July 6. F..... Christians Provide for Their Own (1 Tim. 5: 1-16)  
 July 7. S..... Timothy an Example of Good Training (2 Tim. 1: 1-11)  
 July 8. S..... ... The Law of Love for All (Rom. 13: 8-14)

TIME.—A.D. 63 for Ephesians, A.D. 64 or 65 for 1 Peter.

PLACES.—Paul wrote from Rome to the church at Ephesus; Peter wrote from Babylon to churches in Asia Minor.

PERSONS.—Paul, Peter, and Christians then and now.

### Introduction

The family is the unit of society. Family life is an index to the strength and stability of the nation. When family life breaks down, the nation has little promise of the future. No institution can be strong without organization, so God has given the family sufficient organization to function. He has made the husband the head, of the family. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands, and children are to honor fathers and

mothers. Fathers are to provide the material needs of the family; they have the responsibility of providing a home for the family. Wives are to be keepers at home, making a home for the husband and children. Paul says young women are to marry, bear children, and rule the household. The wife has the duty of ruling the household. This is to be understood in the light of the teaching that the husband is the head of the

wife. But since the husband is out of the house much of the time, the ruling of the household falls largely upon the wife.

Not only has God given the family its organization, but he has assigned its purpose. First, the family is for the bearing and rearing of children. Next, the family plan is for the happiness and welfare of both parents and children. Those who wish to enjoy the blessings of marriage, but refuse to accept the responsibilities of the institution are not pleasing to God. Husband and wife will be happier, more useful to society, and pleasing to God if they will bear and rear children as God intends. The family is a very necessary arrangement for the happiness and welfare of children. Since they are so helpless when they come into the world, and

so dependent upon others for their physical, moral, and spiritual growth, the wisdom of God is obvious in giving us the family plan.

But the family plan is not quite enough; it should be a Christian family to do the best work. No family can be what it should be without Christ enthroned as its King and example in life. The family is definitely crippled in its work if either the husband or the wife is not a Christian. For this reason boys and girls should be taught to start the family right by marrying right, Christians marry Christians. The family is not a missionary society where a Christian marries an alien in the hope of converting him. The odds are against the Christian, and there is too much at stake to run the risk.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. The duty of parents.** People should not bring children into the world unless they are willing to accept the responsibilities that come along with children. Training them for God during life is one of the duties which parents have. Their salvation and that of their children depend upon whether they give their children the training God demands. Yes, parents may be lost for neglecting to train their children. How can parents go to heaven when through *negligence they sent their children to hell?* What is involved in training a child? According to Webster, two elements are included. (1) Instruction; children are to be given instruction as to the way of life. A parent does not excuse himself simply by saying he does not know how to teach. We learn by doing. Do the best you can *now, and tomorrow you will be able to do a better job.* (2) Guidance in the application of knowledge. Not only must a child be instructed, but he must be guided in the application of that knowledge. A child may know a principle of arithmetic so he can repeat it from memory, but until he has seen a problem solved by the *use* of the principle, he will not know how to use it himself. So parents are to give instruction, and then guide the child in the use of that instruction

until it has become a part of his character, a fixed habit in his life. A child is not trained until he reaches this point.

**2. Reason for training children.** (1) The period of childhood is a time of susceptibility. Children look to their parents for teaching and guidance. They believe in their parents. No one can influence children more than a parent, especially during childhood. (2) Childhood is a dangerous period. So much depends on proper training. *A bad start for a child usually means failure in life.* Since children are so easily influenced, and since these influences linger so long with them, childhood is a most important period of life. (3) The future of the church of our Lord depends much upon proper training of children. The future of the church is being determined by *the parents of today.* If we train our children in the way they should go, they will be faithful to the church. Some denominations use this principle of training children to secure the future of their organizations. They build and maintain homes for children where they may train them in the way they wish them to go. If they *can succeed* in this way, why cannot God's people enlarge their work among orphans to save the children and train them for church work in the future?

3, **They will not depart when they are old.** This clause has given trouble to some because they know of children of Christian parents who went wrong after they left home. In the first place it is not necessary to affirm that Solomon meant that this rule can have no exceptions. Moses promised long life to children who honor parents (Ex. 20: 12), but that does not mean there are no exceptions to the rule. Again, some parents teach their children, but never get them trained. There is

a difference between telling a child what to do, and guiding him in the doing of that thing until it becomes a set habit. Training a child is somewhat like pouring concrete and holding it in forms until it is set; after that the form cannot be changed. So training a child in the proper way of life gets him set in that way of living so that neither time nor later influences will change his way of living. Parents should be happy that they hold the future of their children in their hands.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Duties of Wives and Husbands (Eph. 5: 22-25)

*Wives*, be in subjection. The family has to have a head. Either the man or the woman must be that head. Paul argues that God intended from the beginning that man should be the head. (1) The fact that man was created first is proof of his headship. (1 Tim. 2: 12, 13.) (2) Woman was taken from the man, not man from the woman. "For the man is not of the woman; but "the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have *a sign* of authority on her head, because of the angels." (1 Cor. 11: 8-10.) (3) Man is the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of man. (1 Cor. 11: 7.) In what sense is man the image of God, but woman is not? In the matter of authority, headship. Man is both the *image* and glory of God, but woman is the *glory* of man; she is not said to be the image of man as man is the image of God, she is only the glory of man. So the headship of man was in the mind of God when he created man, and the order and manner of creation constitute the reason for his headship. (4) Woman's part in the first sin is also a reason for her subjection to man. In naming the penalty for her sin, God told Eve, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen. 3: 16b.) Paul gives two reasons why woman is not to exercise dominion over the man, the first of which we have already used, and the second is, "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being

beguiled hath fallen into transgression." (1 Tim. 2: 14.) So it seems that man and woman were created with (1) the headship of man and (2) the subjection of woman in mind, but that the actual subjugation took place after woman's transgression.

*As unto the Lord.* This does not mean that the husband is her Lord, or that her obedience to her husband is to be as one's obedience to his Lord. But she is to regard submission to her husband as an act of obedience to the Lord. Servants obeyed God when they served their masters well, and children obey the Lord when they honor their parents. So wives obey the Lord when they are in subjection to their husbands.

*As Christ is the head of the church.* Paul looks upon the church as bearing the same relation to Christ as the wife bears to her husband. (Eph. 5: 32.) God has always looked upon his people as being married to him, and their unfaithfulness is called spiritual adultery. Hosea 5: 1-7; 9: 1.) The church owes subjection to Christ since he is the head.

*Himself the saviour of the body,* Christ is not only the head of the church, but he is also the saviour of the body, which is the church. Man is only the head of the wife; he cannot be the saviour of his wife. Christ is the Saviour of all men in that he is able to save, in that he is willing to save all, and in that provision has been made for the salvation of all men; but he is actually the Saviour of those who are faithful to him.

*Wives subject in everything.* To what extent must wives be in subjec-

tion to their husbands? Paul says to be subject in everything. Paul also says we are to be in subjection to the higher powers, and that to resist the power, or government, is to resist God. (Rom. 13: 1, 2.) Yet we learn that we are to obey God rather than men when the laws of man conflict with the laws of God. (Acts 5: 29.) So wives are to be in subjection to their husbands in everything which will not cause them to disobey God. If a husband demands assistance in some sinful business, a wife must refuse. If the husband interferes with the wife's attendance at worship, she must obey God regardless of what her husband does or says. Some women have made poor selections; they have "brutes in breeches" instead of real men. But through proper submission and by faithful performance of every known duty, they may be able to lead the husband to obey the Lord.

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.* Some have thought that Paul was partial to the men because he told the wives to obey their husbands. Of course Paul had little more to do with this business than any one of us today. He simply wrote what the Lord gave him to write, so he is not to be either blamed or praised for it. But was he partial to the men? When he told them to love their wives like Jesus loved the church, he gave them as big a responsibility as he gave the women. If a man loves his wife as Jesus loved the church, the wife will not find it difficult or unpleasant to be in subjection to him. The difficulty comes in most cases when and because the husband does not love his wife as Jesus loved the church. However, there are some rebellious hearted women who despise dominion, and they find it a galling experience even to be in subjection to the Lord himself. Jesus gave himself up for the church. This is the highest expression of love, even for Jesus. So when man loves his wife with the highest possible degree of love, he will give himself in affectionate attention, providing for her every need, and fulfilling her every wish so far as his ability and good judgment will allow.

## II. Duties of Parents and Children

(Eph. 6: 1-4)

*Obey your parents in the Lord.* There is no principle more fundamental and necessary than obedience of children. Children are not usually to be blamed if they are disobedient, for they would not be that way if parents would do their duty. Good order in the home, and so the success of the home and the right bringing up of children depend on parents teaching their children to be obedient. The phrase *in the Lord* is to be connected with obey rather than with parents. This implies that obedience to parents is a command of the Lord; it is a part of the child's duty to God to obey parents. And it is a part of his duty to God because it is right. God never requires anything wrong of anyone. If God commands a thing we may be sure it is the right thing to do. (Psalm 119: 128.)

*Honor thy father and thy mother.* Obeying parents is one way of honoring them, and to disobey is to dishonor. This is one of the ten commandments delivered by Moses. (Ex. 20: 12.) And with this promise goes the promise that one will live to be old, and that all will be well during life. There are other things to be taken into consideration, such as health, accidents, and so on. But obedience does contribute to longevity. Children who are not taught to obey at home will be disobedient at school; they will give the police something to do when they are a little older, and may end their career in prison. Parents pay a big price for following the path of least resistance with the children.

*Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.* This is a warning in the matter of discipline. Regulating the lives of children is not an easy matter. No two children can be handled exactly alike, for no two children are alike. Hence parents must study their children to discipline them for the best results. How may parents provoke children to wrath? (1) By unreasonable punishment. (2) By uneven punishment, being severe at one time and allowing them to go unpunished for the same thing at another time. (3) By being too strict

with children, not allowing them innocent childish pleasures enjoyed by other children. (4) By being negative in discipline, refusing to allow them to do things they suggest and never furnishing them something to do for pleasure and recreation. (5) By expecting them to be grown-up and to act like mature people.

*Nurture them in chastening and admonition of the Lord.* The word nurture means about the same as the word train. Chastening means training by action; admonition is training by instruction. So children are to be trained by instruction and disciplinary action.

III. Blessings Promised (1 Pet. 3: 1, 7)

*If any obey not the word.* After instructing wives to be obedient to their husbands, Peter tells them why they are to obey, and something of the blessings which follow this obedience. There are some men who will not listen to preaching. They do not even want their wives to talk to them about the Bible. They cannot be gained by the word, that is, by preaching and teaching the word.

*Gained by the behavior of their wives.* Peter says they may be gained without the preaching of the word by mouth. The phrase *without the word* is not to be taken to mean that men may be saved without the gospel which is the power of God to save. It means that they may be saved without preaching the word by mouth. The phrase *by the behavior* of the wives is put over in opposition to the preaching of the word. The wives preach by their behavior, not by word of mouth. Faithful godly living before a husband is a power-

ful influence. But if the wife compromises by staying away from church and going to places of amusement with her husband when she should be worshipping God, she will not win him.

*Dwell with your wives according to knowledge.* Husbands are told to live in harmony with the best knowledge they have. Making a go of marriage is not an accident; it is the result of diligent study and a willingness to sacrifice convenience, be unselfish, to keep peace.

*Giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel.* God's people have always given woman a higher place in society than the heathen nations. Christianity honors woman. The term *weaker vessel* cannot apply to women mentally, so it is to be taken physically. Men are to give consideration to women, be careful for their convenience and welfare, because of their more delicate frame and fragile structure, and the infirmities to which women are subject.

*Joint-heirs of the grace of life.* Wives are heirs together with men of the favors of life. If husbands take advantage of their authority as heads of the home and do not allow their wives to enjoy equally the favors of life, God will not hear them when they pray. Men who spend money for recreation and pleasure, but refuse their wives an equal amount for their pleasure, need not pray, for God will not listen to them; their prayers will be hindered. Men who refuse to accept any responsibility for rearing and disciplining children, and force the wife to carry all that load, need not pray, for God will not hear them.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Good order in the home requires that there be a head. God has named the head of the home, and if the man refuses to accept that responsibility, or the woman refuses to submit to that arrangement, the home will not be what God expects it to be; and the one who rejects God's arrangement will be responsible for the failure.

2. Some husbands and wives reject God's plan by refusing to bear children. Others bear children, but re-

fuse to accept the responsibility of rearing them properly. They leave them to grandparents, or to servants. God will punish such neglect and rebellion against his way, and for the wrongs done to the children.

3. Husbands who love their wives and are affectionately careful for their welfare will be rewarded by the constant and tender love of their wives, and by the Lord in the hearing of their prayers. It pays to live like the Lord commands.



## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, places, and persons of *this* lesson.

### Introduction

Discuss the importance of the family in the community and the nation.  
What organization has God given the family?  
Where has woman authority to rule? What limitations are placed on her?  
What is the primary purpose of the family?  
Of what benefit is the family plan to parents?  
Why is the family plan such a blessing to children?  
Why is it important that both parents be Christians?

### Golden Text Explained

What two elements are involved in training of children?  
Are parents excused from training their children because they do not know how?  
Show the importance of the second element in training.  
Give and discuss three reasons for training during childhood.  
Is it absolutely impossible for a trained child to forsake his training?

### Duties of Wives and Husbands

On what facts does Paul base his proof of the headship of man over the woman?  
In what sense is man in the image of God where the woman is not?  
What did Eve's transgression have to do with the subjugation of woman to man?  
What is meant by being in subjection as unto the Lord?  
The relationship of husband and wife illustrates what spiritual relationship?  
Of what are people guilty who are unfaithful to Christ?

How is Jesus the Saviour of all men? Of the church?

To what degree must women be *in* subjection to husbands? With what exception?

What is the husband's first duty to the wife?

To what degree must the husband love his wife? How is this love manifested?

### Duties of Parents and Children

Who is to be blamed for disobedience of the usual child?

What is meant by obeying parents in the Lord?

Which of the ten commandments is given to children?

What promise accompanies this commandment? Is it never-failing?

What is liable to be the final consequence of disobedience in children?

What warning does Paul give parents in the matter of disciplining children?

Give and discuss several ways fathers may provoke children to wrath.

What is meant by nurturing children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord?

### Blessings Promised

What blessings may come to a husband through the obedience of his wife?

Can one be saved without the word in the sense of not learning the gospel?

How may a woman gain her husband who will not listen to the spoken word?

What compromises do wives sometimes make with husbands? Is that the way Peter says they are to gain their husbands?

What is meant by dwelling with wives according to knowledge?

In what sense is woman the weaker vessel?

How may a husband's prayers be hindered?

Illustrate how a man may fail to make his wife a joint-heir of the grace of life,

## Lesson III—July 15, 1951

# THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CHURCH

## The Lesson Text

### 1 Cor. 12: 12-27

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.

13 For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the

body; it is not therefore not of the body.

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the mem-

bers each one of thorn in the body, even as it pleased him.

19 And if they were ail one member, where were the body?

20 But now they are many members, but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary:

23 and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant

honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness;

24 Whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked;

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

26 And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever."* (Eph. 3: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 1: 18-23.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- July 9. M..... Jesus Promises to Build the Church (Matt. 16: 13-20)
- July 10. T..... The Church Begins and People Are Added (Acts 2: 37-47)
- July 11. W..... The Church Working and Growing (Acts 6: 1-7)
- July 12. Th..... The Church a Body of Many Members (Rom. 12: 1-8)
- July 13. F..... The Church Built Upon Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3: 10-17)
- July 14. S..... Christ the Head of the Church (Col. 1: 9-23)
- July 15. S..... The Church Is the House of God (1 Tim. 3: 14-16)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACES.—Paul wrote to Corinth from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Christians then and now.

**Introduction**

The church should be the greatest thing in the Christian's life. Everything else in his life should find its place and have its time as it compares with or contributes to the church. No social connections should be formed which involves duties or associations that will interfere with or lessen our love for the church. A Christian may take part in the civic activities of his community, but no civic duties should be accepted which will interfere with one's duties to the church. Fraternal orders which seek to be a substitute for the church by affording periods of worship and doing works of charity should have no place in the life of the Christian. For to the extent that a Christian contributes time, energy, and money to such substitutes for the church in the lives of men, he is robbing the church of our Lord of all that he puts into that substitute.

Young people should select their companions and engage in their recreational activities with the church in mind, being careful not to do anything which will reflect upon the good name of the church, or that will cause their interest in the church to weaken and die. Activities on the Lord's day should be planned with the church in mind. Instead of planning worldly amusements and physical recreation for Sunday afternoon, why not plan to spend the day visiting the sick, cheering the aged, reclaiming the wanderer, and saving the lost? If someone thinks this will take all the pleasure out of life, it will be in place to suggest that such is true only of those who enjoy the things of the world. If we cultivate an enjoyment of things spiritual, we will get as much pleasure from doing such things as the worldly person gets from physical recreation.

## Golden Text Explained

**1. God glorified in the church.** Eph. 3: 20, 21 is what is called a doxology. This word is from two Greek words which mean to *speak* praise. So Paul is actually doing what he says in our text should be done. He is giving praise or glory to God. (1) Let us consider that God is worthy of all the glory we are capable of rendering. His wonderful work of creation proves him worthy of glory. The immensity of the universe; the beauty and glory of nature; the unfathomed depths of the wisdom and knowledge hidden in the earth and sky, a tiny part of which man has discovered; and his crowning work of blending his spirit with a piece of clay to form man—these works of creation prove God eminently worthy of the glory which man is capable of rendering, yea, and much more. But when we turn to his work of redemption, we, like Paul, will find it impossible to find words to ascribe to God the glory that belongs to him. His willingness to forgive our sins; his love which gave his Son to *die to make* possible our salvation; his patient work both for and in us to make out of us beings fit to dwell in his presence in heaven; and his preparation of such a wonderful place for saved sinners to live forever free from the sins that plagued them all their lives—this work of redemption proves God infinitely worthy of more praise and glory than we will ever be able to ascribe to him here or in eternity. (2) We are obligated to glorify him. Surely none will be found who will doubt, much less deny, that we owe God all the glory we are capable of rendering to him. He gave us a being in the world; every good and perfect blessing comes from him; he redeemed us from sin; and he will give us eternal salvation if we but be faithful to him. We could not redeem ourselves; we cannot keep ourselves by our own strength from the dominion of Satan; and we cannot stand upon our own merit when we meet him in the judgment, hence our obligation to give glory to him. (3) This glory is to be given in the church. We are not to try to glorify God in human organizations as lodges

and civic clubs. When church members visit the sick, help the poor, or do anything else which is their Christian duty, they must do these things as Christians, members of Christ's church, and not as members of some lodge and allow the human organization to get the glory that rightly belongs to God through the church.

**2. And in Christ Jesus.** God is to be glorified in Christ. Christians may fail to give God the glory. The church may fail to glorify God as it should. But certainly Christ will give him the glory that rightly belongs to him. The language will hardly allow us to say that Paul meant for the church that is in Christ to glorify God. The idea is that the whole church, both in its body and its head, is to give glory to God the Father. Christ glorified the Father by coming to earth, by living a sinless life, by doing the work of the father, by dying for sinners, by coming out of the grave victorious over death and the devil, by ascending back to the Father, and by his mediatorial work as priest and king. He will come again in the glory of his Father (Matt. 16: 27), and will take his faithful home to live with him forever. In all this God is glorified in Christ Jesus.

**3. Unto all generations forever.** God is to be glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus from now on, through time and eternity. Nothing will supersede or take the place of the church as an institution through which God is to be glorified. Those who expect another dispensation and a world-wide organization of a temporal sort through which God is to be glorified are headed for disappointment. The church is not to be superseded as the institution through which God receives glory. Through "all generations of the age of the ages" God is to be given the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. This is Paul's way of saying there is to be no end, that it is for all eternity. We should be glad that we can be a part of such an everlasting institution through which God receives the glory so justly due to him.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Unity of Many Members (1 Cor. 12: 12-20)

*As the body is one, and hath many members.* Our lesson begins by using the human body as an illustration of the church. Our human body has many members performing their various functions, but the many members constitute but one body.

*So also is Christ.* "Christ stands by metonymy for the community united through him and grounded in him." (Expositor's Greek Testament.) Weymouth's translation says, "So it is with the church of Christ." The church is composed of many members of different and varying degrees of ability, yet they are to function as one body without interference with each other.

*For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.* By many this verse is taken as proof of Holy Spirit baptism as the means of entering into the spiritual body of Christ. But we are to consider (1) that Paul says there is one baptism. (Eph. 4:5.) If there is but one baptism, obviously we cannot hold to both water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. (2) Paul baptized some of these Corinthian Christians. (1 Cor. 1: 14-16.) Paul did not have the authority to administer Holy Spirit baptism, hence he baptized them in water. Since there is but one baptism, and Paul administered it to some of them, we know it was water baptism. (3) We learn that the one body is the church. (Eph. 1: 22; Col. 1: 18.) So this baptism Paul administered brought them into the church. It is the same baptism through which people were added to the church in Jerusalem. (Acts 2: 38, 41, 47.) Verse 27 of our lesson shows that the church is the body into which they were baptized. (4) We need to study the phrase *in one Spirit*. In verse 3 of this same chapter, Paul writes about speaking in the Spirit, and in verse 9 certain gifts were bestowed *in one Spirit*. To do a thing *in the Spirit* is to do that thing under the guidance of the Spirit, as the Spirit moves and directs. So the meaning of this verse is, Under the guidance of one Spirit

we were all baptized into the one body, the church. This is Paul's way of accounting for the unity of the body. There are many members with different abilities, but since they were all brought into the body by one Spirit, they work together in unity; they function as one body. If the parts of an automobile are put together by ten men working independently of each other, unity will be lacking so that the car will not function. But if these ten men work under the direction of man, unity is achieved, and the car will function properly.

*Were all made to drink of one Spirit.* Following our baptism into one body we were made to drink, or partake, of one Spirit. Those who claim the baptism of this verse is in the Holy Spirit cannot explain what is meant by this expression, for baptism in the Spirit is partaking of the Spirit in its greatest manifestation to *men*. But the baptism in water, and this is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 38) which follows baptism into Christ. It is the indwelling of the Spirit promised every child of God. (Acts 5: 32; 2 Cor. 1: 22; 1 Cor. 6: 19; Gal. 4: 6.) To eat means to partake of for the sustenance and growth of the person. So in the one body, the church, we partake of the strengthening and developing power of the Holy Spirit. This blessing cannot be had outside of that body in which the Holy Spirit dwells, hence the importance of being a member of the church of which Jesus is the head.

*If the foot shall say.* In verses 15 and 16 Paul shows the folly of members trying to be independent. If the foot says it is not of the body because it cannot be the hand, that does not make it not of the body. The foot cannot be independent of the hand, nor can the foot divorce itself from the body because it cannot do the work of the hand. Paul enforces the illustration by using the ear in the same way. The application in the church is that we have different positions and abilities to suit our positions, and that we are dependent upon each other and cannot be separated from each other in the

church. The proper functioning of the church rests upon our cooperation with each other.

*If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?* To show the absurdity of all trying to do the same thing in the church, and of any one trying to be independent of all others in the church, Paul supposes all the members of the human body turning to an eye. In that case there would be one big eye, but since the eye cannot do anything but see, where were the hearing, the smelling, the speaking, the running and so on? So if all in the church become preachers, where will be the other parts of a perfectly functioning body? If all are song leaders, where will be any to follow?

*God set the members in the body as it pleased him.* We had nothing to do with putting together the members which make up this human body. So neither did we have anything to do with putting the church together. God is the Maker of all bodies temporal and spiritual, and he has set the members in these bodies as it has pleased him. We are to recognize his work and accept it as final. To refuse to do so is to destroy the body.

## II. Mutual Dependence of Members (1 Cor. 12: 20-27)

*Many members, but one body.* Macknight paraphrases this verse as follows: "*But now, indeed, there are many members, which being aptly joined together make but one body, whose happiness results from the existence of all members.*" Paul says there is one body. (Eph. 4: 4.) And here he affirms there is *but* one body. He also tells us that the church Jesus built is that one body. (Eph. 1: 22.) It follows, therefore, that there is but one church over which Jesus is the head. If one is not a member of that church, he does not have Jesus as his head, or ruler. If Jesus is not one's head or ruler, that one will be destroyed at the *second* coming of Jesus. (Luke 19: 27.) Again, we learned that one is baptized into the one body which is the church. Since there is but one church and one means of entering that church, and since those who are not members of that church over

which Jesus is the head are lost, it follows that all who refuse to be baptized into that one body will be lost.

*The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee.* Here Paul begins his argument on the mutual dependence of the members of the body, and expects us to make the application to the spiritual body, the church. Regardless of how important one member may be, it needs the other members, even the most insignificant. There is a fable which says the hand got tired of carrying food to the mouth, so decided to go on strike. The hand did very well for a while, enjoying the rest from his work. But soon he became weak, trembling at every move. He discovered that in carrying food to the mouth he ministered to his *own* strength and happiness. So the members of the Lord's body, the church, depend upon each other so that when they serve others they are serving themselves; and when they hurt other members of the church, they are hurting themselves.

*Upon these we bestow more abundant honor.* This is said of the feeble, or insignificant members of the body. The uncomely, or unpresentable, parts of the body receive more attention; they are clothed, while the comely parts, such as face and hands, are not. And it is to be remembered that comeliness has nothing to do in determining the usefulness or the importance of a member of the body. There is no more important and necessary part of the human body than the reproductive organs, yet these are classed as the uncomely parts which are to be most clothed. So in the church there are some functions which put men forward in the public eye, and there are functions which are obscure and keep men from being noticed by the public. But let no one make the mistake of thinking the public functions are more important and necessary than the less public functions. *Someone* must prepare the Lord's table in order that another may preside at that table. *Someone* must give of his money that the gospel preacher may stand before the public to preach.

*That there should be no schism in*

*the body.* God has given each part its special function so that the body can perform its work, and so there will be no factions and divisions in the body over the different kinds and types of work to be done. If God has done his part to prevent schism, division, it follows that man is to blame when there is a division in the body of Christ. Division is the most serious and disastrous thing that can happen to the body of Christ, with one exception; the whole body could apostatize in perfect peace. Total apostasy is worse, of course, than division, when the division is caused by a part of the body refusing to go along with unscriptural doctrines and practices.

Members *should have the same care one for another.* That is, they should care for others the same way they care for themselves. Being "other-minded," looking out for the good of others, is one of the most Christ-like traits known to humanity. The church of Christ is to be like Christ in this respect, and to the extent it fails to be like him in this way, it fails in its mission in the world.

Whether *one member suffers, all*

*the members suffer.* If a thorn is stuck in the foot, all the members of the body suffer, and all cooperate in removing the thorn. So if one member of the church suffers an unusual reverse, all the members should suffer with that one. This makes the suffering light on all. But if one has to suffer it alone, it is hard to bear. Mutual aid lightens the burden, makes the unfortunate one love and appreciate his brethren, and it advertises the value of church membership to the world.

*Or one member is honored, all the members rejoice.* If the physical head of a man is crowned, all the members of his body share in the glory. So if one member of the church is honored, all the church rejoices, because it is really benefitted. Every blessing that comes to a member of the church, if used properly, will benefit the whole church.

*Now ye are the body of Christ.* Paul concludes with this statement that the people to whom he was are the body of Christ. Individually writing, those baptized into Christ, they were members, but collectively they were the body of Christ.

### Topics for Discussion

1. There is one body, and one head to govern that one body. To be out of that body is to forfeit the headship of Christ. If that body was established and complete in the time of the apostles, it follows that any religious body established since that time is not the body of Christ, and Christ is not its head.

2. There is one body, and baptism is the means of entrance into that one body. It follows that one who has never been baptized is not a member of that body. It is also clear

that any group of people who do not teach and administer baptism are not members of that one body, and others who follow their teaching will not become members of it.

3. The normal healthy condition of the body is peaceful performance of duty by each member thereof. When such is not the case, we conclude that it is diseased. So with the church, the body of Christ. To the extent that individual members are not doing their duty, the body is diseased.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What should be the greatest thing in the Christian's life?  
What should be our attitude toward civic activities? School functions?  
What is your attitude toward fraternal orders?  
What relation should there be between the church and recreation in our life?

How do you think Sunday afternoons can be spent to the best advantage?

#### Golden Text Explained

What is a doxology? Show why our text is a doxology.  
Give several reasons why God is worthy of glory.  
Show why we are obligated to give glory to God.  
In what relationship is God to be glorified?  
Why is it wrong to try to glorify God through human institutions?

In what ways is God glorified in Christ Jesus?  
 How long is God to be glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus?

**Unity of Many Members**

With what does Paul compare the church as a body?  
 What does Paul say about the number of baptisms?  
 How do you reconcile this with the mention of several other baptisms in the Bible?  
 What baptism did the brethren at Corinth receive? How do you know this?  
 Into what relationship does water baptism bring us?  
 What is meant by the phrase, "in one Spirit?"  
 How does Paul account for the unity of the body? Can you illustrate?  
 What is meant by drinking of one Spirit? When do we drink of that Spirit?  
 In what relationship is this blessing enjoyed?  
 How does Paul show the folly of members trying to be independent?  
 How does he show the absurdity of all members in the church trying to do the same work?

Who set the members in the body? What determines their location and function?

**Mutual Dependence of Members**

Can you prove by the scriptures that there is but one church over which Jesus is head?  
 What is the condition of one who is not a member of that one church?  
 In this connection, can you prove the necessity of baptism?  
 Can you illustrate the mutual dependence of the members of the body?  
 What is done for the less comely parts of the body?  
 What are comely functions in the church? Uncomely functions?  
 What hurtful condition has God tried to prevent in the body?  
 What condition is worse than division in the body of Christ? Why?  
 What care should members of the body have for one another?  
 How is this illustrated in suffering? In rejoicing?  
 What constitutes the body of Christ in any given community?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson IV—July 22, 1951**

**THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD**

**The Lesson Text**

**Matt. 5: 13-16; Phil. 2: 14-16; Col. 4: 5**

13 Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith 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; end 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.

14 Do all things without murmurings and questionings:

15 That ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world,

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time,

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." (2 Cor. 6: 17a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Thess. 4: 4-12.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- July 16. M.....The World Loves Its Own (John 15: 16-27)
- July 17. T.....The World Hates Those Not Its Own (John 17: 9-19)
- July 18. W.....Worldliness and Spirituality Contrasted (Gal. 5: 16-26)
- July 19. T.....Quitting the World for God (Eph. 4: 17-32)
- July 20. F.....Putting Off the Ways of the World (Col. 3: 1-11)

July 21. S.....Set Not Hope on Worldly Things (1 Tim. 6: 11-21)

July 22. S. .... Love Not the World (1 John 2: 12-17)

TIME.—A.D. 27 for Matthew 5; A.D. 63 for Philippians and Colossians.

PLACES.—A mountain in Galilee for Matthew 5; Rome for Philippians and Colossians.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Paul, and Christians then and now.

**Introduction**

There has always been a great gulf between what God expects of his people and what the world counts acceptable. Abel was a man who had respect for God's views and way?, while Cain was a man of the world. Jacob was a man who valued spiritual things highly, though he did not always do the right thing to gain the things he desired, but Esau was worldly in that he placed very little value on things spiritual. Abraham was a man of God. He knew the dangers of being too much with the world, and he dwelt in his tents aloof from the continual downward influences of the world. But Lot pitched his tents toward Sodom, the center of worldliness in his day, and though righteous in many respects he suffered for his interest in material security.

Young people have always had trouble, for lack of knowledge and experience, in seeing clearly the line between the right and the wrong. There are many things which are evil in their nature and tendency, but they have the appearance of

being good. Dancing has the appearance of being good in that it will give grace and poise to the body and it will put young people among what many call the best social set in the community; but there are so many evils which come along with these things, evils that are fundamentally and essentially a part of this form of pleasure, that we must regard it as worldly and ungodly. It is the duty of those who have had experience to warn young people against the dangers of these things, and to furnish pleasures and recreation which give them the good they are seeking, but will eliminate the evils. And it is the duty of young Christians to respect the counsel of those who warn them of evil and teach them of the good in this life. Such a program will require tact on the part of the teachers, and humility and submission on the part of the young people. Reasonable efforts on the part of both should go a long way toward saving the young people from a lot of worldliness and suffering to follow.

**Golden Text Explained**

**1. Our Golden Text is a call for our separation from the world.** First we will have to know what is meant by the world. It is not this earth on which we live. It is not this temporal set-up in which we live, for Jesus would not ask his Father to take his apostles out of the world he was leaving. (John 17: 11, 15.) But it is that mass of unconverted and ungodly people on earth, some simply disinterested in God and things spiritual, others hating God and all who live godly lives, while others ignorant of the will and way of God are living after their own traditions, deceived and deceiving others. This is the world that hated Jesus (John 7: 7), and that will hate all who follow him. (John 15: 18-20.) This

is the world that will persecute all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) This is the world that was not worthy of that great host of God's people down through the centuries who by faith walked with God, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, from weakness were made strong, and turned to flight the armies of aliens. (Heb. 11: 32-38.) This is the world that is ever with us to distract us, to alienate us from God, to waste our lives here, and rob us of eternal life.

**2. This separation from the world is in answer to the call of God.** The church is the "called out" of the world; it is the people the Lord has



chosen to be his. (John 17; 19; Eph. 1: 4, 5.) Jesus sounds the great invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11: 28.) But along with this call is the voluntary choice and action of his people. Any doctrine which takes away from man his free and voluntary choice of God in preference to the world is a false doctrine. "Whosoever will" is a fundamental principle of the gospel, and must not be overlooked or rejected.

**3. This separation from the world must be complete and final.** God does not call us to a part-time service or to a divided loyalty. He expects us never to look back when once we have put our hands to the plow. ". . . No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9: 62.) "Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing." One must make up his mind *to deny* himself ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2: 12), when he accepts the call of the Lord. And if necessary he must even be willing to forsake his father and mother, husband or wife, children and property. (Luke 14: 25-27.) It was at this point that the rich young

ruler failed, for Jesus told him to sell all his property and give the money to the poor, and then to follow him. (Matt. 19: 16-22.) His separation from the world was going to cost him too much; he thought the price of being a disciple of Jesus was too high, so he turned it down and went away in sorrow. Many people turn down the Lord's call today who have not enough appreciation of the Lord and his way of life to be sorrowful over their choice.

**4. Blessings attending: the separation.** God promises all who come out to be separate from the world that he will receive them and be to them a Father, and they shall be sons and daughters of his. There is no greater blessing than being a child of God. The orphan living on the edge of the city dump being adopted by a rich family is a very poor and inadequate illustration, but it may give us a faint picture of what it means to be adopted into God's family *to* be a joint-heir of Jesus Christ. Peter asked Jesus what they would receive for giving up all to answer his call, and he was promised a hundred-fold in the life and eternal life in the world to come. (Mark 10: 29, 30.) Though the call entails suffering, the suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory to be enjoyed. (Rom 8: 17, 18.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Christians Serve the World (Matt. 5: 13-16)

Ye are *the salt of the earth*. (1) Salt prevents corruption. We salt meat when it is fresh to keep it from spoiling. So Christians exercise a preserving influence upon the world. They keep others from going into Kin. For the sake of the righteous people the world may be spared calamities which would otherwise come upon it, as ten righteous people might have saved *Sodom* if they could have been found in the city. (Gen 19.) (2) Salt flavors our food. So Christians flavor society; they enrich, ennoble, and beautify the society in which they move. (3) Salt creates thirst. When food is heavily salted, we find ourselves drinking more water than usual. So Christians are the salt of the earth by making others

thirst for righteousness. They live such fine and noble lives that others are attracted to the value of Christianity, and they begin the study of the Bible that they may make their lives as beautiful and useful as that of the real Christians who created their thirst for the right.

*If salt have lost its savor.* Salt may lose its strength and become useless. So a child of God may lose his spiritual strength and be worthless to the society in which he *moves*. The savorless salt is thrown into the street. It was not good even for fertilizer; it would ruin the land if thrown on it. So it was thrown into the street to be walked upon. So the child of God that loses his saving and serving strength is to be thrown out. He is the one-talent man who refuses to use his talent for his

Lord, and in the day of accounts will be thrown out for his failure to serve. (Matt. 25: 14-30.)

*Ye are the light of the world.* The lesson has been taught that as the moon has no light in itself, but reflects the light of the sun, so Christians have no light in themselves, but only reflect the light of the Lord. That is a good illustration, but fails to teach all the truth; in fact it just does not teach the truth. It is true that men, sinful men, have no light in themselves; but it is not true that Christians have no light in them. They have Christ in them who shines out to the world through them. It is not the reflection of some distant light, but the gleaming of a light within. The Christian is the globe, and Christ is the light within that shines through. "For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5: 8.) (1) Light arrests evil. The policeman's flashlight in a dark alley will cause the thief to stop breaking into the store; so the Christian's presence in society will drive out evil. (2) Light guides people out of the darkness and saves them from dangers. The beacon on the shore guides ships during the storm; the light on a mountain top guides the airplane lest it smash on the mountain-side. So Christians guide men both by teaching and example lest they be lost in the darkness of ignorance and idolatry. (3) Light makes manifest; it shows things to be what they truly are. (Eph. 5: 7-14.) Spirit mediums and sleight of hand performers can do very well in deceiving the people as long as they work in the dark; but when the room is flooded with light so that things may be seen for what they really are, they do not work so well. So Christians make *manifest the real* true values in life. They show the ugliness of sin by way of contrast, and they show the beauties of Christianity by exhibiting the Christ-life clearly before the world.

*Neither . . . put it under a bushel.* Men do not put a bushel over the light, but they put it on a stand, or hang it from the ceiling, that all may see. So we are lights for the Lord in this world of sinful darkness, and

we should not allow anything to cover or obstruct the shining of the light. What is the bushel which covers the light? (1) Pleasure and the love of pleasure hide some people's light. (2) The press of business cares keep some lights from shining for the Lord. (3) Home and family cares cover the light of some people. (4) The love of money and the desire to become rich make it impossible for the world to get any benefit from the light of some. (5) With young people the desire for an education and a start in the world all but extinguish the light. (6) Preachers have been known to allow too much golf and fishing, attendance at parties and movies to weaken their light, becloud the globe until the light of the Lord hardly gets through.

Let *your light shine before men.* We are told to let our lights shine that others may see our good works. The same Lord that tells us to let not our left hand know what the right hand does (Matt. 6: 3), tells us to let men see our good works. We are not to do good solely to be seen of men, but it certainly is no sin to allow men to see us do good.

*Glorify your Father who is in heaven.* Men praise God for the good we do and in this way God is glorified. But if something covers our light so that no one sees us doing good, God is robbed of the glory that belongs to him. One does not have to be rich or a highly educated person to let his light shine. Using the abilities we have in the community where we live, serving and influencing the people around us is all that is necessary.

## II. Christians Save the World (Phil. 2: 14-16)

*Do all things without murmurings.* The word murmur is frequently used to describe the sinful attitude and expression of it that characterized the Jews during their wilderness wanderings. Some people are never pleased with the way things are done at church; they murmur about the sermon, about the way the class was taught, and because the preacher does not come to see them as often as they think he should. Such an ugly disposition will ruin the influence of

people, and make it impossible for them to help the church in their community.

Blameless and harmless . . . , without blemish. No one is sinlessly perfect. But there are some faults too big to be excused on the ground of human frailty, and for these, people will blame us. The word translated harmless really means unmixed, pure, sincere. It is translated simple in Rom. 16: 19. To do things blame-worthy and harmful or impure, will cause one to be blemished, or crippled so far as his influence for good is concerned.

In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. This is another phrase used to describe the Jew in the wilderness. (Deut. 32: 5.) A crooked generation is one that is twisted, that deviates from the right; dishonest, fraudulent. A perverse generation is one that is obstinate in its wrong doing; willful; petulant; cranky. (Webster.) Paul said these unbelieving Philippian were both crooked and perverse.

Ye are seen as lights in the world. The church lived among people of this character, and for that reason they must let their light shine to make straight the crooked, and to soften the hard, willful and obstinate hearts of sinners. As the heavenly bodies are luminaries to a dark world, so Christians are seen as lights among the people who are crooked and perverse.

Holding forth the word of life. This is the work of Christians in this crooked world in which we live. This is the way they can save this perverse generation in the midst of which we live. The word of life is that word which gives spiritual life. It is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8: 11); it is that by which we are begotten again. (1 Pet. 1: 23; James 1: 18.)

That I may have whereof to glory. These Philippian were Paul's converts, and if they were faithful in saving others by using the word of life, he would have something whereof to glory. His work in saving them would not be lost if they proved to be the kind of material that would stand the test of the fire. (1 Cor. 3: 12-15.) And if they stood the test,

his work would be proved worthwhile, not in vain. But if they were unfaithful and were lost, he would not receive a reward for his work in converting them.

In the day of Christ. This refers to the day Jesus comes the second time; it is the judgment day, for then Paul will know whether his labors have been in vain. It is called the day of the Lord (Thess 2: 2), and the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1: 8.) Since this is the day of judgment, the day the Lord comes again, and the day Paul will learn if his labors were in vain or if they were to be rewarded, we must conclude that this is the day when both the good and the evil will appear to be judged according to their works; the evil being sent into eternal punishment, and the righteous into eternal life. (Matt. 25.)

### III. Christians Using Wisdom (Col. 4: 5)

Walk in wisdom. Walking implies activity. The word wisdom denotes the character of that activity. Our walk is to be characterized by wisdom. Jesus said his disciples should be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. (Matt. 10: 16.)

Toward them that are without. That is, without, outside, the church. Paul uses the words *without* and *within* in 1 Cor. 5: 9-13 in such way as to show their meaning clearly. Those who argue that the phrase "baptized into Christ" does not denote any actual change of state will have trouble showing that there is any difference between those who are without and those who are within Christ and the church. The reasons for walking wisely before those that are without are many and obvious. (1) People are not interested in doctrine any more, they are measuring you and the church of which you are a member by your life. If you are honest in heart and pure in life, you can influence them. (2) Denominations are wrong in doctrine and consequently weak in arguments along those lines, hence they place the emphasis on practical living. If we allow them to excel us there, we give them the advantage of us in reaching people who make no profession of religion. (3) If a man does

not walk wisely and honestly before those without the church, he not only loses their respect, but he loses his own self respect and loses interest in worship on account of his guilty conscience. So he gradually ceases to serve and worship God.

*Redeeming the time.* Or buying

up the opportunities, is one translation. It means to use well our time, buying it up from waste and ill-use. And the man who walks in wisdom toward those who are without is using his time to good advantage. Let us fill our lives with good, and we will be redeeming the time.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Service to others is the primary lesson in the figures of salt and light. The Christian is to serve. He is saved to serve. The Thessalonians turned from idols to the true God that they might serve him. (1 Thess. 1: 9.) We miserably fail in our mission in this world if we do not serve. Yet that service does not pay for our salvation.

2. The murmuring person is not a working person. Even a mule cannot kick and pull at the same time. Murmuring is not only failure to serve, but it has a definite tendency in the other direction; it is active opposition

to the program of Christ in the world.

3. The Lord requires us to put some thought into our living and serving. The Lord requires intelligent obedience all the way. Knowledge of truth makes us free. (John 8: 32.) Our love is to abound in knowledge. (Phil. 1: 9.) We are to be filled with a knowledge of his will. (Col. 1: 9.) We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. (2 Pet. 3: 18.) Grace and peace are multiplied to us, as well as all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. (2 Pet. 1: 2-4.)

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Name some characters who respected God's ways and contrast them with others who did not.

Why do young people especially have trouble distinguishing between right and wrong?

What is the duty of mature people toward the young?

What attitude should the young have toward the teaching of the mature?

#### Golden Text Explained

Our text is a call for separation from what?

What is the meaning of the world here mentioned?

What has the world done in the past to God's people?

Separation from the world is in answer to what?

What does man exercise in response to this call for separation?

What must characterize this separation from the world?

Of what must we deny ourselves to answer this call for separation?

What must we sacrifice if necessary? What is the reward for such sacrifice?

What blessings does God promise to all who come out from the world?

#### Christians serve the World

Name and illustrate three ways in which Christians are like salt.

Can salt lose its savor? What of its value does?

Does the moon reflecting the light of the sun illustrate the relation between Christ and his disciples? Is the globe with light inside a hotter illustration?

Name and illustrate three ways in which Christians are like light.

Name and discuss ways in which people cover their light and prevent its shining. Is it a duty to let others see our good works? Why?

How can our works glorify God?

#### Christians Save the World

What ugly disposition characterized the Jew in their wanderings?

Why will murmuring hinder our doing good works?

What is the meaning of blameless? Harmless? Blemish?

What terms are used to describe the world about us?

What is the meaning of crooked? Perverse?

What are Christians in the midst of this kind of world?

What are they to hold forth? What is the purpose of holding it forth?

What is the connection between the faithfulness of the Philippians and Paul's glorying in the day of Christ? What is meant by the day of Christ?

#### Christians Using Wisdom

What does the word walk suggest? By what is our walk characterized?

What is meant by those without? Within? Give and discuss three reasons for walking in wisdom toward those without.

What is meant by redeeming the time? What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson V—July 29, 1951

## THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOVERNMENT

## The Lesson Text

## Rom. 13: 1-7; 1 Pet. 2: 13-16

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same.

4 For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to be king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*" (Matt. 22: 21b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 22: 15-22.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| July 23. M..... | Jesus Pays His Half-shekel Tax (Matt. 17: 24-27) |
| July 24. T..... | Duty to God Comes First (Acts 4: 13-22)          |
| July 25. W..... | Christians Rejoice in Suffering (Acts 5: 33-42)  |
| July 26. T..... | An Example of Such Suffering (Acts 16: 19-34)    |
| July 27. F..... | Paul Uses His Roman Citizenship (Acts 22: 22-30) |
| July 28. S..... | Paul Appeals Unto Caesar (Acts 25: 6-12)         |
| July 29. S..... | Brethren Not to Use the Courts (1 Cor. 6: 1-11)  |

TIME.—A.D. 58 or 59 for Romans; A.D. 63 for 1 Peter.

PLACES.—Paul wrote from Corinth to Rome; Peter from *Babylon* to churches of Asia Minor.

PERSONS.—Paul, Peter, and Christians then and now.

## Introduction

Government is of God. Those who think governments are of the devil because the Jews asked for a king contrary to the will of the Lord (1 Sam. 8: 4-9), should explain why there were governments in the nations about the Jews. There were great nations in the days of Abraham. Amraphel (Gen. 14: 1), one of the kings, is now known to be Ham-

murabi whose code of laws is very similar to the laws given by Moses. Nebuchadnezzar, many years later than Hammurabi, learned that God rules in the affairs of nations, and that he sets up kings and removes them at his pleasure. (Dan. 4: 17, 18, 34-37.) Furthermore, we are not to think that the Jews had no form of human government before they

asked for a king. Moses appointed seventy men to help him judge the people. (Num. 11: 10-16.) And when the Jews came into Canaan, they were ruled by judges. God objected to the appointment of a king, not because that particular form of government was from the devil, but because of what he knew the kings would do. (1 Sam. 8: 10-18.)

Governments are necessary, and always have been, to settle disputes between people, to punish the criminal element, to keep records of property, and to legalize transactions be-

tween people. Even if there were no criminals among us, there would still be a need for a government. But our present day danger is too much government. The government is becoming a sort of god-father, or a rich old uncle, to whom both groups and individuals go when they get in a tight financial spot. Christians pay taxes. No Christian should allow a duty to be imposed by his government that forces him to disobey God, or which involves him in such activities as make impossible the cultivation of the graces of a Christian.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Render to Caesar his dues.** It should be remembered that our text was called forth by a trap set by the Jews to ensnare Jesus. They asked him if it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. If he said it was not lawful, they could report him to the Romans; if he said it was lawful, he was not a loyal Jew and had no right to claim to be the Messiah. But when he answered in the words of our text, they were unable to accuse him to anybody. (1) Their use of Caesar's money was proof of their subjection to him and their dependence upon him. So Caesar did have a real claim upon them. If they had always rendered unto God the things they should, they would not have been under the rule of Caesar. But since they disobeyed God, they were subject to foreign rulers. (2) They actually owed Caesar something. Governments perform a service which costs money. Governments have to look to the people governed to defray the expenses of that government. Since Caesar governed the Jews, the Jews were obligated to pay for the service rendered. (3) To refuse to pay tribute to the government is to be a rebel, a crime against the government and a sin against God.

**2. Render to God the things that are his.** Some have thought this simply means to pay the temple tax which every Jew was obligated to pay. But the principle is much wider than that. As the image of Caesar on the coin was proof of Caesar's right to rule the people who used it, so the image of God in every human

being, though marred by sin, is proof of God's right to rule us and to receive from us that which he asks. (1) He asks for our heart, that it be given to him in undivided affection, that we love him with all our heart. (2) He asks that we give him our bodies in living sacrifices, and that we keep them pure and holy, not denied by sin. He wishes to make our bodies his dwelling place (1 Cor. 6: 19), for this reason he demands that they not at the same time be used for sinful purposes. (3) He asks that we give him our time and energy to do his will, to honor and glorify his great name among the people of the earth. In fact we are his, and he asks us that we give ourselves to him, that we recognize his ownership and that we declare it to the world by the way we live among men. This is what we owe to God, and what we are obligated to render to him as his due. To give him less is to deny his ownership, and his right to rule over us, and become rebels in his sight.

