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P R E F A C E

This is the ninth volume of **TEACHER'S ANNUAL LESSON COMMENTARY** on the Bible School Lessons for churches of Christ published by the Gospel Advocate Company. It is also the thirty-third annual volume on the Sunday school lessons published by this company for use in churches of Christ.

Peter tells us that we are to grow in the knowledge of our Lord. (2 Pet. 3: 18.) The Bible is our only source of knowledge which leads to salvation. From this we learn the importance of studying the Bible continually. As we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, we grow in strength of character and usefulness in the Lord's church. People who have little knowledge of God's word are worth but little to the Lord's church, but people with a thorough knowledge of the Bible can be worth a lot to the church. For this reason each Christian should be anxious to increase in the knowledge of God from day to day. For this purpose a certain amount of time should be set aside each day for the study of God's word.

This book is designed to assist people in such study of God's word as will purify the character and increase their usefulness to the church. In the first quarter, we study Bible characters that we may follow the good examples they set and avoid the evil in their lives. In the second quarter, we study the character of Samuel and the conditions under which he lived and served God. His holy, consecrated life under such adverse circumstances should inspire us all to do better. In the last half of the book, we study about the establishment and growth of the church. This is a most practical series of lessons to strengthen and encourage the church.

The inexperienced preachers and teachers will find the treatment of the golden texts helpful in furnishing material for sermons and talks in prayer meetings. And teachers will find the lesson material analyzed sufficiently to assist them in pressing the important ideas in the lesson so the students can take the points home with them.

The book is sent forth with the prayer that it will do all the good possible and no harm at all.

THE AUTHOR.

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BIBLE DICTIONARY OF PROPER NAMES

Compiled by Roy H. Lanier

A

Aar-on (enlightened), Heb. 7: 11. Brother of Moses, and first high priest of the Levitical order.
A-bel (breath, transitoriness), 1 John 3: 11, 12. Second son of Adam; murdered by his brother.
A-bib (sprouting), Ex. 13: 4. First month of the sacred, seventh of the civil, year of the Hebrew calendar; corresponding with our April.
A-bra-ham (father of a multitude), Gal. 3: 8. Founder of the Hebrew people, and father of the faithful.
A-cha-ia, 2 Cor. 9: 2. The southern half of Greece, in which Athens and Corinth were principal cities.
A-dri-a, Acts 27: 27. The body of water west of Greece, and east of southern Italy and Sicily; sometimes considered a part of the Adriatic Sea; now called the Indian Sea.
Ae-ge-an, The body of water east of Greece and west of Turkey, and north of Crete.
Ag-a-bus (he loved), Acts 21: 10. A prophet in Caesarea who foretold a famine and the suffering of Paul at the hands of the Jews.
A-has-u-e-rus (king), Esth. 1. King of Persia; Xerxes of profane history.
Al-ex-an-der (man defender). (1) Kindred of Annas the high priest, Acts 4: 6. (2) A coppersmith who did Paul much harm, and probably resided at Ephesus, 2 Tim. 4: 14. (3) A member of the church at Ephesus whom Paul delivered to Satan, 1 Tim. 1: 20.
Al-phae-us (exchange). (1) The Father of Levi, or Matthew, Mark 2: 14. (2) Father of James the Less, Mark 3: 18.
Am-mon-ites (children of my people), Gen. 19: 38. A people descended from Ben-am-mi, who was the son of Lot by one of his daughters.
An-a-ni-as (Jehovah is gracious). (1) A member of the Jerusalem church who lied about the sale of his property, Acts 5: 1. (2) The disciple who baptized Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9: 18. (3) The high priest whom Paul called a whited wall, Acts 23: 2.
An-nas (merciful), Acts 4: 6. The high priest before whom Peter and John were tried.
An-ti-och. (1) A city in Syria which became the center of Christian activities after the persecution drove the church out of Jerusalem, Acts 11: 26. (2) A city in Pisidia where Paul preached and founded a church, Acts 13: 14.
A-pol-lo, The Greek god of manly youth and beauty, poetry, music, healing; the sender and stayer of plagues; the twin of Artemis.
Aq-ui-la (an eagle), Acts 18: 26. A tent-maker who left Rome on account of persecution; a co-laborer of Paul, and a teacher of Apollos.
A-ra-bi-a, Gal. 1: 17. The country east of Palestine, where Paul spent about three years immediately after his conversion.
Ar-e-op-a-gite, Acts 17: 34. A member of the court of Athens whom Paul converted.
Ar-e-op-a-gus, Acts 17: 19. The hill of Mars in Athens where the court convened, and where Paul preached his sermon in that city.
Ar-is-tar-chus (most excellent ruler), Acts 27: 2. A Macedonian of Thessalonica who went with Paul to Home.
Ash-dod (stronghold). The Old Testament name for Azotus, Acts 8: 40.