**3. No conflict between God and Caesar.** The Jews rankled under Roman dominion, and the loyalists among them contended that it was a sin to pay tribute to Caesar. "In discharging your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never depart from the duty you owe to God; but should remember, that as you bear the image of the great King omnipotent, you are his subjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of yourselves; that is, ought to yield yourselves to him, soul and body, serving him with both, to the utmost of your

power. The Pharisees, and their adherents, under pretense of religion, often justified sedition; but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themselves with the reigning powers, made them a compliment of their consciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, although directly contrary to divine law. Our Lord therefore when he returned this answer,

had both in his view exhorting them in their regards to God and the magistrate, to give each his due; because there is no inconsistency between their rights, when nothing but their rights are insisted on." (Macknight.) Governments sometime insist on more than is their rights, and when this is done, Christians must obey God rather than man, as did the apostles.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Mutual Obligations (Rom. 13: 1-7)

*Let every soul be in subjection.*

This exhortation was needed because

(1) there were many *Jews who* resented the sovereignty of Rome before they became Christians, and this feeling was likely to continue with them. (2) Rome was pagan in its religion, and Christians might think they should not even pay taxes to be used partially to support a heathen religion. (3) Rome required incense to be offered before a statue of the emperor on certain occasions, and Christians needed instructions as to what they should do and what they could not afford to do. (4) Since many Jews were in the church and Jews were known to be rebellious toward Rome, these Christians had to be more careful in their allegiance to the government lest the church get the reputation of being opposed to temporal rule. (5) The church was called the kingdom of Christ, and Jesus was called King, and they made it no secret that their first loyalty was to King Jesus, so they had to be careful not to resist the temporal power lest the government get the idea the kingdom of Christ was a rival temporal power.

*There is no power but of God.* God ordains or permits all powers, all governments. If there is one which he neither ordained nor permits, it exists in defiance of God and is a rival of God's authority.

*Powers that be are ordained of God.* The word translated ordained means to set in order, or arrange. This does not mean that God sanctions all a government does, for he does not; but it does mean that the government is of God in spite of the fact that a wicked man is in the office. We are obligated to respect

the office which is from God, though we cannot honor the man who holds the office.

*He that resisteth the power.* When rulers are not worthy of respect and when laws are not what we think they should be, it is easy to feel that we are not obligated to be submissive. This was especially true of the Jews who regarded the laws and rulers of Rome as inferior to the law of Moses and the sons of David. So to curb this inclination, Paul taught them that resistance to constituted authority was disobedience to God. And since all such disobedience to God is to be punished as sin, they would be careful to obey the power that be,

*Rulers are not a terror to good work.* Generally this is true. It is true in enough cases that we may join with Paul in accepting it as a rule. Yet there are many examples on record where rulers were a terror to good work. Rome herself was such within a few generations after Paul wrote this.

*Wouldest thou have no fear of the power?* Since rulers are a terror to evil works but not to good, it follows that if we will do good we need have no fear of the power. Paul wished Christians to make for themselves a reputation of being for the government instead of being against it; they were to act in such way that they would be praised by the power rather than prosecuted.

*He is a minister of God to thee for good.* Since the power is ordained of God, those in the office are called the ministers of God. God uses them for the good of all who do good. The word for minister means servant; it is our word for deacon. The President is God's deacon for our

good. The policeman on his beat is God's deacon for our welfare. Rulers in our country come nearer realizing their place as servants than do rulers in kingdoms and totalitarian states.

*He beareth not the sword in vain.* To bear, or wear, the sword is an expression which means that he exercises his authority not in vain. We would say the policeman does not wear his badge for show. The ruler is God's servant for the purpose of keeping order, for the protection of the good and the punishment of the evil.

*An avenger of wrath.* The ruler is a servant of God to wreak vengeance upon the wicked. God does not avenge sin openly in miraculous ways; he uses rulers to do it. All vengeance belongs to God. (Rom. 12: 19.) But God chooses the instruments through which he gets vengeance. God has in the past used nations to punish other nations for their sins, and there is no good reason to argue that he does not still operate on the same basis and by the same rule.

*Be in subjection for conscience' sake.* We are given two reasons why we should obey the rulers. (1) To escape the punishment which the ruler will inflict on all who disobey. (2) Since the power is of God and to resist the power is to resist God, our sense of right will not allow us to sin against God by resisting the power. For this reason the Christian is not primarily interested in whether a policeman is looking or not. God is looking all the time, and our first aim is to be pleasing to him. When our conscience with reference to him is satisfied, the policeman will have nothing to do.

*For this cause ye pay tribute.* What cause? You pay tribute to avoid the wrath, and for the sake of your conscience. Being God's servants to protect the good and Execute wrath on the wicked, the ruler has a right to demand tribute for his support; and since we enjoy the protection of the ruler, we are obligated to pay for it.

*Render to all their dues.* Tribute is the usual tax we pay. Custom is the duty imposed by law on certain commodities, especially when they are being taken from one country to

another. Fear refers to that attitude we should have toward the ruler for his power to execute the law to punish those who violate it. Honor is the attitude we should have toward those in high places; we are to respect highly those in honorable offices. Our American freedom of criticizing high officials can easily be carried far enough to violate this teaching of Paul.

## II. Subject for the Lord's Sake (1 Pet. 2: 13-16)

*Be subject to every ordinance of man.* The Greek word translated ordinance is not the word we had back in Rom. 13: 2. In the New Testament it usually means creation, but here it means an institution. "Every human institution" is the translation given by the Expositor's Greek New Testament. This would include every form of government under which Christians might live. The principle of government is from God, but God does not determine whether it is to be a kingdom, a republic, or a pure democracy. So regardless of what type we have, it is a matter of human discretion, and we are to accept it without rebellion because we prefer some other type.

*For the Lord's sake.* What Christians do either helps or hinders the Lord's work in the world. So for the sake of the Lord, and the extension of his kingdom, we are to be subject to the government under which we live. Since the Christian is a citizen in two kingdoms at once, one spiritual and the other temporal, it is easy to allow our interest in or our dislike of the temporal government to hinder our progress in the spiritual, or to embarrass the spiritual kingdom in the community where we live.

*Whether to the king as supreme.* Since Peter was writing to people who lived in Roman provinces, the reference to the king here is to Nero. Governors were men sent by the king to the outlying provinces. Pilate was governor in the time of Christ. Felix and Festus were governors with whom Paul had to deal. They were sent by the Roman government to rule and they were furnished enough soldiers to enforce their orders in their provinces.



*Vengeance on evil-doers.* Peter teaches the same thing as to the purpose of rulers that Paul taught the Romans. They are to punish the criminals and to praise the obedient. Christians should have no need for them except protection from the wicked and the regulation of legal affairs incident to the holding and selling of property, and so on.

*Put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Peter refers to this submission to rulers as well-doing, and says that in this way we may silence the ignorant accusations of men who may make charges against us. The word silence is from a word which means to muzzle. You may not be able to convince men, but you can muzzle them; you can live such an upright life that their criticism will reflect more upon them than upon you. When we live so that their accusations will be easy to believe, we are not living as scrupulously as Peter directs.

*As free, and not using your freedom as a cloak of wickedness.* They were made free by the Lord, but this freedom gave them no right to disregard the rulers under whom they lived. The Jews said they had never been in bondage to any man (John 8: 33.) At that time they were subjects of Rome, but they refused to admit it. They paid taxes and obeyed the law only because they were forced to do so. When they

came into the church they were likely to carry this same spirit of rebellion with them. To do so would be to make their freedom in Christ a cloak, a covering or excuse, for the wickedness of resisting the power of God in human government.

*As bondservants of God.* We are to consider ourselves the bondservants of God. This word bondservant means a slave. We are his by right of creation and redemption. Even if we feel that our freedom relieves us of subjection to human governments, we must recognize the fact that we are the slaves of God, and are therefore bound to obey him. But he has commanded us to be subject to the powers that be, subject to every human institution which punishes the wicked and protects the good, so in being obedient to God we will be submissive to the human government under which we live. This answered the Jew who said that he was subject to God and to him alone. When people remember that they are slaves of God, they will not be too high minded to obey God's servants. Jude rebukes those people who are proud, who "set at naught dominion, and rail at dignities." (Jude 8.) This is a good description of men who refuse to recognize their subjection to local governments, and who engage in harsh criticism of those who are in government positions.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Church and state are separate institutions, yet they may support each other. The state is lifted to a high and purer state of civilization wherever the gospel goes, and the church will benefit from the protecting and orderly influence of good government.

2. While government may be a help to the church, the church is not dependent upon the government for its existence. It has been known to live

and thrive in spite of every effort the government could possibly devise and execute to destroy it. Rome failed to *destroy the church* by persecution.

3. Does submission to the powers that be include obedience to traffic rules? Should a Christian's conscience be offended when he runs a traffic light? Are we bound to observe these rules for the Lord's sake? If so, how many of us will have to revise our driving?

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of this lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Introduction  
How old are human governments known to be?

What did Nebuchadnezzar learn about God's part in governments of men?  
What forms of government did the Jews have before they asked for a king?  
Why did God object to the appointment of a king?  
Name some of the purposes of a govern-

ment? If all were good, would we need a government?  
 What limitation is put upon their participation in government?

**Golden Text Explained**

Give the historical background of our Golden Text.  
 What was proof of Caesar's claim upon the Jews?  
 Why did the Jews owe Caesar something?  
 What was the consequence of their refusal to pay tribute?  
 Name and discuss three things included in rendering to God the things that are his.  
 When is there no conflict between what we owe to God and to Caesar?

**Mutual Obligations**

What was the attitude of Jews generally toward the Roman government?  
 What was the religion of Rome? How did this create a problem for the Christians?  
 Why did Christians in Roman territory have to be careful to obey the Jews?  
 Did the fact that the church is a kingdom have any effect on Christians in the government?  
 What is God's relation to all powers? Can there be a power not under his control?  
 Are the actions of all governments ordained of God?

How did Paul curb the inclination of the Jew to resist the powers that be?  
 To what are rulers a terror?  
 How may we live without fear of the law?  
 What is the relation of rulers to God?  
 Through whom does God exercise vengeance upon evil-doers?  
 What two reasons are given why Christians should obey the laws of the land?  
 Why do we pay taxes?  
 What is tribute? Custom? Fear? Honor?  
 To whom should they be paid?

**Subject For The Lord's Sake**

What is the meaning of the word ordinance in our text?  
 Does God ordain the peculiar form of government under which we live?  
 Do you know the different forms? Where each differs from the others?  
 What is meant by be subject for the Lord's sake?  
 Who was king in the Roman empire when this was written by Peter?  
 What was a governor? Can you name some Roman governors?  
 What is meant by putting to silence men who accuse us?  
 In what respect are Christians free?  
 What is our relationship to God?  
 Why will obedience to God force us to be submissive to the government?  
 How does Jude describe people who refuse to be subject to the powers that be?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson VI—August 5, 1951**  
**CHRISTIANS AS NEIGHBORS**

**The Lesson Text**

**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 Je'-sus, And who is my neighbor?

30 Je'-sus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Je-ru'-sa-lem to Jer'-i-cho; 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 me other side.

32 And in like manner a Le'-vite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Sa-mar'-i-tan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion,

34 And he 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 Je'-sus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 22: 34-40.

### Daily Bible Readings

July 30. M..... What the Law Required as Neighbors (Lev. 19: 11-18)  
 July 31. T..... Love of Neighbor and Eternal Life (Matt. 19: 16-22)  
 August 1. W..... The Early Church and Love of Neighbors (Acts 4: 32-37)  
 August 2. T..... Love of Neighbor Fulfills the Law (Rom. 13: 8-10)  
 August 3. F..... Love Fulfills the Royal Law (James 2: 1-13)  
 August 4. S..... Love of Brethren Required (1 John 2: 7-17)  
 August 5. S..... A Man Who Neglected His Neighbor (Luke 16: 19-31)

TIME.—A.D. 28.

PLACE.—Somewhere east of Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus and a lawyer.

### Introduction

The story of the good Samaritan has a lot of human appeal about it. Humanity makes very little change through the centuries, so the things true of humanity in general then are still true. Humanity then had the superior race problem just like we have today. The Jews hated the Samaritans, and had no dealings with them. (John 4: 9b.) This all began back in the days just after Solomon's death when the people asked Rehoboam to lower the taxes. When he refused to do so, ten tribes pulled off and established the northern kingdom, known as the kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 12.) The northern kingdom was carried into captivity and in their place Assyrians were settled. These Assyrians married Jews who were left there, and so a mixed race was the result. When the kingdom of Judah had served seventy years in Babylon, they returned to rebuild Jerusalem. These mixed people of Samaria wished to have part with them in rebuilding the city but were not allowed to do so. (Neh. 4.) This enmity continued until the days of our Lord. The Jews thought of themselves as the chosen of God, as being acceptable to God on account of their relation to Abraham, and they considered all other people as lost.

Another thing we see in this les-

son which is common is the fact that sometimes we can find better characters among the despised groups than some in the superior group. The Jews claimed to be *the* people of God, and to them Samaritans were no better than dogs. Yet this Samaritan man, a nobody, was more human, did more good, than the most religious men among the Jews. Often today we find the most liberal and charitable people of a community are not members of the church. The Jews taught the law and traditions and kept up the forms of worship, but they forgot to practice what they preached. Such is often the case with the church in a community. If you wish to know what is the *doctrine* of the gospel, just ask the people of the church; but if you wish to see the *practice* of the gospel, especially in the matter of charity, you may have to look outside the church to find it.

In order to evade being embarrassed, the lawyer tried to justify himself. It is difficult to break down and confess our sins, to let our weaknesses be known. It is human to cover such things to keep our associates from knowing them. This lawyer was a perfect specimen of humanity in this respect. He came to make trial of the Lord; he went away trying to cover up his own weakness.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. The love of self.** The measure of our love for our neighbor is the love we have for self. Love for self is manifested in feeding, clothing,

sheltering one's self, and in every way looking out for one's best interests. So if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we will do just

that for our neighbors. "By this rule we are taught to bear with, love, and forgive him; to rejoice in his felicity, mourn in his adversity, desire and delight in his prosperity, and promote it to the utmost of our power; instruct his ignorance, help him in his weakness, and risk even our life for his sake, and for the public good. In a word, we must do everything in our power, through all the possible varieties of circumstances, for our neighbors, which we would wish them to do for us, were our stations reversed." (Adam Clarke.)

**2. Love identifies itself With its object.** People who love God with all their hearts try to become like God in their lives. People who love the world and the things of the world become degraded in thought and life, they become like the world they love. God is higher than we, and our love for him lifts us up toward his level. The world is lower than we, and our love for it pulls us downward toward its level. Love for people will cause us to identify ourselves with them to the extent that we will not think ourselves better than they, in the sense of being superior to them, and more acceptable to God because of race, station, or education. The Samaritan loved humanity to the extent that he could identify himself with a human being in whatever condition he found him, and he would do for that brother human being whatever he would do for himself, or whatever he would wish one to do for him if conditions were reversed. (1) This is the solution of the race problem. It solved the race problem between the Samaritan and the Jew. We see the solution in

the Samaritan, and we can safely imagine that it was solved thereafter in the heart of the Jew who was saved by the Samaritan. *How could that Jew hate a Samaritan after that experience?* (2) This is the solution of church troubles. Loving one another as we love ourselves will keep us from talking about each other to the hurt of our characters. Love will not prevent difference of ideas, but it will guarantee a peaceful settlement of our differences. (3) This is also the solution of family troubles. If each member of the family loves every other member of the family as he loves himself, no one in that family will ever knowingly injure another. And if an injury is done in ignorance, correction will be made as soon as his attention is called to it. And the one who has been injured will accept apology, forgive, and forget the incident as quickly as possible.

**3. Such love Is imperative.** This is one of the demands of the Lord which begins with "Thou shalt." It is not left to our discretion. It is not something we may do if we think it is reasonable. Neither is it something we may do if we think the neighbor is worthy of our love. Next, it is to be remembered that this is the second most important command God has given. The first is that we love God with all our hearts. Hence *only one commandment precedes this one in importance.* And, next, all the law may be summed up in these two commandments. If we love God, we will do all he wishes us to do for him; if we love our neighbor, we will do all that is right toward him.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Question Regarding Eternal Life

(Luke 10: 25-28)

*A certain lawyer stood up and made trial.* There is some discussion as to the identity of lawyers in the New Testament. Some say it is just another term for scribes. But Luke 11: 44, 45, in the King James version, indicates a difference. If there was a difference in their work, the same person doubtless often combined the offices, being both a scribe and a lawyer. Their duties were, (1)

to study and interpret the law; (2) to instruct the Hebrew youth in the law; (3) decide questions in the law. It was unlawful to record judicial decisions of these lawyers, so it was necessary that young men wishing to become lawyers memorize a great body of material. This lawyer came to Jesus to make trial of him, that is, to put a question to him which he could not answer without involving himself with some part of the Jewish people,

*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* This was a common question, being asked by another some months later. (Matt. 19: 16ff.) It implies (1) that people do not now possess eternal life. The young man of Matt. 19 was an exceedingly fine character, but did not have eternal life. (2) It implies that eternal life is conditional, that the enjoyment of it depends upon the desire of man as well as upon the willingness of God to grant it. (3) It implies that man must do something to get eternal life. It goes without argument that man cannot pay for eternal life, but still he must do something to get it. We conclude, therefore, that man's obedience is to manifest his faith and his desire to obtain eternal life, and not to pay for it.

*What is written in the law?* Jesus pointed the lawyer to the law. Did obedience to the law have anything to do with gaining eternal life? There is no principle more clearly taught in the scriptures than that, obedience leads to life and disobedience leads to death. So today if people wish to have eternal life, they must read what the Lord has said, and they must be willing to do what he said.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* This is like his answer to another lawyer who tried to entrap him. (Matt. 22: 35-40.) On that occasion Jesus told the lawyer that this is the first, the greatest, commandment of the law. There is *no duty of man* paramount to this one. (1) To love God with the whole heart is to put him first in our affections, and to allow no one nor anything a place in our affections contrary to the will and wish of God. To love that which is not in harmony with the nature of God is to set an idol in our hearts. (2) To love God with all our soul is to love him more than we love life, to be willing to die rather than cease to love and honor him. (Acts 20: 24; 21: 13.) (3) To love God with all our strength is to exert all our powers, to exhaust all our energy, to consume all our vitality in our work of love. (4) To love God with all the mind is to use all the powers of the intellect in the knowledge and appreciation of God and his works. "In a word, he who sees

God in all things—thinks of him at all times—having his mind fixed continually upon God, acknowledging him in all his ways—who begins, continues, and ends all his thoughts, words, and works, to the glory of his name;—this is the person who *loves* God with all his heart, life, strength, and intellect." (Adam Clarke.)

*This do, and thou shalt live.* The lawyer came to question Jesus, but Jesus questioned him, and did so in a way which made him *condemn* himself. The lawyer could not afford to give the correct answer, for to do so would reflect upon his knowledge and ability as a lawyer. So Jesus told him he could have eternal life if he would practice what he preached. There is no more effective way of silencing an enemy than to force him to teach the truth and then agreeing with him. And here, again, we have emphasized the principle that life is promised to them that do. (Heb. 5: 9; Rev. 22: 14.)

## II. Question Regarding Our Neighbor

(Luke 10: 29-37)

*Who is my neighbor?* We are told that this question was asked in an effort of the lawyer to justify himself. It is possible that many in the crowd listening to him knew that the lawyer, though his forms of worship were faultless, had not loved his neighbor as himself. And doubtless the lawyer was conscious of having attempted to *destroy* the reputation and influence of Jesus who had never done him a wrong. He came there for that very purpose. If he be allowed to say who is his neighbor, he could say that he loved his neighbor. Are we not all in the same situation? Then Jesus gave the parable of the good Samaritan to teach the man who his neighbor was.

*Man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.* "The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is eighteen miles long, and descends 3,500 feet. About two miles from Jerusalem it passes through Bethany, and for the rest of the eighteen miles it passes through desolate mountain ravines without any habitation save the inn, the ruins of which are still seen about half way to Jericho. This district from that time till the present has been noted for

robberies, and Jerome tells us that the road was called the "bloody way." (McGarvey.) We are also told that the sides of the hills and ravines were honeycombed with caves, making excellent hiding places for robbers who infested that region.

*He fell among robbers.* This was no unusual occurrence on this road. We are not told who the traveler was, or his rank or station in life. From the trend of the story we might well conclude that he was a Jew. The thieves took both his money and his clothing, and no doubt thought they took his life; they left him half dead.

*A certain priest going down that way.* If the unfortunate man was conscious at the time the priest came near, no doubt his hopes revived at his sight. He thought surely this priest will help me. The priests lived from the tithes of the people, hence to some extent were dependent upon the people for their living. The priests were servants of the people. Like preachers of today, they were representatives of God, standing for all that is right and good. The man had a right to expect the priest would take time to help him. But Jesus said he passed by on the other side; he refused to render first aid to a man in need. Such action on the part of those who minister cannot keep from making those who see it think less of the religion we profess.

*A Levite also passed by on the other side.* Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, had three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Aaron, the first high priest and brother of Moses, was of the family of Kohath. (Ex. 6: 16ff.) Priests were selected from the family of Aaron. The rest of the Kohathites and the Gershonites and Merarites were called Levites, but they did not have a chance to become priests. (Num. 3: 17-20.) The Levites had cities given them, but they had no inheritance among the other tribes, and they lived of the tithes of the rest of the people. They served the priests about the temple, keeping the temple clean and helping to make the sacrifices required of the people. The sufferer by the wayside had a right to ex-

pect this Levite to help him, but he passed by on the other side.

*A certain Samaritan came.* The sufferer had little right to expect this man to help him, and if he were as strict as many of the Jews he would hardly want him to help him. Jesus said he was moved with compassion. This expression is rarely used with reference to anybody except Jesus. To show his compassion, he bound up his wounds and poured in oil and wine. This was the best first aid treatment that could have been given in that day. He put the man on his beast and took him to the inn, or tourist court, where he cared for him through the night. Notice (1) he lost time caring for the man. Many of us do not have time for others. (2) He put himself to the inconvenience of walking while the sufferer rode. (3) He gave personal attention to the man in need. (4) He spent money on the unfortunate man. These are among the very things we excuse ourselves from doing in various ways.

*When I come back, I will repay thee.* After spending the night with the injured man, the Samaritan paid the inn-keeper, left some extra money for the man. But to make sure he had plenty to keep him as long as he needed to stay, he told the inn-keeper that he would pay the man's bill. This suggests (1) liberality on the part of the Samaritan; (2) unselfishness in the use of his money; and (3) he had a reputation for honesty; he was a man the inn-keeper could trust to pay his debts.

*Which was neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?* The lawyer was forced through self-respect to answer the Lord's question correctly. Notice that the lawyer asked, Who is my neighbor? And Jesus told a story which proved that the Samaritan was neighbor to the man in need. Yet this story is given to illustrate the law of loving one's neighbor as himself. Should the man in need love the Samaritan as he loved himself? Or was the story told to show how the Samaritan loved the man in need as he loved himself? We must either admit there was a change in the point of view as the story progressed, or we must conclude that Jesus in-

tended for us to get the lesson that each was neighbor to the other. Certainly the Samaritan was neighbor to the man in need, as the conclusion of the story says. But showing how to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, Jesus showed how the Samaritan loved the wounded man, making the wounded man the Samaritan's neighbor. So I am a neighbor to all that are in need whom I have opportunity and ability to help, and they are neighbors to me.

Go, and do thou likewise. The

lawyer would not use the hated name of Samaritan, when he answered the question of Jesus; he spoke of him as the one who showed mercy. How humiliating it must have been to this lawyer to hear Jesus telling him to imitate this despised Samaritan. Jesus did not suggest to the lawyer that one such single act would do him any good, but he commended this way of life to him. If we will fill our lives with such deeds of neighborliness, we will have hope of eternal life. (Matt. 25: 31-46.)

**Topics for Discussion**

1. Three financial philosophies are suggested in this story. (1) The robbers: What is thine is mine also and I'll get it if I have to injure you. (2) The priest and Levite: What is mine is mine and I'll keep it regardless of your needs. (3) The Samaritan: What is mine is thine also and I'll share it with you to the extent of your needs. Which is yours?

2. The robbers saw in the man an opportunity for exploitation. People whose only use for others is what they can get out of them are of this class. The priest and Levite saw in the man someone to ignore. Those

who ignore the poor and those who have no social standing are of this class. The Samaritan saw in the man someone to serve. There are always a number of people on our way in life who need our service. Whom will we imitate?

3. The Samaritan did not withhold service until he could argue to a conclusion the race problem of his day. Those who allow the race problem to keep them from serving Jesus in suffering humanity, may, in the judgment, wish they had been of the other race.

**Questions for the Class**

What Is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What was the attitude of Jews toward Samaritans?  
Give a brief history of the rise of Samaria, and why its people differed from the Jews.  
What lesson is suggested by this story as to where we may find real charity?  
What contrast is suggested with reference to the doctrine and practice of the gospel?  
Why do we try to justify ourselves before our friends?

**Golden Text Explained**

What should be the measure of our love for our neighbor?  
Is it wrong for one to love himself?  
How do we manifest our love for ourselves?  
What is the tendency of the one who loves toward the object of his love?  
What will this do for the race problem among us? Illustrate.  
What bearing will this have on church troubles?  
What effect will this have on family troubles?  
What is said about the imperativeness of

How does this commandment rank with the many other commandments of the Lord?  
How many laws may be summed up in this one commandment?

**Questions Regarding Eternal Life**

Who were lawyers? What of their work?  
What question did the lawyer ask? Discuss three implications.  
To what did Jesus point the lawyer for the answer to his question?  
What is meant by loving with all one's heart? Soul? Strength? Mind?  
What is promised to all who do this?  
What is the connection between doing and eternal life?

**Question Regarding Our Neighbor**

What effort did the lawyer make on his own behalf?  
How was he violating the law of love at this very time?  
What do you know of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho?  
Of what race do you think the wounded man was a member?  
What right did the wounded man have to think the priest would help him?  
Of what tribe were the priests? Of what family of Levi?  
What was the relation of the Levites to the priests?  
What was the attitude of the Samaritan toward the wounded man?

In what four ways did the Samaritan show his compassion to the wounded?  
 How did the Samaritan manifest his liberality? His unselfishness?  
 What shows that the Samaritan had a reputation for honesty?  
 Who is my neighbor?

To whom am I a neighbor? Show how the lesson proves it.  
 How did the lawyer show his pride and hatred for the Samaritan?  
 What in the teaching of Jesus was humiliating to the lawyer?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

Lesson VII—August 12, 1951

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIBERTY

The Lesson Text

Rom. 14: 13-23

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling.

14 I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Je'-sus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men.

19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

20 Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21 It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.

22 The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God. Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth.

23 But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

GOLDEN TEXT.— *All things are lawful; but not all things edify.*" (1 Cor. 10: 23b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 8: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 6. M..... Liberty from Bondage to Law (Gal. 4: 1-11)
- August 7. T..... For Freedom Christ Set Us Free (Gal. 5: 1-15)
- August 8. W..... Liberty Is Found in Obedience (John 8: 31-42)
- August 9. T. .. Liberty Follows Obedience from the Heart (Rom. 6: 15-23)
- August 10. F..... Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon (Matt. 6: 19-34)
- August 11. S..... Give No Occasion of Stumbling (1 Cor. 10: 14-33)
- August 12. S..... Paul's Liberty Exercised (Acts 21: 17-30)

TIME.—A.D. 58 or 59.

PLACE.—Paul wrote from Corinth to Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and Christians then and now.

Introduction

Liberty means "freedom from external restraint or compulsion." (Webster.) There can be no such thing as absolute liberty as long as we live in society. The rights of others must

be taken into consideration. When one fails to take into consideration the rights of others, we say he is abusing his liberty, and this is license rather than liberty. We say we live



in a land of liberty, yet there are many laws to regulate this free people. So liberty does not mean that there are no laws of restraint or compulsion. We have liberty in Christ, but that does not mean that there are no laws to regulate our life in Christ. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps (Jer. 10: 23), hence we must look to God for direction in our work and worship.

There are essentials, matters of principle, based upon the nature of Christianity and the authority of Christ, about which we have no choice. They are taught either by direct commandment, approved apostolic example, or necessary inference, and are conditions of our salvation and continued acceptance with God. Then there are incidentals, matters of expediency, which we may do or not, or we may do this way or that, without affecting our relationship with the Lord. With reference to the former we must obey regardless of what effect it may have on other

people; with respect to the latter we may, and should, order our conduct in deference to the wishes and consciences of others. Though we may feel that we have the right and liberty to follow one course, it may be best for the salvation of a soul, or the peace of a church, to follow another course. Proper love and consideration for our fellowman will determine the course we are to follow. To indulge in the enjoyment of a liberty which causes another to be lost is to manifest a brand of selfishness and lack of love for humanity which is inconsistent with the example of Christ and the fundamental principles of Christianity. Paul became all things to all men that he might, win some. (1 Cor. 9: 19-23.) Probably he was acting on this principle when he was purifying himself in the temple in Jerusalem. (Acts 21: 23, 24.) Yet he refused to compromise a principle of the truth at Antioch when both Peter and Barnabas were against him. (Gal. 2: 11ff.)

### Golden Text Explained

**1. All things are lawful.** The *all things* here must be taken in a limited sense, for certainly Paul is not affirming that it is lawful to indulge in anything and everything a person might desire. Things which in themselves are indecent and immoral cannot be included. MacKnight translates "All meats," instead of all things, but perhaps this is too much of a restriction to put on the statement. It is generally agreed that this is taken from a statement in the letter which the church at Corinth wrote to Paul. Either the writer of the letter was making an argument for the right to do things to which others objected, or the writer was setting forth an argument made by some in the church to justify their loose actions. Their argument was that since God put desires in the human body, it is not wrong to indulge these desires, to use them for our enjoyment. This argument was used even for justification of gluttony and fornication. (1 Cor. 6: 12ff.) Paul uses the statement three times, but each time he qualifies it so as to limit its application. The force of these limitations is to deny

the truthfulness of the statement, when taken in its fullest sense. "By 'all things,' of course, is only meant 'all things which are indifferent in themselves.' They erroneously applied this maxim of Christian liberty to that which was inherently sinful, and thus were tempted to make then-liberty a cloak of viciousness." (Pulpit Commentary.)

**2. Limitations of the rule.** (1) The first limitation we consider is that in our text, all things do not edify. Some things lawful to me would not edify the church, so for the sake of the edification of the church I should refrain from those things. I might wish to sing my sermons to the church, but having a very poor voice I am driving people away; I insist there is no law against it, that I have the right to do it if I wish. Yet regard for the edification of the church will force me to forego my pleasure. Any course of conduct on the part of any member of the church with reference to matters of indifference which creates dissension and threatens to divide the church, rather than to build it up, should be given up regardless

of how much it may appeal to the person, or persons, involved.

(2) The second limitation to the rule is that not all things are expedient. The word expedient means, "Apt and suitable to the end in view." (Webster.) A Christian's object is to honor and glorify God, to save lost souls, and edify the church. Some things of an indifferent nature might be lawful to me, but they are not apt and suitable to the accomplishment of this object of a Christian's life. There seems to be no law against preachers using tobacco. We make arguments and reach conclusions which seem to us to have the force of a positive law, but the man who smokes is not at all convinced. However it must be *admitted that it makes no contribution* to the accomplishment of a Christian's primary object in life.

Again, a thing is not expedient when it establishes a definite trend in the wrong direction. There may be no wrong *in* the thing itself, but it may be a straw which indicates that the direction a person or a church is going is definitely wrong. We have fought choirs to render our praise in song, but now we are cultivating choruses and using them part-time. Maybe there is no positive violation of a direct commandment, but is it expedient? Is it a safe practice? Does it tend toward that which is wrong?

(3) The third limitation is not to be brought under the power of any. (1 Cor. 6: 12b.) Food is lawful, but a glutton is a slave. A reasonable amount of pleasure is lawful, but *one can become a slave so that he loves pleasure more than he loves God.* (2 Tim. 3: 4.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Liberty Versus Charity (Rom. 14: 13-15a)

*Let us not therefore judge one another.* Paul has two classes under consideration, the weak in faith and the strong. The weak are those who are troubled about scruples; who are overly careful lest they do wrong. The strong are those who have no scruples in the field of indifferent matters, who have a good understanding of things lawful. Paul taught the weak *not* to condemn the strong for the exercise of his liberty; and he taught the strong not to despise the weak on account of his scruples. The weak usually overlook the duty they have toward the strong, and demand that the strong make all the adjustment. It is as much the duty of the weak not to judge, or condemn the strong, as it is the duty of the strong not to despise the weak. The law of charity demands that both exercise proper consideration for the other.

*No man put a stumblingblock in his brother's way.* The statement above about judging is directed to the weak brother, but this one is directed to the strong. The weak are not to condemn, but the strong are not to cause their brother to stumble. The stumblingblock or occasion of falling means any word

or act of the strong which might cause the weak to sin. This might be done (1) by discouraging one so as to cause him to quit the church, or (2) causing that one to follow our example to do a thing, lawful to us because of our knowledge, but unlawful to him because he thinks it is wrong, and so to commit sin. The law of charity demands that we love our brother too much to treat him in such manner.

*Nothing is unclean of itself.* This refers to food made clean or unclean by the law. Paul knew the law regulating such things was no longer in force, that all meats were clean, and nothing to be rejected. (1 Tim. 4: 1-4.) Nothing is unclean save to him who accounts it unclean. To him who so accounts it, it is unclean. Its uncleanness does not rest on the quality of the food, or the condition of the food, or the lawfulness of it. But when one holds a thing to be unclean, unlawful, to him it is so.

*If because of meat thy brother is grieved.* The word grieve usually means to suffer grief, or to be an occasion of grief to one. But here it seems to be used in the place of the stumblingblock or occasion of falling of verse 13. And this agrees with an old meaning of the word, "To injure; harm." (Webster.) When

people are offended, that is, get angry, because of something we do, they say they are grieved, or offended as a weak brother, and that we must refrain from doing it because it displeases them. This has been overworked by chronic grouches and objectors. If they are not inclined to follow our example to do a thing which would violate their consciences, they have no right to ask us to refrain.

*Thou walkest no longer in love.* This is the law of charity. If we love others, we will not do anything knowingly to cause them to sin; we will forego any selfish pleasure which might be the cause of their falling and being lost.

## II. Liberty and Self-Denial (Rom. 14: 15b-18)

*Destroy not with thy meat.* This is addressed to the strong, and all Gentiles were in this class, who felt that all meats were lawful. Paul tells them they should be willing to deny themselves the pleasure of eating such meats as the weak objected to in order to save those for whom Christ died. After all, meat is not worth as much to the strong as life is to the weak, so the strong are expected to make the sacrifice instead of the weak. Can one be destroyed if Christ died to save him? The old doctrine of limited atonement held by the Calvinists said all for whom Christ died were predestined to go to heaven, and nothing to keep them from going. And some still hold a similar doctrine, that when one once becomes a child of God nothing can keep him from going to heaven, not even his own sinfulness. This one for whom Christ died here is the weak brother, a Christian, whom Paul says can be destroyed by the exercise of the liberty of the strong.

*Let not then your good be evil spoken of.* The good here is that which the strong have liberty to do, that which in the field of indifference they are allowed to do. But they are to deny themselves the pleasure of doing it lest the weak criticize them and the church. On account of the criticism, the critics, the church, and you will suffer, hence it is better to deny yourself the pleasure of doing such.

*Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.* The kingdom is the church, and it does not consist of such temporal things as eating and drinking, and one's standing in the kingdom is not to be determined, or measured, by his eating and drinking things clean or unclean. But the kingdom consists of (1) righteousness, that is, right conduct toward others, right living from day to day. (2) It consists of peace, that is, conducting ourselves in such way as to promote peace in the church, community, and family. (3) The kingdom consists of joy, that is, happiness and contentment with our *lot in this life*, bearing our trials in joy, and doing all things without murmuring.

*In the Holy Spirit.* This modifies all three, not merely joy. Each and all three are produced in the heart and life by the agency of the Holy Spirit. He is the author of all. He does not work them miraculously, nor immediately by direct impact of Holy Spirit upon human spirit, but they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit nonetheless. (Gal. 5: 22, 23.)

*Well-pleasing to God, and approved of men.* He that serves Christ in this way, that is, this self-denying and charitable way; he who recognizes that the kingdom is not meat and drink, but gives emphasis to righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Holy Spirit, he is well-pleasing to God and is approved by men. This course is approved by all, though we may not be able to convince all that we follow this course. Not all men approved of Jesus though he followed such a course.

## III. Liberty and Christian Helpfulness (Rom. 14: 19-23)

Follow after *things which make for peace.* Following our personal inclinations, satisfying our personal desires produces contention, strife, and division; but following after the good of others, and the building up of the body of Christ will produce peace. It is a mark of a Christian to be known for the ability to live at peace with others and to get others to live in peace with each other.

*Things whereby we may edify one another.* We are to give ourselves to the work of building each other up,

strengthening and encouraging each other, rather than antagonizing one another and provoking one another to harsh criticisms and anathemas. This is a very much needed exhortation at this time. If brethren will see that their chief aim in life is to promote peace in the church and to edify the church, and if they will use their time and ability, their papers, books, and schools to do such, their conduct will be well-pleasing to God and approved by all men.

*Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God.* The work of God is the soul saved by grace, growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. If one persists in his liberty to the destruction of a child of God, he will be hindering rather than helping others. Liberty at the cost of a human soul is mighty high priced liberty.

*It is evil for that man who eateth with offence.* Paul admits that all meats are clean, and all matters of indifference are permissible, but it is evil to eat meat or to do any permissible thing, if by doing so we give offense to others. Some have taken this to mean that it is evil to do that which is offensive to him. This is true, but this is not what Paul is teaching here. The evil of this verse is in the strong man who does a permissible thing in spite of the fact it causes his brother to stumble. His sin is not in doing the permissible thing, but in causing his brother to sin. That this is the meaning of the verse is made sure by the following statement: "It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth." The word *stumbleth* defines the word *offence* in the preceding verse, and shows that offence is not simply anger or displeasure.

*It is good not to drink wine.* Here is a specific mention of drinking intoxicating liquor when our drinking

may serve as an example to others that will cause them to stumble. Some say they can take a drink occasionally without any injury to themselves. That may be true, but what of the children, the boys, and other men of the community? Can they take a drink occasionally without injury? Paul says it is not good to drink wine when this liberty of yours causes others to stumble. In this way you overthrow the work of God, you destroy him for whom Christ died.

*The faith which thou hast.* The word faith in these closing verses is the persuasion of the right or wrong of a thing; it is not merely the belief of testimony. The faith, the persuasion that a thing is right, but which is offensive to others, keep it to yourself—have it between yourself and God. The law of Christian helpfulness forbids that you enjoy your liberty, though it does not demand a change in your faith.

*Happy is he that judgeth not himself.* You esteem a thing right, and it is right, but others are destroyed by your doing it, and so you are condemned, not because of the thing you did which was your liberty, but because you destroyed a brother in the exercise of your liberty.

*He that doubteth is condemned if he eat.* The weak brother who follows your example and does a thing he believes is wrong, does not eat of faith, that is, of the persuasion that he is doing right, is condemned. He is not condemned because of the sinfulness of the thing done, for it was not wrong, but he is condemned because he violated his conscience in doing a thing he thought was wrong. Anything we do which we think is wrong is a thing not of faith, and is therefore sin. This passage has been used to prove that a thing which is not taught in God's word is sinful. (Rom. 10: 17.) But this is a misuse of it.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Is it right to allow a few weak (?) brethren to hinder a church in every forward move it wishes to make in the matter of a new building which is badly needed, or a greater missionary program, and other such improvements, just because they will get

offended if the church overrides their veto?

2. There is a difference between a weak brother who may be led into sin by following the example of the strong brother, and the hard-headed old objector who is going to take of-

fence, get angry, if things do not go to suit him. Unlimited consideration is due the former, but sharp and speedy discipline is due the latter.

3. The independent self-important

brother who feels himself amenable to no one, who will do what he pleases regardless of what effect it may have on others, is about as much unlike Jesus Christ as a man can get.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What is the meaning of liberty? License? Does liberty imply a total absence of laws? Distinguish between essentials and incidentals in Christianity. Illustrate. What determines our course with reference to essentials? What determines our course in matters of expediency? Give examples of Paul becoming all things to all men to save some.

**Golden Text Explained**

What did Paul say was lawful for him? With what limitations is the statement to be taken? What gross sins did some use this principle to justify? Can you show that all things are lawful provided they edify? Discuss expediency as a limitation to things lawful. Can you show that all things are lawful provided they do not enslave you?

**Liberty Versus Charity**

What two classes are considered? What does Paul teach each class? What is meant by putting a stumbling-block in another's way? What did Paul mean by saying that nothing is unclean of itself? When is a brother really grieved by our actions?

What is the law of charity toward the weak brother?

**Liberty and Self-Denial**

What was the attitude of the strong toward meats? Can a saved person be destroyed? What doctrines are involved here? What is meant by our good being evil spoken of? What does Paul say the kingdom is not? Explain his meaning. Name and discuss the three things Paul says the kingdom is. What did Paul mean by saying these things are in the Holy Spirit? What is said of all who follow this course of conduct?

**Liberty and Christian Helpfulness**

After what things are we to follow? What are some of those things? What is meant by following after things that edify one another? What is the work of God which may be overthrown for meat's sake? What is meant by eating with offence? Who does that? What lesson do we have here against occasional drinking of intoxicants? What is the meaning of faith in these closing verses? What does the law of Christian helpfulness forbid in this connection? Who is the happy man in this lesson? Explain. Who is condemned if he eats? Explain why. What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson VIII—August 19, 1951**

**THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS THINKING**

**The Lesson Text**

**Psalms 19: 14; Prov. 4: 23; Mark 7: 21-23; Phil. 4: 8**

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in thy sight, O Je-ho'-vah, my rock, and my redeemer.

23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

22 Covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man.

8 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For as he thinketh within himself, so is he."* (Prov. 23: 7a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 15: 10-20.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- August 13. M..... The Righteous Meditate on the Law (Psalm 1)
- August 14. T..... Benefits of Meditating on the Law (Psalm 119: 9-16)
- August 15. W..... Attitudes Determined By the Law (Psalm 119: 97-104)
- August 16. T..... "Try Me, and Know My Thoughts" (Psalm 139: 17-24)
- August 17. F..... "Apply Thy Heart Unto Instruction" (Prov. 23: 12-26)
- August 18. S..... Think Soberly of Self (Rom. 12: 1-8)
- August 19. S..... "Be Not Wise in Your Own Conceits" (Rom. 12: 9-21)

TIME.—About 1025 B.C. for Psalms; about 1000 B.C. for Proverbs; A.D. 28 for Mark; and A.D. 63 for Philippians.

PLACES.—Jerusalem for Psalms and Proverbs; probably Capernaum for Mark; and Rome for Philippians.

PERSONS.—David, Solomon, Jesus, Paul, and all Christians.

**Introduction**

The importance of right thinking cannot be over-estimated. The thinking of young people is even more important than that of mature people, for they are forming character. The things about which they think become a part of them for all their life, so they should have some guidance as to the things they read and the associations they keep. One cannot build a beautiful brick or stone house if he has no better material than mud and straw. So young people cannot build a fine spiritual character if they have nothing better than the average magazine and picture show furnishes as material for building of character. Through thinking, meditation, the material we get by seeing and hearing is turned into character. Meditation is in the process of character building what digestion and assimilation are in the process of body building; it turns thoughts and feelings into character. But one's meditation depends on what he sees and hears. If he sees and hears low, vicious, and vulgar things, his meditations will be on that plane; and the char-

acter he forms will be of that type. But if he sees and hears holy spiritual things, his meditation will be along such lines, and his character of that type.

Mature people cannot afford to disregard their thinking. Let no one conclude that since he has built a holy character, he can now cease to give attention to the plane of his thinking and maintain a holy character. Tomorrow we will be doing what we are thinking about today. The mature heart can be corrupted the same as the young heart, and the man who shuts his eyes to such a possibility is foolish, and he is giving the devil an advantage of himself that he will likely regret. Would you bathe in the filthy water of a pigsty when you could as easily bathe in the crystal pure pool fresh from a spring? Why bathe the mind in the impurities offered by salacious conversation, magazines, and picture shows, when you may as easily bathe the mind in pure ennobling and elevating sentiments offered by better literature and conversation becoming to saints?

**Golden Text Explained**

**1. Teaching of the context.** Solomon says we should not eat the bread of one who has an evil eye. By this he means that we should not accept an invitation from a covetous man to eat with him. A broader application would be that we should not accept gifts from covetous people, because

they will grudge everything we take, and think less of us for accepting their gifts. Solomon then represents the man with the evil eye as saying to you, "Eat and drink," but his heart is not with you. He invites you to eat and drink with him, but in his heart he wishes you would not do it

for he hates to see his food consumed by another. Solomon says that in reality the man is what he is in his heart, and not what he would have you think of him as indicated by his actions. He is at heart, not only a covetous man, but a hypocrite as well. He desires the good will of people, so invites them to eat and drink with him; but he is so covetous that he grudges what they consume. Solomon continues in these words: "The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words." When you have taken leave and have given consideration to what you have done, you will regret that you ever accepted his invitation.

## 2. Reflections and applications. (1)

People are not always what they profess to be, so we should exercise care to determine what they are at heart. Since the heart is the source of our words and deeds, it is not difficult to read a man's heart. We must be careful not to misjudge; we must judge righteous judgment, which is not always according to appearance. (John 7: 24.) (2) We must always remember that a man is to be measured by the heart and not by outward appearance. With reference to the other fellow, this will cause us to exercise caution in all our dealings with others. Next, it will teach us not to give too much credit to outward appearance. Jesus said, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7: 24.) Many times young people, especially, are taken off their feet by the good appearance of people, and by their fair speech. On the other hand they are inclined to mark a man

as a failure if he does not make a fine appearance and use choice language. No greater mistake can be made when measuring character. Look past the clothing and see what he is in his heart, and you will know what the man really is. Next, this should cause us to give more attention to grooming the inner man than we give to grooming the outer man. Peter gives some very valuable instruction to women, telling them not to spend so much time and effort in adorning the physical man as they give to "the hidden man of the heart." (1 Pet. 3: 3-6.) Solomon said, "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised." (Prov. 31: 30.) In this verse he teaches us not to put too much time and attention to the physical man which passes away; but we are to spend much time and effort on the spiritual man made beautiful in the fear of Jehovah, for this part of man lasts forever. (3) Our self-respect can be maintained only when we judge properly and act in harmony with it. If we accept from the hypocritical and covetous man, we will think little of ourselves, knowing that we accepted, not for the sentiment with the gift, but for the value of the gift alone. Our self-respect is worth more to us than the value of any gift man can bestow, hence we are to refuse. (4) Feed your heart upon that which is good and pure, since your real character is to be determined by what you are in heart. One cannot be good at heart without taking his spiritual food from a pure source.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Pray for Right Thoughts (Psa. 19: 14)

Let *the words of my mouth*. David prayed that his words might be acceptable to God. The importance of our words may be seen from the following: "And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12: 36, 37.) Again, "Death

and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." (Prov. 18: 21.) And, "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul." (Prov. 18: 7.) Not only will a man stand or fall in the day of judgment by his words, but his character and standing among men may be determined by his words. "The lip of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment." (Prov. 12: 19.) "The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge

aright; but the mouth of fools pour-  
eth out folly." (Prov. 15: 2.)

*The meditation of my heart.* David realized that the heart is the source of all his words, so he prayed that it might be kept pure so that his words would be such as would please God. The righteous man meditates upon the law of the Lord day and night. He does not do that because he is a righteous man, but he is a righteous man because he has meditated on the law of the Lord. Meditation on the precepts of Jehovah gives one understanding which leads him to hate everything contrary to truth. (Psa. 119: 97-104.) From this passage we learn the secret of David's ability to meditate continually on the law of the Lord; he said he loved it. Over and over he speaks of his love for the law of the Lord (Psa. 119: 47, 48); he says it is sweeter to him than honey (Psa. 19: 10), and more precious than fine gold. (Psa. 119: 127.) When one has cultivated such an attitude toward God's word as that, he will find it easy to spend much of his time meditating upon it, and he will receive great benefit from it.

*Be acceptable in thy sight.* This is a prayer David uttered for his own good. If he prayed for such, we may conclude (1) that it is right for us to pray for such, and that we will profit by such prayer; (2) that God will listen to such prayers and be pleased to answer such to whatever degree is in harmony with his will; and (3) we must recognize that God is interested in such details of our life, that he knows the thoughts and words which go to make up our daily life, and that we must account to him for all such.

## II. Fountain of Good and Evil (Prov. 4: 23; Mark 7: 21-23)

*Keep thy heart with all diligence.* The phrase *with all diligence* is to be taken in the sense of *above everything else*. It is well to keep, or guard, anything else of value, but the most important thing we have to keep is the heart.

*Out of it are the issues of life.* This is the reason why the heart is to be guarded with more diligent care than any other possession. The heart is

the fountain from which all the streams of life issue. As the fountain determines the quality, flavor, and the usefulness of water, so the heart determines the life of an individual. James recognizes the heart as such a fountain in the following words: "Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter . . . neither can salt water yield sweet." (Jas. 3: 11, 12.) Jesus taught, "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." (Luke 6: 45.) So just as surely as the stream is like the fountain, and the fruit is like the tree from which it comes, so the life of a man is determined by his heart. For this reason we should give more diligent care to keeping it pure than we give to any other interest in life.

*Out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed.* Here again Jesus teaches that the heart is the fountain from which come the issues of life. Words are the expression of thoughts. Deeds are but thoughts in action, they are the manifestation of the thoughts that precede and cause the deeds. Is it possible for evil thoughts to proceed from the heart of a child of God? Those who believe in what is called "entire sanctification" think they cannot sin, hence they must believe they are incapable of evil thoughts. But we are warned against hating our brother (1 John 3: 15; 4: 20), and against allowing lust in the heart. (Matt. 5: 27, 28.) If it is impossible for a child of God to do these things, it would be perfectly useless and ridiculous for the Lord to warn them against doing such. We never warn our children to stay off the moon, because it is impossible for them to get there. So if it were not possible for us to entertain evil thoughts and be defiled by them, the Lord would be foolish to warn us against such evil. Evil thoughts will come to the very best and purest of people. The sin is not in their coming into our minds, but in being given a place to stay, in entertaining them there. One may not be able to keep the birds from flying over his head, but he can keep



them from building nests in his hair. So we must drive evil thoughts from our minds lest they defile us. The best way to keep out evil thoughts is to keep the mind filled with good thoughts. If you are troubled by the presence of evil thoughts, be sure you fill your mind every waking minute of the day with pure elevating thoughts; read good books, make the Bible a favorite among them.

*Murders, wickedness.* Murder springs from the heart because it is the expression of a hatred in the heart. The law makes a difference between accidental killing and killing with malice. There is even a difference between malicious premeditated killing and killing one in a fit of anger. The word for wickedness has the idea of malice, so is placed with murders;

*Fornications, adulteries, lasciviousness.* These sins have been loosely grouped about the last five of the ten commandments, and these three are violations of the seventh. Fornication is a term which includes all forms of moral impurity as in Rom. 1: 26, 27. Adultery is a specific term. Webster defines fornication as illicit sexual intercourse on the part of unmarried, and adultery as the same act on the part of married persons; but the Bible does not use the terms so strictly. Married persons were said to be guilty of fornication. (1 Cor. 5: 1.) Lasciviousness is anything which tends to produce lewd emotions. Dancing, petting, and such like fall in this class.

*Thefts, deceit.* These are violations of the eighth commandment. Deceit may be placed here because it is used in cheating, which is like stealing.

*Railing, pride, foolishness, (false witness from Matt. 15: 19).* This is a rather loose classification, though railing and foolishness, if taken as it applies to speech, may well fit in with false witness of Matthew's record. These may be said to violate the ninth commandment.

*Covetings, evil eye.* These are violations of the tenth commandment. To covet is to have an inordinate desire for what belongs to another. An evil eye is one that looks with desire upon what is another's. It may also be used with reference to lustful eyes,

such as a look upon the other sex with lewd desires. (2 Pet. 2: 14.)

*They defile the man.* The Jews were anxious about keeping their hands clean when they ate, thinking they would be defiled to eat with unwashed hands. But Jesus taught them that defilement comes from within, not from without. The word defile means unclean, that which is unfit to be used by the Lord. If we allow such things as these a place in our hearts, we will be unfit for the Lord to use. Constantly we must be on our guard, for at all times there are conditions and situations and circumstances around us which suggest such things to our minds. These things will come in, but we must not allow them to stay and defile us.

### III. Think on These Things (Phil. 4: 8)

*Whatsoever things are true.* All that is the reverse of falsehood is included in this term. We are not to give things false any place in our thoughts, much less to allow them to find expression on our lips. Satan is the father of all that is false. (John 8: 44.) To think on such is to be his disciple and child.

*Whatsoever things are honorable.* The things that are reputable, venerable, are included in this term. It includes honesty in our dealings with each other in a business way, but it also includes all dealings and puts them on the highest plane.

*Whatsoever things are just.* This applies to our dealing with one another also. It sees to it that we are righteous in our social, business, and political dealings. We are not to give consideration to any unjust, or unrighteous dealing, though we may have the opportunity to do so without detection. The only man who is safe with respect to such matters is the man who refuses to consider such things. Any man who gives favorable consideration to such dealings will sooner or later be engaged in such. The heart is the fountain of such, and if such are not allowed in the heart, they will not be in the life; but if such are allowed in the heart, they will finally find their way into the life. No man is big enough and strong enough to defy the laws of God; we can't

prove that God is wrong about these matters.

*Whatsoever things are pure.* This refers to chaste dealing with the other sex.

*Whatsoever things are lovely.* This refers to the disposition. We are to be amiable. We are to have a sweet disposition, and an even temper.

*Whatsoever things are of good re-*

*port.* Things which are considered by the majority of good people to be worthwhile; things that will do good, but never known to do harm.

*If any virtue, if any praise.* Things virtuous and praise-worthy. This was Paul's way of including any and all good things which might not be included in the above catalogue of things.

### Topics for Discussion

1. It is interesting to note how many of the details of our life are made the subjects of prayer by godly men of old. In our lesson today we find David praying that his speech and thoughts might be acceptable to God. The more one prays about such things, the more likely will he be to succeed. Those who never pray have little chance to succeed.

2. Pure water never comes from an impure fountain, and a stream is never permanently purified until the

fountain is cleaned out. So the only way to cleanse the life of a man is to cleanse the heart.

3. No man ever wore out his mind by thinking. The more we think, the more ability we have for thinking. Few people have any mental discipline. They allow their minds to be directed by things, people, and incidents about them. It is a sign of mental weakness not to be able to put certain thoughts out of the mind and replace them with others.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

How important is right thinking?

Is it more important in youth than in mature people? and why?

What part does meditation play in the building of character?

Why must mature people continue to control their thinking?

What is a fertile source of unholy thoughts in modern society?

#### Golden Text Explained

Can you discuss the context of our Golden Text?

What is meant by having an evil eye?

Show that covetousness and hypocrisy are in the man of whom Solomon speaks.

How may we judge what a man is in his heart?

By what is a man to be truly measured? and by what is it easier to measure a man?

What did Solomon say of outward appearance as to its value?

What did Peter teach women about the relative value of outward appearance and the heart?

#### Pray for Right Thoughts

What did Jesus teach about the use of proper words?

Do our words have anything to do with our standing in the community?

What connection is there between meditation on the law of God and being righteous?

What makes it possible for one to meditate constantly on God's word?

What three conclusions do we reach from David's prayer for right thoughts?

#### Fountain of Good and Evil

What is suggested by the phrase all diligence?

What does James teach about the heart as a fountain?

According to Luke, what does Jesus teach about the heart as a fountain?

What is the relation of deeds to thoughts? Is it impossible for a child of God to entertain evil thoughts? Why?

Do we sin just because an evil thought comes into our mind? Wherein is the sin?

How are murder and hatred related?

Distinguish between fornication and adultery. Discuss the use of the terms in the Bible.

What is lasciviousness? and in what activities is it found?

What sins here violate the eighth commandment?

What sins violate the ninth commandment? What is covetousness? and is it a serious sin?

What is meant by the evil eye?

In what way do these things defile a man?

#### Think on These Things

What is meant by things that are true? What is included in things that are honorable?

What is meant by things that are just? Where is the danger in thinking on things unjust and untrue?

To what do the things pure refer? and why are impure thoughts dangerous?

What are the things lovely we are to think about?

What is meant by things of good report? How does Paul take care of all other things worthy of our thoughts?

What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson IX—August 26, 1951

## THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS SPEECH

## The Lesson Text

## James 3: 1-12

1 Be not many *of you* teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment.

2 For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.

3 Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also.

4 Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willetth.

5 So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the

whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell.

7 For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind:

8 But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* a restless evil, *it is* full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God:

10 Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet *water* and bitter?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? neither can salt water yield sweet.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.*" (Prov. 21: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 15: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| August 20. M..... | "Be Not Rash with Thy Mouth" (Ecc. 5: 1-9)         |
| August 21. T..... | A Whisperer Separateth Friends (Prov. 16: 10-28)   |
| August 22. W..... | A Prating Fool Shall Fall (Prov. 10: 8-23)         |
| August 23. T..... | A Fool Seems Wise When Silent (Prov. 17: 20-28)    |
| August 24. F..... | Death and Life in Power of Tongue (Prov. 18: 4-21) |
| August 25. S..... | Speak Truth with Your Neighbor (Eph. 4: 25-32)     |
| August 26. S..... | Foolish Talking Not Befitting (Eph. 5: 3-14)       |

TIME.—About A.D. 60.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—James and Christians then and now.

## Introduction

The gift of speech is a great blessing, but like all other good things, it can be perverted and used for base purposes. (1) The gift of speech is perverted when we engage in filthy conversation. The telling of filthy stories is a common sin, hurtful to all who tell or hear them, and is too base for Christians to practice. (2) The gift of speech is perverted by cursing and swearing. Some people get the

habit so that they can hardly talk in decent company. Taking the name of the Lord in vain is an insult to God and an indication of a lack of love and respect for him that will be severely punished. (3) The gift of speech is perverted in gossip and tale-bearing. Even when people tell nothing untrue it is sinful to spread ugly uncomplimentary things on a person. It is hurtful to his reputation; it is

embarrassing to one who has made a mistake; and it will make it more difficult for him to correct his life. The gossiper should try to put himself in the place of the one he is talking about to see if he would wish to be talked about if he had made the same mistake. But when people invent, or peddle lies invented by others, the harm done is much more serious, and their guilt greatly aggravated. (4) The gift of speech is perverted by too much talk. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; but he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely." (Prov. 10: 19.) Some people never say anything ugly or untrue, but they never stop talking.

Usually they say little that is of any importance, but they just keep rattling along. Solomon suggests that somewhere along the line such people will do some harm. Paul said for us to study to be quiet. (1 Thess. 4: 11.) It is a hard lesson for some to learn. (5) It is a perversion of the gift of speech to engage in harsh criticism, backbiting, railing, and blasphemy. God gave us our tongue to praise him, edify and encourage our fellowmen, and to pray for the things we need. If we use it to abuse our fellowmen, take the name of God in vain, and blaspheme his holy name, we are guilty of a miserable perversion of our gift.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Keeping the mouth.** By keeping the mouth Solomon means guarding our speech. Some one has suggested that the Lord arranged our ears and our tongue in such way as to indicate which was to be used more. He gave us two ears, but one tongue; he placed the ears *on* the outside of our head where they can catch the sound, but he put the tongue- inside and placed it behind both the lips and the teeth. But in spite of all this disadvantage the tongue often is found doing a lot more work than the ears. (1) He keeps his<sup>1</sup> tongue properly who uses it to praise God. "My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." (Psa. 51: 14.) Many times David vows to use his tongue to tell of God's righteousness and goodness, and we cannot use our tongue to better advantage. (Psa. 35: 28; 66: 17; 71: 24.) (2) He keeps his tongue properly who teaches others the way of righteousness. "The mouth of the righteous talketh of wisdom . . . The law of God is in his heart." (Psa. 37: 30, 31.) "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." (Psa. 51: 13.) (3) He keeps his tongue properly who refrains from evil speech. It is as necessary that we refrain from what is wrong as it is that we engage in what is good. David said, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." (Psa. 34: 13.) "I said, I will take heed to my ways; that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle,

while the wicked is before me." (Psa. 39: 1.) (4) He keeps his tongue properly who knows when and what to say. Solomon said there is a "time to keep silence, and a time to speak." (Ecc. 3: 7.) Again, "There is that speaketh rashly like the piercings of a sword; but the tongue of the wise is health." (Prov. 12: 18.) And, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver." (Prov. 25: 11.) And, "A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth; and a word in due season, how good is it!" (Prov. 15: 23.) Again, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but a grievous word stirreth up anger. The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge aright; but the mouth of fools poureth out folly." (Prov. 15: 1, 2.) It is impossible to estimate the value of a man in a church or a community who knows what to say and how to say it and the best time to say it. He can keep neighbors at peace with one another; he can settle their disputes; and if they have lost their respect for one another he can reconcile them.

**2. The blessings of keeping the mouth and tongue.** (1) Solomon says in our text that he shall keep his soul from troubles. A tongue kept from lying is saved the trouble of confessing his sin, going about correcting his statements that he may repair the damage done, and the grief and remorse which follow repentance. A tongue kept from filthy conversation is saved the shame which *one* feels when he sees the damage he has done

those who heard him. The tongue which is kept from inconsiderate and untimely statements is saved from the embarrassment which is caused by words spoken out of turn. (2) The prudent tongue is saved from destruction. "He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." (Prov. 13: 3.) In the first place his influence will be destroyed if he does not keep his tongue from evil and improper speech. One who talks all

the time is never taken very seriously, so has but little, if any, influence for good. And, next, the tongue can bring eternal destruction. The lying tongue is headed for the lake of fire. (Rev. 21: 8.) "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Prov. 18: 21.) Jesus said we will be condemned or justified by our words. (Matt. 12: 36, 37.) If so much depends upon proper speech, we certainly should be very careful to keep *on* the gospel bridle.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. A Timely Warning (James 3: 1, 2)

*Be not many of you teachers.* James does not discourage teaching in the proper spirit, for that would be contrary to other passages. Paul rebuked the Hebrews for not being able to teach. (Heb. 5: 11-14.) But teachers developed a spirit of intolerance of the views of others, asserting their authority, not only before a class, but in ordinary conversation. "We must not affect to speak and act as those who are continually assuming the chair, we must not prescribe to one another, so as to make our own sentiments a standard by which to try all others. ... Do not give yourself the air of teachers, imposers, and judges, but rather speak with the humility and spirit of learners; do not censure one another, as if all must be brought to your standard." (M. Henry.)

*Ye shall receive heavier judgment.* Teaching is a grave, serious business. If the spirit suggested above is shown, the judgment will be heavy because of the law of reaping what we sow, and by the law Jesus gave of being judged by the same judgment we offer. (Matt. 7: 1-5.) But if one teaches in the right spirit, he still has grave responsibilities. If we lead some one astray by our teaching, we may cause a soul to be lost. There is much teaching on the subject of divorce and remarriage that is causing people to make, and be satisfied in, unions which in the sight of the Lord are adulterous. Teachers cannot escape judgment for their part in such unscriptural unions.

*In many things we all stumble.* Even people who are not teachers will make mistakes in their speech, saying things better left unsaid; but teachers

spend a greater portion of their time talking, so are much more likely to make mistakes. And since teachers usually have the complete confidence of those who listen, it is all the more needful for them to be careful.

*If any stumbleth not in word.* If one knows what, when, and how to say, he is indeed a fortunate person. James says he is a perfect man. He does not mean to say that he is sinless, but that if he is in control of his tongue he is able to control the rest of his body; he is completely the master of his powers. "The wisdom and grace which enable him to rule his tongue will enable him to rule all his actions." (M. Henry.) Since the tongue is the most unruly member of the body, he who has power to control it has power over all the rest of the body.

#### II. Power of the Tongue (James 3: 3-8)

*We put the horses' bridles into their mouths.* Here James suggests that our tongue is like a horse in that it must be guarded, bridled. The wilder the horse, the more need for a bridle. So the looser one's tongue, the more need for bridling it with the restrictions placed upon it by the scripture. With the bridle we turn the whole body of the horse, so though the tongue is a wild member it can be controlled; and if it is controlled, the whole body, all the powers of the man, can be controlled.

*Behold, the ships also.* Ships are large when compared to the rudder which serves to guide them. But the man who controls the rudder is able to take the ship where he pleases in spite of fierce winds. So the tongue

is a small member compared to the size of the whole body. It boasts great things. He personifies the tongue, giving it the power to boast of its strength and its power to influence the whole man. But as the steersman who controls the rudder is able to take the ship where he pleases, so the man who has control of his tongue can manage the whole body, his entire being, in spite of other hindering influences. These two illustrations are given to prove his statement that one who is able to control the tongue so as not to stumble in word, is able to control the whole body.

*Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!* This is a continuation of a thought suggested in both the above illustrations. The bit in the mouth of the horse is a very small object compared to the whole body of the horse, yet with that bit the horse is controlled. The rudder is a very small object when compared to the size of the great ship, but it turns the largest of ships from one direction to another when controlled by the steersman. Now he says a small spark, or a match, can kindle a great fire. Cities have been burned, and great forests have been turned into ashes by a small spark or match.

*The tongue is a fire.* It is like a spark in the forest when compared to the whole body, but it is capable of as great damage to the body as the spark is capable of doing to the forest.

*The world of iniquity among our members.* It is the epitome of the world of iniquity. On the tongue may be found all the sins of the world. It can cause them, encourage them, inflame them, increase and intensify them. It is such *among our members*, that is, it stirs other members of the body to iniquities which would never be done without its influence.

*Defileth the whole body.* This it does by inciting the rest of the body to sin as suggested above. When the body is involved in sin, it is defiled. When sin reigns in the body, and members of the body are presented unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness, instead of instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6: 12-14), the body is defiled. When it does the things which defile the man

(Matt. 15: 19, 20), defilement and pollution follow.

*Setteth on fire the wheel of nature.* The phrase *wheel of nature* means the wheel, or course or round, of events set in motion at birth. There is nothing from birth to death that may not be inflamed by the tongue. Men have met to settle differences; one word called for another; soon fists were flying, knives, or guns, were drawn, and lives lost because of hasty hot words which inflamed the men.

*Is set on fire by hell.* Hell is the place where the fire never ceases to burn. Hell is the source of all that is evil in the sense that it is the headquarters of Satan who is the father of all that is evil. We speak of Rome as well as the pope being the source of all authority in the Roman Catholic Church. So in the same way we may speak of hell or the devil being the source of all that is evil. We should remember when we are saying things we should not say that we are then under the influence of the devil, our actions are being determined by hell. This should cause us to be more careful to keep on the gospel bridle.

*Every kind of beasts and birds is tamed.* Man was given dominion over the beasts, birds, and creeping things in the creation. (Gen. 1: 28-30.) It is within his domain to conquer and tame these to use for his own good and pleasure. And James says man has tamed them all, not every individual, but individuals of every kind.

*But the tongue can no man tame.* From this we conclude that the tongue is more unruly than any beast, bird, or creeping thing. This does not mean that no man can control his tongue. This has been used as an excuse for lack of control of the tongue. As long as a horse is wild we keep a bridle on him, but when tamed there is no need for the bridle, for he may be directed by the words of his master. But the tongue can never be tamed to the extent that we can take off the bridle of gospel restrictions.

*A restless evil, full of deadly poison.* A restless evil, never tiring of doing harm. It is like a wild beast in a cage, restless, but harmful if turned

loose. It is full of poison, and may be used to destroy the reputation of others. (Rom. 3: 13, 14.)

**III. Inconsistent Use** (James 3: 9-12)

*Therewith bless we the Lord and Father.* No holier use can be given the tongue than when we are worshipping God. We can praise him for his goodness; we can thank him for his love that gave us Jesus to die for our sins; we can pray to him for the things we need; we can tell others of the great salvation we enjoy and persuade them to partake of the same.

*Therewith curse we men.* There is nothing good which cannot be prostituted to base purposes. So the tongue which can be used for such high and holy purposes as suggested above, can be used for the basest purposes imaginable. That man is made in the likeness of God is mentioned here to show our inconsistency. If we bless God we ought not to curse those who are in his likeness. John says if we love God, we will love all who are begotten of him, for we partake of the nature of him who begets. (1 John 4: 20-5: 1.) So if we bless God, we should bless all who are made in his likeness.

*These things ought not so to be.* Those who praise God at church and then go home to fuss and fight should read this lesson often. Those who sing God's praises and then tell all the ugly gossip of the neighborhood

should realize that the tongue should not be used for such different purposes. The man who preaches the gospel and then when out with other men on the golf course or river will tell filthy jokes should remember that James says such things should not come from the same tongue.

*Doth a fountain send forth from the same opening?* James compares the mouth to a fountain. All know that both sweet water and bitter do not come from the same fountain. So it is inconsistent for man to bless God and curse men, praise God and gossip about men, pray to God and criticize harshly his fellow-man with the same tongue.

Can a fig tree yield olives, or a vine figs? James multiplies his illustration by saying that a tree does not, cannot, bear two different kinds of fruit. He uses this to prove the inconsistency of man in using his mouth for two such widely different purposes. Man is almost alone among God's creatures in his rebellion. The planets obey exactly the laws which govern them. The beasts serve the purposes for which they were created. But man may do exactly the opposite to that for which he was created. He is capable of the highest glory and praise of all God's creation, but he is also capable of the lowest depths of shame and the severest condemnation of any of God's creation.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. Christian perfection, in the sense of maturity and completeness of character, is a scriptural goal set for each one of us. James says if we are able to control our tongue we are able to attain unto this kind of perfection. From this we gather that control of the tongue is the most difficult job we have, and the last victory to gain.

2. Since the control of the tongue is such a big task, and so important to our welfare, we should give much

time, thought, and effort to its accomplishment. Like David, we should make it a matter of prayer. Psalm 19: 14 should be our prayer each morning as we start the duties of the day.

3. An ugly gossiping tongue is an instrument of hell for the accomplishments of the devil's purposes. How can the Lord use a part of one's body for his work while the devil uses the tongue for his work? The whole body belongs to the Lord.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson? Repeat the Golden Text. Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

Read and discuss as time will permit the five ways suggested in which the gift

of speech is perverted from its intended use. Do you know of any other ways the gift of speech may be perverted?

**Golden Text Explained**

What is meant by keeping the mouth and tongue?

What is the first and most important use of the tongue?  
 Show how teaching others is a proper keeping of the tongue.  
 What is said of refraining from evil speech in keeping the tongue?  
 Discuss the keeping of the tongue by knowing when and what to say.  
 What is the blessing of our text to the person who keeps his mouth and tongue?  
 From what destruction is the prudent tongue saved?  
 Wh- if of the value of a person in a community who keeps his mouth and tongue?

**A Timely Warning**

Why are we not to wish to be teachers?  
 What kind of teachers?  
 Does this excuse people from teaching others the gospel?  
 What is the judgment which teachers receive?  
 What is said of the man who does not stumble in word?  
 What is the perfection here mentioned?

**Power of the Tongue**

In what way is our tongue like a horse?  
 A ship?  
 How do these illustrations teach the proper use of the tongue?

In what way is our tongue like a lire?  
 Why is our tongue a world of iniquity among our members?  
 What effect does an evil tongue have on the whole body?  
 What is meant by setting on fire the wheel of nature?  
 By what is the tongue set on fire? What is meant by saying it is set on fire?  
 Over what was man given dominion in creation?  
 What is the one thing man cannot tame? Since the tongue cannot be tamed, what must we do with it?  
 What is meant by its being a restless evil? A deadly poison?

**Inconsistent Use**

What is the highest purpose for which the tongue can be used?  
 What is the meanest purpose for which it can be used?  
 What is there about man which forbids that we curse him?  
 Name some characters who should give special attention to this rule by James.  
 Show how a fountain may be used to illustrate this lesson.  
 Show how a tree or vine can be used to illustrate it.  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson X—September 2, 1951**

**THE CHRISTIAN AND WORK**

**The Lesson Text**

**2 Thess. 3: 6-13; Mark 6: 1-3; John 5: 17**

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you:

9 Not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an example unto you, that ye should imitate us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat.

11 For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Je'-

sus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

1 And he went out from thence; and he cometh into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and, What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and *what mean* such mighty works wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Jo'-ses, and Ju'-das, and Si'-mon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended in him.

17 But Je'-sus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.



GOLDEN TEXT.—*"We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."* (John 9: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 6: 6-12.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- August 27. M.....Lessons for a Sluggard (Prov. 6: 6-19)
- August 28. T.....The Diligent Shall Rule (Prov. 12: 20-28)
- August 29. W.....There Is Profit in Labor (Prov. 14: 15-23)
- August 30. T.....Mark Went Not to the Work (Acts 15: 36-41)
- August 31. F.....Work with Your Own Hands (1 Thess. 4: 9-12)
- September 1. S.....Rich Are to Do Good Works (1 Tim. 6: 17-19)
- September 2. S.....Paul Worked with His Own Hands (1 Cor. 4: 6-13)

TIME.—A.D. 53 for 2 Thessalonians; A.D. 27 for Mark and John.

PLACES.—Paul wrote the Thessalonians from Corinth; Galilee, probably Capernaum for Mark; Jerusalem for John.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Paul, and Christians then and now.

**Introduction**

There is no place in God's program for a lazy person. When man was created, he was given a work to do, to dress and to keep the garden. (Gen. 2: 15.) Nor did God intend that the woman should be idle all the day, for he gave her to Adam as a help meet for him. In other words, she was man's helper. Paul says she is to be a worker at home. (Titus 2: 5.) So when people live like God intends for them to live, they will be workers. Some have been blessed with great wealth coming to them suddenly. Many do not have such wealth long for it so they can quit work and take life easily. Such idleness and indolence are sinful. One does not have to continue to do manual labor, for he may devote his time to handling his money to better advantage. But just to spend one's time and money going from one pleasure resort to another is a sinful waste of the Lord's time and money.

There is another type of work which needs our attention in this

lesson, and that is work in the church for the Lord. If one has enough wealth to quit work, he need not be idle; he is in position to give all his time and energy to working for the Lord. He can visit the sick and needy, and share his wealth with the unfortunate. Doing this in the name of the Lord and for the glory of the church is the best way he can spend his time and money. It will pay bigger and better dividends than it will from any other kind of investment. Those who have a little time they can spare from their office, shop, or family to work for the Lord can accomplish a lot of good. People often think they have so little time to give that there is no need to do anything. But by proper planning the average person can give several hours per week to church work, and if every member would make such arrangement and give his service regularly, the church could carry on a better program, the people serving and being served would receive great blessings, and the church would grow faster.

**Golden Text Explained**

1. Jesus recognized a **will** above his own. Notice the word *must*. We *must* work the works of him that sent me. Jesus did not come to do his own will; he came to do the will of the Father. (John 6: 38.) Even the words he spoke were given him of the Father. (John 12: 48-50.) It was his meat and drink to do the will of the Father. (John 4: 34.) His highest aim, his only purpose in life was

to do the will of the Father. In this he set for us an example we should follow as closely as possible. Notice his use of the word *we*. He said *we* must do the works of the Father. He placed himself among his disciples, became as one of them, when he spoke of doing the will of the Father. He was subject to the Father the same as they; and they were as much obligated to do the works of

the Father as was Jesus. If we could get that lesson, and feel the obligation as keenly as he felt it, and as keenly as he made those apostles feel it, we would get a lot more accomplished in his name. May we all recognize a will above our own, that we are not to live by our own will, but by the will of him who sent Jesus into the world. In this way alone will we ever do the work he expects us to do in this world.

2. **Jesus realized the value of time.** He said he must do the works the Father gave him to do while it was day. He did not have in mind light and darkness when he spoke of day and night. He spoke of life as the day and death as the night. We can work only during life. When death comes, there is no more time for work. This life-time presents us with the greatest of opportunities, and the only opportunities we will ever have to do the will of God and meet his approval in the judgment. Life is so short when compared with eternity that we may regard ourselves as having but a moment of time to make preparation for the greatest event in human experience in this world or in the next. If you were told that a million dollars would be given you for doing a certain thing well, and that only one hour would be given you to prepare for the test, would you not use that hour to the very best advantage? We have but one short lifetime in which to prepare for the judgment, how are we using it? Jesus used the time given him to do the Father's will. He used it so well that John tells us he accomplished so much that the world cannot contain the record of it. (John

21: 25.) We waste more time than we use for the Lord. We misuse much time he allows us, doing things which not only do us no good, but will actually hinder us in our efforts to become like him.

3. **Special inducement to work.** Jesus said the night comes, when no man can work. The night is not far away from any of us. As the farmer leaves the field at the approach of night, so the worker in the Lord's vineyard lays down his implements, folds his hands, and goes to meet his record and get his reward. Many, no doubt, will beg for a little more time to do some things they have been delaying, putting off, but no more time, not another opportunity, will be granted. What a fearful thing it will be to give account of wasted opportunities! Unused minutes, hours, and days which we have frittered away with no thought of what it costs the Lord in precious souls, sheaves which will never be gathered into his barns just because we have been careless and negligent. Young people are prone to say that they have plenty of time, and there is no need to rush into the work. People in middle life are so busy rearing their families and providing for the future that they just cannot take the time to work. Old people say they made no preparation, so are not capable of doing the Lord's work. With one consent they all make their excuses. But when the night comes and we stand before the bar of justice these excuses will weigh nothing. The only safe thing is to do as Jesus did—work for the night is coming when no man can work.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Jesus Sets Example of Work (Mark 6: 1-3; John 5: 17)

He *cometh to his own country*. He had been in and around Capernaum for some time. It was about one day's journey from Capernaum to Nazareth, which is here called his own country. He was accompanied by his disciples. All men who called themselves teachers had a company of students attached to them who followed them wherever they went,

so the disciples of Jesus were not at all peculiar in that they followed him in his teaching tours.

He began to *teach in the synagogue*. This is said to have been on the sabbath. It was the custom of Jesus to worship on the sabbath. And when he had opportunity, he taught people. We cannot think of Jesus allowing an opportunity to go by unused. This was his first visit to the synagogue in Nazareth since he be-

gan his public ministry. Luke tells us of the outcome of this first visit and his narrow escape. (Luke 4: 16ff.)

*Many hearing him were astonished.* Luke tells us that he read from Isaiah of one who should preach the gospel to the poor, release the captives, give sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised, and declared that the scripture was fulfilled in himself. With this in mind we can understand why the people were astonished.

*Whence hath this man these things?* He spoke as a great teacher. They knew he had not been to any great school, such as the one conducted by the learned Gamaliel. So they wondered where he got his learning, the wisdom by which he spoke.

*What mean such mighty works?* To what mighty works reference is made is not clear. In verse 5 we read that he did not do any mighty works, except to heal a few people who were sick. However from Luke's record we learn that he suggested the people would ask why he did not do such works as they had heard of him doing in Capernaum. So they had received reports of his mighty works at other places, such works as were out of line with what they expected of a hometown boy.

*Is not this the carpenter, son of Mary?* Matthew called him the carpenter's son, but Mark calls him a carpenter, proving that he actually worked at the trade himself. Every father was to do four things for his son, (1) circumcise him; (2) redeem him; (3) teach him the law; and (4) teach him a trade. (A. Clarke.) The Jews had a saying to the effect that a father who did not teach his son a trade, taught him to steal. So Jesus was brought up like every other Jewish boy to work at the trade of his father. Matthew refers to him as being the son of Joseph and Mary, but Mark simply calls him the son of Mary.

*Brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon?* According to Mark Jesus had four brothers. Catholics argue that these are not the children of Mary, that Jesus was her only child. There is neither reason nor foundation for the contention, except the desire on the part of all

Catholics and some Protestants to maintain the perpetual virginity of Mary, as if becoming a mother in an ordinary way would detract from her holiness. How many sisters were in the family we do not know, but tradition says there were two.

*And they were offended in him.* It is worthwhile to notice some implications here. (1) The people were offended because a mere carpenter claimed to be a teacher and displayed a wisdom beyond that which the average man of Nazareth was unable to do. (2) And they were offended because he claimed the power to do mighty works, miracles. There had not been a prophet among them for centuries until John the Baptist came, and he was simply a preacher of repentance. The carpenter's trade was a lowly calling, and for one to step out of such a humble station to that of teacher and miracle worker was more than they would allow. (3) His family was as *common* and humble as his calling. There is no implication of their morals here, but their social station was such that they were no recommendation to him as a teacher and miracle worker. (4) The way these brothers and sisters are tied together with him here is proof that they were his real brethren, not of another family. If they were not the children of Joseph and Mary, as Jesus was supposed to be, the people did them a gross injustice by being offended at Jesus because of his connection with them. Laying aside all the technical arguments about two sisters by the name of Mary marrying the same man, and several other arguments so involved that it is difficult to keep them in mind, this one argument seems enough to settle the relationship between Jesus and the four boys and their sisters. The people of Nazareth certainly accepted all five of these boys named here as the children of Joseph and Mary, and they were offended in Jesus making such high claims for himself when he came from such a humble family.

## II. Paul Demands Work (2 Thess. 3: 6-13)

*Withdraw yourselves from the disorderly.* This is not a mere recom-

mendation from Paul, though that ought to be enough to satisfy all who accept him as an apostle of Jesus Christ. This is a command in the name of, by the authority of, Jesus Christ, hence we have no choice but to obey, or be found in disobedience to him when he comes in judgment. The command is to withdraw from all who walk, live, in disorderly fashion. To withdraw does not mean to hurt or harm a man in any way, or to follow him with vicious tales to every place he may go to live; it simply means that we no longer regard him as in fellowship, and we deny him the rights and privileges of Christian fellowship. And this is to be done, not in the spirit of punishment or revenge, but to bring him to his senses to save him.

*Not after the tradition which they received of us.* The tradition, or teaching, of the apostles is to serve as the standard by which our walk is to be measured. If we live in harmony with that teaching, making allowance for human frailty, we are walking orderly; if we are not walking in harmony with that standard, we are disorderly and do not deserve the fellowship of the church. Paul told the church at Corinth how to go about withdrawing from the disorderly. He said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. 5: 4, 5.) So it is the business of the church gathered together to determine the action, and all are to abide by the action taken.

*Ye ought to imitate us.* Paul begins now to specify the disorderly conduct which he had in mind. He reminds them that he and his fellow-workers had not behaved in a disorderly fashion among the people at Thessalonica. Their manner of life was an example which the brethren should follow.

*Neither did we eat bread for nought.* No doubt Paul was in many of their homes at their invitation, but he reminds them that he gave good returns for all they ever spent on him. Idle preachers may at times

eat bread for nought; they do when they spend their time in pleasures and recreation when they should be teaching from house to house and publicly as opportunity affords.

*Working night and day.* Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18: 3), and he worked long hours at his trade that he might not be a burden to any of them. "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." (1 Thess. 2: 9.)

*Not because we had not the right.* Paul argues at length his right to a full support as a preacher of the gospel to the Corinthian church. (1 Cor. 9: 1-21.) He had the right to live of the gospel, but he paid his own way that he might set the brethren an example. So much of the work was done by slaves that work was considered to be degrading, so Paul worked with his hands to show them that work was honorable for a Christian.

*If any will not work, neither let him eat.* This is the rule Paul gave him when he was first with them. It does not apply to those who are sick and cannot work; it applies to all who will not work. It is wrong for a church to support a man who will not work. It is not good to give a beggar his dinner without requiring him to do a reasonable amount of work, provided he is in good health. To do so is to encourage him to beg rather than work. But because it is easier and takes less time to give him his dinner and let him go, we usually extend our charity in that fashion.

*Some among you disorderly and busybodies.* The disorderly are described as those who do not work, so refusing to work when able is disorderly conduct, especially so when one has a family dependent upon his labors. (1 Tim. 5: 8.) Thinking that work was dishonorable, and being able to get donations equal to the necessities of life, some had been encouraged to get along without working. And being idle they had taken up the habit of minding other people's business; they had become busybodies. There are two rules that have few exceptions. (1) Those who

are idle because they dislike work drift into the mischievous business of meddling in other people's affairs. (2) Those who work hard and count it honorable to be so occupied usually attend to their own affairs and leave other people's business alone. Paul taught such things in his first letter.

We *command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ*. Here is another command by the authority of Christ. Paul is positive in his teaching on this subject.

With *quietness they work*. The word *quietness* here is the opposite of *bustle* above. It means not

officially meddling in other people's business. A boilermaker may do his work in quietness by not trying to mind the other man's business, not getting "nosey." This is the same word Paul used to teach women to learn in quietness. (1 Tim. 2: 11, 12.)

*Be not weary in well-doing*. This seems to be directed to the church, encouraging them to continue to help the needy who were worthy, and not to be discouraged by some who would not work and so were unworthy. Do good to those who are worthy in spite of the fact that some have proven unworthy.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Though God rested on the seventh day, he did not take out and quit work for all time to come. He rested from his works of creation, is the meaning. But he continued to work in providence, which work never ceases. The universe could not continue to exist if God were to cease to work for one minute. Hence work is honorable since both the Father and the Son are engaged in work.

2. The humility of Jesus was complete, even to the selection of his

home among humble people, and his occupation as a carpenter. By his association with these humble stations he has dignified them so that none need be ashamed of a humble family or a humble occupation.

3. Churches are lax in their duty to withdraw from those who walk disorderly, and as a result they are losing the respect of the world. Some churches cannot make a cleaning because the leaders are not blameless, and others because they have not the courage.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What was man's first job?  
Are women expected to work?  
Is one excused from work if he is rich?  
How should a wealthy Christian spend his time?  
How can the average person spend time doing church work? How many do such?

#### Golden Text Explained

How did Jesus show that he recognized a higher will than his own?  
How did Jesus set us an example of work?  
How did he identify himself with his disciples in obedience to the Father?  
How did Jesus show that he recognized the value of time?  
What statement of John gives us an idea of how much Jesus accomplished during life?  
What special inducement do we have to make us work?  
How do you feel about giving account to God for the way you have used your time?

#### Jesus Sets Example of Work

What place is called Jesus' own country?  
What was the custom of Jesus on the sabbath?  
How many times had he visited Nazareth since his baptism?  
Why were his neighbors astonished at him?

Did he do many mighty works there? Why?  
What does Matthew call Jesus? What does Mark call him?

What four things did every Jew do for his son?  
How many brothers did he have? What were their names?  
Give and discuss two reasons why the people were offended at him.  
What do you gather as to the social standing of Jesus' family in Nazareth?  
What proof do we have that these brothers and sisters mentioned are the children of Joseph and Mary?

#### Paul Demands Work

On what authority did Paul command us to withdraw from the disorderly?  
What is meant by and included in a withdrawal?  
What is the standard by which disorderly walk is determined?  
What instructions did Paul give at Corinth about withdrawal?  
Discuss Paul as an example in honest labor. At what trade did he work?  
Discuss Paul's teaching as to his right to receive wages for his work.  
What rule did Paul give about working and eating?  
What is the danger in idleness? Do those who work have such danger?  
What is meant by working in quietness?  
What closing exhortation does Paul give? Why?  
What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

Lesson XI—September 9, 1951

THE CHRISTIAN AND WEALTH

The Lesson Text

Matt. 6: 19-30

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

22 The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 No man 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.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Be

not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?

26 Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?

27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?

28 And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 Yet I say unto you, that even Sol<sup>1</sup>-o-mon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

GOLDEN TEXT.— *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*" (1 Tim. 6: 10a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 6: 5-13.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 3. M..... Hard for a Rich Man to Go to Heaven (Matt. 19: 16-30)
- September 4. T..... Beware of Covetousness (Luke 12: 13-21)
- September 5. W..... The Fate of One Rich Man (Luke 16: 19-31)
- September 6. T..... Consequence of Love of Money (Acts 5: 1-11)
- September 7. F..... God Loves a Cheerful Giver (2 Cor. 9: 6-15)
- September 8. S..... Those Taught Support the Teacher (Gal. 6: 6-10)
- September 9. S..... Gospel Preachers Live of Gospel (1 Cor. 9: 1-19)

TIME.—A.D. 27.

PLACE.—A mountain near Capernaum.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples, then and now.

Introduction

We are dealing with one of the greatest, if not *the greatest*, problems of the Christian. What is the proper attitude toward money? How can we make proper disposition of our money? How much shall we contribute on the first day of the week? And how shall we spend the balance of our income? Some people give

these questions very little thought, supposing that anything they do, so long as they are honest and sincere about it, will be acceptable to the Lord. Yet they would criticize their religious neighbor for disposing of other matters of obedience to God on the same basis. Jesus taught that the way we handle our money will

determine where we spend eternity (Luke 16: 1-13), and the Pharisees who were lovers of money scoffed at him for such teaching. And there are still people in the world, even in the church, who look at the matter like the Pharisees did. Then Jesus, in answer to their scoffing criticism, told them of the rich man and Lazarus. It is as if he said, "You scoff at the idea the use of money determines one's destiny, so I'll tell you of a man who felt like you do about the matter. He had great wealth but refused to use it properly, and in Hades he found himself in anguish."

Another passage teaching this lesson, but misunderstood by many, is

Gal. 6: 6-10. Here Paul first says for the taught to communicate, give financial support, unto the teacher. Then he warns us not to be deceived, for God knows how we use our money. If we sow to the flesh, use our money for pleasures and satisfying the desires of the flesh, we shall reap corruption, or reap eternal destruction. But if we sow to the Spirit, use our money as the Spirit directs for spiritual purposes, we shall reap eternal life. This being true, the matter of how we use our wealth is of the utmost importance. People who spend more on vacations, or for picture shows and recreation, than they spend for the Lord are in the same class as the rich man.

### Golden Text Explained

#### 1. The meaning of the statement.

(1) The passage does not say that money is evil. (2) It does not say that the possession of money, even great wealth, is evil. Possession of great wealth is dangerous to the average, yes, to any man. It involves great responsibilities; it subjects to great temptations, but possession of money is not a sin. (3) It is not true that the love of money is the root of all evil, though the King James version reads that way. It should read as our version has it, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. And that does not mean that money is connected in some way with all sins committed, for that is not true. But there is no sin known to man but that has been and will be committed for the love of money. Many sins have been committed many times when money and the love of money had nothing to do with them. But it is also true that the love of money is often the cause of all such sins being committed.

2. **Reasons for warning** us. Two classes of people need to be warned against the love of money, the rich and those who wish to be rich. Of the latter class Paul says those who are minded to be rich fall into temptations and snares and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. If there were no other reason why we should be careful not to cultivate the desire to be rich, this one would be enough.

There are temptations to lie, cheat, and defraud our fellowman. Men misrepresent the value of articles of trade to make a bigger profit. They deceive others as to the condition of an article of trade, by hiding defects, and even by making false statements. Next, Paul says some in their reaching after money are led astray from the faith. Of course those who do the things just mentioned have departed from the faith, for such sins make one unfit for fellowship with God. But one may depart from the faith on account of the love of money who never mistreats his neighbor. Men often keep their places of business open on Sunday and miss worship to meet competition and make more money. They often become so absorbed in business and so greedy to make more money that they lose all interest in the church. This is such a common occurrence that surely all have seen men who have departed from the faith in this way. And next, Paul says that people who are reaching after money pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Obtaining and possessing wealth do not always bring happiness. Usually young people think they could be supremely happy if they just had all the money they could use; but this is a mistake, for wealth brings its problems and responsibilities. The wisest prayer on the subject is as follows: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that

is needful for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God."

3. Some examples. (1) Lot, the nephew of Abraham, is a good example of one who wished to become rich. He had wealth, but he wished to have more, and when given the opportunity to better his condition, he selfishly chose the better part of the land offered by Abraham and went toward Sodom. He gained his wealth, but he lost his family and barely escaped with his life. He would have fared much better with less wealth

in humbler living conditions. (2) Balaam is perhaps the best example of one who sinned on account of the love of money. He loved the hire of wrong-doing. (2 Pet. 2: 15.) For Balak's offer of reward he would have cursed the people of God. (Num. 22ff.) He finally died by the sword for counselling the enemies of God's people to destroy them through immorality. (Num. 31: 8, 16.) (3) Ananias and Sapphira are good examples of people whose love of money brought temptations, caused them to depart from the faith, to lie to God, and die in their sin. (Acts 5: 1-11.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Seek True Wealth (Matt. 6: 19-21)

*Lay not up treasures upon earth.* This teaching is opposite to the desire of the average person, and the advice usually given to young men. Then the problem arises as to what constitutes laying up of treasure. How much insurance can a man carry without violating this teaching? What preparation can be made to be independent in old age without violating it? We must remember the poor about us; we must keep in mind the lost of this and other nations who deserve an opportunity to hear the gospel that they may be saved. If one gives liberally to carry on these works, and is still able to save a reasonable amount for old age, and to give his children a start in life, it would seem acceptable.

*Where moth and rust consume.* Since fine clothing constituted a part of oriental wealth, moths had to be taken into consideration. Since they had no banks as we have, they buried their money, and the rust had to be considered. And since they lived in poorly built houses, they had to be careful lest thieves steal their valuables. Bad investments might also be given as a reason for not laying up treasures on earth, for many have lost all their wealth through investments in failing institutions.

*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.* We do this by spending our money and giving our time in doing good to others and trying to save souls. The rich young man was told to sell his property and give the money to the poor, and he would

have treasures in heaven. (Matt. 19: 21.) That which we give away is kept for us in heaven; that which we keep for ourselves is lost forever. We cannot take our money to heaven with us (1 Tim. 6: 6, 7); the only way we can enjoy it for eternity is to send it on ahead of us, and we do that by investing it in the poor and the lost.

*Neither moth nor rust consume.* Money sent on ahead of us is in safe keeping. Neither moth nor rust can consume it, nor can thieves break through to steal it from the Lord. But this kind of investment requires faith. We talk a lot about faith, and some people think they can go to heaven by faith alone. Brethren often act as if they expect to get there by faith only, for if asked if they believe this teaching of Jesus about laying up treasures in heaven, they will affirm that they do believe it, but since they fail to practice it we must conclude that they think they will get there on faith alone.

*Where thy treasure is.* Why is laying up treasure in heaven so important? Because where our treasure is, there are our hearts also. We must set our affection on things above (Col. 3: 1, 2), so if we put our treasure there we will have this problem solved. We must not love the world and the things of the world (1 John 2: 15), but if we have laid up treasures on earth our heart is also on earth with that treasure; so the only safe way to keep our love from being on earth is to put our treasure in heaven. Again, let us be



warned that this is not just good sermon material; this is God's prescription for right living, this is the Lord's directions for going to heaven when we have to leave this earth.

## II. Single Eye Service (Matt. 6: 22-24)

*The lamp of the body is the eye.* Jesus uses the physical body here for an illustration. The eye is the lamp, it is the source of light, for the body. It is to the body about what the affection is to the soul, the inner man.

If thine *eye be single*. If it is in such sound health and condition that we see perfectly, not a confused, blurred, double vision, our body has plenty of light. So if our affection be single in its object, if it be set upon heaven alone, the soul is full of light and happiness. This is given as a reason for laying up treasures in heaven, for our whole treasure is there, our whole affection will be there; our eye will be single and the soul full of heaven's light.

*If thine eye be evil.* This means a diseased eye, one incapable of functioning properly. The covetous man is spoken of as having an evil eye (Matt. 20: 15), though it is not to be limited to covetousness. Jesus says if the eye is evil, diseased, the whole body is full of darkness. So if the affection is diseased by sin, by lust and greed, by ignorance as to true values in life, the soul will be full of darkness; it will be like the spiritual eye since it gets its impression through that source. We value highly the things we love, and we have little interest in the things we do not love. So it is very important that we love heavenly things. But the way to be sure we love the heavenly things is to put our treasure there, for where the treasure is the heart will be also.

*If the light in thee be darkness.* In this statement Jesus has dropped the illustration of the eye in its relation to the rest of the body, and is speaking of the understanding of the soul. If that in thee which should be light, should enlighten and ennoble, is darkness, that which blurs and obscures, how great is that darkness. That which comes to the soul through misplaced affection is a dense darkness. The man who loves the world can never see God and heavenly things in their true light; he can never

understand and appreciate the church for its real worth; he can never understand why people enjoy worship; and he does not understand why people should spend much time in praise and prayer.

*No man can serve two masters.* When two masters are as opposite in their natures as God and mammon, it is easy to see the impossibility of serving them both at the same time. We will love one and hate the other, so will not be able to do acceptable service to either of them. Our service to the one we love will be hindered by the service we give the one we hate; and the service we give the one we hate will be a grudging half-service which will not be worthwhile. So an effort to serve God and mammon is a failure on both sides. This is given as another reason for laying up treasures in heaven. If we lay up our treasures there, our hearts will be there, and God will receive all our affection and service. The word mammon is used to represent wealth. Mammon was the god of wealth. So the only way to keep from being a worshipper of mammon is to lay up our treasures in heaven.

## III. Trust God to Provide (Matt. 25-30)

*Be not anxious for your life.* Jesus continues his teaching as if someone had said, What shall we do for food and raiment, if we lay up our treasures in heaven? Be not anxious, worried or in a state of doubt, about your life. Mammon cannot give you life. It is better to depend upon him who gave you life to sustain that life, than to depend upon one to sustain life who could not give you life in the first place. Life is not the most important thing, for Paul said he did not value his life very highly as compared to the accomplishment of God's purposes with him. (Acts 20: 24.) But the God who gave us this life, which is of more value than food and raiment, will surely provide as much of these things as are needful.

Behold *the birds of the heaven*. To illustrate God's care for his creation, Jesus uses the birds. They neither sow, reap, nor gather into barns, yet they never go hungry. God provides for them. Since we are of greater

value than birds, capable of doing greater service and rendering more honor and glory to God, surely he will be as faithful to care for our necessities.

*Which of you can add one cubit?* A cubit is a measure of length, and not of time. But the meaning is obvious. We cannot add the smallest measure to our life. If we take it in stature as King James version, we cannot add to our height; if we take this version, we cannot add the smallest measure to the length of life. Notice Jesus says, "Which of you by *being anxious* can add to your life." Anxiety does not add to life; if it does anything, it takes from the length of life. Our anxiety leads us to place too much emphasis on material prosperity, lay up treasures on earth, divide our love and services. So place your trust in God the Giver and Keeper of your life.

*Consider the lilies of the field.* Jesus reasoned that your life is worth more than food; that you are worth more than birds which God cares for; and now he adds another to the list, the lilies. They neither toil nor spin, yet they are clothed in more glory than Solomon. Solomon was the best dressed man among the Jews. The kingdom reached its highest glory in his reign, so the Jews looked upon him as the personification of material glory. But even he was not arrayed

in such glory as God gives to the lilies.

*The grass of the field.* Lilies are here called grass, which is simply a general term for wild vegetation. Jesus calls attention to a few characteristics of this vegetation. First, there is no toil, no struggle, to maintain life. Next, there is no worry, anxiety, about the continuance of life. Thirdly, the life is very short compared to that of a man. And, last, the grass is destroyed, used for heating baking ovens. By comparison we can see that humanity is of far greater value to God, so a greater claim to his provident care. Hence we should be as calm and undisturbed in our life as the grass. Notice the words *much more*; he will much more clothe us. Not that he will give us more clothing, but that he is much surer to clothe us than he is to clothe the lilies. This is an appeal to keep us from that anxiety about material things which will keep us from laying up treasure in heaven.

*O ye of little faith.* This is said to be the only term of reproach Jesus ever gave to his disciples. But if all who do not lay up treasures in heaven because of anxiety for their earthly welfare are people of little faith, he would have to reproach a lot of men today. Theoretically we have great faith, but practically we have but little.

### Topics for Discussion

1. A rich man solved his problem of increasing wealth by building greater barns to lay up his goods for years to come. (Luke 12: 13ff.) Jesus solves this problem for us by telling us to lay up our treasures in heaven. The rich man was worldly wise; Jesus has the heavenly wisdom.

2. When John Wesley was a young preacher he received 30 pounds salary. He lived on 28 and gave away 2 pounds. In his prime he received 60 pounds. He lived on 28 and gave away 32 pounds. He solved

his problem of increasing wealth by the rule of Jesus. He was wrong on many points of theology, but he was right in this matter.

3. The rich man above was a hoarder; most of us are spenders. We solve our problem of increasing wealth by stepping up on a higher plane, more expensive plane, of living. We build bigger and better houses, buy more expensive clothing, automobiles, and take more and longer vacations. Surely this is not the way Jesus would have it.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson? Repeat the Golden Text? Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

How does this problem of wealth compare with other problems of life?

Why is this a difficult problem for a Christian? Can you show that the way we spend our money may determine where we spend eternity?