A-sia, Acts 16: 6. A Roman province in the western part of Asia Minor; capital was Ephesus.
Ath-ens, Acts 17: 21. The capital of Attica, founded by Cecrops in 1556 B.C.
At-ta-li-a, Acts 14: 25. A coast town of Pamphylia from which Paul set sail for Antioch at the close of his first missionary journey.
At-ti-ca, A famous section of Greece, including Athens.
A-zo-tus, Acts 8: 40. A seacoast town north of Gaza.

B

Bab-y-lon (confusion), 1 Pet. 5: 13. Capital of ancient Chaldea, place where the Jews spent seventy years of captivity; and city from which Peter wrote his first epistle.
Ba-rak (lightning), Judges 5: 6. The head of the army who defeated the Canaanites. He was supported and encouraged by Deborah.
Bar-Je-sus (son of Jesus), Acts 13: 6. A sorcerer who opposed Paul at Paphos in Cyprus.
Bar-na-bas (son of exhortation), Acts 4: 36. Friend and companion of Paul in mission work.
Bar-sab-bas (son of wisdom). (1) Joseph, surnamed Justus, one qualified to be an apostle, but the lot fell on Matthias, Acts 1: 23. (2) Judas, chief among brethren in Jerusalem, Acts 15: 22, 32.
Be-el-ze-bub (lord of the dwelling), Matt. 12: 34. A heathen deity to whom the Jews ascribed the sovereignty of the evil spirits, and by whom they charged that Jesus cast out demons.
Ber-ni-ce (victorious), Acts 25: 13. Eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and consort of her brother, before whom Paul made his defense.
Beth-le-hem (house of bread), Matt. 2: 5. The birthplace of Jesus, a city a few miles south of Jerusalem.
Bi-thyn-i-a, Acts 16: 7. A small province of Asia Minor, where lived some to whom Peter addressed his epistle.

C

Caes-a-re-a. (1) Philippi, the most northern point of the journeys of Jesus, Matt. 16: 13. (2) A city about seventy miles northwest of Jerusalem, on the coast; the residence of the Roman rulers in Palestine; and the place where Paul was imprisoned, Acts 23: 23.
Ca-ia-phas (depression), Acts 4: 6. The son-in-law of Annas, associated in trial of the apostles Peter and John.
Cain (to acquire), Gen. 4: 1. The eldest son of Adam and the first murderer.
Can-da-ce, Acts 8: 27. An Ethiopian queen, whose treasurer Philip converted.
Car-pus (fruit), 2 Tim. 4: 13. A Christian at Troas with whom Paul left some books.
Cen-chre-ae (millet), Rom. 16: 1. The home of Phoebe, a deaconess of the church.
Ce-phas (rock), 1 Cor. 1: 12. Another name for Peter.
Che-mosh (subduer; or god of fire), 1 Kings 11: 7. A heathen god worshipped by the Moabites and Ammonites.
Chlo-e (tender shoot), 1 Cor. 1: 11. A person who gave Paul information as to conditions of the church in Corinth.
Co-los-sae, Col. 1: 2. A city in the province of Asia.
Cor-inth, 1 Cor. 1: 2. A city of Greece where Paul established the church.
Cor-ne-li-us (devout), Acts 10: 1. A Roman centurion baptized by Peter.

Crete, Tit. 1:5. An island in the Mediterranean Sea, where Paul left Titus to work.

Cris-pus (curled), 1 Cor. 1: 14. A man whom Paul baptized at Corinth.

Cy-prus, Acts 11: 19. An island in the Mediterranean Sea, where Paul and Barnabas worked.

Cy-re-ne, Acts 11: 20. A principal city of North Africa in Cyrenaica.

D

Da-gon (diminutive of fish). A Philistine god, with a man's head and fish's tail.