What is the lesson Paul teaches in Gal. 6: 6-10? How apply it to us today?

**Golden Text Explained**

Does our text teach that money is evil? Is the possession of great wealth sinful? Why is the possession of great wealth dangerous? Is the love of money the root of all evil? Explain. What two classes need to be warned against the danger of the love of money? Why should those who have no money need such warning? What temptations come to people who are minded to be rich? Does the possession of great wealth insure happiness? What is a sensible prayer for us to pray concerning wealth? Give and discuss three examples of people who sinned for the love of money.

**Seek True Wealth**

What classes of people must we remember before we lay up money for old age? What is the danger to which wealth is exposed when laid up on earth? How do we lay up treasures in heaven? What of its security there? Do you believe in putting your treasure there? Is this a case of faith only? Where must we place our affection? What is the sure way of putting it there?

**Single Eye Service**

What is the lamp of the body? Of the soul? What is meant by a single eye? What is the application of this? What is an evil eye? By what may the affection be diseased? What is the result in life? What is meant by light being darkness? What is the lesson taught? Why cannot a man serve two masters? Who is mammon? What does service to him mean to a Christian?

**Trust God to Provide**

About what are we not to be anxious? Can you distinguish between sinful anxiety and proper concern for the welfare of a family? What use does Jesus make of birds to illustrate his lesson? What lesson does Jesus teach by the use of the cubit? How does Jesus illustrate his lesson by the lilies? What four thoughts are suggested with reference to the grass of the field? What lesson is suggested in the words *much more*? What mild reproach did Jesus give his disciples? Are we guilty of the same?

**Lesson XII—September 16, 1951**

**THE CHRISTIAN AND POVERTY**

**The Lesson Text**

**James 2: 1-6, 14-16**

1 My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing;

3 And ye have regard to him that wareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool;

4 Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world *to be rich* in faith, and

heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him?

6 But ye have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment seats?

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Jehovah, and his good deed will he pay him again."* (Prov. 19: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Lev. 23: 22-25.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- September 10. M..... Poor Always in the Land (Deut. 15: 7-11)
- September 11. T..... Special Provisions for the Poor (Deut. 24: 10-22)
- September 12. W..... The Wicked Oppress the Poor (Psalm 10: 1-14)
- September 13. T..... Helpers of the Poor Blessed (Prov. 14: 20-31)

September 14. F..... Gifts of the Poor Noticed (Mark 12: 41-44)  
 September 15. S..... Liberality in Spite of Poverty (2 Cor. 8: 1-15)  
 September 16. S. Paul and Barnabas Remember the Poor (Acts 11: 22-30)

TIME.—About A.D. 60.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—James and Christians then and now.

**Introduction**

Aside from being downright inconvenient, there are some real dangers connected with poverty. (1) There is the danger that men will steal. When their children are hungry, men will resort to theft to feed them. Being unable to see how it can be done otherwise, and unable to bear their cry for food, they will steal. Agur prayed that he might not be made so poor that he would steal. (Prov. 30: 8.) (2) He also prayed that he not be made so poor that he would use profanely 'the name of Jehovah. Men are inclined to blame God for their conditions, and may even curse God in extreme poverty. (3) Discouragement is another danger. When people are so poor that they cannot dress as the average, they begin thinking they are not wanted at church. They cease to take a public part, take a back seat, and soon they cease to attend church. (4) Covetousness is another danger. Seeing others enjoying plenty while we go in want, not only makes us feel that God does not deal equally with his people, but is likely to cause us to covet what our neighbor has.

And when we feel that way about it, it will be difficult for us to maintain a Christian attitude toward him. (5) We may lose our initiative in extreme poverty, become satisfied merely to exist on the barest necessities. (6) Then it is but one step farther to beggary. When people go that far they usually will not work, and if they do take a job, they are not dependable. They have lost interest in life, their self respect is gone, and they are dependent upon public charity. Laziness and poor judgment are the most frequent causes of poverty, though things beyond man's control often force men into poverty, at least for a while. Being willing to work and not too proud to do any honorable job will usually keep one from poverty. Men have been known to take charity before they would do manual labor, because they had prepared themselves for white-collar jobs. A man who refuses to dig ditches to feed his family to keep them from going hungry until he can do better, even though he may have a Ph.D. degree, is hardly fit to dig ditches. Such pride is unjustifiable.

**Golden Text Explained**

**1. God's care for the poor.** God has always taken care of and had a special interest in the poor and needy, the oppressed and downtrodden. When Moses gave the law special provisions were made for the poor. A widow's raiment could not be taken as security, and a poor man's raiment could not be kept over night as security. (Deut. 24: 12, 13, 17.) The poor were allowed to glean in the harvest fields; and vineyards could not be gathered twice, nor the corners gathered at all, but must be left for the poor. (Deut. 24: 19-22.) When a Hebrew slave was set free on the seventh year, his master must not let him go away empty, but must give to him liberally of the things

he would need. (Deut. 15: 12ff.) Money was to be lent to the poor without interest. (Ex. 22: 25.) But God's interest in the poor was shown, and still is, in provident protection of them from the oppressor. "Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for Jehovah will plead their cause, and despoil of life those that despoil them." (Prov. 22: 22, 23.) David says Jehovah delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him, and the poor and needy from him that robs them. (Psalm 35: 10.) Again he said God has been the helper of the fatherless. (Psalm 10: 14.) God will see to it that the man who oppresses the poor shall come to want.

(Prov. 22: 16.) Isaiah says God has been "a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." (Isa. 25: 4.) Amos said God would bring punishment upon Israel 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." (Amos 2: 6, 7.) And James condemns the rich for withholding the hire of the laborers who have reaped their fields, and says the cry of the poor has entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, or Lord of Hosts, the Ruler of all. (James 5: 4.) This certainly implies that those who oppress the poor will have to answer to the Lord.

**2. Lending and receiving again.** We have seen that God has a special interest in and protection over the poor. The man who cultivates this same attitude toward the poor, who gives freely and looks after the interests of the poor and needy, is a helper of the Lord. God does not do all of his work immediately; he uses agents through whom he takes

care of the poor. So when we give money to the poor, we are lending to the Lord. • We might say the Lord signs the note with the needy; the Lord is his co-signatory. We never expect the poor to repay, so it is a gift. However we may expect the Lord to repay according to his promise, so from that point of view it is not a gift, but a loan. God does not repay in money every time, but it will be of equal, or greater, value. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: Jehovah will deliver him in the day of evil." (Psalm 41: 1.) Again, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." (Prov. 28: 27.) And, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry, but shall not be heard," implies that those who listen to and heed the cry of the poor will be heard when he cries for help. (Prov. 21: 13.) Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom." (Luke 6: 38.) Not only is it lending to the Lord, but it is d'ing good to him, when we help those in need. (Matt. 25: 34-40.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. No Respect of Persons (James 2: 1-4)

Hold *not the faith of our Lord*. The word faith here is to be taken in the same sense as it is in Jude 3 where we are told to contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints, or in Gal. 3: 23 where we are told that faith came after the law, and was revealed. It is the system of faith as opposed to the law; it is the gospel. So James tells the brethren not to hold, practice, or apply the gospel with respect of persons. This strikes at once to distinctions which they were making, showing preference to the rich over the poor.

*Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.* Jesus is called the Lord of glory, which reminds us of Psalm 24: 7-9 where the King of glory goes through the unlifted gate into the eternal city. And when the question is asked, Who is this King of glory, the answer returned is, Jehovah of

hosts, he is King of glory. No one but a divine person would be called the Lord of glory.

*With respect of persons.* If the Lord of glory, Jehovah of hosts, came to this world to live among people and showed no preference to rich or poor, high or low, certainly we should not be respecters of persons. If the poor were good enough for him, they are good enough for us. If he accepted them on equality with the rich, our preference for the rich is a condemnation of his action in the matter.

*If there come into your synagogue.* James wrote to Jews, and it is probable that they continued to call their assemblies and the place of the assemblies the synagogue, just as we use the term church to apply to both the assembly and the place of assembly. This is the only place in the New Testament where the word synagogue is used where it obviously

means church, and the fact that James wrote to Jews accounts for this occurrence. This is not to be taken as proof that they still went for synagogue worship on the sabbath, as the Sabbatarians claim.

*With a gold ring, and fine clothing.* The rich and poor, then as now, were distinguished by their ornaments and clothing. Such things naturally attract attention, and they are usually indicative of material success. Shabby, or vile clothing usually indicates poverty and failure in a material way.

*Regard to him that weareth the fine clothing.* This is a perfectly human thing to do. It is not unknown in churches of Christ today. If a wealthy family moves into the city where there are a number of congregations, the preachers and prominent members get busy visiting and urging this family to "place membership," or "cast their lot," with their particular congregations, regardless of where they have settled in the city. But if a poor family moves into the city, they are left to find where the church meets the best way they can. It is allowed that this may be an over-statement of the matter for sake of illustration, but it is affirmed that such conditions exist generally as justify the statement. There is a definite trend among us to appeal to the upper middle class of people who are financially secure and independent, and we are giving less and less attention to the extremely poor. They are being reached by the highly emotional groups, such as Holinists, Nazarenes, and so on. We need to re-study and re-arrange our program so as to reach these financially insecure people.

*Sit thou here in a good place.* These people showed preference by seating the rich in front, or on an elevation near the speaker, while they seated the poor in less conspicuous and convenient places.

*Become judges of evil thoughts.* We would say, judges possessed and controlled by evil thoughts. There are two sins charged against these people. (1) They judged the worth and merit of people upon first sight, and made distinctions based upon that judgment. When strangers come into

your assembly, it is unwise to pass judgment upon them until you have had time to get acquainted with either by letter of recommendation from other churches or reputable individuals. (2) They judged by outward appearance. This is always the wrong thing to do, for Jesus said not to do it. (John 7: 24.) This revealed a human weakness in them for preferring the rich to the poor. This attitude gives the rich every advantage when he does not need it nearly so much as the poor. We are inclined to show favors to the rich, even in financial ways, which we will not extend to the poor. If two new families are in church, one rich and one poor and shabbily dressed, and you plan to invite one family into your home for a visit, which will it be?

## II. Follow God's Example (James 2: 5, 6)

*Did not God choose them that are poor?* James reminds us that God chose the poor to be heirs of the kingdom, hence we should not prefer the rich before the poor. But has God been partial in his choice? Has he accepted the poor and rejected the rich? No, God is as pleased to save a rich man as he is to save a poor man. But he framed the gospel in such a way that it appeals to the poor more than it does to the rich. The poor heard Jesus gladly, but the rich went away sorrowful. (Matt. 19: 22.) The gospel comforts and encourages the poor, but it warns the rich, humbles the proud, and threatens the covetous. Jesus said it is not so easy for a rich man to go to heaven as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. (Matt. 19: 23, 24.) God has shown special care for the poor, while never mistreating the rich, so we should follow his example to be kind and thoughtful for the welfare of the poor.

*To be rich in faith.* Since the gospel is of such nature as to appeal to the poor, to comfort and encourage them, we can see why they should be rich in faith. The gospel requires humility, and the poor have nothing to be proud about, so they can be rich in humility. The gospel requires that we not squander our money on pleas-

ures of this world, and the poor have so little money that they have to use it all for necessities. Furthermore, the poor have to look to God for help, while the rich are inclined to feel that they do not need to pray for daily bread, for they can write a check for their necessities. So the poor have faith and trust cultivated in their hearts by their condition in life, while the rich must cultivate trust in spite of their condition in life. God did not make the gospel this way solely to favor the poor, but since the gospel is what it is, the poor have the advantage.

*Heirs of the kingdom which he promised.* The kingdom here may refer to the church, for Jesus said the poor in spirit, among which some rich could be included since it means the humble, should possess the kingdom. (Matt. 5: 3.) And this could mean the eternal kingdom of our Lord which is promised to people who love the Lord. (2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) Since it is so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom (Matt. 19: 23, 24), James could well say that the poor are heirs of the kingdom. This does not mean that people are saved just because they are poor, but it does mean that not many rich people are going to be saved. The rich are not lost primarily because they are rich, but they are lost because of the sins which are so common among the rich. They find it difficult to trust God, to be humble, to use their money as liberally as they should, and to be as kind and merciful to the poor as God demands them to be.

*Ye have dishonored the poor man.* This they had done by showing preference to the rich. God honored the poor; men dishonor them. Men honor the rich in spite of the fact that the rich oppress them and persecute them. This seems almost a personal appeal to get the brethren to cease showing preference to the rich.

### III. Showing Our Faith (James 2: 14-16)

*What doth it profit?* James is looking at the practical side of Christianity. What is faith without works worth? He goes on in this connection to say that faith without works is like a body without the spirit, it is dead.

The religious world accepts this principle as it applies to a Christian, but they reject it when applied to the alien sinner. They hold to salvation by faith only. This is what James calls a dead faith, so according to James they contend that men are saved by a dead faith. But they come back to say that this is written to Christians, which is true, and that the principle does not apply to alien sinners. But it seems that James wrote in view of such an objection, so he not only used Abraham as an example of justification by faith and works, but he used Rahab the harlot who was a heathen woman of Jericho. (James 2: 25.) Since she was justified in the same way as Abraham, we must conclude that the principle applies, and that alien sinners are saved by a faith that works. If their faith is not a working faith, it is dead. If there are *no works* for a believer to do before his justification, he has no opportunity to show whether he has a living or dead faith. Repentance, confession, and baptism are all works by which the believer shows his faith, and by which his faith is proved to be a living faith.

*If a brother or sister be naked.* James supposes a case where a needy person asks for food or clothing. The one asked simply says for them to be warmed and filled, yet he gives neither food nor clothing. This is faith without works; this is the dead faith James says is of no profit. There is much of such sentiment in the world, and in the church. Often we hear people say they feel so sorry for the poor. Their emotions are slightly stirred, but they are not sufficiently stirred to move them to do any practical good. The sentiment is of no value to the poor, and it will convict those who have it. The very presence of the sentiment in the heart is proof that they realize here is an opportunity to do good, and the failure to use it is sin. (James 4: 17.) The sentiment is the work of God in the heart which is intended to move the person to do good; the resistance put up by offering excuses is nothing short of resisting God. It is sinful to resist God who works in us both to will and do for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2: 13.)

**Topics for Discussion**

1. One man may be born with great material advantage over another, but such material wealth does not commend him to the favor of God. However it may be a real hindrance to his spiritual growth because of the peculiar temptations which go with it.

2. The rich and the poor meet in death in that it takes no bigger grave for the rich than the poor, the rich are subject to decay like the poor, the rich cannot take money with them.

3. Since the poor are rich in faith and the rich are usually lacking in faith, why should the poor envy the rich? Our upside-down worldly conception of values is the only reason why the poor ever envy the rich. Peace of mind, contentment, happiness, growth in spirituality, and the hope of eternal life—none of these things are dependent upon wealth, and yet they are the greatest values in life. Why long to be rich?

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What is the connection between poverty and theft?  
Why are the poor tempted to use profanely the name of Jehovah?  
How are the poor likely to become discouraged?  
What is the connection between poverty and covetousness?  
How does poverty cause us to lose initiative and finally go to beggary?  
What are frequent causes of Poverty?  
What is the cure for poverty?

**Golden Text Explained**

What special provisions were made by Moses for the poor?  
How is God's care for the poor still shown?  
What did Isaiah say of God and the poor?  
What did Amos say of the oppression of the poor in his day?  
What does James teach about God's care for the poor laborers?  
How may we become helpers of the Lord in these matters?  
How is our gift to the poor a loan to the Lord?  
In what ways does God repay the loan to us?  
In what measure did Jesus say we will be repaid?

**No Respect of Persons**

What is the meaning of the word faith in our text?  
What is suggested in the term Lord of glory applied to Jesus?  
In what way were the brethren showing respect of persons?

In what sense is the word synagogue used in our text?  
Is there a tendency today to show respect of persons?  
Is there a trend in your congregation away from the poor to the financially independent?  
What is meant by being judges of evil thoughts?  
Why is it wrong to judge people by outward appearance?

**Follow God's Example**

Whom has God chosen to be heirs of the kingdom?  
Is this showing respect to the person of the poor? Why?  
Why is it easier for the poor to go to heaven than for the rich?  
What is meant by being rich in faith?  
Of what kingdom are the poor made heirs?  
Are they heirs just because they are poor?  
How were the poor dishonored? Why were they inconsistent in doing so?

**Showing Our Faith**

To what is faith without works likened?  
Is this rule of James applicable to both alien sinners and Christians?  
Can you prove that an alien sinner is subject to this rule of faith and works?  
In what way does the alien sinner show his faith?  
In what ways should a Christian show his faith?  
Sorrow for the unfortunate condition of the extremely poor is an indication of what?  
Who is the author of this sentiment in our hearts?  
How may we resist God in such matters?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?



## Lesson XIII—September 23, 1951

## THE CHRISTIAN AND RECREATION

## The Lesson Text

## 1 Tim. 4: 6-12; Mark 6: 31, 32

6 If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Je'-sus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou has followed *until now*:

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness:

8 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.

9 Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance.

10 For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set

on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.

11 These things command and teach.

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity.

31 And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For bodily exercise is *profitable* for a little; but godliness is *profitable for all things*." (1 Tim. 4: 8a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 6: 31-43.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| September 17. M..... | There Is a Time for Many Things (Ecc. 3: 1-15)  |
| September 18. T..... | The Whole Duty of Man (Ecc. 12: 1-14)           |
| September 19. W..... | Value of Abstinence Demonstrated (Dan. 1: 1-21) |
| September 20. T..... | Going to the Desert to Pray (Luke 5: 12-16)     |
| September 21. F..... | Jesus Attends A Feast (Luke 7: 36-50)           |
| September 22. S..... | Jesus Attends A Wedding (John 2: 1-11)          |
| September 23. S..... | Paul Prayed for Rest in Rome (Rom. 15: 30-33)   |

TIME.—About A.D. 64 for 1 Timothy; A.D. 28 for Mark.

PLACE.—East shore Sea of Galilee for Mark; places unknown for 1 Timothy.

PERSONS.—Paul, Timothy, Jesus and his disciples.

## Introduction

Recreation is a great problem (1) for parents. It is the duty of parents to provide recreation for their children. Children need and will have it somewhere and in some form. If parents do not provide and supervise such recreation as is wholesome, children will get their recreation elsewhere which will likely be anything but wholesome. Some time, thought, and money will have to be spent in providing recreation. Children will desire others of their age to go along with them to enjoy their pleasures, so there will be the problem of selection of associates, and the supervision of

their association as well as selecting the type of recreation for them to enjoy. (2) Recreation is a great problem for the children. They must have some sympathy with and respect for their parents in this matter. Young people should take the advice and counsel of parents and others who cooperate with them to provide entertainment. They should be considerate of both time and expenses involved in the equipment and periods of entertainment. (3) The church has an interest in the recreation of the young people, but it is the same interest it should have in the welfare of a home,

or the success of a business owned and operated by any member of the church. It is not the duty of the church to provide entertainment for young or old. It is not a part of the program of the church to provide playgrounds, programs of entertainment, or supervisors of such programs. The church should have an interest in the type of entertainment provided for the young people just like it should be interested in the type of business carried on by any member of the church. If a man cheats and defrauds in his business, the church should do something about it. If young people engage in recreation of doubtful morals, or things definitely lascivious, the church should do something to correct the situation to bring the young people to walk in right paths. But it definitely is no more the duty of the church to provide recreation for the young people than it is the duty of the church to provide a business for every member of the church to conduct. The church has all it can do to carry on the work the Lord gave it, that is, preaching the gospel to the lost, edifying the saved, and caring for the needy.

There are certain principles which should govern us in our recreation. (1) Time. First, the hours we will use in such. No Christian should think of setting a time for recreation which will conflict with stated hours of worship. Second, there is a possibility of spending too much time in recreation, though it never conflicts with periods of worship. Third, Sunday is not a day for recreation, though many people so use it. It is the Lord's day. Yes, all days belong to him; but if Sunday is not his in a peculiar way, why was it, and it alone, called the Lord's day? If it is his in a peculiar way, Christians ought to observe it in a peculiar way. One is miserably lacking either in knowledge of a Christian's duty or in his vision for opportunities if he cannot find anything more worthwhile to do on Sunday than to go golfing, picnicking, for to a picture show. (2) The matter of expense must be considered. One who spends more during the year for

recreation than he does for the Lord is liable to be accused of loving pleasure more than he loves the Lord. It would be most difficult for him to disprove the accusation. Neither Jesus nor Paul would do such as that. (3) Association must be considered. If your form of recreation takes you among ungodly people, your morals are likely to become corrupted. "Evil companionships corrupt good morals." (1 Cor. 15: 33.) It is not enough to say that it is the same type of associates you have where you work; it might be possible that a man would have to change his place of work to save his moral standards. (4) Your influence must be considered. One might wish to engage in a form of recreation which is questionable in the minds of many good people. If he persists in doing it, he will lose his influence for good, and the church will be criticized on his account. For the sake of his influence and for the sake of the good name of the church one would be obligated to get his recreation elsewhere and at other things. (5) Things which enslave a person must be avoided. What will enslave one may not enslave another. But if a form of recreation grows on you and holds you to the extent that you are spending too much time and money, neglecting your business and family, or being weaned away from the church, you should change to something else while you can. (6) Things which have started thousands of other people on the downward path are to be avoided in spite of our belief that we can engage in them without harm. Dancing, according to dancing masters and hundreds of unhappy victims, has been the starting point for thousands of people in a life of sin and shame. For young people to think they can engage in dancing without harm just because they are not now conscious of any danger, is to act foolishly and expose themselves to a hidden danger against the warnings of those who have been over the road. There are too many forms of recreation with which no such dangers are connected for young people to needlessly expose themselves.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Little profit in bodily exercise.** Paul says bodily exercise is profitable

for little, that is, as compared to the profit to be gained from godliness. He

very likely has reference to the bodily austerities and punishments inflicted by people upon themselves which were supposed to subdue the passions of the body and to cultivate holiness. This was a superstition and has been popular at different times in the world's history. But from the point of view of recreation, bodily exercise has its value, and so deserves a place in one's daily program, especially in the lives of young people. Old people lose their zest for such, and often criticize the young for their enjoyment of recreation, forgetting they once enjoyed such themselves. On the other hand youth is likely to overrate bodily exercise and wish to give too much time to it. It is difficult for one to strike the happy medium, unless he be his own judge!

2. **Godliness is profitable in all things.** Surely no one will be found who will seriously deny the truth of that statement. "It is favorable to good health, by promoting temperance, industry and frugality; to clearness and vigor of intellect, by giving just views of truth, and of the relative value of objects; to peace of conscience, by leading to the faithful performance of duty; to prosperity in business, by making a man sober, honest, prudent, and industrious; to a good name, by leading a man to pursue such a course of life as shall preserve it; and to comfort in trial, calmness in death, and immortal peace beyond the grave. Religion in-

juries no one. It does not destroy health; it does not enfeeble the intellect; it does not disturb the conscience; it does not pander to raging and consuming passions; it does not diminish the honor of a good name; it furnishes no subject of bitter reflection on a bed of death. If a man should do that which would most certainly make him happy, he would be decidedly and conscientiously religious; and though piety promises no earthly possessions directly as its reward, and secures no immunity from sickness, bereavement, and death, yet there is nothing which so certainly secures a steady growth of prosperity in a community as the virtues which it engenders and sustains, and there is nothing which will certainly meet the ills to which man is subject." (A. Barnes.)

3. **There should be no conflict.** There is some value to be gained from recreation. There is infinitely greater value to be gained from godliness, or piety. If one must be subordinated, or given up entirely, which will it be? Surely all will say that the one of less value should be sacrificed. Hence all recreation should be planned with our moral and spiritual interests and responsibilities in mind, being careful to put the latter first in our thoughts and activities. With such views of the comparative values of the two in mind, we are likely to go far astray from the path of righteousness.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Lessons on Exercise (1 Tim. 4: 6-12)

*Thou shalt be a good minister.* Paul is giving Timothy instructions for carrying on his work as an evangelist. Timothy had been left at Ephesus to teach the church and to protect it from certain heresies. (1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.) Now Paul tells him that he will be a good minister if he will put the brethren in mind of the teachings he had given him.

*Nourished in the words of faith and good doctrine.* This phrase explains the preceding term *good minister*. A good minister is one who has been nourished, trained, brought up, in the words of faith and good doctrine. The faith here is the gospel, and it is

held and expressed in words. And these words are not such as would have been chosen by man's wisdom, but words given by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2: 13.) And Paul tells Timothy to "hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 1: 13.) "If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," he is the cause of strife and trouble. (1 Tim. 6: 3.) Notice that the words of faith and good doctrine nourish a good minister. Good ministers do not thrive on men's doctrines and deathbed tales. These along with old wives' fables are to be refused.

Exercise *thyself unto godliness*. Paul is playing on the word exercise in this and the following verse. It is better to exercise one's self unto godliness, cultivating a pious spirit, than it is to give time to old wives' fables or the physical exercise of others who practiced bodily punishments to cultivate holiness. Paul's idea was that holiness can be attained better by nourishing one's self in the words of faith and good doctrine, than in the bodily exercise and austerities of the Essenes.

*Bodily exercise is profitable for a little.* "Bodily exercise here refers, doubtless, to the mortifications of the body by abstinence and penance which the ancient devotees, and particularly the Essenes, made so important a part of their religion." (A. Barnes.) Such bodily exercises had some good about them in that they required zeal, determination, self-control, and self-denial; but in comparison to godliness they were of little value.

*Having promise of the life that now is.* The value of godliness lies in two things. (1) It promises something for this life. Many of these things are suggested in the treatment of the Golden Text. Godliness gives one a good influence among the people with whom he associates. Being founded in and nourished by words of faith and good doctrine, godliness appeals to the minds and consciences of people. Those bodily austerities Paul was combatting rested on superstition and were incapable of doing any good for people. (2) Godliness promises much in the life that is to come. It will prepare us to stand in the judgment, and fit us for enjoyment of the activities of heaven. But these bodily exercises fitted man for neither life, death, nor heaven.

*Faithful is the saying.* This statement refers to the verse preceding it. From this we conclude that Paul quoted a maxim familiar to Timothy. In this verse he simply puts his stamp of approval on it, saying it is faithful, it can be relied upon. And he says it is worthy of general, even universal, acceptance.

To this *end we labor and strive*. Because it is true that godliness is profitable here and hereafter, we

labor and strive and suffer to bring the message of salvation to all men. Our labor looks back to the value of godliness which we wish to bring to others, and it looks forward to the hope we have in God's promise to reward us with eternal life. Paul was moved by his desire to save others and his hope of enjoying eternal salvation himself.

*The Saviour of all men.* If God is the Saviour of all men, why will not all men be saved? He is *potentially* the Saviour of all men, because he is able to save, he is willing to save, and he has provided for the salvation of all men. But he is *actually* the Saviour of only those who believe in him. And, of course, Paul means a faith which works by love, for he says that is the only thing which avails anything. (Gal. 5: 6.) If we say that belief is the only thing that is required, we cut out repentance which all admit to be essential to our salvation. (Luke 13: 3; Acts 17: 30.)

*These things command and teach.* This suggests the importance of the matters with which we are dealing. They are of sufficient importance for Paul to tell Timothy to devote his time to commanding and teaching them. He is to refuse old wives' fables, a belittling term for the doctrines and commandments of men, and give his time to commanding and teaching the words of faith and good doctrine in which he had been nourished, and which were worthy of acceptance by all.

*Let no man despise thy youth.* Timothy must have been over thirty years old at this time, but in comparison to Paul he was a young man; and no doubt he was younger than many in the church at Ephesus, especially the elders. He was to be careful lest he lose their respect as a teacher.

*Be thou an ensample to them that believe.* The preacher is to be an example to people who hear and watch him in life. To lead, one must be out in front. Hence more is required of a preacher than of those who follow. No more good traits of character are required, but a greater degree of growth and perfection is required in the leader than in a follower. He was to be an example in word, that is in a knowledge and proper use of the

word; in manner of life, showing others how to live the Christian life; in love to God and man; in faith, that is in keeping a pure faith and contending for the faith; in purity, or chastity of manners in social life.

## II. Jesus Took His Rest (Mark 6: 31, 32)

*Come ye yourselves apart, and rest a while.* This brings us back to our subject of recreation. And this was recreation in the form of a much needed rest from wearisome toils. There were two reasons for the attempted vacation. (1) The disciples had been on a preaching tour; they had worked hard and travelled long hours. They needed a rest, as did Jesus, and Jesus wished to hear their reports of accomplishments, and how the people had received them. (2) John had just been beheaded, and there was an element among the Jews

who thought this an opportune time to rebel against Rome. From John 6: 15 we learn that it was at this time the people tried to make him king by force. They knew his power to work miracles, and if he could be persuaded to use this great power for his country, they might throw off the yoke of Rome. It was to get away from this situation that Jesus wished to go elsewhere for a rest.

*They went away in a boat to a place.* By desert is meant an uninhabited section. The human body is so constructed that it must have rest. Jesus was human, so he needed rest and relaxation. But he knew that the body can get along on a lot less than we usually excuse ourselves for taking, so he did not go on extended vacations as often as many do today. No one is to judge another in such matters, but we may admonish each other with profit.

## Topics for Discussion

1. Be sure to get a clear conception of the duties of the home as contrasted with the duties of the church in the matter of recreation. To confuse the two realms of activity will involve us in absurdities.

2. Mutual sympathy and confidence between parents and children, leaders of the church and the young people, will go a long way toward solving any difficulty which may arise.

3. Building recreation rooms and providing and supervising recreational activities at the expense of the church is a departure from the simple gospel plan as revealed in the New Testament. The church might as well relieve the parents of feeding and disciplining all the young people at church expense as to take over the job of entertaining and supervising their recreation at church expense.

## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

### Introduction

Discuss parental duty of providing recreation for their children.

How can children make the duty of parents as light as possible?

Discuss the connection between the church and the recreation of the youth.

What about recreation and the time we devote to it?

What does expense have to do with our recreation?

What does association have to do with our recreation?

What of the problem of influence with reference to recreation?

Are there forms of recreation that enslave? What must we do about them?

What is to be our attitude toward forms of recreation which have ruined others?

### Golden Text Explained

How does the profit of bodily exercise compare with the profit of godliness?

Contrast the views of youth and old age on the matter of recreation.

How many things can you name which are promoted by godliness?

What effect does godliness of a majority of the people have on the community?

Where there is conflict between recreation and godliness, how is the problem to be solved?

### Lessons on Exercise

Where had Paul left Timothy? For what purpose?

In what had Timothy been nourished? What did these things make him?

Where did Paul get these words of faith and good doctrine?

In what was Timothy to exercise himself?

To what did Paul refer by the term bodily exercise?

In what does the value of godliness consist?

Why is godliness profitable unto these things?

To what end did Paul labor and strive?

In what sense is God the Saviour of all men?

In what sense is he the Saviour of them that believe?

What kind of faith is here implied?

How does Paul suggest the importance of these matters?  
 About how old was Timothy? Why was he to be careful lest men despise his youth?  
 To whom was he to be an example? Is more required of an example than of those who follow? Illustrate.  
 In what things was Timothy to be an example?

**Jesus Took His Rest**  
 Why did Jesus and the disciples need rest? Why did Jesus wish to get away from the people at this time?  
 What does this suggest about the humanity of Jesus?  
 Did Jesus require as much rest as the average today thinks he should have? What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson XIV—September 30, 1951

**THE CHRISTIAN AND OTHER RACES**

**The Lesson Text**

**Eph. 2: 11-18; Gal. 2: 11-14; 3: 28**

11 Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gen'-tiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands;

12 That ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Is'-ra-el, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Je'-sus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition,

15 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;

16 And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh:

18 For through him we both have

our access in one Spirit unto the Father.

11 But when Ce'-phas came to An'-ti-och, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned.

12 For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gen'-tiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Bar'-na-bas was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Ce'-phas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gen'-tiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gen'-tiles to live as do the Jews?

28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Je'-sus.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation." (Acts 17: 26.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 3: 26-28.

**Daily Bible Readings**

September 24. M..... Origin of Many Nations (Gen. 11: 1-9)  
 September 25. T..... Eve the Mother of All Living (Gen. 3: 9-21)  
 September 26. W..... God Set the Bounds of Peoples (Deut. 32: 6-12)  
 September 27. T..... One God Has Created Us All (Mal. 2: 10-16)  
 September 28. F..... Jehovah the Father of All (Isa. 63: 15-19)  
 September 29. S..... Jesus Blesses A Canannite Woman (Matt. 15: 21-28)  
 September 30. S..... All Nations from One Man (Acts 17: 22-31)

TIME.—A.D. 63 for Ephesians; A.D. 58 or 59 for Galatians.

PLACES.—Paul wrote Ephesians from Rome, and Galatians from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and Christians then and now.

### Introduction

Christianity is the only religion we know anything about which deals with all nations on the same basis. Judaism dealt with the Jewish nation, and the various heathen religions were for such nations as recognized these various deities. Judaism was far superior to any of the heathen religions of its day because it came from God, and because it prepared the way for and furnished the elements out of which Christianity was formed. But because Moses gave a law for the Jews only and Jehovah dealt with the Jews in a peculiar way, they got the idea they were better, more acceptable in the sight of God, than any other people. They thought God loved them more than he loved other people; that he would not punish them for their sins as he punished other people; and that he would save them for the sake of Abraham regardless of how they lived. Hence the superior race of that day. The oppression of Rome, the destruction of the temple, and the scattering of the Jews throughout the world put an end to Jewish superiority. Shem stepped down to give place to Japheth as the dominant people in religion. Paul speaks of this same shift as the Jews being broken off that the Gentiles

might be grafted in. (Rom. 11: 19.) Jesus kept pretty well within the Jewish pattern during his public ministry, not because he believed in racial superiority, but because his work of preparation was of such nature that it was not necessary for him to spend time among other races. He ministered to Samaritans, which was contrary to the Jewish pattern. (John 4.) He blessed the Canaanitish woman in the coast of Tyre and Sidon, because of her great faith, which was absolutely contrary to Jewish opinion. He obviously departed from Jewish practices in these two instances to set an example for his people to use later. He commanded his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16: 15.) Peter said gospel promises were to all that are afar off. (Acts 2: 39.) Peter did not know the meaning of these words until the Lord sent him to the Gentile Cornelius to offer him salvation on equal terms with the Jews. (Acts 10.) The majority of Jews refused to accept Gentiles, but Gentiles were soon in the lead. The great Gentile church in Antioch took the lead in evangelizing the world.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. God made of one man, one flesh, all nations of the earth.** This one man was Adam. Eve is called the mother of all living. (Gen. 3: 20.) Hence, from Adam and Eve all the people of the earth have come, regardless of their color, location, or disposition. Paul said, "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes." (1 Cor. 15: 39.) Men are of one flesh; they have one common source. The different races are not composed of different kinds of flesh. Until recent years there were many people who would argue that the Negro does not have a soul, that he is a lower class of being than the white race. A few can still be

found who believe this vicious doctrine, and many more who act as if they believe it. There are three great divisions of humanity which started with the sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

**2. God determined the appointed seasons of nations.** God is the ruler of this universe. The rise and fall of nations are determined by him. He uses what men prefer to call natural means, and men often see the result and not the cause; they see the human instruments used in the rise and fall of nations, and fail to see God using them. Nebuchadnezzar failed to see God in his rise to power, and in the development of his nation. So proud did he become that it was necessary to teach him that God orders the rise

and fall of nations, so he was made to live like a beast for seven years to learn "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Dan. 4: 32.) Cyrus, the king of Persia, understood that Jehovah had given him his kingdom. (Ezra 1: 1, 2.) So nations rise, prosper, decline, and perish according to God's appointed seasons. God did not arbitrarily set these seasons, and then force nations to fit into this pre-arranged schedule. But according to his foreknowledge of what nations would do, God appointed the seasons of the existence of nations.

3. God determines the bounds of the nations. In the tenth chapter of Genesis we are told of the division of territory among the three sons of Noah and their posterity. North and east of the Mediterranean Sea was allotted to Japheth. South of the Mediterranean and east of the Red Sea was given to Shem. South of the Mediterranean and west of the Red Sea was given to Ham. Moses says, "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he

separated the children of men, he set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of children of Israel." (Deut. 32: 8.) The separation was made before there was such a thing as a Jewish nation, but the separation was made with them in mind, reserving a place for them. This demonstrates the foreknowledge of God, and his method of dealing with nations. Why the various families of the earth have different physical features is a problem which the Bible does not propose to settle. Men have accounted for it in several different ways, no one of which is entirely satisfactory to very many people. It seems best to classify that as one of the secret things which belong unto Jehovah our God. (Deut. 29: 29.) The thing we need to do is to recognize every human being as our brother or sister, and do our best to carry the gospel of salvation to every nation and every individual in every nation. It is not our duty to live with nor like them, but it is our duty to preach Christ to them.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. All Nations Made Nigh in Christ (Eph. 2: 11-18)

*The Gentiles in the flesh.* Paul speaks of Gentiles in the flesh, and circumcision in the flesh. These terms applied only to the flesh, not to the spirit. The Gentiles were called Uncircumcision by the Jews. It was a term of reproach, as well as of distinction one from the other.

*Ye were separate from Christ.* Paul wishes the Gentiles to remember that they were at one time separate from Christ. To call such to remembrance would cause them to appreciate their present blessings more by way of contrast. They had no knowledge of Christ's love and sacrifice for them; they had not received the offer of salvation in him; and so they had no hope of eternal life in him, and because of his atonement for their sins. As this refers to a time previous to the death of Christ, Paul implies that Christ was a part of the Jewish religion, and that the Gentiles had no part in that. The offerings were types of Christ, and since the Gentiles were not allowed to make offerings, they

were denied this fellowship and participation in the worship of Christ.

*Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.* A commonwealth is a body of people organized into a state. The Gentiles were aliens to this state of Israel. They were not necessarily enemies of this state, but they were aliens in the sense that they were not citizens, and were not entitled to participate in the blessings of citizenship in the state.

Strangers from the covenants of *promise*. Covenants are based upon and grow out of promises. Paul speaks of the better covenant being enacted upon better promises. (Heb. 8: 6.) The old covenant at Sinai was enacted upon the land promise made to Abraham. (Gen. 17: 8; Psa. 105: 8-11.) The covenant of circumcision was based upon the same promise. (Gen. 17: 9ff.) The Gentiles were strangers from these covenants which were based upon the promises made to Abraham and his seed after him. At a later time. (Eph. 3: 6ff.) Paul shows that the Gentiles were included in the seed promise which God made



to Abraham. But from the time of the land promise and the covenant based upon it to the time God saw fit to fulfill his seed promise to bless all nations in Christ, the Gentiles were strangers from the covenants of promise. The seed promise is found in Gen. 12: 3 and 22: 18, and the fulfillment is in the gospel of salvation through Christ. (Acts 3: 25, 26; Gal. 3: 6-16.)

*Having no hope and without God.* Since they were separate from Christ and had no connection with the covenants of promise, we can see why they had no hope. That is, they had no solid basis for hope. They may have entertained some false hopes, based upon false promises of their heathen religions, but these are the same as no hope at all. They were without God; they were atheists; that is the Greek term used. They lived as if God did not exist. Many people are practically atheists today because they live just like they would live if there were no God.

*But now in Christ Jesus.* Conditions have changed. Christ has come and died for all men; his gospel has been preached to men of all races and nations. And in Christ there are blessings for all.

*Made nigh in the blood of Christ.* The greatest blessing that has ever come to all nations is that people can be made nigh in the blood of Christ. To be made nigh is to be given access to all that they had been denied formerly. This blessing comes through the blood of Christ. He shed his blood in his death. His death made it possible for Gentiles to receive his blessings. (Gal. 3: 13, 14.) So the blessing is attributed to his blood. The life is in the blood, and when the blood is shed the life is sacrificed.

*He is our peace, who made both one.* He is the source and cause of peace being made between Jew and Gentile, so that no longer is one denied blessings which are available to another. He broke down the middle wall of partition between the races. Here Paul refers to a wall which separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Jews in the temple. The Jews were allowed to go closer to the holy place than the

Gentiles. But in Christ there is no such wall of separation between races or nations; all have the same privileges.

*Abolished in his flesh the enmity.* The phrase *in his flesh* suggests the atonement which Jesus made by suffering in his flesh. The enmity was abolished by the death of Christ. The enmity is denoted to be the *law of commandments contained in ordinances*. This is a reference to the Mosaic covenant, and that part which had to do with ordinances. Since the Gentiles were not allowed to have part in this, it was the occasion of enmity, or a feeling of ill-will which grew up between Jews and Gentiles. When Jesus fulfilled the law, he took it out of our way. (Col. 2: 14.)

*Create in himself of the two one new man.* The two referred to are Jew and Gentile, and the one new man made of them is the church. If this was done by the death of Christ, it follows that the church, which resulted from his death, could not possibly have existed until after his death.

*Reconcile them both in one body unto God.* This one body is the church. (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1: 18.) Hence reconciliation to God takes place in the church, and we see the importance of becoming members of the church. This reconciliation is made through the cross, because the enmity was slain in his death on the cross. This enmity is not that which existed between Jews and Gentiles mentioned in verse 15, but this is enmity between man and God. So through his death we are brought back to God and made to love him, and so we become reconciled to God in Christ and through his death on the cross.

## II. No Racial Distinctions in Christ (Gal. 2: 11-14; 3: 28)

*When Cephas came to Antioch.* Cephas is an Aramaic word which means the same as the Greek word Peter, a stone. Scholars differ as to when Peter went to Antioch, but from this letter to the Galatians it seems that his visit mentioned here followed the Jerusalem conference. The mention that "even Barnabas" stood with Peter instead of Paul seems to indicate that this incident took place

while Paul and Barnabas were associated together in missionary work. Hence we conclude that the visit followed immediately the Jerusalem conference, but preceded the break between Paul and Barnabas.

*I resisted him to the face.* Being an apostle did not keep men from making mistakes. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit did not guarantee perfection in life. Peter made a mistake in spite of being an apostle baptized in the Holy Spirit. Those today who claim they are made sinless by the baptism of the Holy Spirit should account for Peter's mistake.

He ate with the Gentiles. Having helped to settle the dispute at Jerusalem about the standing of the Gentiles, Peter began to eat with them, making no distinction. It is said that some men came from James. This is the James who lived in Jerusalem, the brother of Jesus, and who exercised such a great influence in that section. He presided at the Jerusalem conference. (Acts 15.)

*Drew back and separated himself.* Peter was afraid of what these men would think, and what the church in Jerusalem would think of him, so he reversed his decision and refused to eat with the Gentiles any more. Fear of public opinion is a great force in our lives. Fear of the opinion of cliques in society is a great force. Cliques, or groups, of brethren associated together around a periodical, or a school, can put good brethren in fear and wield an influence on them sufficient to control their opinions and actions. This is an evil which should be avoided and destroyed. It is dangerous and disastrous.

*Jews dissembled, even Barnabas.* Paul says the "rest of the Jews" followed Peter, even Barnabas going along with them. Dissemble means to hide under a false semblance; to make a pretense. It is hypocrisy; doing a thing for one reason, but pretending to do it for another reason. This was a serious charge to bring

against a fellow apostle, but Paul does not hesitate to make the charge. Peter never denied it, so it must have been true.

*They walked not uprightly.* Upright walk is determined by the teaching of the gospel. Paul measured them and their walk by the gospel and found them walking contrary thereto, so he rebuked them. We are told to have no fellowship in evil works, but rather reprove them. (Eph. 5: 11.) It is as much our duty to reprove sin as it is to abstain from it ourselves.

*I said to Cephas, If thou, being a Jew.* Peter had lived as a Gentile before these men came from Jerusalem. That is, he was making no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Now Paul asks, *How compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* By drawing off and refusing to eat any longer with Gentiles, Peter was in effect forcing the Gentiles to live as do the Jews. His action would compel the Gentiles to become circumcised in order to enjoy his full fellowship and association. So Paul accused Peter of being a Jew who did live as a Gentile for a while, but now he would compel all Gentiles to change and live as Jews. Here was race prejudice, race distinction, and race pressure brought by a man who knew better. We need to exercise care today lest we be guilty of the same thing.

*Ye are all one man in Christ Jesus.* By this is meant that there are no distinctions made in Christ. Neither Jew nor Greek has any advantage in Christ; neither bond, slave, nor a free man has a single privilege not enjoyed by the other. Neither male nor female has any special privileges. They do not have the same duties, but they are equal so far as favors enjoyed are concerned. Whites have not one single blessing in Christ which is not equally shared by the negroes and on the same terms; no special privileges to any in Christ.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Christianity won out over all them to take away privileges from mystery religions of the first few, the favored classes. centuries after Christ because of its universal characteristics, its tendency at Antioch is not that of an inferior to elevate the downtrodden rather criticizing a superior; it was the ac-
2. Paul's action in rebuking Peter

tion of a man rebuking one who was his equal. Paul did not approach the problem as the average Catholic approaches the Pope today; Paul did not consider Peter as his pope.

3. Does racial equality in Christ demand free and unlimited social intercourse between any two races such

as whites and negroes? Can we practice racial equality in Christ as taught by Jesus and his apostles, and still maintain our practice of segregation as it is known in the South? These questions should be discussed calmly and intelligently. They are live issues.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

In what way was Judaism like the heathen religions?  
In what way did Judaism differ from the heathen religions of its day?  
How did Jewish feeling on superiority arise? When did it come to an end?  
Why was the work of Jesus on earth primarily with the Jews?  
What two exceptions did he make? With what races? For what purpose?  
Did the apostles understand the universality of Christianity at first?

**Golden Text Explained**

What evidence do we have that all humanity sprang from one man?  
Name three great divisions of humanity.  
What is meant by appointed seasons of nations? What does God have to do with it?  
What great king was taught that God controls the affairs of nations?  
What great king understood God's sovereignty over the nations?  
Can you give the locations of the three great divisions of humanity?  
What part did Israel have in this division?  
What does this teach us about God?  
Can you account for the physical difference between races? What is more important?

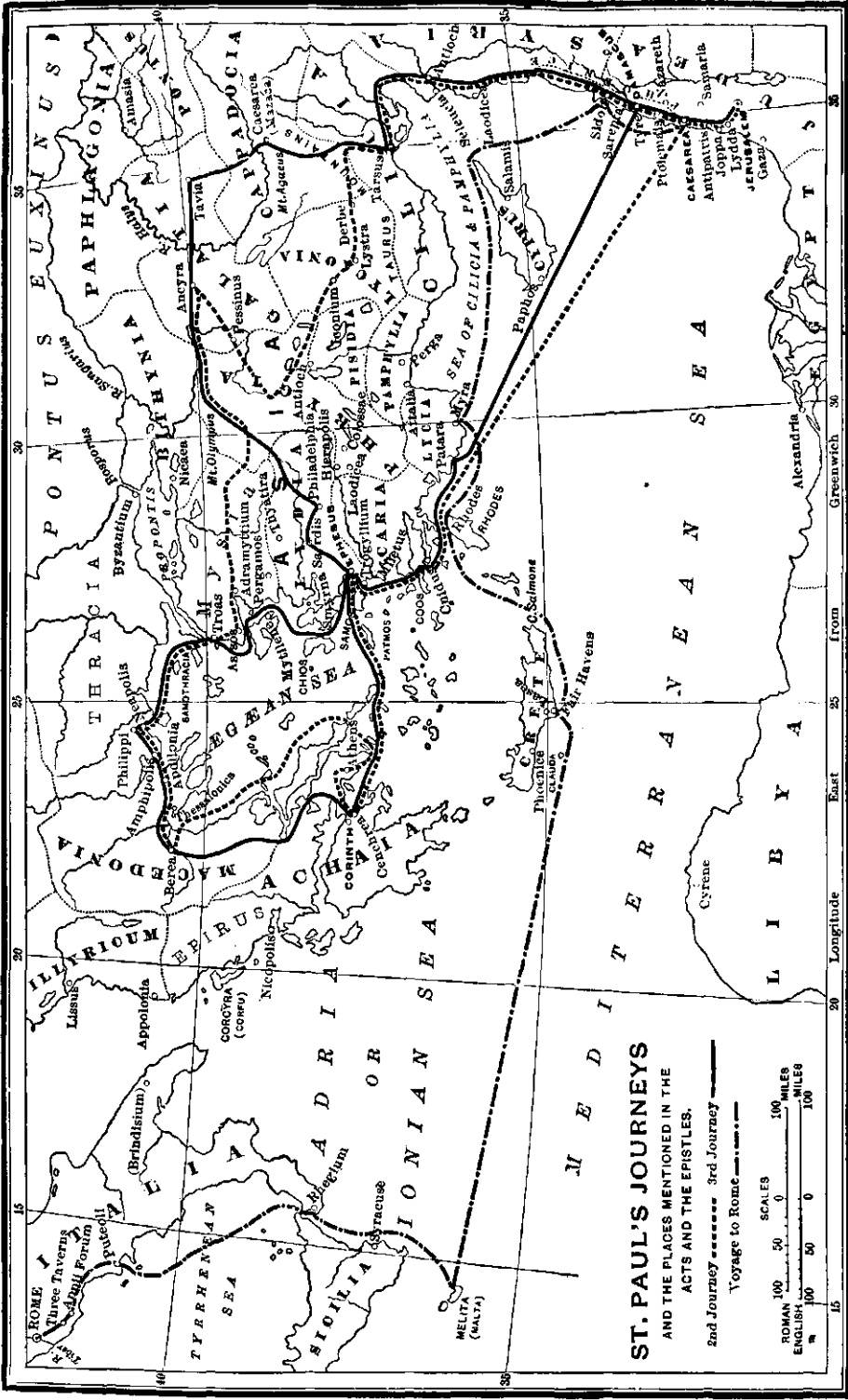
**All Nations Made Nigh in Christ**

What is meant by being separate from Christ?  
What is meant by being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel?  
From what covenants were Gentiles

strangers? Why called covenants of promise?  
What two great promises were made to Abraham? What covenants based upon them?  
What does it mean to be without God in the world?  
What is meant by being made nigh? What does the blood of Christ have to do with it?  
In what sense is Jesus our peace?  
What was the enmity between Jew and Gentile? In what was it abolished?  
What was the new man created in Christ? Of what elements was this new man created?  
What is reconciliation? Where does reconciliation to God take place?  
How does this emphasize the importance of being a member of the church?

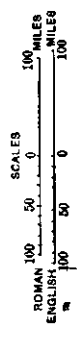
**No Racial Distinctions in Christ**

Who was Cephas? When did he go to Antioch?  
What does Peter's mistake teach us about the baptism of the Holy Spirit?  
Why did Peter fear the brethren from James? Who was this James?  
Discuss the danger of cliques, or groups, of brethren exercising influence by pressure.  
What is meant by the Jews dissembling? Who was influenced by them?  
By what standard did Paul determine whether brethren walked uprightly?  
What accusation did Paul bring against Peter?  
How and to what degree was Peter guilty of racial prejudice and distinction?  
What is meant by being one man in Christ?  
Does the fact that there is neither male nor female in Christ give women the right to do anything in the church that men are privileged to do?  
What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?



**ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS**  
 AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE  
 ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

Voyage to Rome ———  
 2nd Journey - - - - -  
 3rd Journey ·····



Longitude East from Greenwich 15 20 25 30 35

## FOURTH QUARTER

## STUDIES IN REVELATION

**AIM.**—*To study "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" in order that the student may receive the blessing pronounced upon him "that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein."*

## Lesson I—October 7, 1951

## JOHN ON PATMOS

## The Lesson Text

## Rev. 1: 1-9

1 The Revelation of Je'-sus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, *even* the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John;

2 Who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Je'-sus Christ, *even* of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

4 John to the seven churches that are in A'-si-a: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne;

5 And from Je'-sus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of

the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood;

6 And he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto his God and Father; to him *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. A-men'.

7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, A-men'.

8 I am the Al'-pha and the O-me'-ga, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience *which are* in Je'-sus, was in the isle that is called Pat'-mos, for the word of God and the testimony of Je'-sus.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"Blessed is he that *readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.*" (Rev. 1: 3.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Rev. 4: 1-11.

## Daily Bible Readings

October 1. M.....Every Scripture Is Profitable (2 Tim. 3: 10-17)  
 October 2. T.....A Blessing in Searching Scripture (John 5: 37-47)  
 October 3. W.....Jesus Witnessed Before Pilate (1 Tim. 6: 11-16)  
 October 4. T.....Jesus Went Away in Cloud (Acts 1: 6-11)  
 October 5. F.....Jesus the Firstborn of All Creation (Col. 1: 9-20)  
 October 6. S. We Are Made a Royal Priesthood (1 Pet. 2: 1-10)  
 October 7. S.....Jesus the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22: 10-16)

**TIME.**—About A.D. 95.

**PLACE.**—Isle of Patmos.

**PERSONS.**—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all that read and heed.

### Introduction

There are nearly as many different opinions about the book which we are about to study as there are commentators on it. But there are two schools of thought with reference to the purpose of the book which we should notice in this first lesson. We will let Adam Clarke speak for one as follows: *"The book of the Apocalypse may be considered as a PROPHECY continued in the Church of God, uttering predictions relative to all times, which have their successive fulfillments as ages roll on; and thus it stands in the Christian Church in the place of the SUCCESSION of PROPHETS in the Jewish Church; and by this especial economy PROPHECY is still CONTINUED, is ALWAYS SPEAKING; and yet a succession of prophets is unnecessary."* (Preface to the Revelation of St. John, Clarke's Commentary, Vol. VI, p. 996.) According to this view there is much in the book which had no meaning to the people of John's day, as the prophecies could not be understood until world events made the interpretation obvious. And in this connection Clarke says it is the business of the commentator to point out such fulfillments as they occur, but he declines to accept the responsibility because he cannot be sure he is right in saying a certain event is

the fulfillment of a certain prophecy.

The second school of thought as to the purpose of the book and the people for whom it was written holds that it was written primarily for the suffering Christians of John's day, and that they could read it with profit and be encouraged by it. It is not denied that the prophecies contained in it reach far beyond their day, even to the end of time, but that the forces of evil with which they were contending in John's day were of the same nature as the forces of evil with which the church of all ages would have to contend. Those who see in certain prophecies such men as Hitler and Stalin, and such countries as England and America, see in it things which the people to whom John wrote could not possibly see, since these men and nations were not then in existence. It seems better to take a broader view of matters and see anti-Christian governments, anti-Christian religious systems, and the seductive and alluring influences of the material and social world about us as the enemies of Christ and his saints; and to see the final victory of the people of God over these forces. Men and nations who oppose Christ and his church will then fit into these broad patterns in any and all ages from John to the end of time.

### Golden Text Explained

1. A blessing: **pronounced.** John pronounced a blessing upon both the readers and the hearers of the matter contained in this book. There has been some argument as to what he meant by the *reader* and the *hearer*. Albert Barnes says it means any one who reads and attends to the things written, but admits that the language will bear another interpretation. Moses Stuart and others say it refers to the custom, common in those days when there were few copies of the Scripture, of one man standing to read while others listened. So John pronounced a blessing on both the reader and the hearer. The Pulpit Commentary suggests that this is probably the earliest authority for the public reading of the New Testament in assemblies for worship. One reason for giving this meaning

to the words is the fact that the word *hear* must obviously be taken in this sense since the next phrase includes the doing of what is heard.

2. **Keep the things that are written.** To keep a thing may mean to remember it; to ponder it in the mind. It may also mean to obey, to give heed to the things that are written. But since this book of Revelation deals largely with predictions which are not of such nature as to be obeyed, Stuart and others think this expression means to remember. But there are a number of commandments, especially to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3, which were to be obeyed by those churches, and by all others today in like conditions. The blessing has never been promised to people who read the Scripture without any intention of doing what

is taught therein. Jesus gave a contrast between the man who hears and does and the man who hears and does not in the Sermon of the Mount. (Matt. 7: 24-27.) And James tells us that it is not the man who hears and forgets, but the doer of the word that is blessed. (James 1: 22-25.) So John promises a blessing to both the reader and the hearer of Revelation provided they also keep the things which are written; provided they remember them and live by the things written.

3. **The time is at hand.** This phrase is not to be taken as teaching that all that is predicted in the book of Revelation was considered as being at hand at the time John wrote. Time has proved that this was not true, hence we cannot give the words

this meaning. But the series of events which John revealed in this book were about to begin; the time for the events to begin to unfold was at hand; they must shortly begin to come to pass. Though some of the events were at least nearly two thousand years in the future, and maybe thousands of years, yet it was correct to say that the series of which these distant events were a part was about to begin to unfold itself. The fact that it was at hand would quicken the interest of the people to whom John wrote, and would cause them to give more diligent effort to arrive at a correct understanding of what John wrote. And the fact that they are now in process of fulfillment should spur us to greater efforts to learn their meaning.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. A Preface and Promise (Rev. 1: 1-3)

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.* The word revelation means an uncovering, or unveiling, of something heretofore hidden. But the form of this expression may mean that Jesus is the subject of the revelation given, or it may mean that Jesus is the source of the revelation. In this case we may be sure that the expression means that Jesus is the revealer, the One through whom the revelation comes, for it is said that God gave it to him to give to his angel, to give to John. It is also true that Jesus Christ forms a great part of the subject matter of this revelation, for much of it is about his final and complete triumph over all his enemies.

*Which God gave to him.* While Jesus was on earth he made progress mentally and socially just as all ordinary human beings. (Luke 2: 40, 52.) He was in some sense dependent upon and subject to his Father, even as other human beings. (John 5: 19.) The fact that he grew in wisdom while on earth may account for the statement that he did not know the time of his second coming. (Matt. 24: 36.) He said his doctrine was not his, but that he received it from the Father. (John 12: 49, 50.) Here it is indicated that this same relationship between him and the Father continues after he has gone

back to heaven, for this revelation which he is about to give to John is given him by the Father. It seems that this mediatorial dependency will continue until he has subjected all things to himself and is ready to deliver the kingdom to God the Father. (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) Even then there seems to be a distinction maintained, for it is said that the Son himself shall be subjected to God that he may be all in all.

*Which must shortly come to pass.* The things which were shortly to come to pass stand in apposition to the revelation of the first phrase of the verse, so we gather that the things revealed were shortly, or soon, to come to pass. But it is certain that some of the things revealed are yet in the future, so were a long time in the future of John's day. So we conclude that the sense of the statement is that the things revealed were soon to begin to be fulfilled; the first of a long series of events was at hand, and the rest of the series would come along in their turn, according to the good pleasure and plan of God. It is said that these things *must* come to pass; necessity is implied, but the ground of the necessity is not expressed. It could be that it is a part of God's plan for the redemption of his people and the destruction of his enemies, and that nothing can stand in the way of his accomplishments of

his great and grand purposes formed from eternity.

*By his angel unto his servant John.* God gave the revelation to Jesus; Jesus gave it to the angel; the angel gave it to John; and John wrote it to the seven churches in Asia. It seems that the angel's part in the revelation was to cause the visions to come before the eyes of John, and to interpret their meaning to him so that he could write them. It is said that these things were *signified* unto John by the angel, and that word *signified* means to indicate by signs and symbols.

*Who bare witness of the word of God.* John refers to his own testimony which he has borne to the truth of the word of God. This is probably a reference to the gospel which bears his name, to his three letters which bear his name, and to his record as a gospel preacher. It was on account of this faithful witnessing that he was exiled on Patmos. He not only bore witness of the word of God, but he also bore witness of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave testimony both by word of mouth and by his miraculous deeds, and John says he has borne faithful witness of this testimony of Jesus. No one can read the Gospel of John without being impressed with the fact that he faithfully recorded the testimony of Jesus with reference to God and his purpose in sending the Son into the world. This study of the two books should be enough to convince anyone that John the apostle is the author of both.

## II. Salutation and Praises (Rev. 1: 4-9)

*To the seven churches that are in Asia.* Whether there were just seven churches in the province of Asia at the time John wrote, it is impossible to determine. There was a church at Colossae in A.D. 63, for Paul addressed a letter to it. Moses Stuart thinks there may have been any number of other churches in the province, but that these seven were chosen because seven is a perfect number and because they were representative of all conditions of the church in all ages of the world. B. W. Johnson says, "This *complete*

number would make them fitting representatives of the entire Church, and those selected probably represent every condition that ever prevails among churches that have not apostatized from the faith." (Vision of the Ages, p. 29.)

*From him who is and who was and who is to come.* This is an expression of eternal being. It expresses existence in the past, the present, and the future. It implies uncreated, self-existing Being. In this connection it refers to the Father. It could as well be used of the Son, the second person of the Godhead, or of the third, but since these persons of the Godhead are mentioned in expressions following, we conclude that this refers to the Father.

*From the seven Spirits before the throne.* There is hardly any end to the controversy among commentators as to the meaning of this phrase. Some think it refers to the Father, others to Jesus Christ, and some think it refers to angels, among them Adam Clarke. But since this in form of a doxology, an ascription of praise to the Father and the Son and to "the seven Spirits," we must conclude that whoever is meant is worthy of the praise and adoration which is given to the Father and the Son. Angels are not worthy of such, and it is never ascribed to them by any inspired writer. So we conclude that the Holy Spirit is intended. Why the number seven? We do not know, and perhaps cannot know. But a good guess is that it is used to denote the manifold gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in his work of establishing the church, convicting sinners, and sanctifying the saints. A study of verse 6 chapter 5 will throw some light on this verse.

*From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.* Here we have mention made of the other member of the Godhead. Prayer is made that grace and peace will come from the Father, Holy Spirit, and the Son. (See 2 Cor. 13: 14.) Here the Son is honored for three things. He is (1) the faithful witness, because he was faithful in giving witness to the Father, and in that he can be depended on for a true witness; (2) he is the firstborn from the dead, referring to his resurrection



from the grave to die no more. He was not the first ever to be raised from the dead, but he was the first to be raised to die no more. (3) He is called the ruler of the kings of the earth. He rules over kings like kings rule over their subjects. This is a form of praise for his majesty and power. Kings rule over their subjects. This is a form of praise for his majesty and power. Kings do not always obey him, but wherein they displease him they must answer to him. Those who think the Lord has no hand in the management of the affairs of the world should remember that kings who have so little interest in the affairs of their kingdoms make poor kings. Our Lord is not a poor king; he is interested in the affairs of the kings over whom he rules.

Unto *him that* loved us. Here is another three-fold ascription of praise to Jesus Christ. (1) He loveth us, even enough to die for us and to prepare for us a home in heaven; (2) who loosed us from our sins by his blood, which he shed on the cross for the remission of our sins, and by which he redeemed us from all sins; (3) made us to be a kingdom and to be priests unto God. The meaning of this is not that some are made kings and others priests; but all his people are kings and priests, a royal priesthood. They are kings in that they reign with him and will be victorious over their enemies through him; and they are priests in that they have access to God through Christ. They are not dependent upon a priesthood like the Jews of old; they are priests themselves, able to offer sacrifices unto God.

*He cometh with the clouds.* This is in keeping with the promise of the angels who comforted the apostles when he went away. (Acts 1: 9, 11.) God appeared at Sinai in a thick cloud. Usually his appearances are in clouds. This suggests majesty and glory. Jesus is worthy of all the majesty and glory characteristic of God.

*Every eye shall see him.* The clouds will not be such as will obscure our vision of him. Those who argue that Jesus came in 1914 (Jehovah's witnesses) have to say that those who have eyes of faith to discern his coming see him. But this says nothing

about eyes of faith, and even mentions that the soldiers who pierced Jesus will see him. This implies two things. (1) That eyes of faith are not intended here, for no one thinks the Roman soldiers were believers. (2) That the coming of Jesus will be at the same time of the resurrection of the dead, for the Roman soldiers will have to be raised from the dead to see Jesus when he comes. This further suggests that the wicked will be raised at his second coming, unless, indeed, these Roman soldiers were later converted and are now among the righteous.

*All the tribes of the earth shall mourn.* To Christians the coming of Jesus is a most glorious event, one to look forward to with joyous anticipation. (Titus 2: 13.) But to the unsaved his coming to judgment will mean weeping and wailing. Since it is said here that all tribes of the earth shall mourn over him, we may conclude that most of the people of the earth at the time of his coming will be unsaved. Those who think the world will be converted to Christ before his coming have a problem here.

*I am the Alpha and Omega.* Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last letter, so this simply means the first and the last. It denotes the eternity of Christ. He was in the beginning and he will be at the ending of all things. The fact that these terms apply equally to the Father and the Son, and the further fact that the word *Almighty* refers equally to the Father and the Son, suggests the divinity of Jesus equally with that of the Father.

*I John, your brother and partaker.* This verse really belongs with the next lesson. The writer is identifying himself with the people to whom he wrote as being a fellow-citizen in the kingdom of Christ, and as enduring patiently with them the tribulations which all shall suffer who live godly lives in Christ. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) As proof of this suffering John says he was then in the isle of Patmos, a short distance west of Ephesus in the Mediterranean Sea, suffering persecution on account of his preaching the word of God and bearing testimony for the sake of Jesus.

### Topics for Discussion

1. A blessing is promised in this lesson; it is promised to all who read, and heed the teachings of this book. People who love the word of God enough to read it often, and who delight in the practice of the things which they find therein, may entertain the hope of living with the Lord.

2. There is a mourning mentioned

in this lesson. It is mentioned in connection with those who pierced the Saviour. People who do not love the Lord enough to study his word to learn their duty, and who are too busy with the affairs and pleasures of this world to do what they know to be their duty will be among the mourners in that day when he comes.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Discuss the view of Revelation which holds that it takes the place of a succession of prophets.

Is it easy or difficult to recognize a certain event as the fulfillment of a prophecy? Discuss the second view of the book suggested in our lesson.

What three anti-Christian influences are suggested as enemies of Christ and his church?

#### Golden Text Explained

On whom did John pronounce a blessing? To whom does the reader refer? The hearer?

What is meant by keeping the things one hears?

What type of hearer is promised a blessing? What other type of hearers are there?

What did John mean by saying that the time is at hand?

What was John's purpose in saying the time was at hand?

#### A Preface and Promise

What does the word Revelation mean? What part did Jesus have in this revelation?

In what ways and to what extent was Jesus dependent on the Father while here?

What indication do we have that he is still dependent on the Father?

How long will this mediatorial dependency continue?

What did John mean by saying that the things must shortly come to pass?

What is implied in the statement that these things *must* come to pass?

Can you trace this Revelation from God

to the seven churches, and tell what part each one in this series performed? What is implied in the word signify as used with reference to this Revelation? To what did John refer when he said he had borne witness of the word of God? To what else did John say he had borne witness?

#### Salutation and Praises

Were there only seven churches in Asia? Why was the number seven chosen by John?

What expression is used to reveal the eternal existence of God?

Discuss the meaning of the phrase "seven Spirits before the throne."

For what three things is the Son of God honored in this verse? Discuss each one.

John praises Jesus for what three things which he has done for us? Discuss each one.

What is common both to the ascension and the second coming of Jesus?

Who will see him come? What two things are implied in this fact?

How does the Christian view the second coming of Jesus?

What is implied here as to the religious condition of the world at his second coming?

What is meant by Alpha and Omega? What do these words imply with reference to Jesus?

What other term is used of Jesus which applies to God alone?

How does John identify himself with the people to whom he wrote?

What statement proves the existence of the kingdom of Christ in John's day?

What is the common lot of all who live godly lives in the kingdom?

What proof did John offer of his patience in the kingdom?

Locate the Isle of Patmos on the map. What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson II—October 14, 1951

## THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

## The Lesson Text

## Rev. 1: 10-30

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet

11 Saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches: unto Eph'-e-sus, and unto Smyr'-na, and unto Per'-ga-mum, and unto Thy-a-ti'-ra, and unto Sar'-dis, and unto Phil-a-del'-phi-a, and unto La-od-i-ce'-a.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

14 And his head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a

furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last,

18 And the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Ha'-des.

19 Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Fear not; I am the first and the last." (Rev. 1: 17b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 5: 5-12.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| October 8. M.....  | Isaiah's Vision of the Lord (Isa. 6: 1-5)             |
| October 9. T.....  | Ezekiel's Vision of the Lord (Ezek. 1: 26-28)         |
| October 10. W..... | Daniel's Vision by the River Hiddekel (Dan. 10: 1-21) |
| October 11. T..... | Stephen's Vision of the Lord (Acts 7: 54-60)          |
| October 12. F..... | Paul's Vision of Paradise (2 Cor. 12: 1-10)           |
| October 13. S..... | John's Vision of the Throne (Rev. 4: 1-11)            |
| October 14. S..... | John's Vision of Heaven Opened (Rev. 19: 1-16)        |

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all that read and heed.

## Introduction

The reader should know that scholars are not agreed on the date to be assigned to the writing of the book of Revelation. Some believe that John was exiled by Nero and that he wrote his book before A.D. 70, the year of the destruction of Jerusalem. The early date is usually placed at A. D. 68 or A.D. 69. Most of the reasons given for the early date are internal in

their nature. "The linguistic phenomena, the doctrinal expressions, and the methods of conveying Christian truth, in the two books are such as irresistibly lead the student to the conviction that the Apocalypse is much earlier than the Gospel." (Pulpit Commentary.) Again, the Greek of the book of Revelation is not as smooth and polished as that of the

Gospel of John, so scholars argue that Revelation must have been written much earlier than the Gospel, and that the writer had had time to improve his use of the Greek language. And again, it is argued that the doctrines of the Gospel of John are much more developed than those of Revelation, but are such as grew out of the Revelation, evidence that Revelation was written before the Gospel.

On the other hand those who contend for the late date of A.D. 95 or 96 depend largely on external evidence. Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, said, "The Apocalypse was seen not long ago, but almost in our generation, near the end of Domitian's reign." And Jerome says that John saw his visions on the island of Patmos to which he was sent by Domitian. He also said that this occurred in the fourteenth year of the reign of Domi-

tian. It is also known that Domitian preferred to exile people instead of killing them, while Nero beheaded, burned, and threw his victims to the wild beasts. And it is also known that Domitian prosecuted a short but relentless persecution against Christians, beginning in A.D. 93 or 94. Even some of his relatives who had enjoyed unusual liberty were exiled on account of the fact that Domitian's attitude toward Christians had radically changed. (See Barnes' Notes, Revelation, p. 18.) Clement of Alexandria speaks of John about the time he returned from his exile in Patmos as being an "infirm old man." John was about sixty years of age at the time of the persecution by Nero, but about ninety years old when Domitian persecuted Christians. So Clement's description of him would fit better if John was exiled on Patmos by Domitian than if he was exiled by Nero.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. The exhortation.** When John first saw Jesus on the island of Patmos, he fell down as one dead. The sinfulness of man has always caused man to shrink from the presence of God. When Jesus had manifested his divine power in an unusual degree, Peter said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5: 8b.) But Jesus gave John reassurance by this exhortation, "Fear not." Perhaps no other statement from Jesus could have brought the calm and assurance which this characteristic statement brought. Jesus had used the statement so many times during his public ministry that it was as if to say, You learned to trust me during life, now place your trust in me as in times past. John had learned that when Jesus was near no harm could come to him. When the disciples were about to be destroyed by the raging waves, Jesus came walking on the water, and said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." (Matt. 14: 27.) John was present on another occasion when Jesus was transfigured before the disciples, and they fell upon their faces sore afraid; but Jesus calmed their fears by saying, "Arise, and be not afraid." (Matt. 17: 7.) John was with Jesus on another occasion when news of the death of a daughter para-

lyzed a man with fear; but Jesus calmed him with the assurance, "Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole." (Luke 8: 50.) John had learned another lesson from Jesus as to whom he should fear and whom he should not fear. When Jesus sent them out to preach, he told them not to fear what men would do to them, for he would be with them and give them the word they should speak. But rather they were to fear God who after the death of the body had power to cast both body and soul into hell. (Matt. 10: 28.) So John had not been afraid to preach the gospel, even in the face of banishment from home, or perhaps death itself. The Lord's exhortation to fear not had been a sustaining power all through the years. Now when he hears those soul-calming words again, he knows his Lord and Master is near, and that no harm can come to him.

**2. Christ takes away our fears.** (1) With political and economic conditions as unstable as they are, man, if left to his own strength and wisdom, has room for fear. But Jesus removes such fears. He says for us not to be anxious what we shall eat or wear, but to trust him. (Matt. 6: 31-34.) And (2) he removes our fear of sin and its punishment. He has atoned

for our sins in his suffering on the cross, and has promised forgiveness for every sin. (3) He has removed our fear of death. He has gone into death and Hades and has come out with the victory. He promises to go through that experience with us; his rod and his staff will comfort us in that hour. (4) He has removed our fear of judgment. Perhaps there is no experience man dreads more than answering for his sins in the judgment. But since Jesus died for our sins and forgives them, we will not have to answer for them in judgment.

All we need do is accept him as our Saviour and be faithful to him, and his blood will wash away all our sins; hence no need to have any fears of the judgment.

3. **Reasons for the exhortation.** Jesus told John not to fear for, said he, "I am the first and the last." That is, I am the Living One, the Eternal One. And because he is eternal he will ever be with us to guard and protect us from all dangers. There is great comfort in the fact that we belong to him who is eternal, and eternally for us and with us.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Churches Identified (Rev. 1: 10, 11)

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.* To be "in the Spirit" means to be under special influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us of speaking in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 3), and from the connection we know he means to speak as one is moved and guided by the Holy Spirit. John was inspired, and having been baptized in the Holy Spirit, was able to perform miracles when they were needed to confirm the word. So in this sense he was continually under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But on this particular day he was under special influence of the Holy Spirit beyond that which he usually and continually enjoyed. We should notice that he says it was on the Lord's day. This is the only time this expression is found in the Bible. The "first day of the week" is found twice. (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 16: 2.) Early Christian writers spoke of the Lord's day as the day on which Jesus rose from the dead.

*I heard behind me a great voice.* The speaker is not identified here, but from what follows we are sure it was Jesus Christ. It is said that he had a voice as of a trumpet. This may refer to the volume and the clarity of the voice. The trumpet is the instrument which was used to summons the army, hence was a loud clear toned instrument.

*What thou seest, write in a book.* This is John's authority for writing this book we call Revelation. The fact that he was told to write this book to the seven churches is proof that it was to be useful to the people of his day. If it had been intended to

take the place of a succession of prophets in the church, and was meant for the instruction and comfort of future generations only, why should it be addressed to the seven churches then in existence? Certainly it was for their information and comfort as well as for ours.

*Unto Ephesus.* We know more about the church at Ephesus than we know about the church at the other places mentioned in this list. Paul established the church at Ephesus. (Acts 19.) Paul spent more than two years with the church in Ephesus. (Acts 19: 8-10.) He wrote one of his short epistles to the church at Ephesus. The church was in good condition when Paul wrote that epistle, for he commends their faith in the Lord and their love for the saints. (Eph. 1: 15, 16.) But when John wrote Revelation they had left their first love. (Rev. 2: 4, 5.) This is one argument for the late date, for Paul wrote them in A.D. 63 and they would hardly have had time to leave their first love by A.D. 69, the early date some give Revelation.

*Unto Smyrna.* Of this church we know nothing. The town of Smyrna was about forty miles north of Ephesus. It was a commercial city, and has been known to have as many as 130,000 population. Polycarp, a disciple of John, was martyred there.

*Unto Pergamum.* This city was still farther north, perhaps a hundred miles north of Ephesus. The city was about twenty miles from the seashore. It was situated in a very beautiful valley. At one time it had a library of 200,000 volumes.

*Unto Thyatira.* We know nothing of the church there, but we do know of a woman of that city who became a Christian in Philippi. (Acts 16: 14, 15.) It was situated southeast of Pergamum, and was noted for its dye works.

*Unto Sardis.* Sardis was the capital of the province of Lydia. It was the home of the rich man Croesus, proverbial for his wealth. Very little of the city remains today.

*Unto Philadelphia.* Of the church there we know nothing. We are told there is a church building which natives think was standing in the days of John.

*Unto Laodicea.* This city was due east of Ephesus. This church was known to Paul, for he makes mention of it in Col. 2: 1. It is probable that Paul had something to do with the establishment of all these churches, for while he was at Ephesus saw to it that "all Asia heard the word." (Acts 19: 10.)

## II. Description of the Lord (Rev. 1: 12-18)

*I turned to see the voice.* It was the voice like a trumpet that attracted John, so he says he turned to see the voice meaning, of course, to see him who uttered the voice.

*I saw seven golden candlesticks.* This is not like the light in the tabernacle, for there they had but one lamp-stand with seven lights on it; but here there are seven separate lamp-stands. Later we are told that these lamp-stands were used to represent the seven churches to which John was to address his letters.

*In the midst of the candlesticks one like a son of man.* The term "son of man" is used a number of times in the New Testament, but always, with one exception (Acts 7: 56), it was used by Jesus. It denotes his humanity and was used in humility. His disciples called him the Son of God to denote his divinity and to give him due honor. Notice that he is now in the midst of the candlesticks, signifying that he is ever in the immediate presence of the churches which wear his name and keep his commandments.

*Clothed with a garment.* Here John begins a description of the dress of

Jesus, and we should notice the difference between his dress in this vision and his dress while he was here in his humility. He is dressed in this vision like a king. A long robe reached down to, but not covering, his feet; a golden girdle about his breast. This was usually worn about the loins.

His head and his *hair were white as wool.* Leaving his clothing, John begins in this verse a description of Jesus himself. The reader should turn to Dan. 7: 9-14 and compare the description of one like to a son of man who came to the ancient of days with John's description of Jesus. They are too much alike for it to be accidental.

*Eyes as a flame of fire.* It is not said that flames of fire were shooting from his eyes, but that they were as a flame of fire, like a flame in some respects. They were bright, sharp, and penetrating like a flaming light.

*His feet were like unto burnished brass.* The word *burnish* means to make shiny or lustrous by rubbing or polishing. Commentators suggest that the form of the Greek word here may suggest a mixture of gold, silver, and brass, but there seems to be no certainty of this interpretation. The refining John mentions suggests that this is to be taken as the purest brass capable of the highest polish and luster.

*His voice as the voice of many waters.* His voice was in some respect like the noise of many waters. Perhaps it was like the roar of the ocean, or like the pounding of the waterfall, or the churning of the cataract. It is possible that he means to suggest the power and weight of authority in that voice, for which John would have the profoundest respect.

*In his right hand seven stars.* The right hand suggests power, since our right hand is usually stronger than the left. The seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches, as we are told later. The whole statement suggests that the seven churches are under the authority and in the protection of Jesus Christ. He holds in his hand the destiny of all men. Those who love and obey him will be blessed by him; those who despise

and disobey him will be destroyed by him. He is One with whom we have to do; he cannot be escaped. Men may refuse to pay any attention to him in this life, but they cannot always ignore him. One day they will bow the knee to him and confess that he is Lord and Christ. (Phil. 2: 10, 11.)

*Out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword.* Again we must not take this in a literal physical sense, but the words which proceeded from his mouth were like a sword. This is a familiar figure in Scripture. (Isa. 49: 2; Eph. 6: 17; Heb. 4: 12.) The two edges of the sword may suggest the double action of God's word to destroy the wicked and to build up the righteous, to cut and to heal, to condemn and to justify.

*His countenance was like the sun.* Countenance means the expression of the face. And John says it was as the sun shining at its strength, that is, it was as radiant as the sun when shining its brightest. This reminds us of his face shining so brightly at the time of his transfiguration. (Matt. 17: 2.) The whole of this description is framed so as to give us the idea of the glory and majesty of the Lord.

*I fell at his feet as one dead.* No doubt it would have such an effect on any one of us. Perhaps John did not recognize Jesus before falling as one dead, but he knew it was an appearance of a heavenly being. Compare the effect of heavenly visitors on others. (Isa. 6: 5; Ezek. 1: 26-28; Dan. 8: 18, 27; 10: 7-9, 17; Acts 9: 3-9.)

### Topics for Discussion

1. The vision of the Lord was granted John on the Lord's day. If more of us would be as faithful as John was to worship on the Lord's day, we would get a clearer vision of the Lord and of what he wishes us to be. Faithful regular worship is essential to an understanding and appreciation of the Lord and of the life he wishes us to live.

2. Patmos was a lonely desolate place, and for this reason it was chosen as a place of exile for people who incurred the displeasure of the emperor. In the loneliest spot on earth the richest experience with the

*Was dead and am alive for evermore.* This statement would serve to identify the visitor with Jesus whom John knew and loved, and whom John believed to be alive from the dead. It also characterizes him as the living One, the one who conquered death, and who can give to us that eternal life in spite of the efforts of Satan to hold us in his realm of death. He follows with the statement that he has the keys of death and Hades. Hades is the realm of departed spirits, good or evil, which is to be destroyed when it gives up its dead to go to the judgment. (Rev. 20: 13, 14.)

### III. Authority to Write (Rev. 1: 19, 20)

*Write the things thou sawest . . . the things which are . . . things that shall come to pass.* The things he had seen refer to this vision of the Lord; the things which are refer to the state of the seven churches; and the things that shall come to pass are the visions of the future he was to be shown.

*Seven stars are angels of churches.* There has been much argument over who these angels of the churches were. Albert Barnes argues at length that they were the preachers for the churches. What he wrote to the angel of the church was applicable to the church, and he ends each letter by warning them to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So the angel of the church is identified with and as a part of the church which he served.

Lord was enjoyed. Let us take courage in our hours of loneliness and realize that no spot can be so desolate that Jesus cannot be there; no night can be so dark that Jesus cannot brighten it with his presence, if we but keep ourselves in the Spirit.

3. We are ever in the hand of the Lord. If we are disobedient, we are held in his hand unto punishment; if we are obedient to him, we are held in his hand unto eternal life and blessedness. Let us recognize his authority over us that all may be well with us.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

What is the early date given for the writing of the book of Revelation?  
Can you give some reasons for this early date?  
What reasons are given for the late date?  
What two Roman emperors are involved in these dates?  
What noted church "fathers" are used as evidence? What do you know of them?

**Golden Text Explained**

What effect did the appearance of Jesus have on John?  
What was Peter's reaction to the divine power of Jesus?  
With what familiar statement did Jesus reassure John?  
Discuss three other occasions when Jesus calmed people with this statement.  
How does Jesus remove our fear for material necessities?  
How did he remove our fear of sin and its punishment?  
How does Jesus take away our fear of death?  
How does he remove our fear of the judgment?  
On what great truth was this exhortation based?

**Churches Identified**

What is meant by being in the Spirit?  
How many times is the Lord's day mentioned in the Bible?  
By what other term is the day mentioned in the New Testament?  
What did John hear behind him? What effect did it have on him?

What authority did John have for writing the book of Revelation?  
What do you know of the establishment of the church at Ephesus?  
What evidence do we have here for the late date of the book of Revelation?  
What do you know of Smyrna? Of Pergamum? Of Thyatira? Of Sardis? Of Philadelphia? Of Laodicea?  
Is it possible that Paul may have established these churches? Why?

**Description of the Lord**

How many candlesticks did John see?  
What did they represent?  
Whom did he see? In what relation to the candlesticks?  
By what title is Jesus mentioned? What do you know of the use of this title?  
What is said of the garments of Jesus?  
Of his hair? Of his eyes?  
What is said of his feet? Of his voice?  
What was in the right hand of Jesus?  
What did they represent?  
What lessons are suggested by Jesus holding these stars in his right hand?  
What proceeded from his mouth? What is the significance of the two edges?  
What is said of the countenance of Jesus?  
Of what other experience does this remind you?  
How did Jesus identify himself to John?  
Of what did he say he had the keys?

**Authority to Write**

Of what three things was John told to write?  
What do the seven stars represent? Who are the angels of the churches?  
What shows the close relationship between the angels and the churches?  
What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson III—October 21, 1951**

**THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS**

**The Lesson Text**

**Rev. 2: 1-7**

1 To the angel of the church in Eph'e-sus write:

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:

2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;

3 And thou has patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.

4 But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.

5 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nic-6-la'i-tans, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.



GOLDEN TEXT.—"Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works." (Rev. 2: 5a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 19: 1, 8-21.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 15. M..... Church Established in Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-7)
October 16. T..... Church Effects Sale of Idols (Acts 19: 23-41)
October 17. W..... Paul Visits with Ephesian Elders (Acts 20: 17-35)
October 18. T..... Paul Writes to Church at Ephesus (Eph. 1: 1-14)
October 19. F..... What Salvation by Grace Means (Eph. 2: 1-13)
October 20. S..... Christ Gave Himself for the Church (Eph. 5: 22-33)
October 21. S..... Final Exhortations to the Church (Eph. 6: 10-20)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the church at Ephesus, and all who read and heed.

Introduction

The island of Patmos is one of a number of small insignificant islands in the Aegean Sea, between Greece and Asia Minor. There are so many small islands in the group that they have been referred to as innumerable, and they were called "Sporades," which means "scattered." Patmos is not far from Ephesus or Miletus, being nearer to the Asiatic than it is to the Grecian coast. However in the time of John the island belonged to Greece. Albert Barnes says, "It is some six or eight miles in length, and is not more than a mile in breadth, being about fifteen miles in circumference." However Adam Clarke says, "The whole island is about thirty miles in circumference." The island has no trees, but does abound in "flowery plants and shrubs. Walnuts and other fruit trees are raised in orchards, and the wine of Patmos is the strongest and the best flavored in the Greek islands." The greater part of the island is barren rock, and what orchards and vineyards are there are in ravines and "little nooks among the ledges of the rocks." "About half-way up the

mountain, there is shown a natural grotto in a rock, where John is said to have seen his visions, and to have written this book. Near this is a small church, connected with which is a school or college, where the Greek language is taught; and on top of the hill, and in the center of the island, is a monastery, which, from its situation, has a very majestic appearance."

Some commentators have doubted that John wrote Revelation while on the island, saying that he did not possess "the time and materials and opportunity for writing." But from the frequent commands to write what was seen (Rev. 1: 11, 19), and the instruction to write special messages to each of the seven churches, we gather that he wrote as he was given the visions and messages. In Rev. 10: 4 we learn that during a vision John says he "was about to write," when he was interrupted by a voice from heaven. This seems to be next to positive proof that the writing was done on Patmos, and that probably each vision was recorded before the succeeding vision was given.

Golden Text Explained

1. Remember whence thou art fallen. (1) From this we conclude that a Christian can fall. If someone objects to this conclusion in this case because John was writing to a church and not an individual, let it be remembered that a church can fall only as the individuals which make up the church falls. So if the church at

Ephesus fell away, the people who composed the church fell. (2) Their fall was due partially to the fact they had left their first love. The fervent ardent love with which they started the Christian life was not to be found among them. Paul commended them for their love of the saints. (Eph. 1: 15.) (3) Their fall

was also due to the fact that they had ceased to do good works, for John urged them to repent and do their first works. Failing in their love for God and the saints, they naturally ceased to do good. Love is the moving, impelling force that causes a person to work for the Lord. Activity is the proof of love. Deeds in the hand prove love in the heart, unless a person be a hypocrite. (4) We learn from this letter to the church at Ephesus that such a falling away from our first love is disastrous unless we repent. Some contend that a child of God cannot fall so as to be lost, but the Lord tells this church that he will remove their candlestick if they do not repent. By this he means that he will refuse to recognize them as his church. On the other hand some admit that a person can fall, but they insist that the Lord will not allow him to die in that fallen condition. If that be true, there was no need to warn the people of Ephesus to repent, for they would do it anyway.

2. **Repent.** In this instance repentance was to be brought about by remembering whence they had fallen. (1) They were to remember their exalted position as a beloved child of God. They were to think upon the goodness of God in adopting them into his family and making them the recipients of his manifold goodness. Since the goodness of God leads men to repent (Rom. 2: 4), they would be led to repent through remembering whence they had fallen. (2) They were to remember the joys

of salvation which were theirs when they were doing their first works. After David had sinned and was sorrowing in penitence for his mistakes, he prayed for God to restore unto him the "joy of thy salvation." (Psalm 51: 12.) Sin brings regrets and remorse; it brings that guilty unclean feeling that robs one of the interest and pleasure usually derived from worship; it gives one such an unworthy feeling that he rather evades the place of worship, neglects his private devotions, and finds no comfort in reading God's word. (3) They were to remember what a great loss their sin had occasioned both to themselves and the Lord. Failing to do good, they had failed to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord; instead of growing through the years, they had lost ground. And the Lord had lost many days and months of service by their failure to work for him. Being sorry for this loss would move them to repent and be faithful again.

3. Do **the** first works. Some suppose that restoration to God is done by a miraculous visitation from on high, so they wait for the Lord to do it all. But here the Lord tells them to get busy doing the good they formerly did. Doing good will not pay the Lord for salvation, but the Lord promises to save people who love him and manifest that love by doing good. So those who have fallen from their first love must repent of their mistake, kindle the fires of love again, and fill their time with doing all the good they can.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. The Church Commended (Rev. 2: 1-3, 6)

To *the angel of the church.* As suggested before, these angels of the churches are the preachers who served them. We cannot be sure, but it is very probable that Timothy was the one to whom reference is made here. Paul left him in Ephesus to protect the church from false doctrines (1 Tim. 1: 3), and tradition says that he remained there until his martyrdom in A.D. 97. This first letter is addressed to John's home church probably because Ephesus was

the capital of the province, and the largest and most important center.

*He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.* We have learned that these seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches. (Rev. 1: 20b.) Jesus calls attention to himself as the One who holds these angels in his hand. Preachers of the gospel may derive some comfort from this lesson. They are held in the right hand of the Lord; they are kept by his power, so they have no need to fear what men may do unto them. Sometimes churches do not properly care for preachers; often

they do not appreciate faithful, God-fearing, truth-loving preachers who condemn sin in both high and low places in the church. If such be the condition, let them remember that they are held in the right hand of him who never sleeps, and who never forgets our work of faith and our labor of love.

*Walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.* Walking in the midst of the churches, which are referred to as candlesticks (Rev. 1: 20c), denotes interest in the welfare of the churches and continued activity on their behalf. It may also denote an intimate knowledge of their affairs. He is among them, near them; he knows their state because of his nearness to them.

*I know thy works.* Five of these letters have this statement, while two of them differ slightly. But the words *I know* are found at the beginning of all seven of them. The Lord wished to impress them with the fact that he knew of their state, their works, or their lack of faithfulness. The fact that the Lord knows even our hidden thoughts and our veiled motives should cause us to be careful, and to pray that we may never go astray.

*Thy toil and thy patience.* The church at Ephesus was not a dead church, though they had left their first fervent love. They toiled, and they were patient, or steadfast, in that toil. There was sufficient activity in the church that the Lord could point to it and commend them for it, and he did so before he administered his rebuke for their lack of love. Preachers and elders might get a good lesson here of commending people for the good they do before rebuking them for their lack of love. Some preachers make the mistake of commending, but never rebuking regardless of how much evil there may be in the church. Others make the mistake of never commending, but always rebuking regardless of how much good may be in evidence. Either extreme is bad.

*Thou canst not bear evil men.* One's character may be judged by the company he keeps, and the things he tolerates in his presence. The fact that this church could not bear

evil men is quite a recommendation. (1) It suggests that they would not tolerate ungodliness in the membership. Churches today are entirely too loose in this respect. Rarely do we hear of an ungodly person being excluded from the fellowship of the church. (2) It suggests that they could not tolerate unscriptural teaching and practice in their worship. John says if we encourage a false teacher we become partakers in his evil works, so we conclude that teaching false doctrines is an evil work. Of course the man who is guilty of an evil work is an evil man.

*Didst try them that call themselves apostles.* The Pulpit Commentary argues that this is proof of the early date for the writing of Revelation, because in A.D. 95 all the apostles except John were dead and it would have been foolish for a man to claim to be an apostle when they were all dead; but that in A.D. 69, the early date, several of the apostles were living and men might get by with claiming to be one of the twelve. But it is unlikely that any man would try to impersonate one of the original twelve. We prefer to think this refers to men claiming they were apostles either by selection like Matthias (Acts 1: 20ff), or by miraculous appointment like Paul. (Acts 9.) In either case the appearance of such men would be more likely after the original twelve were all gone than before their death. But the church at Ephesus tried them before accepting them. How could they be tried? (1) By their teaching. If they taught anything different from what Paul and other apostles taught, they were not of God. (2) Apostles had power to do things other men could not do. (Acts 8: 14, 18.) Paul said he wrought the signs of an apostle among the Corinthians. (2 Cor. 12: 12.) If a man could not work the signs of an apostle, he was rejected.

*Didst bear for my name's sake.* They had suffered for the sake of the name of Christ. This indicates their regard for the good name of the Lord, and their efforts to protect it.

*Thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans.* It is difficult to know who these people were or what they taught. Some think them to be fol-

lowers of Nicolaus, one of the seven deacons. (Acts 6: 5.) Others say that the word Nicolaitan means the same in Greek that the word Balaam does in Hebrew, and that the Nicolaitans held the same doctrines which Balaam taught to seduce the people of Israel. There is some justification for this in Rev. 2: 14, 15, though we cannot be positive that their doctrines are identical there. However all the ancients who have written about the Nicolaitans agree in saying that they taught that the Christian was free from, in the sense of being above, the moral law of the gospel, and that they might eat meats offered to idols and might indulge in promiscuous sexual intercourse without sin. These are the sins Balaam taught the children of Israel; and this is the doctrine which the Lord hates.

## II. The Church Reproved (Rev. 2: 4, 5, 7)

*I have this against thee.* After commending them for the good, he now points out some things of which they are guilty that are displeasing to him. They had left their first love. They were maintaining the forms of religion; they even tried those who claimed to be apostles and found them to be false; and they were doing some work for the Lord. But in spite of this activity, there was a declining of their love. They were not so fervent as they used to be; they did not give the joyous expression which they formerly gave of their affection. As husbands and wives accept each other as a matter of course, and forget to show or speak of their love, so Christians take their church work and relationships as a matter of course and fail to make it a vital and living thing in life. This may be (1) an indication of indifference to the welfare of the church. Many people are indifferent who have no sinful idol in their hearts. They do not love the Lord less because they love some idol more, but are simply indifferent as to their duty to God and the good of the church. (2) It may be an indication of a divided love. There are those who love the Lord less because they love the world more. They wish to hold to the Lord because they wish to meet him in peace in the judgment;

but they are grasping and holding dear the things of the world for the present good and pleasure to be derived therefrom. (3) It may be an indication of disappointment. There are people who have been told that the Lord will hear and answer the prayers of his children; they have prayed for something and failed to get it, so they are disappointed. A family has lost a child in death. They prayed for its recovery, and they cannot understand why the Lord did not answer their prayers, so they cease to love the Lord as fervently as they did before. This is because of a lack of understanding of God's ways, but there is much of such ignorance in all of us.

*Else I come to thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place.* Christ is represented as walking among the churches, yet he says he will come to Ephesus. This is a way of saying he will punish; he will come in judgment upon them for their sins. The removing of the candlestick is a way of saying that he would sever relationship with them; he would no longer recognize them as his people. They had not reached the point of sinfulness that made it impossible for the Lord to fellowship them, but if they continued in their sins he would have to cut them off. One cannot continue in sin and not become more sinful. Sin is progressive; the longer one remains in sin, the deeper in the mire he goes. Hence repentance was the only cure for their condition. In genuine repentance lay their only hope of continued fellowship and communion with the Lord.

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith.* Jesus often told his hearers, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. 11: 15; Mark 4: 23.) It was a way of calling special attention to some particular statement as worthy of special consideration. The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit, showing that even when the Lord spoke he used the Holy Spirit. Paul said the Spirit speaks expressly. (1 Tim. 4: 1.) That which God says to the church is said through his Spirit.

*To him that overcometh.* This indicates effort on our part. Heaven is not promised to people who do nothing.

ing. One may have trials of one kind and another may have trials of a different kind to overcome. But one must overcome those temptations peculiar to himself if he expects to be saved. The reward of overcoming is to be allowed to eat of the tree of life, which means that he will partake of eternal life and all the blessings the Lord has prepared for

the faithful. The tree of life is in the Paradise of God, that is, in heaven. It is not implied that the literal tree which grew in Eden (Gen. 3: 22-24) has been transplanted in heaven; but the life they might have lived had they not sinned, and even more, may be enjoyed there by all who overcome, who gain the victory through Jesus Christ.

### Topics for Discussion

1. The attitude of the church at Ephesus toward evil men is a good example for churches today. Often preachers and elders think they are not free enough from sin to "cast the first stone," but we must remember that no one can be sinlessly perfect, and that if one must be so to discipline an evil man there will be no discipline. Those in Ephesus who tried and disciplined those evil men were not sinlessly perfect.

2. The doctrine that the spirit of man is born again, but the body is not; that the new-born spirit cannot sin, and that the deeds of the body

do not defile the spirit and will not damn the spirit, is dangerously near the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which the Lord said he hates. Yet that doctrine is held by a few prominent denominations.

3. God excites us to obedience both by threats and promises. He threatens us with loss of fellowship with him if we do not repent for our sins, and with eternal destruction in hell if we do not repent. He promises us eternal life in mansions prepared for us if we will overcome the trials and temptations of life. If anyone is lost it will not be the Lord's fault.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

In what Sea is the isle of Patmos located? What do you know of its size, vegetation, and so on?

What proof do we have that John wrote Revelation while on the island?

#### Golden Text Explained

What proof do we have in this text that a person can fall?

To what was the fall of these Ephesians partially due?

To what else their fall due? What connection does good works have with love?

Can such a fall prove fatal? What was the remedy suggested to them?

What was meant by the removing of their candlestick?

Name and discuss three things people should remember to excite them to repentance.

What is the connection between good works and salvation?

#### The Church Commended

Who was probably the angel of the church at Ephesus?

Who are the seven stars John mentioned?

What lesson is suggested by Jesus holding the seven stars in his right hand?

What are the seven golden candlesticks? What lesson is suggested by Jesus walking in the midst of them?

What does Jesus suggest when he tells them that he knows their works?

To what degree was the church at Ephesus active in the Lord's work?

Discuss the wisdom of mixing commendation and rebuke to get best results from people.

What was the attitude of the church toward ungodliness? False teachings?

In what ways would men likely claim to have been appointed as apostles?

In what two ways could Ephesus try them to see if they were genuine apostles?

Do you know what the signs of an apostle were?

Who were the Nicolaitans? What doctrines did they teach and practice?

To what Old Testament character are they similar in their doctrines?

#### The Church Reproved

What one thing did the Lord have against the church at Ephesus?

Show the relation between indifference and leaving your first love.

Show the connection between divided love and leaving your first love.

How may leaving your first love be an indication of disappointment?

In what sense did the Lord threaten to come to the church at Ephesus?

Why must the church at Ephesus repent in order to *continue* to enjoy his fellowship?

What did the Holy Spirit have to do with this letter to Ephesus?

What reward is offered to him that overcometh?

Where is the tree of life? What is it? Where is Paradise?

Lesson IV—October 28, 1951

**THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA**

**The Lesson Text**

Rev. 3: 7-13

7 And to the angel of the church in Phll-a-del'-phi-a write:

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth:

8 I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.

9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep

thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.

12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Je-ru'-sa-lem, which cometh down out of heav-en from my God, and mine own new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."* (Rev. 2: 10b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 2: 8-11.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- October 22. M.....Jesus the True God and Eternal Life (1 John 5: 18-21)
- October 23. T.....Disciples Keep His Word (John 17: 1-12)
- October 24. W.....The Source of Temptations (James 1: 12-18)
- October 25. T.....The Lord Guards His Own (2 Thess. 3: 1-5)
- October 26. F.....The Lord Delivers the Godly (2 Pet. 2: 1-11)
- October 27. S.....New Jerusalem the City of God (Rev. 21: 1-8)
- October 28. S.....A New Secret Name Promised (Rev. 2: 12-17)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the church at Philadelphia, and all who hear.

**Introduction**

Since there is considerable discussion as to whether Revelation was written by John the Apostle, or by some other man by the name of John, it will be well for us to look briefly into the evidence given in favor of the apostle for its author. Albert Barnes gives a good summary of the evidence in his commentary on Revelation. Summarizing the evidence during the period from the death of John to A.D. 150, he says, "(a) The book was known; (b) so far as the testimony goes, it is in favor of its

having been composed by John; (c) the fact that he was the author is not called in question or doubted; (d) it was generally ascribed to him."