Dam-a-ris (heifer), Acts 17: 34. A woman whom Paul converted in Athens.

Da-mas-cus (activity, industry), Acts 9: 2. The city where Paul was baptized, 133 miles north of Jerusalem.

Dan-iel (God is judge), Dan. 7: 13. A captive and officer of rank in Babylon, and the fourth of the Hebrew major proph-

Da-vid (beloved), Acts 2: 29. Second king of Israel, and prophet who foretold the resurrection of Jesus.

Deb-o-rah (bee), Judges 4: 5. A woman who judged Israel and delivered the people from the Canaanites led by Sisera.

Der-be (juniper?), Acts 16: 1. A city of Asia Minor where Paul preached on his first missionary journey.

Di-a-na, Acts 19: 24. The goddess of the Ephesians.

Dor-cas (gazelle), Acts 9: 36. A woman of Joppa who was known for her good works, and was raised from the dead by Peter.

Dru-sil-la, Acts 24: 24. Daughter of Herod Agrippa I; wife of Felix the governor.

E

E-li-jah (Jah is God), 1 Kings 17: 18. A prophet of God in the days of Ahab king of Israel who broke the strength of idolatry by a contest on Mount Carmel.

E-lim-e-lech (God is king), Ruth 1: 2. A man of Bethlehem in the days of the judges who moved his family to Moab on account of the famine.

E-li-sha (God is salvation), 2 Kings 4: 13. A prophet who succeeded Elijah and who cured Naaman of his leprosy.

E-noch (teacher, or initiated), (1) The eldest son of Cain, Gen. 4: 17. (2) The son of Jared and father of Methuselah; translated that he should not see death, Gen. 5: 18.

Ep-a-phras (lovely, fascinating), Col. 4: 12. A member of the church at Colossae, and a helper of Paul.

E-paph-ro-di-tus (lovely), Phil. 4: 18. A member of the church at Philippi, and a fellow-worker with Paul.

Eph-e-sus, Acts 19: 1. Capital of Asia, where Paul established the church.

E-ras-tus (beloved), Rom. 16: 23. (1) City treasurer at Corinth, Rom. 16: 23. (2) A fellow-worker with Paul, 2 Tim. 4: 20.

E-thi-o-pi-a, Acts 8: 27. A country in Africa, south of the Libyan desert.

F

Fair Ha-vens, Acts 27: 8. A harbor on the south coast of Crete, where Paul advised the ship captain to spend the winter.

Fe-lix (happy, fortunate), Acts 24: 24. Governor of Judea before whom Paul was tried.

Fes-tus (joyful), Acts 25: 27. Governor of Judea, succeeding Felix.

G

Ga-bri-el (man of God), Luke 1: 26. The angel who visited Mary.

Ga-ius. (1) A man of Macedonia, and Paul's helper, Acts 19: 29. (2) A man of Derbe in Asia, Acts 20: 4. (3) A man in Corinth whom Paul baptized, 1 Cor. 1: 14.

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

Ga-la-ti-a, Acts 16: 6. A province of Asia Minor, where Paul preached the gospel.

Gal-i-lee, Acts 1: 11. The northern division of Palestine, and that from which both Jesus and the apostles came.

Ga-za (strong, or fortress), Acts 8: 26. A seacoast town southwest of Jerusalem.

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.

Geth-sem-a-ne (oil press), Matt. 26: 36. A place, or garden, on the western slope of Mount of Olives, across Kidron from Jerusalem.

Go-mor-rah (submersion), Jude 7. One of the cities of the plain destroyed by fire from heaven for its wickedness.

Go-shen, Gen. 47: 5, 6. A district in north-east Egypt where the Israelites were settled when Joseph brought them from Canaan to save them from the famine.

H

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

Ham (swarthy), Gen. 6: 10. Son of Noah who was responsible for the curse being placed upon his family.

Ha-ran (scorched, arid), Gen. 24: 10. A city of Padan-Aram where Abraham lived for five years on his pilgrimage to Canaan, and where Nahor settled permanently.

Her-od, The name of an Idumaean family given the rule over Palestine by the Caesars.

(1) Herod the Great, Matt. 2: 3. The king who attempted to kill Jesus.

(2) Herod Antipas, Matt. 14: 1. The king who beheaded John the Baptist.

(3) Herod Archelaus, Matt. 2: 22. Son and successor to Herod the Great.