During the next fifty years, from A.D. 150 to 200, a number of witnesses are offered to prove that the apostle wrote the book. Justin Martyr, a Christian philosopher, converted to Christianity about A.D. 133, wrote, "And a man from among us, by name John, one of the apostles of Christ, in a Revelation made to him has prophesied that the be-

lievers in Christ" should do certain things. And the things mentioned make undoubted reference to Rev. 20: 1-4. So this man, a very trustworthy witness, says Revelation was written by John the apostle.

Clement of Alexandria who flourished about A.D. 192 to 220, quotes passages from the book, and one time referred to Rev. 21: 21 as "the words of the apostle." Often he speaks of John as the writer, but this time he speaks of the apostle. Putting the two together we have his testimony that the Revelation was written by John the apostle.

Tertullian lived about the same time as Clement—he died in A.D. 220. He refers to the book of Revelation

more than seventy times, and frequently says it was written by John the apostle. Once he says, "The apostle John, in the Apocalypse, describes a sharp two-edged sword coming out of the mouth of God."

Barnes then sums up the evidence of the next period of fifty years down to A.D. 250, by saying that "all these, without exception, have left a clear and decided expression of their belief that John the apostle was the author of the Apocalypse." He then adds that if the undivided opinion of the best writers for one hundred and fifty years is not sufficient evidence to convince one of a fact, it would be impossible to submit enough to convince that one.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Faithfulness required.** Our text was directed to the church at Smyrna. The Lord told them that they were going to be persecuted for a while. Some of them were going to be cast into prison to be tried; their faith was going to be tested. The Lord does not promise us an easy time in his service. He promises to help and encourage us when we are tried, but he does not promise to steer us clear of all trials. But in the midst of these trials he does demand that we be faithful. A soldier is not worth much to the Lord if he gives up in the heat of the battle. The fearful retreating soldier gives the enemy comfort and encouragement. He also demoralizes other soldiers, and his example takes away their courage and influences them to give up the battle. But if Christians are viewed as servants, the same brand of faithfulness is required. Paul says, "Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4: 2.) The Lord does not require me to do as much as he requires of someone else, but he does require me to be as faithful as the other man. The one talent man was not condemned because he did not bring in five extra talents for his master, for the two talent man was blessed equally with the five talent man, though he brought in only two talents. The two talent man was as faithful as the five talent man. But the one talent man was condemned

because he had not used faithfully what he had.

**2. Perseverance required.** Perseverance is staying on the job, continuing to do right, in spite of hindering influences, in spite of persecution. The church at Smyrna was about to be persecuted, and the Lord wanted them to be faithful to him even if it meant death *on* their part. The measure of our perseverance may be determined by our love of life and enjoyment of the pleasures of this life. Paul said, "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course." (Acts 20: 24.) With Paul there was something dearer than life, something worth more than the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life. To him it was the work of the Lord well done, his duties faithfully performed. If in the performance of those duties he should lose his life, he would count it well spent and go on to a better place to spend eternity. But some of us love life so dearly, we enjoy living with our family and friends so much, that we much prefer that the Lord wait until we are no longer capable of such full enjoyment to take us to that better place. But if while still capable of enjoying the pleasures of this life, one gives his life in suffering persecution or a martyr's death, he has shown real Christian perseverance.

**3. A reward promised.** James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth

temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him." (James 1: 12.) Our text says the crown of life goes to the faithful; James says it goes to them that love the Lord. Hence we may conclude that only those who love the Lord fervently will be faithful under persecution. Demas loved this present world and left his post of duty with Paul. (2 Tim. 4: 10.)

His love of life and enjoyment of the pleasures of this present world led him to think that the reward was not sufficient to repay him for the suffering he had to endure. But Paul says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." (Rom. 8: 18.) Peter speaks of this reward as "the crown of glory" and an incorruptible inheritance.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Speaker Identified (Rev. 3: 7, 8)

*These things saith he that is holy.* God is often spoken of as the "Holy One of Israel." (Isa. 1: 4.) Luke speaks of Jesus before his birth as "the holy thing" and says he shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1: 35.) Peter quotes a prophecy of David in which Jesus is referred to as the "Holy One" of God. (Acts 2: 27.) The demons called him the "Holy One of God." (Mark 1: 24.) The apostles called him the "Holy Servant." (Acts 4: 27.) He lived a life of such holiness that when he challenged his enemies to convict him of sin they were put to silence. (John 8: 46.) And it is affirmed by the Holy Spirit that though he was tempted in all points as we, yet he lived without sin. (Heb. 4: 15.) Peter tells us he left us an example that we should follow in his steps, and that he did no sin. (1 Pet. 2: 21, 22.)

*He that is true.* John's use of the word true as applied to Jesus Christ is unusual. It is characteristic of the writer of the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and the Revelation, suggesting that all five books were written by the same man. In the Gospel we read of "the true Light." (John 1: 9.) And in the Epistles we find it again. (1 John 2: 8.) He is called the "true bread." (John 6: 32.) He is called the "true vine." (John 15: 1.) Again we read, "We know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5: 20.) John calls him "the faithful and true witness." (Rev. 3: 14.) Again, "He that sat thereon called Faithful and True." (Rev. 19: 11.)

*He that openeth and none shutteth.* With the key of David, Jesus opens and no man shuts. Key is the symbol of power and authority. David was king over the people of God when the kingdom reached its highest peak of glory. So the key of David symbolizes power and authority over the people of God. He has the power to shut and no man can open; he has the power to open and no man can shut. This is an expression of absolute power. All authority was given him in the resurrection (Matt. 28: 19), and he still retains and exercises it.

*I have set before thee a door opened.* An open door usually means an opportunity to do good. A door of faith was opened to the Gentiles. (Acts 14: 27b.) An effectual door was opened in Ephesus to Paul, though there were many adversaries. (1 Cor. 16: 9.) At Troas a door was opened for Paul to preach the gospel in Macedonia. (2 Cor. 2: 12, 13.) In all these places the open door is a symbol for opportunities. However there are some who think it means here an opportunity to escape from the persecution which is about to come upon them, mentioned in verse 10.

*That thou hast a little power.* The church was weak, whether in numbers or ability we do not know. But from the connection, it seems that the Lord was opening to them a door of opportunity to serve him, and the door of opportunity would be in keeping with their little power to respond.

*Didst keep my word, and didst not deny ray name.* This is quite a commendation for a church of little power. They had kept the Lord's



word; they had been faithful in contending for the faith; they had dared to stand up to confess their faith in the word of the Lord in spite of the criticism of the world. We need more church members like that today. They were not ashamed to wear the name Christian. Peter wrote to Christians not too far east of Philadelphia to encourage them not to be ashamed to wear the name of Christ, but rather let them glorify God in that name. (1 Pet. 4: 12-16.) Having confessed the name of Christ in spite of the cost in suffering, we may be sure Jesus will confess these people before his Father in heaven. (Matt. 10: 32, 33.)

## II. Help in Time of Trial (Rev. 3: 9-11)

*I give of the synagogue of Satan.* The form of the expression in this verse is rather awkward. He starts the sentence by saying, "I will give," throws in the explanation that certain people are lying about their true identity, and then picks up the thought again; but this time instead of saying *I will give*, he says, "I will make." But the thought is clear as to what the Lord was going to do for the church at Philadelphia. He was going to so order, or arrange, affairs that those who were their enemies would bow at their feet in acknowledgement of wrong; the church was going to be victorious. By the synagogue of Satan, he refers to the meeting place of these Jews who were persecuting the church. It was a synagogue of Satan, not the meeting place of the Lord and his people.

*They say they are Jews, and they are not.* John refuses to recognize one as a true Jew unless he is a Christian. Paul said one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; neither is that circumcision which is in the flesh, but in the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter. (Rom. 2: 28, 29.) These who were Jews outwardly were persecuting people who were Jews inwardly, as Paul said would be done (Gal. 4: 29), and the Lord promised the church that he would humble these proud enemies.

*Make them come and worship before thy feet.* This is the manner in which these enemies would be

humbled. The Lord did not promise to make them idolaters, so we must take the word worship, not in a spiritual sense, but in a civil sense. The word is used in the Bible in both senses. And in this experience these persecuting Jews would learn that the Lord had loved the church. Whether this involves the conversion of these Jews we are not able to determine certainly, though several commentators argue that it does.

*Because thou didst keep the word of my patience.* These words may mean either the patience which Jesus commands, or the patience which he exercised when he was under trials. There is not much difference, only a matter of degree. But this church had been patient under trial, which is another way of saying they had been steadfast, to such a degree that the Lord was highly pleased, and was willing to reward them abundantly for their faithfulness.

*I will keep thee from the hour of trial.* Here is a contrast: "thou didst keep," and "I will keep." And there is a connection between them. The Lord said he would keep them from trial *because* they had kept his word. Just what is meant by keeping them from the hour of trial is difficult to determine. It might mean that they would be exempt from trial, or it might mean that he would keep them from apostasy when the trial came. Probably the latter is nearer the truth.

*Which is to come upon the whole world.* How much territory is included in "the whole world" of this verse we do not know. It probably means the whole of the Roman Empire. But whether this persecution was during the reign of Domitian or Trajan we do not know. Those who accept the early date for Revelation, of course, think this refers to the persecution during the reign of Nero.

*That no one take thy crown.* The trial mentioned was to come shortly after the writing of the book, and the Lord warns them lest they lose their crown. The crown comes to those who are "faithful unto death," so they would have to persevere in the face of death to keep their crown. If keeping them from the hour of trial meant exemption from trials,

there would be no danger of their losing their crown during the persecution. The Lord would keep them from apostasy, but even this was on condition that they do their part; they had to exercise care, they had to be faithful, or they would lose their crown.

### III. Blessings to Overcomers (Rev. 3: 12, 13)

I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. The overcomer is to be made a pillar in the temple of God. This, of course, is not to be taken literally any more than we are to take Paul's statement that we are material built upon the foundation (1 Cor. 3: 12), or Peter's statement that we are "living stones" (1 Pet. 2: 5), and conclude that we are literal building material. But the temple of God is built of good material. The pillars of the temple play a most important part, both in support and in the way of ornament. And the overcomer deserves such a conspicuous part, especially those who have endured great trials, even martyrdom.

*He shall go out thence no more.* This refers back to the one who overcomes, not to the pillar. When one has overcome finally and has been accepted into the eternal abode of the saints, there is no further need for fear; there will be no more trials in which one might lose his crown, or forfeit his right to live in heaven. This is one thing which should cause all of us to look for and earnestly desire the coming of the Lord. (2 Pet. 3: 12.) But only those who are

sure they are prepared in heart and life for the coming of the Lord can with any degree of seriousness pray for the coming of the Lord.

*I will write upon him the name of my God.* This is a form of expression, distinctly Hebrew in its origin, which implies complete possession. When one has the name of God written upon him, there is no doubt about who owns him. The high priest under the law had the name of the Lord written on his forehead; he was the Lord's servant and representative.

*And the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem.* This would denote his citizenship; it would indicate the city to which he belonged. Not that anybody would need to know where anybody else belonged, since all who will be there will belong to the same city; but it is a figure of speech taken from political life to give comfort and encouragement to these people in the midst of their trials. If they are faithful, they will finally belong to God, and be accepted as citizens of his city, the new Jerusalem. No greater honor or blessing can possibly come to a weary wandering pilgrim of this sin-cursed earth.

*And mine own new name.* The name of Jesus will also be written upon the overcomer. This, too, indicates ownership, and the source of supply for all our needs, and the one to whom we may look for protection. Though the church was weak, the Lord promised to care for it in this world, and to bless all who overcome with eternal life in the city of his God.

### Topics for Discussion

1. The authority of Christ in our lives, and his sovereign rule over all should be emphasized. He has all authority; he is the head of all things; he is the creator and preserver of all things, and upholds all things by the word of his power. He opens and no man shuts; he shuts and no man opens.

2. There are open doors about us all the time. But to enter them will require time, effort, and money; it will require that we sacrifice some of the pleasures of this world; it will require that we suffer inconvenience,

and maybe hardships. Are we willing to enter such open doors? Our missionaries around the world have entered these doors. If we are not willing to enter them ourselves, we should at least hold up the hands of these people who have entered them, and who are giving their lives in these fields of service.

3. One does not have to be a preacher to enter open doors. One does not have to cross the ocean to enter these open doors. Young couples are needed in all walks of life to go into states and cities where

the church is either weak or does not exist, and there they can build a home and a business, and help build

the church of our Lord while they are building the homes and businesses. Will you go?

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What is said for the authorship of Revelation up to A.D. 150?

What evidence does Justin Martyr give that John wrote the book?

What evidence do we have from Clement of Alexandria? From Tertullian?

What is the sum of the evidence from A.D. 200 to 250?

#### Golden Text Explained

What does the Lord promise us during trials?

What does he demand of us in these trials?

What effect does one unfaithful person have on other people?

Is our faithfulness measured by the amount of work we can do?

What is the meaning of perseverance?

What is the measure of our perseverance?

What was dearer to Paul than his life?

What is the reward promised to the faithful?

Why was Demas unfaithful?

What does Paul say of the value of the reward as compared to the suffering here?

#### Speaker Identified

Discuss the word holy as it is applied in Scripture to God and Jesus.

Discuss the word true as used by John and applied to Jesus Christ.

In what terms are the power and authority of Jesus expressed?

What is the meaning of an open door?

Give some examples in the Bible and in our day.

For what good deeds did the Lord commend this church? What has he promised to do for them?

#### Help in Time of Trial

What is meant by the synagogue of Satan? Of what sin were those in Satan's synagogue accused? Why?

Who, according to Paul, is a true Jew? What did Jesus say he would make these enemies do? What is meant by worship?

What is meant by the word of his patience? What is the hour of trial mentioned? Why did the Lord promise to keep them from it?

What is meant by keeping them from the hour of trial?

What is meant by the whole world in this lesson?

Of what were they in danger of losing? On what condition would Jesus keep them?

#### Blessings to Overcomers

What is meant by making one a pillar in the temple of God?

What blessed assurance does the overcomer have?

What should this assurance to overcomers cause us to do?

What is meant by writing the name of God on a person?

What is the city of God? What is meant by writing its name on the overcomer?

What other name is to be written on the overcomer?

What is there of value in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson V—November 4, 1951

# THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA

### The Lesson Text

Rev. 3: 14-22

14 And to the angel of the church in La-6d-i-ce'-a write:

These things saith the A-men', the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou

art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and

open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my

throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."* (Rev. 3: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 3: 1-6.

### Daily Bible Readings

|             |        |                                       |                   |
|-------------|--------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| October 29. | M..... | The Majesty of the Lord               | (Heb 1: 1-14)     |
| October 30. | T..    | Lukewarm Interest in Things Spiritual | (Luke 14: 15-24)  |
| October 31. | W..... | Evil Boasters Brought Low             | (Hosea 12: 7-14)  |
| November 1. | T..... | God's Offer of True Riches            | (Isa. 55: 1-13)   |
| November 2. | F..... | God Chastens His Children             | (Heb. 12: 1-13)   |
| November 3. | S..... | The Lord Is Willing to Save           | (Matt. 23: 37-39) |
| November 4. | S..... | Jesus Overcame the World              | (John 16: 25-33)  |

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the church at Laodicea, and all who hear.

### Introduction

Since this is the last lesson we will have on the churches of Asia, it will be well to go through the letters to see (1) the things in the church which the Lord approved. To the church at Ephesus he said he knew their "toil and patience." To Thyatira he said, "I know thy works, and thy love and faith and patience, and that thy last works are more than thy first." This was high commendation; they had grown in good works, rather than leaving their first works as did the church at Ephesus. He commended a few in Sardis for not defiling their garments, hence we conclude that he approves of purity in life as well as good works. He commended the church in Philadelphia for keeping the word of his patience and not denying his name while under the pressure of persecution. And he commends the church at Pergamum for the same thing. The church at Ephesus was commended for detecting the claims of false apostles, and for hating the works of false teachers. So we conclude that the Lord not only approves purity of life and good works, but he

approves our zeal for purity of doctrine and organization in the church.

(2) He found many things in the churches which he disapproved. Ephesus was reproved for leaving her first love and ceasing to be zealous of good works. The church at Sardis was reproved because, "I have found no works of thine perfected before my God." It seems they were willing to begin a good work, but not patient and steadfast enough to carry it on to completion. The church at Pergamum was rebuked because some of its members held the doctrine of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The church at Thyatira suffered a woman, called Jezebel, to teach and seduce people to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. In other words, she led them to go into heathen places of worship where immorality was a part of the order of worship. And the church at Laodicea was rebuked for its lukewarm attitude, its pride in material possessions and its failure to prize spiritual things. It is the only church in which the Lord found nothing to commend.

### Golden Text Explained

1. **A reprobate church.** Paul says Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you be reprobate. (2 Cor. 13: 5b.)

Christ was outside of the church at Laodicea knocking for entrance, therefore we conclude that this

church was reprobate. The Greek word translated reprobate means, "failing to stand the test." The church at Laodicea had become so worldly minded that they failed to stand the test, they failed to measure up to the standard the Lord has set, so he refused to dwell in the church any longer; he refused to recognize them as his people. The condition of a reprobate church in which Jesus refuses to dwell may be realized when we remember that they have refused to live by his standard and they have adopted that of the world. Their course is downward, ever downward, without hope of recovery, except through repentance, turning back to him whom they have rejected. Next, their condition is seen in that they have no high priest through whom to approach God. One cannot reject Jesus Christ without at the same time and by the same act rejecting God. (Luke 10: 16.) Hence, when Jesus leaves people, their avenue of approach to God is gone. They are without God, separate from Christ, and had no hope of eternal life. (Eph. 2: 12.) Next, they got into this condition because of their love of the world and the things of the world. Soon they reached the point where they valued material things above the heavenly things. Being thus deceived, they felt rich and righteous and did not know that they were poor and miserable and blind.

2. **A lingering: Christ.** Jesus did not desert the church altogether; he did not leave it with vengeance and refuse to give the church another chance. But he stands at the door and knocks; he is pleading for entrance. However, this entrance is upon condition that they repent of their sins. He left them because of their sins, and he will not return until they have repented and quit their sins. Jesus is ever willing to give people another chance as long as

they are in this life. There is no end to his mercy, no limit to the number of times he will forgive our sins as long as we can genuinely repent of them.

3. **The sinner's responsibility.** "If any man will hear my voice, and open the door." Notice that Jesus is pictured as standing outside the church, but when he talks about coming back he speaks of *any man* opening the door. Jesus dwells in the church only as he dwells in the individuals who make up that church. So when he returns, it will be to one individual at a time. This implies that every individual has the power of choice; he may choose to enjoy the world and exclude Christ, or he may choose to renounce the world and enjoy Christ. This makes one's salvation depend upon his own actions. From this point of view we may say that a man saves himself. (Acts 2: 40b.) We must not lose sight of the fact that God gives men this power to choose, and that ultimately God is responsible for man's salvation; yet since man must make the decision, the choice, and must move to open the door for the Lord, to this extent he saves himself.

4. **The encouragement given.** Jesus says if a man will open the door, he will come in and sup with the man and the man may sup with him. Supping, eating, with a person is an indication of friendship, of mutual love and respect. There is fellowship and communion in a common meal. So for Jesus to sup with us and us to sup with him means that fellowship has been restored, that we are acceptable to him, that we meet his approval. Life is so uncertain that *no* one can afford to go a day without the fellowship of the Lord. When sin comes between us and the Lord so that he refuses to fellowship us, we are lost. He promises us fellowship on such easy terms as to encourage us to open the door and let him come in.

### Exposition of the Text

**I. The Lord Rebukes** (Rev. 3: 14-17)  
*The Amen, the faithful and true witness.* The word *Amen* means one who is true. The phrase following the word is really an explanation of its meaning in this usage. This, of

course, refers to the Lord. The statement is made to impress the Laodiceans with the truthfulness of what was being written to them. People today need to be reminded that the word of the Lord is truth, the truth

that saves if obeyed, and condemns if rejected. We are prone to dismiss the truth of God as if it were no more than the opinions of some man.

*The beginning of the creation of God.* Some have interpreted this to mean that Christ is the first being God ever created. They believe that the Father is eternal, without beginning or end, but that the Son had a beginning, though it was before even the angels. Along with this statement they use Col. 1: 15, where Paul says Jesus Christ is the "firstborn of all creation." But this denies the essential deity and divinity of the Lord, which is affirmed in many Scriptures. The Greek word here translated *beginning* is translated many times in the New Testament by prince, *head, ruler, powers,* and it would be easier for us to get the right meaning here if it were translated the head, or ruler, of God's creation. The word firstborn also means ruler, since the firstborn son became the head of the family when the father died, and it is to be so understood in Col. 1: 15. This statement was made to the church at Laodicea to impress them with the need of listening to what was said. Since the ruler of all God's creation was speaking to them, it behooved them to hear and obey.

*Thou art neither cold nor hot.* Adam Clarke suggests that they were too good to go to hell and too bad to go to heaven. They were for the Lord, but not enough so that one could be sure of it; they were against sin, but not to the extent that one could be sure of it. They wished to stay on both sides of the fence at the same time. They were not positive and aggressive in their stand for the truth and right. They took no positive stand against evil in the community to stop its progress or to stamp it out entirely. They wished to be neither for nor against the Lord, neither for nor against the devil.

*I will spew thee out of my mouth.* The Lord said he preferred that they be either hot or cold, but since they were neither, he would spew them out of his mouth. To spew out means to vomit. The figure of speech, a rather vivid one, is suggested by the well known fact that tepid, lukewarm water is nauseating, and may cause

one to vomit. So the Lord says that a lukewarm church is nauseating to him. When he spews out a church, or an individual, that one is lost. Those who believe it is not possible for a child of God to be lost, must affirm that it is impossible for a child of God to become lukewarm. If it is impossible for God's children to become lukewarm, how did this church at Laodicea get that way?

*I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing.* The three phrases in this statement amount to about the same thing. They are the words of people who are satisfied with what they have and do not realize the need of doing better, of attaining more, of going on to higher heights of spiritual development. There is some argument as to whether they meant they were rich in material wealth or in spiritual, but as Barnes suggests, they likely included both. Very few rich people feel the need of daily prayer and regular church attendance. Satisfaction and complacency with reference to material affairs usually lead to the same feeling with reference to the spiritual affairs of life. They did not need to ask for daily bread, for they could buy it with their money; they felt no need of prayer, humility, love of brethren, for they were unconscious of their need of such things.

*And knowest not.* The people were deceived; they thought they were in the very best of condition, but they were in a hopeless condition. (1) They were wretched, that is, in a wretched state. The only reason they were unconscious of their misery was their misguided views of what real piety is. (2) They were miserable, that is, in a state to be pitied. But they were the last ones to ask for pity because they thought that they were all right. (3) They were poor. They had great material wealth, but they were poor in lasting spiritual wealth. (4) They were blind. They thought they could see the true values, but being deceived, they were unable to see and appreciate the beauties of holiness, self-sacrifice, and other Christian virtues which make a beautiful life. (5) They were naked. They were clothed in the finest money could buy, but the soul was exposed,

was naked, without a rag to cover it from the light of judgment. Of the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit they knew nothing; of the adornment of good works they were totally ignorant; of the necessity of these things in the judgment they gave no thought at all.

## II. The Lord Counsels (Rev. 3: 18, 19)

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire.* The Lord counsels them to buy gold, not in the crude ore state, but refined by fire, purified, having all the dross taken out. By gold here he means the true spiritual values. They thought they had the real riches of this life in their farms, shops, businesses, bank accounts, but these were as crude ore unrefined when compared with the real spiritual values of life. If they would buy gold of him, they would be truly rich in character and in the hope of eternal life. We need to learn today that there are some things in life worth more than an education, or a growing business, or a big bank account. It is not because these things in themselves are sinful, but that they are not worth so much as true piety and purity and loyalty to God and faithfulness to his church and its program in the world.

*White garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself.* It is said that Laodicea was the center of a black wool market and was famous for that product, and for cloth made from it. The Lord may have intended a reference here by way of contrast. They were clothing themselves in material prosperity and were satisfied with it, when they could have the garments of holiness and righteousness from him if they would but accept them. They were satisfied with the black garments of sin, but he counsels them to exchange for the white robes of righteousness.

*Eyesalve to anoint thine eyes.* Since they were blind to the real values of life, they needed something to correct the condition. The eyesalve the Lord would supply would restore their spiritual sight, and make them capable of seeing things in their true light. Spiritual perception and appreciation are lacking in many today; but, like the Laodiceans, those who are lacking in such are not conscious

of their spiritual malady. The blind man who has never seen the beauty of a rainbow or the glory of a sunset is not conscious of what he is missing. So the spiritually blind man who is satisfied with worldliness is not conscious of what he is missing in the beauty of holiness.

*As many as I love, I reprove and chasten.* From Heb. 12: 4-11 we learn that the Lord chastens every son whom he receives, and that if one is never chastened it is a sign that he is not a child of God. So the fact that God was chastening these people is proof of their sonship. But in spite of the fact that they are children of God, Christ is outside, he tells them they must repent before he will return, and that if they do not he will spew them out of his mouth, or disown and destroy them. Here then is an example of children of God actually having gone so far in sin that they are lost if they do not repent. To say that it is impossible for such a person to die before repenting, is to make admonition wholly unnecessary.

## III. The Lord Encourages (Rev. 3: 20-22)

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.* There is suggested in this figure that the Lord is anxious to do good unto a people who have dishonored him. They have been unfaithful to him; they have put him to shame in the community where he should have been honored and glorified, but still he is willing to bless them if only they will allow him to do so. Next, it is suggested that Jesus will not force himself upon anyone. He stands outside when he has the power to open the door and force his way into the house. He does not even open the door. He stands outside knocking, expecting the door to be opened before he will enter.

*If any man will hear my voice.* This is not an audible voice; Jesus never speaks to man in this dispensation in that way. Jesus had John write this letter to the church at Laodicea, and the people could hear his voice by reading and taking to heart what was written. In this same way we hear what the Spirit has to say to the churches. The word *hear* may well be taken in the sense of heed—if any man will heed my voice of warn-

ing, of pleading, and will open the door, I will take up my abode in him, is the thought Jesus intends for them to get.

*He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne.* This is a promise of exaltation and honor and glory to all who overcome in this life. The overcomer is to share the exaltation and glory of Jesus Christ. The final victory over sin and death, which man gains through Jesus Christ, is to be enjoyed and celebrated in heaven when the last enemy has been destroyed. In this victory all overcomers will share. Those who believe in a thousand years reign of Christ on earth use such passages as this to prove a difference between the throne of Christ and the throne of the Father.

One might as well argue that there is a difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ. We have these two terms, and yet Paul says it is the "kingdom of Christ and God." (Eph. 5: 5.) A kingdom has but one throne. The kingdom of Christ and God has the throne of Christ and God. (Rev. 22: 1.) The Lord promises the overcomer that he may sit with him on that throne, enjoy the victory gained and the blessings prepared for all who have identified themselves with the Lord in the battle against sin and have been faithful unto, and until, death. Paul teaches us that as Jesus was humbled in life and death, is exalted in the resurrection and glorification, so we will be exalted with him if we are faithful to him. .

**Topics for Discussion**

1. The Lord found nothing in this church to commend; he starts the letter with a rebuke. They were in worse condition than any other church, yet they were ignorant of their true condition. Since this is true, we should never be self-satisfied, but we should be continually examining ourselves, comparing ourselves with the standard in God's word, and trying to improve.

2. No one gets so bad, no church so far off the right track, that Jesus is not interested in them, and counseling them to buy pure gold of him, wear

his white robes of righteousness, and use his eye-salve that they may see themselves in the true light.

3. The church at Laodicea was the worst church of the seven, yet the greatest promise of the seven is made to that church on condition of repentance. This suggests that the depth of sin to which people go does not prejudice the Lord against them so that he will not bless them as abundantly as he blesses others who have not been so sinful. Great is the mercy of our Lord! were it not so, none of us would ever share his glory.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

How did the Lord encourage this reprobate church to open the door to him?

**Introduction**

**The Lord Rebukes**

Make a list of, and discuss, the things in the seven churches that the Lord approved.  
List and discuss the things in the churches that he disapproved.  
Make a list of the things in your congregation which the Lord would approve, and of the things he would disapprove. (It might be well to use this for a study Wednesday night.)

What titles did Jesus use to identify himself to this church?  
Discuss Jesus as the "beginning of the creation of God."  
In what terms did the Lord describe the church at Laodicea?  
What do you think was their attitude toward civic and social sins?  
What do you think would have been their treatment of false teachers?  
What is meant by spewing them out of his mouth?  
What was their conception of their own condition?

**Golden Text Explained**

What is a reprobate? Can you show that the church at Laodicea was reprobate?  
What is the first thing mentioned as characteristic of a reprobate church?  
Why does a reprobate church have no access to God?  
What leads a church to become reprobate?  
Discuss Jesus as the lingering Christ.  
Discuss the sinner's responsibility as taught in this text.

Give and discuss the five terms Jesus used in describing their condition.  
Is it possible for there to be as much difference between your own opinion of yourself and the Lord's opinion of you as there was in this case?  
How can we be sure our opinion of ourselves is near the Lord's judgment of us?



**The Lord Counsels**

In what did this church think the real riches of life are to be found? Were they wrong?  
 What, in your opinion, are the true riches of life? Do you find it easy to live in harmony with this estimation of values?  
 With what does the Lord advise men to be clothed?  
 What was wrong with their eyesight? What did the Lord advise them to do?  
 What evidence do we have that Jesus was dealing with children of God?  
 In the light of this lesson, what do you think of the impossibility of contact?

**The Lord Encourages**

What lessons are suggested by Jesus standing at the door and knocking?  
 How did this church hear the voice of Jesus? How do we hear his voice?  
 How do we hear what the Spirit says to the churches?  
 What promise does Jesus give this church? How does it compare with promises to other churches?  
 Can you show that God and Christ occupy the same throne? How are we to sit with him in that throne?  
 What is there of interest in Topics for Discussion?

Lesson VI—November 11, 1951

**WORSHIP IN HEAVEN**

**The Lesson Text**

**Rev. 4: 1-11**

1 After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, *a voice* as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter.

2 Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne;

3 And he that sat *was* to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.

4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones *I saw* four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

6 And before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living

creatures full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle.

8 And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying,

Holy, holy, holy, *is* the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

9 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power." (Rev. 4; 11a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 14: 1-5.

November 5. M.....Jehovah Is King of Glory (Psalm 24: 1-10)

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| November 6. T.....  | Jehovah Is a Mighty One (Psalm 89: 1-18)            |
| November 7. W.....  | Jehovah Is King Over All the Earth (Psalm 47: 1-9)  |
| November 8. T.....  | Jehovah Is Great and to Be Praised (Psalm 48: 1-14) |
| November 9. F.....  | Jehovah Is the God of Our Salvation (1)             |
| November 10. S..... | Jehovah Will Give Grace and Glory (Psalm 84: 1-12)  |
| November 11. S..... | Jehovah Is Clothed with Majesty (Psalm 93: 1-5)     |

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all that read and heed.

### Introduction

John ranks with the very greatest of the prophets in the visions which he was allowed to behold. Paul said he was caught up into the third heaven, or Paradise, where he heard and saw things not lawful for a man to utter. (2 Cor. 12: 1-4.) Whether he had a greater vision than John, we have no way of knowing; but at least he must have seen things not seen by John, since John gives a description of what he saw. Isaiah and Ezekiel of the Old Testament were granted visions of the majesty and glory of Jehovah, and they give descriptions somewhat similar to that of John, especially Ezekiel. There are some things common to all of the visions which should be of interest to the student at this time.

First, all three of these prophets see the throne of Jehovah, and make some attempt to describe it. Isaiah mentions the throne, but makes little effort to give us a picture of it. Ezekiel says it had the appearance of a sapphire stone (Ezek. 1: 26), and John gives us a picture of the throne encircled by a rainbow "like an emerald to look upon."

Next, they all mention that One is sitting on the throne, but there is no attempt to tell us anything about his person. Isaiah says he saw the Lord, and he calls him the King, Jehovah of hosts. (Isa. 6: 1-5.) Ezekiel says

he saw only the likeness of a throne and the glory of Jehovah. John says he that sat on the throne was to look upon like jasper stone and a sardius, which serves to give us the idea of royalty and majesty.

All three prophets mention the glory of him who sat on the throne. We get the idea from what Isaiah said that it was a glorious vision, and John says he saw his glory. (John 12: 41.) Ezekiel says there was a likeness of the appearance of a man above the throne, and lest we might get the idea that he was saying Jehovah looks like a man, he says plainly, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah."

All three prophets mention living creatures about the throne. Isaiah calls them seraphim and says they have six wings. Ezekiel gives a detailed description of them and their movements. Isaiah does not give the number of seraphim, but both Ezekiel and John say there were four living creatures. Ezekiel says these living creatures were cherubim. (Ezek. 10: 20.) Seraphim and cherubim are both heavenly beings. Some think the seraphim are a higher order than the cherubim, but that is uncertain. If Isaiah and Ezekiel are talking about the same heavenly beings, which is very probable, the two words refer to the same order of beings.

### Golden Text Explained

The language of our text is said to be the words of the "four and twenty elders" who are around the throne of God in heaven. The four living creatures have worshipped God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." When they have uttered their praise to God, the twenty-four elders fall down before

God and cast their crowns before the throne, to acknowledge him as worthy of glory and honor and power.

**1. We first consider that which God is worthy to receive.** (1) He is worthy to receive the glory. The word glory means, "Praise, or distinction accorded by common consent; praise accorded in worship." Hence he is worthy to be praised and

glorified in worship, even by the heavenly beings. If he is worthy to be worshipped by heavenly sinless beings, sinful human beings should count it an indescribable honor to be allowed the great privilege of worshipping him. (2) He is worthy to receive honor. This word means, "Esteem due or paid to worth; manifestation of respect." God is worthy of all the esteem we can give him, and all that the heavenly being can render to him. Creatures are not capable of honoring God, the Creator, as highly as he deserves. He is deserving of infinite honor, but no creature is capable of giving such honor, because they are finite beings. (3) He is worthy of having all power ascribed to him. All creatures are finite in power, and so can have no adequate conception of infinite power; but they can praise God for his infinite power, and bless his name for being worthy of such praise and adoration.

**2. Let us now consider some reasons why God is worthy of receiving such worship.** (1) The four and twenty elders assign one reason for ascribing to God all glory and honor and power, and that is, "for thou didst create all things." When we look about us and behold the vastness of the universe, with its teeming millions of stars and planets, separated by millions of miles, and yet moving in more than clock-like precision in their relation one to the other, we

agree with the elders that he is worthy. The vastness of the universe overwhelms us. But when we consider the beauty of the green earth and the starry heavens, and remember that they are the work of his mighty hands, we feel again that he is worthy. When we consider man, a combination of common clay and a portion of his spirit, and behold the works of his hands in the fields of science, industry, and the arts, we realize anew that God is worthy of glory, honor, and power. (2) It is one thing to create, and another to preserve that creation in perfect order. Since God has preserved his creation, we are bound to give honor and praise to him for his work of preservation. (3) But perhaps there is no other work of God which moves us to honor, praise, and adore him like his work of redemption. Even the angels desired to look into the work of redemption before the plan was made known. (1 Pet. 1: 12.) Seeing the love and power and goodness of God manifested in lifting man from the mire of sin, purifying and sanctifying him so that he may be an honor to God on earth and a fit person for communion with God in heaven, is over and over a fresh manifestation to men and angels of the power of God, and proof that he is worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the power ascribed to him by the elders in heaven.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. A Vision of the Throne (Rev. 4: 1-3)

*A door opened in heaven.* After the preliminary visions of chapter one, and the letters to the seven churches, John sees another vision. He says he saw a door opened in heaven. This is to be taken, not literally, but as something seen in vision. He saw the things of heaven as clearly as one could see things in a house when looking through an open door.

*A voice saying, Come up hither.* This voice was the first voice of the vision which he heard, not necessarily the same voice he had heard in the first vision. (Rev. 1: 10.) Yet both are said to be like a trumpet, in that they were loud and clear. This voice

invited him to come up, presumably, to open the door.

*Things which must shortly come to pass.* The one speaking to John, who we may suppose was Jesus Christ, said he was to be shown things which must shortly come to pass. The things to be related from this point on through the book were in the future to John. That all things shown were to be consummated in the near future is not stated, but the series of events which will reach to the end of time, and even beyond, must shortly begin to unfold.

*Straightway I was in the Spirit.* Whether John left Patmos to behold this vision is a subject for considerable discussion. John does not say that he went anywhere. Paul says he

was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12), but John does not use such language. Stuart says that since the voice invited him to come up hither, and this verse says straightway he was in the Spirit, it is proof that he was taken up to heaven. But John says he was in the Spirit (Rev. 1: 10) when he saw his first vision, and no one claims that he left Patmos. To be in the Spirit was simply to be completely under the influence of the Spirit, a kind of rapture or ecstasy.

*A throne set in heaven.* As John looks through the open door, the first thing which catches his attention is a throne. This suggests that it is the central thing, in the central position.

*One sitting upon the throne.* John does not tell us who is sitting on the throne, but the general information gathered from the whole vision would suggest that the one to whom is ascribed all glory and honor and power is the one upon the throne.

*He that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius.* Stuart translates it, "He who sat was in appearance like to a jasper stone and a sardian." Neither Isaiah, Ezekiel, or John make any attempt to describe the form or appearance of the One on the throne. No doubt it is impossible to do so in human language. God is a unique Being; he is beyond our comprehension, and no doubt it is impossible for us to apprehend him as to form and appearance. And if John could have given us a description, there would have been no end to the efforts of humanity to make forms of God in all kinds of materials. Man is inclined to be idolatrous; he wishes to have some form of God to aid him in worship. Some have suggested that Jesus was God in human form as an accommodation to humanity's desire to have a form of God to worship. Authorities are not agreed as to the color of these stones. Jasper, according to Webster, was probably a dark green or opalescent stone. Barnes says it was a red, or yellow. The sardius was red, light or deep color. The general idea is to suggest royalty.

*And there was a rainbow.* This was like an emerald to look upon, which suggests that the color of green predominated in the rainbow; or it may

have been a green halo over the throne.

## II. Surrounding the Throne (Rev. 4: 4-7)

Round about *the throne were four and twenty thrones*. These thrones were for the four and twenty elders about the throne. Who were these elders? Commentators generally say they are human beings re-deemed, representative of all the re-deemed. Some take it that twelve represent the Jews and twelve the Gentiles; others that twelve represent the Jewish church, and twelve the church of Christ. But if so, who is left to represent the people of God before the Jewish church began? and who would represent the Gentiles during the Jewish age? In Rev. 7: 9ff., John saw a great multitude which no man could number standing before the throne. The elders and living creatures were there, but they were not of the great multitude. One of the elders asked John who were these people, and then explained that they were those who had come up out of great tribulation and had washed their robes in the blood of the lamb. The elder did not say *we* washed our robes, but *they*. Hence the elders are not of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. And on through the 7th chapter this elder speaks of what *they* have done and what *they* are enjoying. These elders are heavenly beings associated in the praise of God with the seraphim and cherubim.

*Out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders.* This is a usual part of such scenes, and perhaps is expressive of the majesty and glory of God. Such things were so prominent on Sinai that Moses was exceedingly fearful.

*Seven lamps of fire.* And John goes on to say that these are the seven Spirits of God. Whether there were seven distinct Spirits, or the number seven is used of the manifold powers of the Holy Spirit, we have no way of knowing. If the number is to be taken literally, we would say these are Spirits, heavenly beings different from the seraphim, who stand before the throne to do the bidding of Him who is on the throne.

*A sea of glass like unto crystal.*

This throne scene is set in an expanse of clear pavement, clear as crystal. The purity and crystal clearness, as well as the vast expanse suggested by the term sea, is to be emphasized here.

*Four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.* Instead of "living creatures," the King James version has "beasts," which has given rise to an endless amount of wild speculation as to the meaning of these beasts, or creatures. They have been guessed to represent just about everything, even to four continents, including America. But if we compare this vision with that of Ezekiel, we will find that in Ezek. 1 he speaks of four living creatures with wings, and then in Ezek. 10: 20 he says he knew that these creatures were cherubim. May we not conclude that these living creatures of John's vision are the same? The fact that they were full of eyes seems to suggest the eternal vigilance and watchfulness of these creatures.

*First creature was like a lion.* Whether John intended to give any idea as to the whole body of these creatures is not certain. The third is not said to be like a man, but to have a face as of a man. So likely the facial appearance is all he intends for all four. The lion suggests courage; Barnes says it suggests dominion and authority.

*The second creature like a calf.* This suggests patience and strength.

*Third had a face as a man.* This suggests intelligence.

*The fourth was like a flying eagle.* This suggests swiftness, penetrating vision, and Barnes suggests that it indicates the protecting providence of God.

### III. Activity About the Throne (Rev. 4: 8-11)

*Living creatures had six wings.* Perhaps the three pairs of wings suggest promptness in executing the will of God. In Isaiah's vision these seraphim had six wings, but in Ezekiel's vision they had four wings, and the hands of a man under their wings. It is not necessary that we interpret every little detail of these visions, though we may suppose that certain things suggest certain ideas to our

minds as long as we stay within scriptural bounds.

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God.* The four living creatures have no rest day or night, but are continually praising God for his holiness and power. The three occurrences of the word holy has generally been accepted as a proof, or at least an implication, of the Trinity. Isaiah uses the same expression in his vision, and we know that the second person of the Godhead was included. (John 12: 40, 41.) So it is likely that holiness is ascribed to each of the three persons of the Godhead.

*The Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.* God is praised for his infinite power. Surely no one who regards the universe as his creation can doubt his power. His eternity is also expressed in the terms *was, is, and is to come*; the past, present, and future One. He has his being, or existence, irrespective of time. Though he regards time in his dealings with humanity, he is not himself affected by time; he is a timeless Being.

*The four and twenty elders shall fall down before him.* The four living creatures and the four and twenty elders join in the praise given to God. This worship is represented as being continual, for the four living creatures are said to have no rest, but are praising God day and night. Then it is said that when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is on the throne, the four and twenty elders join in the worship. So it must be a continual thing. This is said that we may get the idea of the worthiness of him who is on the throne to receive such worship. If angelic beings are continually worshipping him, is it unreasonable that he should expect us to "pray without ceasing"? We think it is unreasonable for the preacher and the elders to expect us to attend three periods of worship per week. Do we refuse to go to prayer meeting because we think God is not worthy of worship? Or do we refuse to go because we do not enjoy worshipping him? If we do not enjoy such here, would we enjoy it if we were in heaven?

*Worthy art thou.* The worship of these heavenly beings consists in as-

cribing glory, honor, and power to God because he is worthy; and he is accounted worthy because he created

all beings and all things. If we consider him worthy of worship, we will gladly worship him.

### Topics for Discussion

1. This vision is of heaven; the scene is laid in heaven; it concerns heavenly beings. Later visions will deal with the earth, and activities on the earth, and men and nations of the earth. But all of this one has to do with heaven and heavenly beings.

2. The Father is emphasized in this chapter as the occupant of the throne, and as the one who is worthy to receive the glory and honor and power. But the vision does not close with this chapter, it continues into the next,

and there the Son is emphasized as the One who is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessings.

3. The heavenly beings are impressed with what God is and what he does. They praise him for what he is and find the reason for it in what he has done and is now doing for all creation. We should join them in praise to God for what he is to us, and for what he has done for us, and what he is willing to do for us in the future.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Name four Bible characters who saw visions of heaven.  
Which one was not allowed to tell what he saw and heard?  
What is the first thing common to the visions of the three prophets?  
What is common in all the visions as to the appearance of Jehovah?  
What do they say of the glory of the throne vision?  
Discuss the living creatures mentioned by each of the prophets.

#### Golden Text Explained

Our Golden Text is the language of what beings?  
What is the first thing God is said to be worthy to receive? What is its meaning?  
What is the second thing? What is the meaning of the word?  
What is the third thing God is worthy to receive?  
What is the first reason for ascribing this praise to God?  
Give a second reason why God is worthy of such worship.  
What work of God means most to us?  
What of our obligation to thank and praise him?

#### A Vision of the Throne

What made it possible for John to see this vision?  
What things were to be shown John?  
What is meant by shortly coming to pass?  
What is meant by being in the Spirit?  
Is there any proof that John left the isle of Patmos for this vision?  
What is the first thing John saw through this open door?

What is said of the One sitting on the throne?  
What meaning is attached to jasper and sardius?  
Why is the appearance, or form, of God not described?  
What was over the throne? What of its color?

#### Surrounding the Throne

Who are the four and twenty elders around the throne?  
Why can they not represent the Jewish church and the church of Christ?  
By the use of a Bible Dictionary, learn what you can about seraphim and cherubim.  
What proceeded from the throne? What the significance of these?  
What is meant by the seven lamps of fire?  
In what was this throne scene set?  
Who are the four living creatures? Why so many eyes?  
What was the first living creature like? What the meaning?  
What was the second living creature like? What the meaning?  
Discuss the third and fourth living creatures.

#### Activity About the Throne

How many wings did these living creatures have? What the meaning of them?  
What is implied in the thrice holy worship of the creatures?  
What characteristics of God are emphasized in this worship?  
How long does the worship of the creatures and elders continue? What does this suggest as to the character of God?  
Does our lack of continued worship indicate a lack of appreciation of God?  
What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson VII—November 18, 1951

## THE SEALED BOOK

## The Lesson Text

## Rev. 5: 1-10

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And, no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon:

4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon:

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Ju'-dah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven

Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came, and he taketh *it* out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sing a new song, saying,

Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,

10 And madest them *to be* unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.*" (Rev. 5: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 5: 11-14.

## Daily Bible Readings

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| November 12. M..... | The Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49: 8-12)   |
| November 13. T..... | A Shoot from the Stock of Jesse (Isa. 11: 1-10)  |
| November 14. W..... | The Lamb of God (John 1: 29-34)                  |
| November 15. T..... | The Mighty God and Prince of Peace (Isa. 9: 1-7) |
| November 16. P..... | The Bright Morning Star (Rev. 22: 16-21)         |
| November 17. S..... | Jesus the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5: 1-11)        |
| November 18. S..... | Judge of the Living and Dead (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)     |

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all that read and heed.

## Introduction

Chapter four of Revelation, as we learned last week, is devoted to a description of the throne in heaven, and to praise and adoration of him who sat on the throne. This week we will learn that the fifth chapter is devoted to a continuation of the heaven-

ly scene, but the praise in this chapter is directed to the glorified Christ instead of the Father. The two chapters should be viewed together as one scene, but two distinct parts; one in which praise is given to the Father because of his mighty works, and the

other to the Son because of his work in the redemption of the lost.

We should also remember that these chapters concerning this heavenly scene are not to be interpreted as having any future meaning, that is, the events of the future are not revealed in them. The future does not begin to unfold until the first seal on the book is opened, which is found in the sixth chapter. The subject matter of these fourth and fifth chapters does not involve us in the uncertain interpretation of signs and symbols which represent figures and forces of the future, hence they are comparatively easy to understand.

By way of introducing this chapter, Albert Barnes says, "The *design* of the whole chapter is evidently to honor the Lamb of God, by showing that the power was entrusted which was confided to no one else in heaven or earth, of disclosing what is to come." The tears of John indicate the importance of breaking the seals; the fact that no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, except the Lamb of God, could be found who was able to break the seals, serves to give honor and glory to the Son of God above every other being in the universe. This gives us reason for great joy since he is our Friend and Advocate.

### Golden Text Explained

**1. Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.** No one figure of speech is sufficient to express all the characteristics of Jesus. There are, perhaps, a hundred such figures as this one in the Scriptures, each one revealing some significant characteristic of Jesus. This figure has some Old Testament background, for Judah, the tribe from which Jesus came, was called a "lion's whelp," and was said to stoop down or crouch like a lion. (Gen. 49: 9.) What does this figure of speech suggest with reference to the character of Jesus? Surely it is not intended to suggest the wild, mean, destructive characteristics of the lion. (1) There is the suggestion of great strength. The lion is known for his strength and his courage to use that strength. So Jesus is known for his strength and courage. The church under him should display that courage in the strength of him who leads us. Strength is the main characteristic necessary for the breaking of the seals in this vision of our lesson. (2) Freedom is another characteristic of the lion. He thrives in freedom, but languishes in captivity. So Jesus won his victory, was free from sin and its servitude, and is able to make us free. (3) The lion is the ruler of the jungle; he is the king of the beasts. So Jesus is King, that King which came from the tribe of Judah. He is ruler over all. He is head over all things. (Eph. 1: 21.) Those who recognize him as King and obey his marching orders will prosper in this life, and will be happy in the life to come.

He not only has the power to break the seals of the future, but he has power to take care of his own in eternity. (4) The lion is a majestic-looking figure. "His lordly mane and noble bearing, and the thunder of his roar that echoes through the woods at night, impress men with the sense of awe." So Jesus has a majesty beyond that of any earthly potentate, yes, even beyond that of the highest archangel in glory.

**2. Jesus is the Root of David.** Since the root bears the tree (Rom. 11: 18), one might get the idea that the meaning here is that Jesus is the root which bears and sustains David. And that certainly is true, but it is not the meaning intended here. This is intended to picture Jesus as growing up as a shoot out of the old root. When a tree has fallen into decay, usually the roots will put forth a shoot which will flourish and grow into another tree. So when the house of David had fallen into decay, and its glory was gone, and it seemed that the prophecies concerning the rule of the house of David might never be fulfilled, the roots put forth a shoot out of dry ground (Isa. 11: 53: 2), and a tree more noble than the original came into being. This shoot out of dry ground was Jesus. Matthew and Luke say that Jesus descended from David. He was called the Son of David while he lived upon the earth. (Matt. 9: 27.) Paul writes of the gospel of Jesus, "who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1: 3.)



And Matthew begins his gospel by saying that he is "the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matt. 1: 1.)