(4) Herod Agrippa I, Acts 12: 1. The man who killed James and imprisoned Peter.

(5) Herod Agrippa II, Acts 26: 1. The king before whom Paul made his defense.

(6) Herod Philip, Mark 6: 17. The former husband of Herodias, and brother of Antipas.

He-ro-di-as, Mark 6: 17. Wife of Herod Philip, taken unlawfully by Herod Antipas, and the woman who demanded the head of John the Baptist for her daughter.

Hy-me-nae-us (wedding song), 2 Tim. 2: 17. A man who taught false doctrine concerning the resurrection, saying it was past already.

I

I-co-ni-um, Acts 14: 1. A city of Lycaonia in Asia Minor where Paul preached.

Il-yr-i-cum, Rom. 15: 19. The country on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, now the territory of Yugoslavia and Albania.

Is-ra-el (he who striveth with God), Rom. 11: 26. A name given to Jacob and his posterity.

Is-ra-el-ite, 2 Cor. 11: 22. A descendant of Jacob; a member of one of the twelve tribes.

J

Ja-bin (intelligent), John 11: 1-3. King of Hazor, a city of the Canaanites; an

oppressor of the Israelites in the time of Deborah.

James (same as Jacob, supplanter).

(1) Brother of John and one of the apostles. Matt. 10: 2.

(2) Son of Alphaeus, and one of the apostles, called the Less. Mark 3: 18.

(3) The brother of Jesus, and writer of the epistle James. Matt. 13: 55.

Ja-pheth (to extend), Gen. 5: 32. Son of Noah and father of the white races.

Ja-red (descent, low ground), Gen. 5: 15.

Father of Enoch.

Je-ho-ram (exalted by Jehovah), 2 Kings 3: 2. Son of Ahab and king of Israel in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

Je-ru-sa-lem (foundation of peace), Acts 15: 2. Religious and political center of the Jews; the birthplace of the church.

Jez-e-bel (chaste), 2 Kings 9: 22. A foreigner and wife of Ahab who worshiped idols and attempted to force all Israel into idolatry.

Jez-reel (God will sow), 2 Kings 9: 17.

(1) A city of Issachar, residence of Ahab. (2) Valley or plain between Gilboa and Little Hermon, later called Esdralon.

John (whom Jehovah has graciously given).

(1) John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. Matt. 3: 1.

(2) Son of Zebedee and brother of James, an apostle. Matt. 10: 2.

(3) John Mark, companion of Paul and writer of the Gospel of Mark. Acts 12: 12.

(4) The father of Peter, also called Jonas. John 1: 42.

Jon-a-than (gift of Jehovah). A high priest, son of Annas and successor of Caiaphas.

Jop-pa (beauty), Acts 11: 13. A seacoast town southwest of Jerusalem; now called Jaffa.

Jo-seph (increaser), Gen. 41: 40. A son of Jacob, sold in Egypt.

Josh-ua (whose help is Jehovah), 1 Chron. 7: 27. Successor to Moses, who led the people into Canaan.

Ju-dae-a, Acts 2: 14. Southern division of Palestine, including Jerusalem.

Ju-da-ism, Gal. 1: 13. The Jewish religion.

Ju-das (praise), Acts 15: 32. A Christian of high standing in Jerusalem.

Ju-das Is-car-i-ot (Judas means "praise" and Iscariot means "man of Kerioth"), Acts 1: 16. One of the apostles, and the one who betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Jude. Brother of Jesus and James, and the writer of the epistle that bears his name.

Ju-pi-ter, Acts 14: 12. A Greek god, worshipped by the people of Lystra.

L

La-od-i-ce-a (justice of the people), Col.

4: 16. A city in the province of Phrygia.

Laz-a-rus (God has helped), Luke 16: 20.

A beggar at the rich man's gate.

Lot (a covering, veil), 2 Pet. 2: 7. Son of Haran; nephew of Abraham; resident of Sodom.

Lu-cius, Acts 13: 1. A teacher in the church at Antioch.

Luke, 2 Tim. 4: 11. A physician of Troas, and compaction of Paul.

Lyc-a-o-ni-a, Acts 14: 6. A district of Asia Minor including Lystra and Derbe.

Lyd-i-a, Acta 16: 14. A woman of Thyatira; Paul's first convert in Europe.

Lys-i-as, Claudius, Acts 23: 26. The captain of Roman soldiers in Jerusalem.

Lystra, Acts 16: 1. Home town of Timothy, where Paul preached on first missionary tour

M

Mac-e-do-ni-a, 1 Thess. 1: 8. The northern district of Greece, including Philippi.

Man-a-en (counselor), Acts 13: 1. A teacher in the church at Antioch, and foster-brother of Herod Antipas.

Mat-thi-as (God's gift), Acts 1: 26. The man selected to be an apostle in the place of Judas.

Mel-chi-z-e-dek (king of righteousness), Heb. 7: 1. Priest and king of Salem in the time of Abraham, whose priesthood was the type of that of Christ.

Mel-i-ta, Acts 28: 1. Ancient name of Malta; scene of Paul's shipwreck on way to Rome.

Mer-cu-ry, Acts 14: 12. This was the Greek Hermes, and Latin Mercurius, for whom the people at Lystra mistook Paul.

Mes-si-ah (anointed), John 4: 25. The Hebrew term for Christ, the Anointed of God.

Me-thu-se-lah (man of offspring), Gen. 5: 27. Son of Enoch and grandfather of Noah.

Mid-i-an (strife, contention). (1) Son of Abraham by Keturah, Gen. 25: 2. (2) A land inhabited by the Midianites between Edom and Paran, 1 Kings 11: 18.

Mi-le-tus, Acts 20: 17. The seaport of Ephesus, where Paul met the Ephesian elders.

Mir-i-am (their rebellion), Num. 12: 1. Sister of Moses and leader of the women during the wilderness wanderings.

Mo-ab (from my father?), Gen. 19: 37.

(1) Son of Lot by his eldest daughter.

(2) A land north of Edom and east of Jordan inhabited by the Moabites.

Mor-de-cai (dedicated to Mars), Esth. 5: 5. A cousin to Esther and servant to King Ahasuerus of Persia.

Mo-ses (drawn out), Acts 15: 1. The mediator of the old covenant; the giver of the law.

My-ra (ointments), Acts 27: 5. A city of Lycia on Paul's route to Rome.

N

Na-a-man (pleasantness), 2 Kings 5: 1. A captain in the Syrian army who was healed of leprosy by Elisha.

Na-dab (noble, generous), Num. 3: 2. Eldest son of Aaron who died for offering strange fire before Jehovah.

Na-o-mi (my delight, pleasure), Ruth 1: 2. Wife of Elimelech who brought Ruth back to Bethlehem and encouraged her to marry Boaz.

Naz-a-renes, Acts 24: 5. The church was called by its enemies the sect of the Nazarenes.

Naz-a-reth (branch), Luke 4: 16. A town in Galilee where Jesus grew up.

Ne-ap-o-lis (new city), Acts 16: 11. The seaport of Philippi in Macedonia.

Nep-tune. A god identified with the Greek Poseidon, the god of the sea.

Nic-o-de-mus (conqueror of the people), John 3: 1. A ruler among the Jews, and one who believed in Jesus.

O

Ol-i-vet, Acts 1: 12. The place where Jesus ascended to heaven.

O-nes-i-mus (profitable or useful), Phile. 10. A slave of Philemon converted by Paul.

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 Mediter-

anean Sea. But common usage today applies it to all of Canaan, the holy land.

Pam-phy-l-i-a, Acts 13: 13. A political division of Asia Minor, southern part.

Pa-phos, Acts 13: 13. A city on the western coast of Cyprus.

Pass-over, Acts 12: 4. A Jewish feast to commemorate the deliverance of the firstborn of the Israelites when all the firstborn of Egypt were slain.

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

Per-ga, Acts 13: 13. An ancient and important city of Pamphylia.

Pe-ter (stone), Acts 2: 14. A leader among the apostles, and the speaker on Pentecost.

Pe-shi-to. A Syriac translation of the Bible containing all the Old Testament and the greater portion of the New Testament. It is to Syrian people what the Vulgate is to the Latin people, or the King James Version is to the English-speaking people. It dates back to the second century of our era.

Pi-si-di-a, Acts 13: 14. A province of Asia Minor where Paul labored much.

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

Phi-le-mon (loving, affectionate), Phile. 1. A member of the church at Colossae whom Paul wrote in the behalf of one of his converts.