**3. Jesus is the Lamb of God.** Though this figure of speech does not occur in our Golden Text, it is in the Lesson Text, and is so much in line with the thoughts of this text, it may well have a place in our consideration at this time. He is the Lamb of God, of course, because he is God's offering for the sin of the world. (John 1: 29.) Without the shedding of blood there is no remis-

sion; it is impossible for the blood of animals to take away sin; therefore it had to be the blood of the Son of God. The value of his blood is infinite because in it was the life of the sinless Son of God. The dignity of his Person as well as the degree of suffering had something to do in determining the value of his blood to redeem our souls from sin. There are other characteristics of a lamb which are to be found in Jesus, as meekness, gentleness, and suffering without resistance. (Isa. 53: 7, 8.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. A Sealed Book (Rev. 5: 1-3)

*I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne.* Here again no effort is made to describe the One on the throne, though he is spoken of as having a hand. But we must be careful not to confine the being of God to a form, or to space.

*A book written within and on the back.* This book was likely a roll, since the modern method of book making was not known in John's day. A long piece of writing material ten to eighteen inches wide was used. Each end was fastened to a piece of wood, and by turning each the material was rolled on both pieces. By turning the pieces of wood, rolling it off of one and on to the other at the same time, any place on the material could be found. This book seems to have been rolled on one piece of wood, as we shall see. Usually only one side of the material was used for writing, but when material was scarce, or there was too much matter for one book and hardly enough for two, both sides of the material were used.

*Close sealed with seven seals.* The number seven is used throughout the book to suggest perfection and completion, hence we may conclude that there were seven seals on the book because John wished us to know that it was sealed completely. No one was able to learn the contents of the book, because it was perfectly sealed, having seven seals. Furthermore, the seven seals were so placed and arranged that the first sealed the end of the material so that it would not unroll. When that one was broken, the material would unroll un-

til the second seal was reached; when the second seal was broken, the material would unroll until the third was reached, and so on until the seventh seal was broken, permitting the reader to finish reading the roll, or book.

*Who is worthy to open the book?* John says he saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice this question. The strength of the angel is mentioned to account for a great voice, and this great voice suggests that all concerned could hear the question. So when there was found but one to open the book, it could not be said that the beings in only a small area had been canvassed as to whether they could open it. This magnifies the strength and wisdom of the one who opens the book.

*No one in heaven, or on earth.* No one in heaven takes in all angels; no one on earth included all humanity; no one under the earth includes all spirits good and evil. No one was found to open the book, or to look thereon, that is, on the contents of the book. John does not mean to say that no one in that heavenly company, including angels, elders, and living creatures, saw the book in the hand of him who sat on the throne. He simply means that no one was able to break the seals so as to look upon the writing, or to know the contents of the book.

#### II. One Found to Open the Book (Rev. 5: 4-8)

*And I wept much.* Since John was told that he would be shown things which must shortly come to pass, we may conclude that he knew that this book contained the revelation of

the future. Therefore, when no one was found who was able to open it, he was much distressed. (1) Humanity's interest in the future is always keen. Men will give more time to the study of prophecy than they will to those passages which tell them their duty, or rebuke them for their sins. Preachers can get greater crowds to hear them speculate on the "mark of the beast," or the "battle of Har-Magedon" than will listen to a lesson on how to become a Christian, or how to worship God acceptably. (2) John's tears may be regarded as common to humanity when they fail to penetrate the future and are left in the dark as to what is to befall them. (3) The breaking of these seals not only meant gaining a knowledge of the future, but it indicates the execution of God's plan revealed therein. "Hence, if the scroll is not opened, then no protection for God's children in the hours of bitter trial; no judgments upon a persecuting world; no ultimate triumph for believers; no new heaven and new earth; no future inheritance. (Hendriksen.) Certainly if there was no one in heaven or on earth with strength and wisdom enough to open, that is, to have a knowledge of, the future, it follows that no one can execute God's glorious redemptive purposes. This was enough to make both men and angels weep.

*Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.* This is the language of one of the elders, one of the four and twenty around the throne of God. The elder says that this Lion of the tribe of Judah "hath overcome to open the book." The overcoming made him able and worthy to open the book. Undoubtedly this refers to his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave. In these experiences Jesus met and overcame Satan, and gained authority over all heaven and earth. (Matt. 28: 18.) This is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but the appropriateness of the figure here is apparent at once. Since the lion is the king of beasts, Jesus is the Lion, or King of all, and has the strength to do what no creature is able to do. The term "Root of David" suggests his human-

ity. And since as a human being, the son of David, he overcame, we may take courage that we, in him, will gain the victory. It was the Root of David, a human being, that overcame to open the book. We started out by saying that this book of Revelation was written to encourage a persecuted church, and certainly this point is in line with the general purpose of the book.

*And I saw in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb.* We are reminded of the heavenly beings mentioned in the fifth chapter, the elders and the living creatures. See the former lesson for an explanation of who they are. John was told to behold the Lion of Judah and the Root of David, but when he looked he saw a Lamb. So we are not to think that he saw Jesus in either of these forms, but he saw the One who was all these things.

*As though it had been slain.* The Lamb appeared as though it had been offered in sacrifice. And this mention of a Lamb, slain in connection with overcoming to open the book is proof that it was through his sacrificial experience that he gained the right to open the seals of the book.

*Having seven horns, and seven eyes.* Horns are the symbol of power and authority, and the number seven is the symbol of completeness and perfection. So the seven horns of this Lamb mean that he has all authority. And the seven eyes are explained as being the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the world. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as seven to express the variety of his work, or his perfect wisdom, omniscience. (1 Cor. 2: 10, 11.)

*And when he had taken the book.* Commentators find great difficulty in understanding how a lamb could take a book and open it. We are not to think of Jesus as being in the form of a lamb any more than we are to think of him in the form of a lion or a root, for he is called all three in this lesson.

*Having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense.* The incense is said to be the prayers of the saints, but there is no such explanation of the harp. But that they had a literal harp in heaven would imply the

growth of timber, the mining and manufacture of metal, and the manufacture of instruments. Surely no one wishes to go to that extreme to justify the use of such in Christian worship. However if such could be established, it still would fall short of proving them scriptural in worship here, for the fact that a thing will be in heaven is no good reason why it is right to have it in Christian worship.

### III. A Song of Praise (Rev. 5: 9, 10)

*They sing a new song.* These twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are the ones who have the harps, and they are the ones who sing the new song. Some see in this instrumental accompaniment, but since it is also said that they have bowls of incense, it is a little difficult to see how they could hold bowls, hold a harp, which was a string instrument, and play it too. Besides this, the living creatures had wings instead of hands. (Rev. 4: 8.) When we start making these things literal, we get into trouble. The best thing to do is simply say that they praised the Lord for his ability to open the sealed book so that John might know and reveal to us the things which were contained therein. This passage was not intended as a manual of worship, and to press it into that service is to pervert the scripture.

Worthy *art thou*. This is the song that was sung when the Lamb took the book to open it. The Lamb had

proven himself worthy of the praise of heaven.

*For thou wast slain.* This is assigned as the reason why the Lamb was worthy to open the seals of the book. Here again the death of Christ is connected with the things which John saw taking place in heaven. People today who think that the death of Jesus was not vicarious, and that his blood has no more power to cleanse from sin than the blood of any other good man, will have difficulty in explaining these references to his death as the reason why the Lamb was worthy of the worship of heavenly beings.

*Didst purchase unto God with thy blood.* The heavenly beings say that Jesus bought men with his blood; he redeemed sinful men with his blood.

*Madest them to be unto our God a kingdom of priests.* Here again the pronoun *them* as used by the elders and living creatures suggests that they were not of the number purchased by his blood, hence heavenly beings, not redeemed human beings. Those purchased had been made a kingdom of priests, and that is what Christians are now.

*They reign upon the earth.* The tense of the verb shows the reigning was in John's time. Christians are kings and priests, or a royal priesthood, reigning with Christ, and their reign is upon the earth, and while they live upon earth, and while Jesus is in heaven.

## Topics for Discussion

1. Humanity's intense interest in the future has led people into speculation, wild predictions, and false expectations. Many have become so absorbed in such matters that they had neither time nor desire for the practical side of Christianity, and no doubt many have been lost because they gave their time to such instead of practicing Christianity.

2. Others have become so sure of their speculative theories that they have made them tests of fellowship,

and have urged them to the point of dividing the church of the Lord. The book of Revelation was written to encourage Christians under persecution.

3. "Worthy art thou" should be the song of praise on the lips of every Christian every day he lives. He is worthy of our love, praise, and adoration; he is worthy of every sacrifice we make in time or money; he is worthy of every hour of service we can give him.

## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

### Introduction

With what particular thing does chapter four of Revelation deal?  
Who is the central figure of chapter five?

Do these chapters deal with things in the future?  
 What reasons for great joy to us are suggested in this chapter?

**Golden Text Explained**

What Old Testament background did John have for referring to Jesus as a Lion? Name and discuss four ways in which Jesus is like a lion.  
 What is meant by saying that Jesus is the Root of David?  
 How do inspired writers link Jesus with David?  
 Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God? What gives the blood of Christ its infinite value to redeem us?  
 What characteristics of a lamb are found in Jesus?

**A Sealed Book**

What reference is made in our text to God the Father?  
 How were books made in John's day?  
 What was usually indicated by writing on both sides of a scroll?  
 How many seals were on the book? What the significance of the number?  
 How were the seals arranged on the book?  
 Why mention the fact that a strong angel asked who was worthy to open the book?  
 Over how much territory was search made to find one worthy to open the book?  
 What is meant by saying that no one was worthy to look upon the book?

**One Found to Open the Book**

What was contained in the book John wished to have opened?  
 What of humanity's interest in the future? What good was to be derived from breaking the seals of the book?  
 Who asked John to cease his weeping? Who was found worthy to open the book? What made him able to open it?  
 Why is the term Lion so appropriate to Jesus in this connection?  
 What meaning does the "Root of David" have in this connection?  
 Under what figure did John behold Jesus as he took the book?  
 What proves that the sacrificial experience of Jesus made him able to open the book?  
 How many Horns did the lamb have? How many eyes?  
 What is the meaning of these symbols? Do you think the elders each had a literal harp? If so, what is implied?  
 What were in the bowls they had? What is meant by this?

**A Song of Praise**

What did the elders do when Jesus took the sealed book?  
 What reason did they give for singing that Jesus was worthy?  
 How is the death of Jesus connected with his being worthy to open the seals?  
 Who were made a kingdom of priests? When and where do they reign with Christ?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson VIII—November 25, 1951**

**THE FOUR HORSEMEN**

**The Lesson Text**

**Rev. 6: 1-11**

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come.

2 And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come.

4 And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature

saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand.

6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come.

8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Ha-des followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge

and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled *their course*.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*For the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?*" (Rev. 6: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 6: 12-17.

### Daily Bible Readings

November 19. M.....God's Good Pleasure Being Done (Eph. 1: 3-14)  
 November 20. T.....Jesus Sends a Sword (Matt. 10: 34-42)  
 November 21. W.....Mark of Beast for Buying and Selling (Rev. 13: 11-18)  
 November 22. T.....Destruction of Death and Hades (Rev. 20: 11-15)  
 November 23. F.....Coming of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 1-8)  
 November 24. S.....Description of the New City (Rev. 21: 9-27)  
 November 25. S.....We Shall Reign for Ever and Ever (Rev. 22: 1-5)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all who hear and heed.

### Introduction

With the opening of the first of the *seven* seals and the appearance of the first horse and his rider, we leave solid ground, and there are about as many explanations as there are commentators writing on the book. "In the boundless future that was to succeed the times of John, there would be, of necessity, many events to which these symbols might be applied, and the result has shown that it has required but a moderate share of pious ingenuity to apply them, by different expositors, to events differing widely from each other in their character, and in the times when they would occur." (Albert Barnes.) The writer has before him nearly a dozen standard commentaries on Revelation, and excepting one writer who follows Albert Barnes so closely that he may be accused of copying, there is no agreement between any two of them. Some of them think the matters in chapter six refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, while others think it deals with matters of the Roman empire soon after the time of John. However they may be divided into two groups, the first of which suppose that the horses and their riders rep-

resent certain men and conditions at one certain period of the world's history; and the second group suppose that these horses and their riders represent Christ and his church, in the case of the white horse, or the forces of evil in opposition to the Lord, and that these forces may be viewed as at work soon after John's day, or in any other age of the world. The first, or historical, method of interpretation has used about all the signs and symbols of Revelation, applying them to men and events of history. If time rolls on another thousand, or five thousand, years, these interpretations will obviously have to be rejected, and a new shuffling of signs and symbols to fit an extended historical situation, making room in that interpretation for all the other men and events during this extended period of time. But this other method of interpretation, set forth in "More Than Conquerors," by William Hendriksen, will not be effected if the world stands another ten thousand, or more, years. But which is right? This writer does not propose to settle the matter. Both theories will be set forth and the reader may make his own decision.

### Golden Text Explained

Our Golden Text is in connection with the opening of the sixth seal. According to the historical method of interpretation, this sixth seal refers to the consternation and alarm "fulfilled in the Roman empire in the threatening invasion of the Goths in the neighborhood of the Danube, pressed on by the Huns," the date being in the fourth century. But according to Hendriksen's interpretation, this is the consternation of the enemies of the Lord in the last great day as the wrath of God and the Lamb is to be manifested.

1. **Day of their wrath is come.** The pronoun *their* refers, not to the people, but to "him that sitteth on the throne . . . and the Lamb." (1) Notice that it is said that the "day of their wrath" is come. Is it not implied that this is a set day, a day appointed? If this is implied, this statement can refer to no other day than that which God has appointed in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, and has given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Acts 17: 31.) (2) Notice that God and the Lamb can, and will, exercise wrath in that day. There are many today who wish to picture God and Christ as being soft sentimental Beings who cannot punish anybody regardless of how he lives. The Bible represents God as a vengeance-taking God, and as a consuming fire. (Heb. 12: 29.) The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of his Son; and they shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. (2 Thess. 1: 9, 10.)

2. **The objects of their wrath.** In this vision, John saw seven classes of people who were concerned about this day of wrath. He names them

as, "The kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman." Of course there is overlapping in this classification, but the number is seven. We have found that the number seven denotes completion or perfection. Hence none of the enemies of God may hope to escape the pouring out of his wrath. Paul names the objects of his wrath as those who know not God, and who obey not the gospel. And Peter raises a question as to what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel. (1 Pet. 4: 17.) Elsewhere John says that the fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21: 8.)

3. **Their efforts to escape the wrath of the great day.** John said he saw all these classes of men as they tried to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains; and they cry unto the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb who comes to execute judgment. These men who have been so independent all their lives, and so defiant of the authority of heaven, will in that day have nothing to look to for help. Having rejected the only One who can help them in that day, they are left to stand alone and cry for mercy, but find none.

4. **Who is able to stand?** Jesus told his disciples to watch and make supplication that they might be able to stand at that time before the Son of man. (Luke 21: 36.) John says those who are with the Lord, the called, chosen and faithful, will overcome with him. (Rev. 17: 14.) The prophet says those who turn from their wickedness, who keep his statutes and do that which is lawful and right, that man shall live and not die. (Ezek. 18: 21ff)

### Exposition of the Text

**I. Horses and Their Riders** (Rev. 6: 1-8)

The Lamb *opened one of the seven seals*. We remember from the last lesson that the Lamb, Jesus Christ,

was praised for being the only one in the universe who was able to open the seals, and that the opening of the seals not only meant revealing the future, but executing God's plans

for the salvation of God's people.

*I saw a white horse.* All agree that the horse is a symbol of conflict. The ox and the ass were used for domestic purposes, but the horse for war. (Job 39: 19-25.) The color of the horse must have some significance, for each of the four horses is of a different color. White signifies purity, holiness, and some add prosperity.

*He that sat thereon had a bow.* The historical interpreters say this refers to Trajan and the Roman rulers immediately following until about A.D. 180 or 190. This was a time of peace in the Roman world, though Rome was waging a war of aggression all through the period; and the empire reached its greatest extent during this period. The fact that the rider had a bow as his weapon leads these interpreters to think this refers to Trajan, because he was a native of the island of Crete, the first foreign-born man to rule Rome. The Cretans were noted for their use of the bow and arrow in battle.

But the other class of interpreters say the rider is Jesus Christ. They do so because Christ is all through Revelation presented as "conquering and to conquer." This rider receives a crown, and Jesus is said to be crowned. (Rev. 14: 14.) This rider is on a white horse, and Jesus is said to ride a white horse, in Rev. 19: 11ff, which they think is a parallel passage with this one. The fact that the rider carries a bow instead of a sword is a difficulty, but in Psa. 45: 3-7 we have a prophecy that Paul applies to Christ (Heb. 1). in which the Lord's arrows are said to be sharp. If he has arrows, surely he had a bow.

*Another horse came forth, a red horse.* This is at the opening of the second seal. This horse is red, which is taken to be a symbol of bloodshed. To the rider of this horse it was given, or permitted, to take peace from the earth. According to those who give the historical interpretation, this applies to a period immediately following the period of peace and prosperity in the Roman empire just mentioned. The ruler Commodus came to the throne in A.D. 182. Being in some respects a weak character, he was influenced to kill his political enemies.

Once he tasted blood, he went to excess as few men ever have. He was assassinated by one of his officers. His throne was taken by another, but was soon killed. The throne was then sold to the highest bidder. When the army heard of this, it appointed a general as ruler and returned home to seat him on the throne, which was done by civil war. Another army in another part of the empire appointed its ruler, and these armies fought each other. Such civil strife continued for nearly a hundred years, during which time there were thirty-two emperors and twenty-seven pretenders to the throne.

The other class of interpreters say this rider on the red horse represents persecution. Wherever the white horse goes with the gospel of peace and purity, the devil gets busy on the red horse of persecution. The Greek term for *slay* in verse 4, with but one exception in the New Testament, applies to Christ and his people. In this verse John sees people being slain, and in verse 9 he sees souls under the altar who had been slain for the word of God, and they are asking how long until their blood will be avenged. It is certainly possible that these two verses refer to the same people.

*There was given unto him a great sword.* Different Greek words in the Bible are translated by our English word sword. This Greek word means "the sacrificial knife." And "the use of the verb [slay] seems to imply that the vision more immediately contemplates the death of the martyrs." (Pulpit Commentary.)

*I saw, and behold, a black horse.* This is the opening of the third seal. Again the horse stands for conflict. The color is black, and suggests sorrow and despair. The rider of this black horse had a balance in his hand. A balance is usually a symbol for justice, but not always; it may be a symbol for strict measure or weight. And since we are told that a measure of wheat cost a shilling and three measures of barley for as much, we know there was a scarcity of food. And the warning against hurting the oil and wine seems to suggest that people were inclined to destroy their olive and grape vineyards rather than

pay a high tax on them. The historical interpreters find a period of time in the Roman empire which compares well with the conditions suggested here. Barnes says it began in the time of Caracalla, A.D. 211 and continued for some years. He takes statements from Gibbon's history of the Roman empire to show that the taxes were heavy, and food was scarce. These conditions were brought on by the civil war of the preceding period.

The other class of interpreters see in this economic persecution and hardship regardless of the age of the world in which it occurs. The scarcity of wheat and barley means the scarcity of the necessities of life, while the oil and wine represent the luxuries of life. A measure of wheat was a quart, and a shilling was a day's wages. So a man could earn about enough to maintain his own life, but not enough for a family. The comforts and luxuries of life were plentiful, but beyond his power to obtain. This would cause some to steal, others to depart from the faith from discouragement. It represents economic hardship used by the forces of evil for the destruction of the church, regardless of the age of the world in which it may happen.

*I saw, and behold, a pale horse.* Horse still suggests war, and the color is pale, which means death. "The reign of death, in the form of famine, pestilence, disease; fulfilled in the Roman empire in the bloodshed, famine, and pestilence that prevailed" during the reigns of the emperors from A.D. 243 to 268. (Barnes.) The rider of this horse is called Death, and it is said that Hades followed him. So we have Death and Hades taking a fourth part of the inhabitants of the earth. Gibbon says that during this time more than half of the people of certain districts were destroyed, and that if an average was made, at least one half of the human species died.

According to the other method of interpretation no effort is made to locate any definite time for this reign of death. The word sword in verse 8 is not the same as the sacrificial sword in verse 4, so this denotes general slaughter, and not that merely

of the saints. The sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts are destroying elements used by Death, and their action here is noticed only as they affect the people of God. If there was an age shortly after John saw his vision in which these forces operated, it was a fulfillment of his prophecy; but if time goes on another thousand years, and such conditions prevail again, they will be in fulfillment of this prophecy. To sum up, we have Christ on the white horse going forth with the gospel. Next we have the red horse of slaughter of God's people, and the black horse of economic hardship and poverty due to injustice, both of which symbolize the direct persecution of the church by the world. Last, there is the pale horse of Death followed by Hades destroying and swallowing a fourth part of humanity, which indirectly hurts the people of God.

## II. Souls Under the Altar (Rev. 6: 9-11)

*And when he opened the fifth seal.* The horse and rider are not connected with the opening of this seal; it is a temple scene. Souls were underneath the altar, signifying that they had died for the word of God and the testimony which they held. They were asking how long before their blood would be avenged on them that dwell on the earth. This seal suggests a time of extensive persecution of the church. Those who hold the historical interpretation point to the reign of Diocletian, who came to the throne in A.D. 284. "His reign was distinguished by the most terrible, most prolonged, and most general persecution known in the history of the ancient church." The emperor was busy for nearly twenty years uniting his kingdom, but in A.D. 303 he began the persecution of the church, not in one province, but in all the empire; it was not to stop the growth of Christianity, but "to abolish the Christian name from the earth." It is said that 700,000 died in Egypt alone, so the number throughout the empire must have been at least a few million people. The persecution raged for ten years without giving the church a rest.

Those who hold the general view



of these seals do not single out any one time of persecution, as that of Diocletian, but refer this to any time of persecution of the church when people are being put to death because they are Christians. It seems obvious that those slain under the second seal, verse 4, would be included as well as those slain under Diocletian. And if the world were to continue a thousand years, and some ruler were to put people to death because they insisted on being Christians, they would also be included. The seals represent movements in any age, rather than isolated events in some particular century.

*Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood.* Are these souls crying for vengeance? and if so, are unlike their Lord who prayed for his tormentors?

No, they do not wish to take vengeance for their sake; they do not wish to see others suffer just because they have been wicked. But the character and honor of God are involved, and these saints wish to know how he will allow his attributes of justice and holiness to be challenged. They are interested in the honor of God more than they wish to see their tormentors punished.

*Yet a little time.* This is as God counts time, so we need not be surprised if several hundred years are involved. But there will be others slain, martyred, and these first must not be avenged and blessed until all the martyrs are ready to share the blessings. This suggests that this seal applies to people in other centuries and nations.

### Topics for Discussion

1. The Lord has never promised that his church would be free from persecution, but he has promised that his grace will be sufficient to see his people through all suffering. Peter was told that his blessings would be attended with persecutions.

2. Persecution of the church tends to purify and strengthen. In times of persecution, such as the church suffered under Nero and Diocletian, very few became members of the church who were not willing to give their lives for it. They knew when

they obeyed the gospel that they might at any time be called to renounce their faith.

3. There were some who put a pinch of incense on the fire before the statue of the emperor with a mental reservation; others bought their certificate from money-loving officials showing that they had worshipped the emperor when they had not. The church generally frowned upon such practices, and many were excluded from the fellowship of the church.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

To what extent do commentators agree on the fulfillment of Revelation?  
Distinguish between two methods of interpretation of Revelation.  
What difficulty will the historical method have if the world continues several thousand more years?

#### Golden Text Explained

In what time of the world's history are the events of our text laid?  
What is suggested with reference to the day of wrath in our text?  
Is the exercise of wrath inconsistent with the love and mercy of God? Why?  
How many objects of God's wrath are named? What is suggested by this number?  
According to Paul and Peter, who will suffer the wrath of God?

What efforts will people make to escape the wrath of God?  
What characters will be able to stand in the day of wrath?  
Will the good moral man be able to stand in that day? Why?

#### Horses and Their Riders

Who was worthy to open the seals? Why?  
Of what is the horse a symbol? What is the significance of a white horse?  
Who sat on this white horse? What was his weapon?  
What arguments are made in favor of Christ as the rider of the white horse?  
What was the color of the second horse?  
What the significance of this color?  
To what period of time does this seal point?  
Describe the civil commotion of the Roman empire during this period.  
Give the argument that the red horse represents religious persecution in any age.  
What was the color of the third horse?  
What the significance of this color?

What did this rider have in his hand?  
 What the meaning of this?  
 During the reign of what emperor is this seal opened?  
 What argument is made to prove this is economic persecution of the church in any age?  
 What was the color of the fourth horse?  
 What the significance of this color?  
 Who was the rider of this horse? What followed the horse?  
 During what period of time was this prophecy fulfilled?  
 According to the general method of interpretation, what is the meaning of this seal?

**Souls Under the Altar**

Where is the scene of this prophecy laid?  
 In the reign of what emperor is it supposed by some to be fulfilled?  
 When did his persecution begin? How long did it continue?  
 What was the purpose of this persecution?  
 What do you know of the number who died in this persecution?  
 According to those who hold the general view, how is this prophecy fulfilled?  
 Why do these souls ask how long before their blood will be avenged?  
 What must happen before their blood will be avenged? How long will it be?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Lesson IX—December 2, 1951**

**THE GREAT MULTITUDE**

**The Lesson Text**

**Rev. 7: 9-17**

9 After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And they cry with a great voice, saying,

Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying,

A-men': Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. A-men'.

13 And one of the elders answered,

saying unto me, These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they?

14 And I say unto him, My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat:

17 For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."* (Rev. 7: 17b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 7: 1-8.

**Daily Bible Readings**

November 26. M.....Few Enter the Narrow Gate (Matt. 7: 13-23)  
 November 27. T.....Who Then Can Be Saved? (Matt. 19: 23-30)  
 November 28. W.....A Great Multitude in Judgment (Matt. 25: 31-46)  
 November 29. T.....Will the Son of Man Find Faith? (Luke 18: 1-8)  
 November 30. F.....Judged by the Word of God (John 12: 44-50)

December 1. S.....More Than Conquerors Through Him (Rom. 8: 31-39)

December 2. S.....Coming Out of Great Tribulation (Heb. 11: 32-40)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all who hear and heed.

### Introduction

The seventh chapter of Revelation opens with four forces *on* the four corners of the earth about to be let loose to hurt the earth and sea. But an angel stays these hurting forces until the servants of God on earth are numbered and sealed. "What these hurting forces are depends upon which interpretation one follows. The historical interpreters think they are the Goths under Alaric, A.D. 395 to 410; the Vandals under Genseric, A.D. 428 to 468; the Huns under Attila who styled himself the "Scourge of God," A.D. 433-453; and the Heruli, a tribe of the Goths, under Odoacer, A.D. 476 to 490. This last war under Odoacer, however, was really a rebellion in the Roman army, and not on a par with the other three invasions from foreign powers.

The sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand from the twelve tribes of Israel is interesting. First, there are exactly twelve thousand from each tribe. This, of course, is enough to suggest that this number is

not to be taken literally. Next, though twelve tribes are named, Dan and Ephraim are left out, and Joseph is included. Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and each was made the head of a tribe, which made thirteen of the tribes. When the tribes are named, Levi is usually omitted because that tribe was given no regular inheritance in Canaan; and Joseph's name is omitted, so it takes both Ephraim and Manasseh to make the twelve. But here Joseph is included and so is Levi, so two have to be omitted. Why Dan and Ephraim are selected is not known. But does John refer to the saved from the Jewish in this number? Some say that he does, and that the great number John saw in verse 9 refers to those saved under the new covenant. Others think that the hundred forty-four thousand refer to the church on earth—the church militant; and the great number of verse 9 refers to the church triumphant, all the redeemed in heaven.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The time to which our text applies. Regardless of different methods of interpretation, the language of our text must refer to a time and place far removed from this earth. As long as people live upon this earth, there are going to be tears of sorrow, suffering, and disappointment. Death will reign upon earth until Jesus comes to destroy death by the resurrection of all that are in their graves and to change all the living righteous that they may be with him forever. And as long as death reigns, there will be sorrow in the hearts and tears in the eyes of those who are left behind. If human nature remains the same as it is today and has been since creation, there will be people who have no regard for the rights of others; the poor will be oppressed; the strong will impose upon the weak; the crafty designing money

lovers will swindle and fleece the unsuspecting and innocent; the poor who are always with us will have his heart-breaking problems and experiences which wring tears from him and his sympathetic wife and suffering children. Yes, this earth is a vale of tears, a land of sighs and sorrows, of sickness and suffering, of desolation and death. The pleasures of this earth are fleeting, and many of them are seductive and destructive. The lasting genuine pleasures we enjoy here are not of this earth—they are heaven-born, given us as a foretaste of what we will enjoy when God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes. So we may be sure that our text refers to a time beyond the end of this earthly existence, and to a place beyond the reach of the conditions which prevail upon this earth.

2. **Every tear shall be wiped away.**

The word *every* is to be emphasized in this statement. We are not promised partial relief from the things which bring tears to our eyes; it is total, complete, and eternal relief from the causes of sorrow and sadness. In that land no one will ever be called to stand by the new-made grave of a loved one to take a long last parting look upon the features which have given so much joy in their presence, but will cause tears of grief to flow in their absence. For "death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away." (Rev. 21: 4b.) In that land no one will put his trust in a person to have it shattered and destroyed by hypocrisy and deceit, for "all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Rev. 21: 8b.) In that land no father or mother will weep over a prodigal son or a wayward daughter, for "without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." (Rev. 22: 15.) In that heavenly land the righteous will not be "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked," for the "wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, even all the nations that forget God." (Psalm

9: 17.) Nor shall the righteous in that glorious land be grieved by the false teaching and blasphemies of those who have no respect for the authority of God and his Christ, for those who preach any gospel other than that preached by the apostles will be anathema (Gal. 1: 8, 9), and those who have not bowed to the authority of Christ will be destroyed. (Luke 19: 27.)

3. **Who are these from whose eyes are wiped every tear?** The elder told John they were the people who (1) came up out of great tribulation. Those who never suffer for the Lord will have no tears to be wiped away; those who never labor for the Lord will not be in position to rest from labor and toil. (2) They are the people who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Notice the action implied in these two statements; it looks like the people in that heavenly land are there because they were active. Not that they earned salvation, but because they refused to be "good-for-nothings" like the one-talent man. Tears are wiped away as a reward, and those have done nothing will not have any reward. So let us labor and suffer for the Lord here while tears freely flow, knowing that God will wipe them all away. We may weep through the night, but joy cometh in the morning.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Multitude Praising God (Rev. 7: 9-12)

*After these things.* Rev. 7: 1-8 is a record of what John saw on earth. The forces were about to be loosed upon the earth, when an angel came from the sunrising, saying, Hurt not the earth, sea, nor trees till we shall have sealed the servants of God on their foreheads. When the sealing was over, John heard that the number was one hundred forty-four thousand. If these servants of God were not on earth, there would have been no good reason for holding up the judgments of the four winds until these servants were sealed. The significance of the seal is probably threefold; (1) protection, the one wearing the seal is under the protection of God whose seal he wears; (2) ownership, the one wearing the seal is the

property of him who gave the seal; (3) identification, the one wearing the seal is identified as belonging to and being associated with him who gave the seal. Since the seal was on the forehead, we conclude that it was something prominent, something which could be seen by all men, hence not the sealing of the Holy Spirit in the heart mentioned by Paul. (Eph. 1: 13.)

*A great multitude before the throne.* John saw this great multitude after he saw the one hundred forty and four thousand, but how long after we are not told. We may safely presume that one vision was given immediately succeeding the other, though as to the time of the fulfillment of them we are left to determine that through interpretation. We should notice also that this scene

is in heaven, for it is said to be "before the throne." The multitude was such that no man could count them. Since we are told a little later that these are the redeemed of the earth, we may be sure that many people are going to be saved. Jesus said that only a few will enter the narrow way, but this is in comparison with the many who enter the broad way that leads to destruction. (Matt. 7: 13, 14.) Of the responsible people of the earth, we may be sure that a majority will be lost. But some argue that there will be enough who die in infancy, and who are not mentally responsible, that the number saved will actually be greater than the number lost. But guesses are not worth much.

*Arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.* White robes suggest purity and righteousness, and palms denote victory. It was an oriental custom to carry palm leaves before a victorious king or general. The church had been pictured to John as under persecution even unto death, and in the first part of this chapter four forces are pictured as being delayed in bringing their destructive power upon men. But John is permitted to see beyond the earth and the sufferings of men on the earth where he beholds them with white robes and palms. So he is assured that they remained righteous through their ordeal, and that they were rewarded with the victor's reception and crown.

*Salvation to our God.* At first sight of these words we would get the idea that salvation is to be enjoyed by God, but of course, this cannot be the meaning. Hence we conclude that the salvation is enjoyed by man, and he is ascribing to God the praise and the glory for it. Though we must obey God to be saved, we do not earn salvation, we are not to glory in what we do; we are not to think the saving efficacy is in what we do, or in us when we do it. There is a possibility that in stressing the necessity of obedience to the gospel and of working and worshipping faithfully until death, we may lose sight of the fact that our salvation is by the grace of God, and that God alone is to be praised for it.

*And unto the Lamb.* It should be noticed that salvation is ascribed to both the Father and the Son. When we say that God alone is to be praised for our salvation, certainly the Son is included, for he is God, the same as the Father. (John 1: 1-3; 1 John 5: 20.)

*All the angels, elders, four living creatures.* We first met with these elders and living creatures in chapter 4, and departed from the usual interpretation of the elders as redeemed human beings to say that they are heavenly beings; and here they are associated with the angels in their praise of God instead of being with multitude of the redeemed.

*Fell before the throne, and worshiped God.* Regardless of how high in the scale an angel may be, he recognizes God as eminently worthy of praise and honor. Angels count it a great privilege to be in God's presence and have the opportunity of worshipping him. We should learn to regard it as our highest privilege and most profitable exercise on this earth, and we should be found often engaged in such exercise.

*Blessing, and glory, and thanksgiving.* This is worship of the same character as that in chapter 5: 12, 13. "The highest kind of praise is ascribed to God; everything excellent in character is to be attributed to him; every blessing which is received is to be traced to him." (Barnes.) And God is worthy of such, not in one century, but forever and ever. There is no change in God; he is ever the same. Hence those under persecution may take courage to be faithful to him, knowing that he ever rewards all who love and serve him.

## II. Blessed State of the Saved (Rev. 7: 13-17)

*Who are they, and whence came they?* It is said that one of the elders answered John, when as yet nothing had been said in this vision. But such language is rather common where the speaker knows that a certain train of thought is going through another's mind. And certainly the elder knew that John was thinking of this great multitude of people he was viewing. So the elder answered John's train of thought by asking him who they were. Such a mul-

titude could not fail to attract one's attention, nor could one fail to wonder who they were and whence they came. These were the obvious questions.

*My lord, thou knowest.* John calls this elder "My lord." The word lord here is about the equivalent of our "Sir." It is a term of respectful address, especially to a superior. The soldiers all know its meaning, and soon learn to use it frequently. There are two things suggested about John's character in this incident. (1) He was not ashamed to confess his ignorance. He did not know who these people were nor whence they came, so he made no effort to cover up and leave the impression he knew something he did not. It takes more humility than some of us have to make such a confession. (2) He did not indulge in speculation to cover up his ignorance, and in the hope he might accidentally hit upon the truth. Humanity is inclined to speculate where it does not know the truth, or where it does not have positive information. In secular matters there is little harm to come of such a disposition, but in spiritual affairs unlimited harm may come of it.

*Come out of great tribulation.* The word tribulation is not to be limited to the idea of persecution, though, of course, this is included. All hardships suffered on account of being a Christian are included in the word. Peter says, "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4: 16.) And the reason for being glad we can suffer for the Lord may be found in the same place, "Inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." These whom John saw had been partakers of Christ's suffering in their tribulations, so now in glory they are rejoicing around the throne of God and the Lamb, giving praise to him from whom all blessings flow.

*Washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.* It is easy to become so literal in the use of some of these terms that we will give the impression that the soul is washed in the blood like clothes are washed in

water. Brethren who speak of the soul coming in contact with the blood of Christ, and making no explanation of their figurative use of the words, are in danger of giving the wrong impression. Washing the soul in the blood of the Lamb simply means forgiveness of sins on account of the merits of the shed blood of Christ.

*Therefore are they before the throne of God.* The elder who speaks to John says this multitude before the throne are there because their robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Their faithfulness under persecution may be viewed as a secondary reason for their being around the throne, but it can never be looked upon as a reason equal to the blood of Christ. Without the blood of Christ ten thousand times that amount of suffering would not have gained for them a place around the throne of God and the Lamb. Neither can the suffering of one person be laid to the account of another. This is true for two reasons. (1) The sufferings of people have absolutely no value to atone for sins. (2) Each man shall give account of himself to God; each one will be judged according to his own works, whether they be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5: 10.) The five-talent man could not give the one-talent man a few of his talents to enable him to meet his master in peace.

*They serve him day and night.* Those who have the idea that heaven is a place where nobody works will either be disappointed when they get there, or they will not get there at all. What the service is that we will render is not known. Work is honorable and useful to the one who works and those for whom he works; it is honorable enough to have a place in heaven.

*Spread his tabernacle over them.* This expression denotes protection and communion, an intimate relationship. He will live with them and share his bounties with them.

*They shall hunger no more.* Hunger and thirst, when prolonged, become almost intolerable. The people who are around the throne will never suffer such wants. This, too, is to be taken as a figure of speech, assuring

us that all our needs will be supplied, whatever they are.

*The Lamb shall be their shepherd.* Jesus Christ will be our Shepherd there as he has been here. It is not affirmed that he will perform the same work for us, for we will not

need to be forgiven of sin, or shielded from temptation. But he will still be our Shepherd, to lead us to fountains of the water of life. In some ways the life of the saints will be dependent upon him. He is the source of all life. (John 1: 4.)

### Topics for Discussion

1. The sovereignty of God over all creation is suggested in the fact that forces of desolation and destruction were ready to be let loose, but they were delayed that the people of God might be sealed and not be hurt. If we could know to what extent the hand of God controls the affairs of our everyday life, many of us would be surprised.

2. Those about the throne use their time in serving and praising God and the Lamb. We should cultivate the

inclination and ability to do such while here, lest we be not ready for the enjoyment of the activities of heaven.

3. All the good that men desire here is said to be supplied to an infinite degree in heaven. This is God's way of arousing in humanity sufficient interest and desire to cause us to put forth the proper effort to get there. But when we get there we can say with one of old, The half has not been told us.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

With what picture does chapter 7 of Revelation open?

What are these forces supposed by some to be? Who were their leaders?

How many were sealed? Of what tribes?

What tribes were omitted?

Who are represented by the hundred and forty and four thousand?

#### Golden Text Explained

Where is the scene of our text laid?

When and how will death be destroyed?

What picture do you have of this earth when contrasted with heaven?

Name and discuss four or five causes of tears which will not be in heaven.

What two things are said of the great multitude in heaven?

According to our text, how does God reward sorrow and suffering?

#### Multitude Praising God

Where is the scene laid in Rev. 7: 1-8?

What is the threefold significance of the seal placed on the hundred forty-four thousand?

Where is the scene of our lesson text laid? What is the proof?

What does Jesus say about the comparative numbers of the saved and lost?

Does this text teach that more will be saved than lost?

How were the saved arrayed? What the significance of white? Of palms?

What does this suggest with reference to those under persecution?

What is meant by the statement, "Salvation to our God"?

Is there a danger in stressing the necessity of obeying the gospel?

Who shares equally with the Father in the praise for our salvation?

With whom are the elders and living creatures associated in this vision?

How do these heavenly creatures express their adoration to God?

In what words do they give praise and glory to God?

#### Blessed State of the Saved

In what sense could the elder answer John when as yet nothing had been said?

What term does John use in addressing the elder? What is its meaning?

What two traits of character do we see in John in this reply?

What is the meaning of tribulation as used here?

In what had they been partakers with Christ? How is this rewarded?

What is meant by washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb?

How may we use this term in an objectionable sense?

What is the primary reason for their being around the throne?

What is the relation of their sufferings to their place around the throne?

Give two reasons why the sufferings of one man cannot be applied to the good of another.

How are the people about the throne to occupy their time?

What is meant by God spreading his tabernacle over them?

In what language does John tell us our wants will all be supplied?

What will be the relation of Jesus to those about the throne?

How will his service there differ from his service to us here?

What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

Lesson X—December 9, 1951

**THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB**

**The Lesson Text**

**Rev. 19: 7-16**

7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God.

10 And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Je'-sus: worship God: for the testimony of Je'-sus is the spirit of prophecy.

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that

sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 And his eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon his head *are* many diadems; and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself.

13 And he *is* arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure.

15 And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb."* (Rev. 19: 9a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 19: 1-6.

**Daily Bible Readings**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| December 3. M.....  | The King's Wedding Feast (Matt. 22: 1-14)              |
| December 4. T.....  | The Virgins at the Marriage Feast (Matt. 25: 1-13)     |
| December 5. W.....  | Watch and Be Ready for His Coming (Luke 12: 35-48)     |
| December 6. Th..... | Church Presented to Christ (2 Cor. 11: 1-10)           |
| December 7. F.....  | Christ Gave Himself for the Church (Eph. 5: 22-33)     |
| December 8. S.....  | Christ Gave Himself to Redeem Us (Titus 2: 11-15)      |
| December 9. S.....  | Desiring the Coming of the Day of God (2 Pet. 3: 8-14) |

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all who hear and heed.

**Introduction**

In our lesson the marriage of Christ and his church is pictured as taking place at the end of time and in heaven. However there are other passages of scripture which represent the church as being the wife of Christ here. Some have thought we are merely espoused to Christ here on

earth, and that the wedding will take place in heaven, and Paul seems to suggest such an idea in 2 Cor. 11: 2. Macknight in his Commentary on the Epistles takes that position. But in Rom. 7: 1-4, Paul speaks of our being married to Christ that we might bring forth fruit unto God. And in Eph. 5:



23-33, Paul illustrates the relationship between Christ and the church by the relationship between the husband and wife, suggesting that the church bears the same relation to Christ that the wife bears to her husband. If there is any confusion in the mind of any over these Scriptures, it likely is the result of making these figures of speech too literal. We are actually united to Christ in a spiritual sense in this life, and this union is in one sense like a marriage. Christ is our head, and we are subject to him as a wife is subject to her husband. But from another point of view we are separated from Christ; he has gone into a far country; we are espoused unto him, and will one day be presented as a pure virgin to him. That union will be like a marriage in the sense that Christ and his church will come together to live together and enjoy each other's actual presence for ever. The festivities which follow the consummation of that union are called the wedding supper. They are like a wedding supper in that there is feasting and great rejoicing; but unlike a wedding they are to continue for ever. So if some one wishes to argue that we are already married to Christ, we will agree with him;

and if another wishes to argue that we are espoused to Christ here, and will be married to him in heaven, we will agree with him. But if some one wishes to argue that both ideas cannot be true, we disagree with him. Christ is the foundation of the church. (1 Cor. 3: 11.) But Christ is the builder of the church (Matt. 16: 18), and he is the head of the church. (Eph. 1: 22.) How can he occupy all three positions at the same time? He cannot in one illustration; but in three separate illustrations, and from three different points of view, he can occupy all three positions. We are citizens in a spiritual kingdom; we are children in a spiritual family; we are members in a spiritual body; we are branches in a spiritual vine. How can we be all these things at the same time? We have no trouble with this, for we know these are illustrations used to teach various lessons about our relationship to Christ. So we are espoused to Christ, and we are married to Christ here and now, and we are to be married to Christ in heaven. These are different figures of speech to illustrate different phases of our relationship to Christ, and must not be viewed as contradictory.

### Golden Text Explained

1. **The marriage of the Lamb.** The union of Christ and his church in heaven is called a marriage. We may notice the parties in this marriage. (1) The Bridegroom is Jesus. He has wooed and won the bride. He has had a most formidable rival for the hand and heart of his bride. Satan has made every effort possible, even resorting to the performance of marvelous works and pseudo-miracles (2 Cor. 11: 14, 15), to gain the bride for his own. The bridegroom has been a constant and faithful lover. He died for his bride, but rose again and now lives that he may bless her and make her happy. He loved her when she was wholly unworthy of his love; he blessed her when she did not appreciate her blessing as she should. When she left her first love and became lukewarm, he stood at her door and knocked, pleading with her to open the door and let him in that he might sup with her and she with him. (2)

The bride is the church, his people of all time; not merely his people under the new covenant. The great throng John saw about the throne in Rev. 7: 9ff., who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, were from every nation and people and tongue, and they are the same we find here who have on the white robes of fine linen. It is said that she had made herself ready for her bride. This she had done by her choice of the bride, the rejection of the rival suitor, and her faithful living in response to the love of the Bridegroom. In this marriage we may notice the following: (1) The mutual choice—Jesus chose his bride and the bride chose Christ; (2) mutual love—Jesus loved the church and gave himself for her, and the church loved him more than she loved the world; (3) mutual aim—the glory of God and the best interests of humanity.

2. **The happiness of those who at-**

tend the marriage. The figure of a marriage here is a bit imperfect, for those who are bidden to enjoy the wedding supper are from another point of view the bride herself, and the two ideas are brought together in the same illustration. So we would say (1) that the happiness of those bidden to this wedding supper lies in the fact that they are the bride, and as such they are especially honored on that occasion. To be the bride of so great a Person as the Son of God, and to enjoy his love and fellowship for ever is the source of more genuine joy than we can possibly comprehend. (2) To be invited to

attend such a joyous occasion is not only an honor, but it is a reward for all our trials and tribulations in this life. When we mingle with that happy company, we will view our sufferings here as mere trifles; we will realize that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory of that place and occasion. (Rom. 8: 18.) And (3) the happiness of those who attend that wedding feast will spring from the assurance that such joy will have no end. The trials of life on earth will be for ever ended; the temptations and the danger of falling from grace will be ever gone, and nothing can rob us of our eternal joy.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. The Bride and Bridegroom (Rev. 19: 7-10)

*Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad.* This is part of what John heard which sounded to him "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders." This description of the voice he heard is to emphasize the volume, and thus to suggest the number of beings uttering the sound. This was a happy throng for they felt they should give voice to their exceeding gladness. In the first verse of this chapter, you will find this scene is laid in heaven, and not upon the earth, if will help us in the interpretation of some of the following verses to keep this in mind. Not only is the great multitude engaged in giving joyous praise to God, but the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures, which we have met in other places, are also engaged in this praise. This also leads us to realize that this scene is in heaven and not upon the earth.

For *the marriage of the Lamb is come.* The bridegroom is introduced first. The rejoicing and exceeding gladness of the former statement is based upon the fact that the marriage of the Lamb is near. Some view this scene as thrown in a little premature, that is, before the final consummation of things on earth. Immediately following this announcement of the marriage of the Lamb, Jesus goes forth to conquer the nations of the earth. But the marriage of the Lamb is not to take place until the final

consummation of things on earth, and the union of Christ and the church following the judgment. Adam Clarke views this marriage here as "a more glorious state of Christianity than ever was before." But it should be remembered that John does not say that the marriage takes place at this point. He simply says the marriage of the Lamb is *come*, and his wife hath made herself ready. It seems that mention is made of the marriage here because in Chapters 17 and 18 he has shown the fall of Babylon, the harlot and the mother of harlots, and the pure bride is mentioned by way of contrast; it is a celebration of victory over the harlot, Babylon.

*His wife hath made herself ready.* This refers to a bride making her wedding garments. As applied to the church it means that her constancy and faithfulness to Christ, which she is enabled to do by the grace of God, has prepared her for the union with Christ in heaven.

*It was given unto her.* Lest some one get the idea that the church had by her own goodness and strength prepared herself for the union, it is said that it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure. Humanity has neither the wisdom nor the strength to prepare for such a union without the help of God. Here again we should be reminded that we can stress obedience and faithful service to the point that we will lose sight of God's part in our holiness,

and are likely to think we accomplish it in our own strength. The truth may be stated in two sentences, as follows: God prepares the church for its final union with Christ; and, the church (wife) makes herself ready for the final union with Christ. These are not *contradictory* statements; they are *complementary* statements.

*Fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* The King James version has "righteousness" where this version has "righteous acts." Those who believe the doctrine of imputed righteousness view this as the righteousness of Christ imputed to the saints. But this translation makes such an interpretation impossible. The saints stand robed in their righteous acts, and so are prepared for their union with Christ. We must not lose sight of the fact that they were led by the teaching of God to do them, they were preserved from the power of Satan while they were doing them, and that these righteous acts have no merit to atone for sin. We must remember that we are enabled by the grace of God to do them. But, let others remember that we are not forced by the sovereignty of God to do them. They are of God in that his wisdom suggests them, and his strength enables us to do them; but they are ours in that we choose to do them, and we put forth effort, sometimes in the face of persecution, to do them.

*These are true words of God.* This statement is not to be applied only to the statement that those are blessed who are bidden to the marriage supper, but also to the words he had heard the multitude saying. This statement is made for the encouragement of the people who are suffering as the churches of Asia were suffering. They may rest assured that the statements of God are true, and that as sure as they are true the suffering church will some day be a triumphant and glorified church.

*I fell down before his feet to worship him.* We are not told who was speaking to John, except that he said he was a fellow-servant with John. He was an angel, a created being, not worthy of worship. We may be sure he was not the pope, nor one who enjoys the worship of human beings like

the pope does, for he would not allow John to worship him.

*Worship God.* This being was not God, for he told John not to worship him, but to worship God. Peter, a good man, refused the worship of another (Acts 10: 25, 26); here an angel refuses worship. Hence we may conclude that neither good men nor angels accept worship, and any man who accepts the worship of other men is not a good man.

*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* This statement was made as a reason why John should not worship the angel, who said he was a fellow-servant of those that hold the testimony of Jesus. The angel was assisting in the revealing, and John was to record the testimony of Jesus; thus they were fellow-workers. It is the business, or nature, of prophecy to testify of Jesus; and it was the business of an apostle to testify of Jesus, hence they were fellow-servants.

## II. The King and His Armies (Rev. 19: 11-16)

*A white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True.* This is the beginning of a separate vision from the preceding paragraph. We are told that a horse is the symbol of war, and that white is the symbol or righteousness. Hence the two together may be taken as a symbol of a righteous war, such as the Lord would wage. The rider of this white horse is called Faithful and True. These are not his name, they are attributes of his character. And they are such as are particularly applicable under the circumstances. He is Faithful, worthy of our confidence in the conflict he is entering. He is True, he deals justly and equitably; he is honest and honorable in his treatment of all.

*In righteousness doth he judge and make war.* He judges and makes war, not for personal aggrandizement, but for righteous purposes. Kings and dictators wage war to satisfy their lust for power and wealth, but the rider of the white horse acts from righteous motives.

*And his eyes are a flame of fire.* With this begins quite a long description of the rider of the white horse. His eyes are a flame of fire

perhaps suggests the penetrating, searching power of his vision. On his head are many diadems, crowns. By saying there are many he emphasizes the fact that he exercises authority over many realms. He is not only the head of the church, but he is head over all things. (Eph. 1: 22.)

*Hath a name no one knoweth.* Where this name was written, no one knows, and surely it must be different from that which was written on his thigh, in verse 16. It is not necessary to conclude that *no one* could know the name, but rather that they could not fathom the meaning and significance of the name. "It involved a depth of meaning, and a degree of sacredness, and a relation to the Father, which he alone could comprehend in its import."

*Arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood.* This suggests his close contact with the foe in battle, but has no reference to the shedding of his own blood.

*His name is called the Word of God.* This is the name which in verse 12 it is said no one can know. This is the word *logos* which is used of Jesus in John 1: 1, 14. It is the title applied to Jesus before he was made flesh, and in some way expresses his relationship to the Father, and his work of revealing the Father to the world. Possibly the question of the eternal sonship of Christ, about which there is never-ending argument, may be classed with these things which no one can know about this name of the rider of the white horse.

*The armies which are in heaven.* There is some argument as to whether these armies are composed of the an-

gels, or of the redeemed saints. Since the word *armies* is plural, why not include both? The fact that they are clothed in fine linen, white and pure, suggests that the redeemed are included, for they have on the same garments which the bride is said to wear in verse 8. The fact that they are all riding white horses again suggests victory in warfare.

*Out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword.* Clarke thinks this refers to the gospel which is generally referred to as a sword. Barnes says, "here it is the emblem of a work of destruction wrought on his foes." Since this is the final battle, we prefer to think of it as the emblem of destruction.

*Rule them with a rod of iron.* An iron rule is an irresistible rule. How long this rule is to continue, and the purpose of the rule, are not stated. But it seems that the beast and the false prophet, in verse 20, together with their followers are the ones ruled, and that their destruction is soon accomplished.

*He treadeth the winepress.* Grapes were put in a wine press, and men trod upon them to press the juice from them. In the figure the wrath of God is the winepress, the enemies are placed in it, and the Lord treads upon them, shedding their blood, taking their lives.

*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* This is his name written on his garment over his thigh. His name is appropriate since he is in mortal combat with kings and princes. (Verse 18.) The title means that he is supreme over all who wear such titles; all must bow to him.

## Topics for Discussion

1. There is nothing that encourages people more and makes them more determined to continue in the fight for right than the assurance of final victory. John wrote Revelation to a struggling church fighting against great odds, and at times seemed to be waging a losing battle. This picture of final complete triumph was an encouragement to them.

2. The devil insisted that Jesus fall down before him in worship. (Luke 4: 7.) We have found that neither good men nor angels allow men to

worship them. The pope of Rome demands people to bow before him. Since this is an act of worship, he is either what he claims to be, and Peter and the angel were wrong, or the pope is on the devil's side of this matter.

3. If the saints before the throne are clothed with their righteous acts, and these righteous acts are the service and worship we perform here, some church members, if they get there at all, are going to very scantily clad, since they seldom worship and rarely perform any service.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

Is the church married to Christ at this time?

May we correctly say the church is espoused to Christ to be presented in marriage later?

Is it right to say that the union of Christ and his church in heaven is a marriage? Can you show by illustrations how these positions may be harmonized?

#### Golden Text Explained

Who is the bridegroom in this marriage?

Who is the bride?

Who is the rival of the bridegroom? What do you know of his works?

What can you say of the spirit and manner in which the bridegroom won his bride?

What part has the bride taken in preparation for this marriage?

Name and discuss three things in this union that are mutual.

Name and discuss three reasons for the happiness of those who are invited to the marriage.

#### The Bride and Bridegroom

What is said of the voice which announced the marriage supper?

Where is this scene in John's vision laid? Does the marriage of the Lamb take place before the other events of our lesson?

Why do you think the marriage is announced as near at this particular time?

What part does the church have to do in making herself ready for the marriage?

With what is the bride clothed?

Discuss God's part in preparing the bride, and the bride's part in making herself ready.

What assurance is given that these messages given John are true?

Why did the angel refuse John's act of worship?

What man refused to allow another man to worship him?

What of the character of a man who will allow other men to worship him?

What is meant by saying the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy?

#### The King and His Armies

What is the significance of a white horse in prophecy?

What was the rider called? What the meaning of these terms?

In what manner does the rider judge and make war?

What is said of the eyes of the rider? What the meaning?

What is said with reference to his name? What is said of the garment he wears?

What the significance?

What is the name of the rider? Why cannot man fully understand its meaning and significance?

Of whom are the armies of this rider composed?

What proceeds from his mouth? What its meaning?

What is meant by ruling with a rod of iron?

What is meant by treading the winepress with the wrath of God?

What name was written on the thigh of this rider? What its meaning?

What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson XI—December 16, 1951

# THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

### The Lesson Text

Rev. 20: 11-15; 22: 6-8

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Ha-des gave up the dead that were in them:

and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and Ha-des were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire.

15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

6 And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.

7 And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John am he that heard

and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."* (Rev. 20: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 25: 31-46.

### Daily Bible Readings

- December 10. M.. Some Shall Rise to Shame and Contempt (Dan. 12: 1-4)
- December 11. T.....Judgment in Parable of Talents (Matt. 25: 14-30)
- December 12. W.....A Day Is Appointed for Judgment (Acts 17: 22-31)
- December 13. T.....Paul Reasoned of Judgment to Come (Acts 24: 22-27)
- December 14. F.....A Day of Righteous Judgment (Rom. 2: 1-16)
- December 15. S.. Each One Shall Give Account of Himself (Rom. 14: 1-12)
- December 16. S.....A Fearful Expectation of Judgment (Heb. 10: 26-31)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all who hear and heed.

### Introduction

The thought of judgment has a terrifying effect on most people when they give time to think seriously on the subject. For this reason many people refuse to think about it. If the preacher insists on talking about such things, these people refuse to attend. They do not wish to be disturbed. They are not ready to make preparations to meet God in peace in the judgment, and the only way for them to have any peace of mind is to refuse to think on the subject.

Others have decided to do away with the judgment after death; they say that all the judgment there will ever be is what takes place in this life. But they are troubled with such passages as Matt. 25: 31-46, where Jesus is pictured as coming to gather all nations into judgment, divide the righteous from the wicked, and send the former to eternal life and the latter to eternal punishment. They are also bothered with the fact that Paul says God has set a day in the which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ. (Acts 17: 31.) And the writer

of Hebrews says that it is appointed to man once to die, and after that cometh judgment. (Heb. 9: 27) And again, Paul says Jesus shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing, or second coming. (2 Tim. 4: 1.)

Some have a difficulty in understanding the need of a judgment at the coming of Jesus since our destiny is settled at death. Jesus, in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16: 19-31), teaches that the righteous go to a place of rest and the wicked go to a place of torment as soon as they die; so, why have a judgment? It is a fact that the judgment is not going to be held to hear testimony for and against a person and determine whether he is to be saved or lost. The judgment is held to reward the righteous and sentence the wicked. It is a day when even the wicked will bow the knee to God and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. A careful reading of Matt. 25: 31-46 will reveal the purpose of the judgment therein described.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The Judge and his throne. All the description we have of the throne is that it is great and white. The word great refers to its size or elevation, and white suggests the holiness of him who sits upon the throne. The One who sits upon the throne is the

second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said the Father has given all judgment unto the Son (John 5: 22), and that he was given authority to execute judgment because he is a son of man. (John 5: 27.) Peter said that the

apostles were charged to preach that it is Jesus Christ who is "ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." (Acts 10: 42.) And Paul says God has 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: 31.) So the resurrection of Christ is God's assurance to all men that Jesus Christ will be the Judge of all on the day appointed. And Paul refers to the throne as the judgment-seat of Christ. (2 Cor. 5: 10.) And finally Paul calls Jesus Christ the judge of the living and the dead. (2 Tim. 4: 1.)

2. The time of the judgment. From the setting of our text we would know that this judgment scene is among the things to transpire in the last days, but there are passages which are not made difficult by symbols from which we can get the truth without any uncertainty. Jesus pictures the judgment at the time of his second coming. (Matt. 25: 31-46.) Paul says, "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4: 5.) Here Paul says the time for judgment is at the coming of the Lord both the good and the wicked of Thessalonica will be present on the day the Lord comes the second time, and that the good will be given rest from their trials, and the wicked will be afflicted because they have not obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1: 7-10.) If the student has sufficient interest, he can find a number of parallels between this statement of Paul and the judgment scene

as described by Jesus in Matt. 25: 31-46.

3. The terrifying effect of the Lord's presence. The Lord is pictured as a Judge; and for the guilty a judge has a terrifying effect. The righteous will feel secure in that day, not because of their goodness, but because of what the Lord has done for them. But between the Judge and the wicked there will be none to stand. They will view him as a just Judge who will hold them accountable for their sins. There is no possibility of their escaping condemnation, because they have rejected the only One who could save them from their sins. The terrifying effect of the presence of the righteous Judge is pictured in our text as the heaven and earth fleeing from his face; and the utter hopelessness of their situation is suggested in the fact that no place was found for them when they fled. Though the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall melt with fervent heat at the time, we are not to suppose that such takes place because the heaven and earth are afraid of the Lord. (2 Pet. 3: 10.) The elements are pictured in several scriptures as being affected by the presence and judgments of the Lord. (Psa. 18: 7, 15; 77: 16-19; 114: 3-5.) But by saying that his presence in judgment affects the elements in this manner, he gives a vivid picture of the effect his presence will have upon all who have rejected him in this life. The utter hopelessness of their situation cannot be overemphasized. Those who are so brave and self-sufficient and independent here, who think they can get along without the Lord and his church, will be among those who will try to flee from his presence in that day. It is better to acknowledge him here and be saved.

### Exposition of the Text

I. The Throne, and the Books (Rev. 20: 11, 12)

*I saw a great white throne.* The purpose of the book of Revelation, as we have said from the first, was to give encouragement to the churches suffering persecution. To do this the Lord gave a picture of the final and glorious triumph of the Lord and his church over all their enemies. In

the preceding verses the final overthrow of the devil, the beast and the false prophet is given. They are thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be tormented for ever and ever. When they have been put out of the way, the judgment gets under way so that the righteous may be taken to live with the Lord for ever, and the wicked may be con-

signed to that place where the devil was sent. Since the wicked lived for the devil all their days upon earth, it is reasonable that they should be allowed to continue in his presence in eternity. If they chose him here in preference to the Lord, why deprive them of his presence in eternity?

*And I saw the dead, the great and small.* This is John's way of saying he saw all the dead before the throne of God. It is fashionable in these modern days for people to doubt, if they do not openly deny, the gathering of all the human family in one great gathering in judgment. Jesus speaks of five different groups of people in as many generations and nations being in the judgment together. He said the people of Tyre and Sidon will fare better in judgment than the people to whom he was talking; and the people of Sodom would also fare better than that generation. (Matt. 11: 20-24.) Tyre represents a generation 330 years B.C., and Sodom a generation 1900 years B.C. Again, he said the people of Nineveh would rise up in the judgment with his generation, and they lived 858 years B.C. He also said the queen of the south who came to see Solomon would rise up in the judgment with his generation, and she is from a generation of about 1000 years B.C. The generation to which he was talking was one of A.D. 30. And Paul says the good and bad of Thessalonica will be in the judgment together, which is the same judgment all these others will attend, so there are six nations and generations that will be in the same judgment. If these six nations, separated by two thousand years of time, are in the same judgment, surely all nations of all times will be there. The dead, the great and small, will all be there together in one vast assemblage.

*And the books were opened.* It is not best to be too positive as to what these books are. Three ideas have been set forth. (1) The various laws under which men have lived, as Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian. The word is plural, and might suggest that those who lived in Abraham's day would be judged according to the laws binding upon him; David lived in the Jewish age, so would

be judged according to the laws under which he lived; and we who live in the Christian age will be judged not by the law under which David lived, but by the law of Christ under which we live. (2) These are the books containing a record of human deeds. Clarke goes further to say one was a book of life and another a book of death, the former containing the good deeds of God's people, and the latter the deeds of the wicked, but this seems a little far-fetched. (3) Matthew Henry thinks the plural suggests the books of God's memory and man's conscience. God has kept a record of man's deeds, both good and evil. Man remembers his evil deeds, but has kept many of them hid in the secrets of his heart. In that day God's record will bring them to light, and man's conscience will acknowledge them. Both the first and third interpretations are entirely in accord with known truth, and make a very good explanation of the passage.

*Another book was opened, which is the book of life.* Here again we have differences of opinion. Matthew Henry says this refers to the Bible, the statute book of heaven. But most agree that this is the book which contains the list of God's people. The overcomer has his name written in the book of life. (Rev. 3: 5.) And all worship the beast unless they have their names written in the Lamb's book of life. (Rev. 13: 8; 17: 8.) And if any one's name is not in that book of life, he will be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20: 15.) So this book of life must be the book which contains the names of all the people of God.

*Dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books.* Here again the plural is used, suggesting that these books are the same as were first opened. The things written in these books form the basis of judgment, that is, they contain the statutes by which the people are to be judged. Hence we conclude that these books contain the laws under which the people lived. Surely all will be judged by the law under which they lived.

*According to their works.* The law under which we lived on one side,



and our works on the other. This is not said to be the only consideration, and we may thank God furthermore that something else enters into the decision. There will be enough evil works on the record of the very best to cause him to be lost if it were not for the death of our Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf. On the other hand we must admit there will be much good to be found on the records of many people, and, perhaps, more good deeds than evil. But since the evil deeds are recorded against them, and they have not obeyed the gospel, they do not have the benefit of Christ's blood to save them from the few evil deeds they have done. And the fact that they have rejected Christ is alone sufficient to condemn them.

## II. The Second Death (Rev. 20: 13-15)

*The sea gave up the dead that were in it.* Those who have been buried at sea, and those destroyed in the flood make a rather sizable number. Some doubt the resurrection of such because their bodies have been devoured by the creatures of the sea. But that which to man seems an impossibility is not even a difficulty to God.

*Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them.* Death is personified here, and viewed as holding people in his realm. This covers all who are buried in the sea, or we may look upon death here as the grave, and death and the sea, or earth and sea, holding all the bodies of men, while Hades holds the spirits. Hades is defined as the place of rest for departed spirits, both good and evil. From Luke 16: 19-31 we get the idea that Hades is composed of two parts, one a place for the evil and the other a place for the good spirits, and that there is an impassable gulf between the two so that there can be no crossing from one place to the other. Some hold the idea that Hades was destroyed when Jesus was raised from the dead, but if so, why is it spoken of here as giving up those who are held in it at the time of the last judgment?

Death- and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. There could be no punishment suffered by death or Hades, but since he is treating of

them as personified, he speaks of casting them into a place of suffering. It is a way of saying that they are destroyed forever. No one ever comes out of the lake of fire; it is a place of eternal destruction. So when he says death and Hades were cast into this place, he means that they are forever destroyed. He explains that this is the second death; it is the death from which there is no resurrection. It is called a death, not because it is a separation of body and spirit, but because it is a place of suffering and destruction.

*If any was not found written in the book of life.* All whose names were not found in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire. No wonder Jesus told his disciples that they should rejoice more over the fact that their names were in the book of life than that the evil spirits were subject to them. (Luke 10: 20.) Paul said the names of his fellow-workers were written in the book of life. (Phil. 4: 3.) Those who overcome have their names written in the book of life, and the Lord says he will in no wise blot them out, but will confess them before the Father and his angels. (Rev. 3: 5.) So if, in the day of judgment, your name is in the book of life, you will be confessed before the Father and his angels; but if your name is not found in the book of life on that day, you will be thrown into the lake of fire.

## III. Blessing Pronounced (Rev. 22: 6-8)

*These words are faithful and true.* It is the angel who speaks to John. He gives him assurance anew of the truthfulness of all the things he had seen. His soul had been flooded with scenes so far surpassing anything he had ever beheld that he needed assurance.

*The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets.* Who sent his angels to show John the things which were shortly to come to pass? The angel said it was the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets. But who is the God of the spirits of the prophets? "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches." (Rev. 22: 16.) Therefore Jesus is the God of the spirits

of the prophets. (Rev. 1: 1.) This is just another link in the chain of proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Sent his angel to show unto his servants. Jesus sent his angel to reveal these things. But we have found at times that Jesus himself spoke to John. (Rev. 1: 8, 16ff.) Here again we And angels performing their office of ministering spirits sent forth to do service to them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1: 14.)

*Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.* It is not clear what is meant by keeping

the words here. This statement could mean to obey the words, and there is much in chapters 2 and 3 to be obeyed. Or this statement could mean to keep in mind so as to be encouraged and strengthened by the words of the prophecy of this book. Or we may suppose that both ideas are to be gleaned from the statement. Those who hold in mind the promises of this book and obey the commandments of this book will be blessed. Certainly this is true, not only of this book, but of all books of inspired writings.

**Topics for Discussion**

1. If you knew you would stand in the judgment tomorrow, what would you do today? We should do every day what we know we would do if we expected to answer in judgment for it the very next day. This would cause us to leave undone all evil, and take care to do good.

2. If it were not for the atoning blood of Christ and the forgiving love of God, none of us would be able to stand in the judgment. But by

the grace of God we can stand in the judgment without any mark of his displeasure resting upon us. There is no promise or provision of the gospel more comforting and glorious than this one.

3. Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? If it is not there, it is your fault. The scribe of heaven is ready to write it there; he is only waiting on you to become a child of God.

**Questions for the Class**

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

**Introduction**

Does the average man enjoy thinking of judgment? Why?  
Can you prove that there is to be a judgment after death?  
What is the purpose of the judgment at the coming of Christ?

**Golden Text Explained**

Why is the judgment throne said to be great? White?  
To whom is the authority to judge given?  
By whom does Paul say the world is to be judged?  
By what term does Paul refer to the throne of judgment?  
When does Jesus say the judgment will be?  
What does Paul say about the time for the judgment?  
When does Paul say the good and wicked of Thessalonica will be rewarded and punished?  
How is the terrifying effect of the presence of the Lord in judgment expressed in our text? How does this agree with the teaching of other texts?

**The Throne and the Books**

What is the general purpose of the book of Revelation?  
The destruction of what forces is neces-

sary to the accomplishment of this aim?  
How many of the dead do the words small and great include?  
Can you name and give the dates of five or six groups of people who are to be in judgment?  
To your mind, is this sufficient evidence to prove a general judgment when Jesus comes?  
What are the books which will be opened in the judgment?  
What is the other book that is to be opened? What does it contain?  
What use is to be made of the things written in the books?  
What will our works have to do with our judgment?  
Can one be saved by having enough good works to outweigh the evil? Why?

**The Second Death**

From what three places do the dead come into judgment?  
What do you know of Hades? When will it be destroyed?  
Does the fact that sea creatures devour human bodies pose a difficulty on God's part in the resurrection?  
Into what are death and Hades to be cast? When will they be cast into it?  
What is the significance of the second death?  
Over what were the disciples to rejoice more than over their power to cast out demons?

Where were Paul's fellow-servants' names written?  
 What promise is made to those who overcome with reference to the book of life?  
 What is done to the people whose names are not found in the book of life?

Who is the God of the spirits of the prophets?  
 Whom did this God send to show John the things shortly to come to pass?  
 To whom are angels sent to do service?  
 Upon whom is a blessing pronounced in this book?  
 What is meant by keeping the words of the prophecy of this book?  
 What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

**Blessing Pronounced**

How did the angel give John reassurance?

Lesson XII—December 23, 1951

**THE NEW JERUSALEM**

The Lesson Text

Rev. 21: 1-4, 23-27

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more.

2 And I saw the holy city, new Je-ru'-sa-lem, coming down, out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God:

4 And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

23 And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.

24 And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.

25 And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there):

26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it:

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev. 21: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 21: 5-22.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- December 17. M.....Mansions Prepared for Us (John 14: 1-11)
- December 18. T..... We Shall Behold His Glory (John 17: 20-26)
- December 19. W.....Conformed to the Body of His Glory (Phil. 3: 17-21)
- December 20. T..... We Shall Ever Be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4: 13-18)
- December 21. F.....Salvation Ready to Be Revealed (1 Pet. 1: 3-12)
- December 22. S.....New Heaven and New Earth (2 Pet. 3: 1-14)
- December 23. S.....House Eternal in Heaven (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all who hear and heed.

**Introduction**

In the study of the new Jerusalem, there are two things which cannot easily escape our attention if we are

giving very close study to the matter. (1) There is a hint of the restoration of the garden in Eden, or

Paradise. The mention of the tree of life in the new Jerusalem reminds us of the tree of life in the garden of Eden. Along with the tree of life, we have the water of life flowing from the throne. Though this is not mentioned in the account of the garden in Eden, we are told that the garden was well watered. And there the fruits of the tree of life will be for the healing of the nations, suggestive of life being perpetuated by the eating of the fruit of the tree. This idea is also to be found in what was said of eating the fruit of the tree of life and living forever. (Gen. 3: 22, 23.) Some have imagined that the new heaven and new earth will be just about what God intended that man should enjoy in the first heaven and earth if sin had never invaded the Paradise of man. There seems to be no positive proof for the idea, but it is a pleasant thought, and there seems to be no evil that can come from entertaining it. (2) Another idea we get from the study of the new heaven and earth is the thought of a pure theocracy, that is, a situation where God himself rules. Israel started with a modified form of theocracy, the only form there

could be among sinful men, where God's servants and priests taught and executed the law. And when they demanded a king, God said the people had not rejected Samuel, God's representative, but they had rejected God himself. (1 Sam. 8: 4-9.) But in the new heaven and new earth, it is said that the tabernacle of God is with men, and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be therein; and there was no temple in the city, for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. The idea of the presence of God and the Lamb among the people is prominent. There will be no government by the people and for the people, we may be sure; but that the presence of the Father, the infinite God, will be limited to any portion of the new heaven and earth any more than he is limited to any certain portion of this heaven and earth, is difficult to believe. But this is getting close to speculation; let us rest assured that the faithful will be provided with far greater blessings in that heavenly place than they deserve, and that they will never exhaust its boundless resources prepared and reserved for their enjoyment.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The inheritance of the overcomer. What are the things we shall inherit? (1) Salvation from sin, one that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1: 5.) This salvation means that we are saved from the power of sin; from the guilt of sin; from the pollution of sin; from the penalty of sin; from the suffering and sorrow caused by sin; and from the presence of sin. No more will we be subject to temptation to sin; no more will we be humiliated and embarrassed by the sins we commit; no more will we be forced to live in a community where sinful and shameful conversation and conduct are the order of the day. (2) The overcomer will inherit eternal life. Jesus told Peter that we inherit eternal life "in the world to come," (Mark 10: 30.) Jesus further said that the righteous go away from the judgment "into eternal life." (Matt. 25:41.) Eternal life is not simply living forever. The devil will live,

in the sense of being conscious, forever, but he does not have eternal life. So we conclude that there is more to eternal life than simply living forever. It is living forever in a state of bliss and happiness. (3) The overcomer will inherit a mansion in Paradise, heaven. Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for his people in the mansions of God. (John 14: 1ff.) (4) The overcomer will inherit all the things which are necessary for the greatest pleasure and highest enjoyment of life forever. He will have the privilege of eating of the tree of life in the Paradise of God. (Rev. 2: 7.) He will have angels and the redeemed for his associates, and he will have God for his ruler. What more can we ask?

2. Who is to inherit all these things? The overcomer. What must one overcome that he may inherit these things? (1) One must overcome the love of money, and the tendency to put his trust in material wealth. The

rich young ruler asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, and he was finally told to sell all he had and give it to the poor and follow Jesus. (Matt. 19: 16ff.) He refused to give away his money. He failed to overcome the temptation to love and trust money. (2) One must overcome the love of pleasure. Jesus says the cares and riches and pleasures of this life choke the good seed and prevent fruit bearing to the glory of God and the salvation of the soul. (Luke 8: 14.) Some people are lovers of pleasure more, than lovers of God. (2 Tim. 3: 4.) They allow pleasures to cheat them and deprive them of the happiness of heaven. (3) One must overcome the temptation to do nothing. The one-talent man (Matt. 25:

14ff) was afraid to accept responsibility; it was easier to do nothing. He might make a mistake if he attempted to do something, so he did nothing. People who never do anything, never overcome anything, so will not inherit anything. (4) One must overcome the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

**3. The blessedness of the overcomer.** His chief blessing is the fact that he has Jehovah for his God, and that God owns him as his child. "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah." (Psalm 144: 15b.) No greater blessing can be desired. If Jehovah is our God, and if he is with us in that eternal home, we will lack no good thing; our happiness will be complete.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21: 1-4)

*I saw a new heaven and a new earth.* There is much discussion as to whether the new heaven and the new earth will actually be new throughout, or if they will be this present heaven and earth renovated by fire and reworked, and made even a better place than this present situation. According to Peter, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Pet. 3: 10.) This says the earth shall be burned up. What is the meaning of the word translated burned *up*? Thayer says it means to "consume by fire." It is found eleven times in the New Testament. In Matt. 3: 12, the chaff shall be burned up; in Matt. 13: 30, 40, the tares are to be burned; in Acts 19: 19, the books were burned; in Heb. 13: 11, the animals were burned without the camp. These passages show the meaning and use of the word. The earth is to be burned up like chaff, like books, like animals. Furthermore, we are told that the earth and the *works therein* shall be burned up. What are those works? They are the works of men and the devil. What is to be done to them when they are burned up? The verb burned up (one word in Greek) occurs but once, so whatever

happens to the works therein when they are burned up is exactly what is going to happen to the earth when it is burned up. The word cannot mean one thing with reference to the earth and an entirely different thing with reference to the works therein *when it does not occur but one time in the statement.* So it looks like we are going to have a new heaven and a new earth.

*I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem.* John says he saw this holy city descending from God out of heaven. Does it descend from the new heaven? We are not told, but this seems to be past the existence of the old order, so we may safely presume that it does come down from the new heaven. This city is pictured as having been as carefully prepared for the people of God as a bride is prepared for her husband. Furthermore, the adornment of that city compares with the adornment of the bride. It is a beautiful, well prepared city adapted to the needs of the people for whom it is prepared. Will it be a literal city? Will it actually occupy space on the new earth as some great city today occupies space on this earth? Will some of the people live in the city, while others live in the country surrounding the city? Perhaps these questions lead us too far into the field of speculation for us to spend our time with profit upon them. But we may safely say that

our bodies will not be physical, flesh and blood, for such shall not inherit that kingdom. (1 Cor. 15: 50.) And Paul argues at length that the earthly precedes the spiritual and heavenly; we have already borne the image of the earthly, and shall in the resurrection bear the image of the heavenly. So is it an *actual* place? Yes. Is it a *physical* place? No.

*The tabernacle of God is with men.* Will the Father in his fullness dwell upon this new earth? Or will he be in the new heaven and we upon the new earth? Would God in the person of Christ dwelling among the people meet the requirements of this statement? Would that fulfill all that is promised here? This writer is not able to answer this question, and does not care to risk a guess on the matter, but would not part company with faithful brethren holding to either view. The question is worthy of much thought. If the fullness of the Godhead dwells in the Son (Col. 2: 9), and the Son dwells among the people, blessing them in every way necessary for their happiness, they could wish for nothing better. Yes, God will dwell among them, and be their God; this is the happiness of the saints.

He shall *wipe away every tear from their eyes.* This may be done in two ways. (1) He will reward them so bountifully that they will be more than compensated for all they have suffered on earth. The tears of sorrow and suffering will disappear when the reward is realized. The hand that wipes away our tears will wreath our faces in smiles. (2) He will wipe away our tears in that he will constitute such a state of things that we will have no reason to cry. The situation in which we will find ourselves will be so gloriously beautiful and so perfectly adapted to our welfare that we will be supremely happy every minute of eternity; there will be no time, no cause, and no occasion for tears.

*And death shall be no more.* What would you pay for a house and lot in a city far away in the mountains where death could not find you? Surely most any of us would sell all we have to convert our property into cash, and then borrow all we could

from the bank, and from our friends to be able to buy just a house and lot in such a place, if it could be found on this earth. But we can have such a place in the new earth. How much would you give for a mansion there? Some people will not give up worldly pleasures for such a place. Others will not deny themselves the fleeting pleasures of soul-destroying sins that they may have such a place to spend eternity. Death shall be destroyed, cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20: 14), so will never be able to reach us in that new Jerusalem.

*Neither mourning, nor crying, nor pain.* These are some of the things which make this world "a wilderness of woe." If we could measure all the physical pain on earth today, we likely could not bear the thought of it. But added to physical pain, there is the pain of hearts that are breaking from sorrow, disappointment, heart-aches, and cruelties of inhuman treatment. Pain is a prevalent thing; it is world-wide; none are exempt. But in the new heaven and earth no one will suffer pain of any kind.

## II. Further Description (Rev. 21: 23-27)

*City hath no need of the sun.* The sun and moon are among the heavens and elements that pass away and melt, and nothing is said of bringing them back. In this place we are told that they will not be needed, for the glory of God will furnish all the light that will be needed in the new heaven and new earth. God is light (1 John 1: 5), and dwells "in light unapproachable." (1 Tim. 6: 16.) When the Lord appeared to Paul, the light was such as to outshine the sun at noon. (Acts 26: 13.)

*And the lamp thereof is the Lamb.* "God's light shines in the city, and in the Lamb that light is concentrated, and from him everywhere diffused." (Adam Clarke.) It seems from this statement that Clarke thinks the Lamb, Jesus Christ, will be the representative of Deity with whom the saints will have contact, and through whom Deity will bless the faithful in the new Jerusalem.

*Nations shall walk amidst the light.* The only way a nation can walk in

a place is for its citizens to do so, hence we conclude that some people of all nations will be there to enjoy the good things prepared for them.

*Kings of the earth bring their glory into it.* This is a figurative way of describing the riches and glory and splendor of the place. "The idea which lies at the basis of all, is, that the new world in which righteousness dwells, will be splendid beyond conception, and that all who dwell in it will be of one heart and one mind, as to the offerings of homage and gratitude which they bring to the Majesty that sits enthroned in its metropolis." (Stuart.)

*Gates thereof shall not be shut by day.* In ancient cities the gates were kept open by day, and closed at night to prevent surprise from an enemy. Following the imagery under such customs, John says the gates shall not be shut by day, and since there is no night there, it follows that the gates will never be shut. Commentators indulge in the guess that this suggests that no one will feel like he is imprisoned within a city, but will be allowed freedom to pass in and out "to survey the works of God in all parts of his dominion." Just remember that all such statements are guesses; and interesting, if true.

*Nothing unclean shall enter.* John makes this statement as strong as words can make it. "There shall in no wise" enter into it anything that is unclean. The people who go there must first be cleansed from all the defilement and pollution of sin. If he had said that no one can go there who has ever sinned, none of us could entertain a hope of going to the place. But through Jesus Christ we are cleansed from our sins, and

through his transforming power there is taken from us the love of sin and the desire to indulge in the lusts of the flesh. We are schooled in the appreciation of heavenly things until we love them more than we love the world and the things of the world, so that when we enter that place we will be ready for and adapted to the environment.

*Maketh an abomination and a lie.* An abomination is something disgusting and detestable; something offensive and abhorrent to people of pure and holy minds. Since the new heaven and earth are to be places of happiness for the saints, there must be nothing abominable there; the presence of such would mar the happiness of the people who are there. People who dare not indulge in sin, but enjoy seeing others sin, have ground to fear their hearts are not right in the sight of God.

*They that are written in the Lamb's book of life.* When the Lord's disciples returned from a preaching tour, they rejoiced that they were able to cast out demons. But Jesus told them they should not rejoice at this, but rather "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10: 20.) The writer of Hebrews says the church of the firstborn are enrolled in heaven. (Heb. 12: 23.) The Lord says to the church at Sardis that those who overcome will not have their names blotted out of the book of life. (Rev. 3: 5.) Those whose names are not in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20: 15.) The overcomers who have their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb have their names in the book, and they make up the company of the blessed who will dwell in the holy city, new Jerusalem.

### Topics for Discussion

1. Wherein do the new heaven and earth differ from the heaven and earth in which Adam and Eve were created, and in which they lived until they sinned?

2. Enjoyment of the new heaven and earth will depend on our success in cultivating a taste for and an appreciation of the company, the worship, the government, the service, and

general conditions which prevail there. A person who enjoys a picture show more than he enjoys a prayer meeting would feel out of place if he were immediately transferred to that place.

3. When prizes are to be given away, we want our names enrolled. How much more should we be anxious to have our names enrolled in heav-

en's book so that we may be among that number who will be privileged to enjoy the new heaven and the new earth. But the church of the first-

born are the only ones who have their names enrolled (Heb. 12: 23), so we had better be sure we are members of that church.

### Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the Golden Text.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

#### Introduction

What in the new Jerusalem suggests a restoration of the garden in Eden?

What is pure theocracy? Has there ever been such a government on the earth?

What is suggested as to the form of government in the new Jerusalem?

#### Golden Text Explained

Name and discuss several things included in salvation from sin.

Distinguish between eternal life and merely living forever.

What will the overcomer inherit in the way of a place to live?

Name some necessities of life the overcomer will inherit.

Name and discuss four things one must overcome to inherit eternal life.

What is the chief blessing of the overcomer in heaven?

On what condition will our happiness be complete?

#### New Heaven and New Earth

What does Peter say will become of this heaven and earth we are in now?

Discuss the meaning of the verb "burned up" as used in this verse.

What are the works spoken of in this verse? What is to become of them?

What did John see coming from God out of heaven? Is this the new heaven?

What preparation has gone into the making of this new Jerusalem?

What is your conception of the new heaven and new earth?

What is meant by God tabernacling among the saints in the new Jerusalem?

In what two ways will tears be wiped from our eyes in heaven?

What would you pay for a place to live where death cannot find you?

What makes this world a "wilderness of woe" as we pass through it?

What two kinds of pain are there? How prevalent is pain in the earth?

#### Further Description

Will there be a new sun and moon for the new heaven and earth?

What is said of the brightness of the light from God?

What place does the Lamb occupy in lighting the new heaven and earth?

How can nations walk in the midst of that city?

What is meant by kings bringing their wealth and glory into it?

Why is the city said to have gates? When will they be closed?

What is the meaning of keeping the gates open all the time?

What is said of the purity of heaven? What is an abomination?

What of people who dare not sin, but enjoy seeing others do things sinful?

What did Jesus say is cause for rejoicing? Whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life?

Whose name will not be blotted out? Whose name will be blotted out?

What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

## Lesson XIII—December 30, 1951

### THE LAST INVITATION

#### The Lesson Text

#### Rev. 22: 8-19

8 And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things.

9 And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.

12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.

13 I am the Al-pha and the O-me-ga, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

14 Blessed are they that wash



their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

15 Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Je'-sus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let

him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." (Rev. 22: 17a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 22: 1-7.

### Daily Bible Readings

- December 24. M.....Invited to the Land of Canaan (Num. 10: 29-32)
- December 25. T.....Invited to Return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1: 1-4)
- December 26. W.....Jehovah's Great Invitation (Isa. 55: 1-9)
- December 27. T.....Jehovah's Invitation to the Wicked (Ezek. 18: 25-32)
- December 28. F.....An Invitation to Righteousness (Micah 6: 1-8)
- December 29. S.....Jesus Invites Disciples (Matt. 11: 25-30)
- December 30. S.....Jesus Invites the Thirsty (John 7: 37-44)

TIME.—About A.D. 95.

PLACE.—Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—John, the seven churches of Asia, and all who hear and heed.

### Introduction

There is something about a last invitation which is somewhat pathetic. The last sermon of a meeting, and the last invitation offered during the meeting, seem fraught with unusual meaning and importance. The fact that it may be the last sermon someone will ever hear, and the last formal invitation someone will ever have to obey the gospel, fills our hearts with awe. No one can watch an acrobat perform his dangerous feats where he takes his life in his hands and handles it with seeming careless indifference without feeling anxiety for his welfare. Thousands of people gathered in the streets of a great city to watch with breathless interest a man who threatened to jump from the ledge near the top of a great skyscraper. Yet we associate with people day after day who are taking risks which are freighted with far greater consequences. People are teetering on the brink of eternity; one moment they are here telling

themselves they have plenty of time to prepare to meet God in the judgment, and the next moment they have gone out unprepared to meet their Maker.

But, what a wonderful thing the invitation is when it is heeded! An invitation from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth and all that is in them, the Creator of our bodies, the Preserver of our lives, the Father of our spirits, and the Judge before whom we will stand in the last great day. It is an invitation to accept pardon for our sins, balm for our sin-sick souls, and strength to endure the trials of life. It is an invitation to be a child in his family that we may be an heir of God, to be a citizen in his kingdom that we may enjoy his protection, and to be a member of his body that we may enjoy the life-giving influence of his Spirit. It is an offer to lift the burden we cannot bear, to atone for the sins which we cannot hide, and to plead our cause

before the throne of justice. It is an offer to walk with us through life in paths of usefulness, to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death in calm assurance, and to stand

by us in the judgment pleading the merits of his shed blood in our behalf. It is an invitation to live for him on earth, to wait for him in the grave, and to live with him in heaven.

### Golden Text Explained

#### 1. Those who give the invitation.

John names the Holy Spirit as one who invites us to come. But Jesus said, "He shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak. ... He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." (John 16: 13, 14.) So when the Holy Spirit invites, he is but taking words from Jesus and revealing them to us. It is the Lord inviting us through the Holy Spirit. If we were invited by the president of the United States to some special function of state, to a big banquet where food and good will abound, we would feel honored; and even if it were inconvenient for us to attend, we would likely do so for fear of dishonoring him who invited us. While people generally would feel that way about an invitation from the president, the average person turns down the Lord's invitation without a thought of the dishonor and insult their actions may be to him who invited them.

Next, John says that the bride invites us to come. The bride is the church. It is composed of those who have made themselves ready for the bridegroom. The bride has arrayed herself in fine linen, bright and pure. The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Hence the bride is that group of people who are living righteous lives. The bride says, Come. (1) The bride invites because she wants others to know the joy of union with Christ as she has come to know it. She is not selfish in the enjoyment of her blessings. When Andrew found the Lord, he thought immediately of his brother Simon, and he brought him to Jesus. (John 1: 41, 42.) (2) The bride invites because she appreciates more than ever the danger one is in who is out of Christ. People do not realize the danger of some situations until they have been out of them long enough to evaluate them properly. That is espe-

cially true of living in sin. Those who live in sin cannot realize the danger like those who have been delivered from it. Standing on the solid rock of Christ and his truth, the church looks back upon those in the mire and quicksand of sin, and with anxious concern for their safety, the church pleads with them to come.

(3) The bride invites because she has had a foretaste of heaven. The joy of sins forgiven, the peace of heart that passeth understanding, and the hope that purifies the soul—these are streams in the desert of life, they are gleams in the night from the light that floods all heaven.

#### 2. The invitation is free and undeserved.

The Lord is not bound by any obligation to us to invite us. We have never put him under obligation by doing something good for him, that he feels that he must return the favor. Sometimes we do things for our neighbors because they have done something for us. But the Lord does not invite us because he feels it to be his duty to do so. He invites us because he loves us. He does not love us because we are worthy of being loved. He does not invite us because of what we can do for him. People sometimes cultivate the friendship of certain others because of social and political and financial advantage. But the Lord does not invite us because it is to his advantage to do so.

3. The invitation is worldwide. Jesus does not invite one race or color and bar the rest. He does not invite the rich and bar the poor, nor does he invite the poor and bar the rich. It is difficult for us to keep from being a respecter of persons, but the Lord is so far above us all that he pays no attention to the little differences to which we attach so much importance. Let us accept his invitation, and then join him in inviting others.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. John and the Angel (Rev. 22: 8, 9)

*I John am he that heard and saw these things.* Four times (five in King James version) John identifies himself as the one receiving the revelation from the Lord. The fact that he does not speak of himself as being an apostle has led some to think it was not John the apostle who wrote the Revelation. But his age and his reputation in the church were such that he did not need to add an identifying term. One less known and loved would have felt the need of some further identification. The things to which he refers here as seeing and hearing include all that he has seen and heard in all the visions on Patmos.

*When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship.* This is the second time John has made this mistake. (Rev. 19: 10.) It was difficult for him to keep from associating the one who revealed these things to him with the glory and majesty of the things and Beings revealed. In this is a fine suggestion as to why the Lord has made human beings the bearers of the message of salvation; the reason why he put such great treasure in earthen vessels. If he had commissioned the angels to preach the gospel, people would have lost sight of the gospel and would have worshipped the messenger. If John tried twice to worship the angel who revealed these things to him, surely ignorant human beings would lose sight of the message and give all honor to the angelic messenger. But when the power to save the soul is carried by a frail human being, an earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4: 7), no one is inclined to worship the bearer of the message, nor to attribute the power of the message to the preacher.

*Fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets.* The angels said he was only a fellow-servant of John and the prophets, and he speaks of the prophets as being the brethren of John. Then he adds that he is a fellow-servant with them that keep the words of this book. The angel is subject to the commands of God as well as human beings are. He was not obligated to obey the same commands we are to obey, but

it is as necessary for angels to obey God as it is for human beings to obey him. Jesus prayed that the will of God be done on earth as it is done in heaven (Matt. 6: 10), showing that the creatures in heaven set up for us on earth an example of obedience. And again, the angel told John not to worship him, but to worship God. This is equal to saying that God alone is to be worshiped. Paul condemned the heathen for worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. (Rom. 1: 25.)

#### II. Warnings and Promises (Rev. 22: 10-15)

*Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.* To seal a book was to close it and keep it securely for future use. With respect to the visions shown Daniel, God said, "Shut thou up the vision; for it belongeth to many days to come." (Dan. 8: 26.) Again, "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." (Dan. 12: 4a.) The things of which Daniel wrote were in the distant future, so were to be preserved for a long time before they should be of practical use. But the things shown John were shortly to come to pass, so there was no need to seal the book; people would need the things shown John for the comfort and encouragement under persecutions which were to come upon the church in the near future. By saying the time is at hand, the angel did not mean that the end of time was at hand. He simply meant the time for the beginning of the fulfillment of the visions John had seen.

*He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still.* These words must be taken in connection with what follows about rendering to every man according to his works. They apply to man beyond the grave, not on this side. The Lord has never exhorted the filthy to continue in their filth, or the unrighteous to continue in their unrighteousness as long as they are on this side' of the grave. Death is not going to work a miraculous change on people so that those who have enjoyed unrighteousness here will abhor unrighteousness over there; nor will it change people who

enjoyed living in moral filth here so that they will hate such over there and seek only to engage in that which is pure. Those who have enjoyed unholy things here will go to a place where such characters belong; they have not prepared for heaven, so would not delight in the things transpiring there. It is our business to cultivate an appreciation of the things righteous and holy while here on earth we live, so we will be prepared to go to the place in eternity where such things are to be found. It is also necessary that we cultivate the ability to hate the things that are unrighteous and filthy. Hate is a good quality if pointed at the proper things.

*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me.* There is no doubt that this refers to the second coming of Christ. The fact that he said he would come quickly has led some to think that the apostles looked for him in their generation. But since the time of his coming is set in the plan of God (Acts 17: 31), we must admit that quickly, as the Lord counts time, can cover at least nineteen hundred years, and we have no way of knowing how many more. We must not lose sight of the fact that he says judgment is to be at the time of his coming. At the time of his coming, he says he will render to each man according to his works. Those who think that the only judgment there will ever be is during this life surely have not read this verse. And those who think the wicked dead will not be raised at his coming have overlooked the fact that Jesus says at his coming he will Tender to each man according to his works—the good to be blessed with eternal life, the evil to be sent to torment.

*Blessed are they that wash their robes.* As we have seen before, to wash our robes in the blood of Christ is to be forgiven of our sins on account of the merit of his shed blood, the atoning power of his death. It is said that we wash our robes because we are active in rendering the obedience which is made a condition of our forgiveness. Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22: 16.)

Surely the washing away of sins in this verse is included in the washing of robes in our text. John says the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1: 7.) This is a continual washing during the Christian life, and is also included in the washing of robes in our text.

*Have the right to come to the tree of life.* We are not to take this in the sense of earning our salvation, for none can do that. But since God has promised eternal life upon certain conditions, all who meet those conditions are said to have the right, by the grace of God, to come to the tree of life to eat of its fruit and live forever.

*Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers.* Those human beings who have traits of character common to dogs are classed as such. The characters named in this verse are the cause of the sorrow and suffering so common to the world. The fact that they will not be tolerated in heaven should be encouragement to all to keep such out of our lives, and to make every effort possible to go there.

**III. Invitation and Warning** (Rev. 22: 16-19)

*I Jesus have sent mine angel.* It is no longer an angel speaking, but the Lord, John's Lord and Master, himself. How John's heart must have thrilled to see him again, that One whom he loved so dearly on earth! It was comforting to John to have this testimony from Christ himself, and to have his assurance that all the visions were genuine, and that the truths revealed in them were from the Lord. By root and offspring of David he simply meant to identify himself as the Messiah, the son of David whom John had known on earth.

*He that heareth, let him say, Come.* Not only the Spirit and the bride, but even all who hear this great invitation are to relay it until it reaches around the earth, over and over.

*And he that is athirst, let him come.* Where there is no desire, no thirst, for heavenly things, the gospel has the power to create that thirst if we but give it a chance in our hearts. And in many hearts there is a genuine thirst, a longing for things higher and holier, but since

the gospel has never gone into that heart this thirst is not recognized. When the gospel is preached in his hearing, the thirst is identified, and that soul knows what he has been longing to enjoy. Blessed is that heart that will not be satisfied with anything less, or that differs from, the truth as it is revealed in the Bible. But when we have learned the truth as it is in Christ, we may still be athirst for the heavenly joys of this text. So the invitation still belongs to us; the Lord says for us to come and take of the waters of life freely. The fountain will never run dry, the stream will never be stagnant, and the price is only the taking.

*I testify unto every man.* These seem to be the words of John. Notice the solemnity of this warning. He testifies to *every man*; there is no exception, not even councils, synods, or popes, none can make a change in the teachings of this book without dire consequences. The words of the prophecy of this book, of course, refer only to Revelation.

However the principle is applicable to any other book in the Bible. Any addition will corrupt, and any subtraction will pervert. Hence man dare not lay unholy hands on any book in the Bible to add to its contents nor to take from it.

*Add unto him the plagues which are written.* The plagues are the punishments mentioned in the book which are to be visited upon the disobedient.

*Take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city.* This is the punishment for taking away from the words of the prophecy of this book. This is a warning to keep scribes, commentators, and preachers from handling the book to suit their own theories, and yet some disregard the warning and use the symbols and visions of the book to serve unholy purposes. May the comments of this work serve neither to add to nor take away from the true sense of the teaching of our Lord through his servant John.

## Topics for Discussion

1. The Lord has been perfectly fair with humanity in that he has told us that he is coming in judgment, and that there is a certain preparation to make if we expect to meet him in peace. Had he not told us what to do to be prepared, or if he left us in doubt as to his intention to return, man might say that he had not been given a square deal.

2. The Bible closes with blessings and curses. It opened with a proposition of life or death, and man was left to choose. It closes with somewhat the same proposition. A blessing is promised to all who will wash

their robes in the blood of the Lamb. A curse is threatened to all who disobey in that they are said to be left outside the city.

3. If any man misses heaven for adding to what has been revealed, he cannot blame the Lord. If any man fails to enjoy eternal life because he took something away from the words of revelation, he cannot accuse the Lord of not giving him fair warning. Since man could not write the Bible without the direction of God, he should have sufficient modesty and humility to leave it like the Lord made it.

## Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?  
Repeat the Golden Text.  
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

### Introduction

What is your impression of the seriousness of a last invitation?  
Name and discuss the different things suggested that make an invitation a wonderful thing.

### Golden Text Explained

Who is the author of this last invitation?  
What does the refusal of an invitation usually imply?

Who is the second party to give this last invitation?

Name and discuss three reasons why the bride invites others to come.  
What can you say of the freeness with which the invitation is given?  
To what degree do we deserve such an invitation?

Whom does this last invitation include?

### John and the Angel

How many times does John identify himself as the writer of Revelation?  
What mistakes does John make for the second time in this lesson?

How does this justify the wisdom of God in making man the vessel to bear the message of salvation?

With whom is the angel a fellowservant? What is said of obedience of angels?

**Warnings and Promises**

What is meant by sealing a book of prophecy?

Why was John told not to seal his book?

What is meant by saying the time is at hand?

Why does the statement about the unrighteous and filthy not apply to men in this life?

What is the meaning of the statement?

To whom does it apply?

What practical suggestion is contained in it for us?

What is meant by the Lord coming quickly?

What does the Lord say he will do at his coming?

How does this statement affect certain doctrines with reference to the judgment? The resurrection of the wicked a thousand years after the righteous?

In what sense can it be said that man has a right to come to the tree of life?

What type of characters will be outside of heaven?

**Invitation and Warning**

How did Jesus identify himself to John?

What three parties are said to extend the last invitation?

Does John's solemn warning about adding to his book apply to the whole Bible?

What is the penalty for adding to the words of this book?

What is the penalty for taking away from the words of this book?

What is the primary purpose of this solemn warning?

What is there of interest in the Topics for Discussion?

Have the studies for the past year been profitable to you? Would you like to make some suggestions to the writer of these lessons? If so, you are requested to direct them to him in care of the Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, Tennessee.

## NOTES