Phil-ip (lover of horses), Acts 8: 26. An evangelist who preached in Samaria, and was sent to convert the Ethiopian eunuch.

Phi-lip-pi, Acts 16: 12. The principal city of Macedonia, where Paul preached.

Phoe-be (shining, bright), Rom. 16: 1, 2. A deaconess in the church at Cenchræe.

Phoe-ni-ci-ans. People inhabiting a narrow strip of country running 120 miles along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea beginning at Mount Carmel; Tyre and Sidon were principal cities.

Phryg-i-a, Acts 16: 6. A province of Asia Minor where Paul preached.

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

Pris-cil-la (diminutive of Prisca, ancient), Acts 18: 2. The wife of Aquila from Rome, who helped to teach Apollos the way of the Lord.

Ptol-e-ma-is, Acts 21: 7. A seacoast town just north of Caesarea.

Pu-rim, Esth. 9: 26. A feast of the Jews to celebrate their deliverance from the plot of Haman to destroy them while in captivity.

S

Sad-du-ceeds, Acts 23: 7. A religious sect of the Jews, thought to be followers of one Zadok, who denied the existence of angels and spirits, and the resurrection.

Sal-a-mis, Acts 13: 5. A seaport on the east end of the island of Cyprus.

Sa-ma-ri-a (Shemer's watch-mountain), Acts 8: 5. Where Philip preached; the home of Simon.

Sa-mar-i-tans. Inhabitants of Samaria, sometimes used to distinguish from Jews.

Sam-o-thrace, Acts 16: 11. An island in the Aegean Sea between Troas and Neapolis.

San-he-drin. The supreme court of the Jews consisting of seventy members.

Sap-phi-ra (either sapphire or beautiful), Acts 5: 1. The wife of Ananias, who

lied to the apostles about the amount of money received from the sale of property.

Sa-tan (adversary), 2 Cor. 4: 4. The god of this world, the accuser of the saints.

Se-leu-ci-a, Acts 13: 4. The seaport from which Paul set sail for his first missionary journey.

Ser-gi-us Pau-lus, Acts 13: 7. Proconsul of Cyprus to whom Paul preached.

Si-don (a fishery), Acts 12: 20. A seacoast town of Phoenicia, just west of Damascus.

Si-las (sylvan), Acts 15: 22. A companion of Paul in missionary work.

Sil-va-nus, 1 Thess. 1: 1. Another form of the word Silas; a companion of Paul.

Si-mon (hearer) (1) Another name for Peter, John 1: 42. (2) A man converted by Philip, but who sinned soon afterwards Acts 8: 13.

Sis-e-ra (battle-array), Judges 5: 20. Captain of the Canaanites who was defeated by Barak and Deborah.

Smyr-na (myrrh), Rev. 2: 8. The home of Iranæus, the pupil of Polycarp who was the pupil of John the apostle; a city of Asia Minor, near Ephesus.

So-dom (place of lime), Jude 7. A city in the days of Abraham destroyed by fire from heaven on account of its wickedness.

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

Ste-phen (crown), Acts 6: 8. A gospel preacher, and the first Christian martyr.

Sym-e-on Ni-ger, Acts 13: 1. One of the teachers in the church at Antioch.

Syr-i-a, Acts 15: 41. The country north of Palestine with Damascus as capital.

T

Tar-sus, Acts 11: 25. The home of Paul, and where Barnabas found him when he wanted a helper in the work at Antioch.

Ter-tul-lus (diminutive of the name Tertius), Acts 24: 1. A lawyer who prosecuted Paul.

The-oph-i-lus (friend of God), Luke 1: 3. The man to whom Luke addressed his books.

Thes-sa-lo-ni-ca, 1 Thess. 1: 1. A city of Macedonia where Paul established a church. Now called Salonica, Greece.

Three Taverns, Acts 28: 15. The place where Paul was met by brethren on his way to Rome, fifty-six miles from the city.

Thy-a-ti-ra, Acts 16: 14. A city of Asia Minor, the home of Lydia.

Tim-o-thy (honoring God), Acts 16: 1. A Christian of Lystra, Paul's son in the gospel.

Ti-lus (honorable), Gal. 2: 3. A Greek, co-laborer with Paul, whom Paul would not allow to be circumcised at the Jerusalem conference.

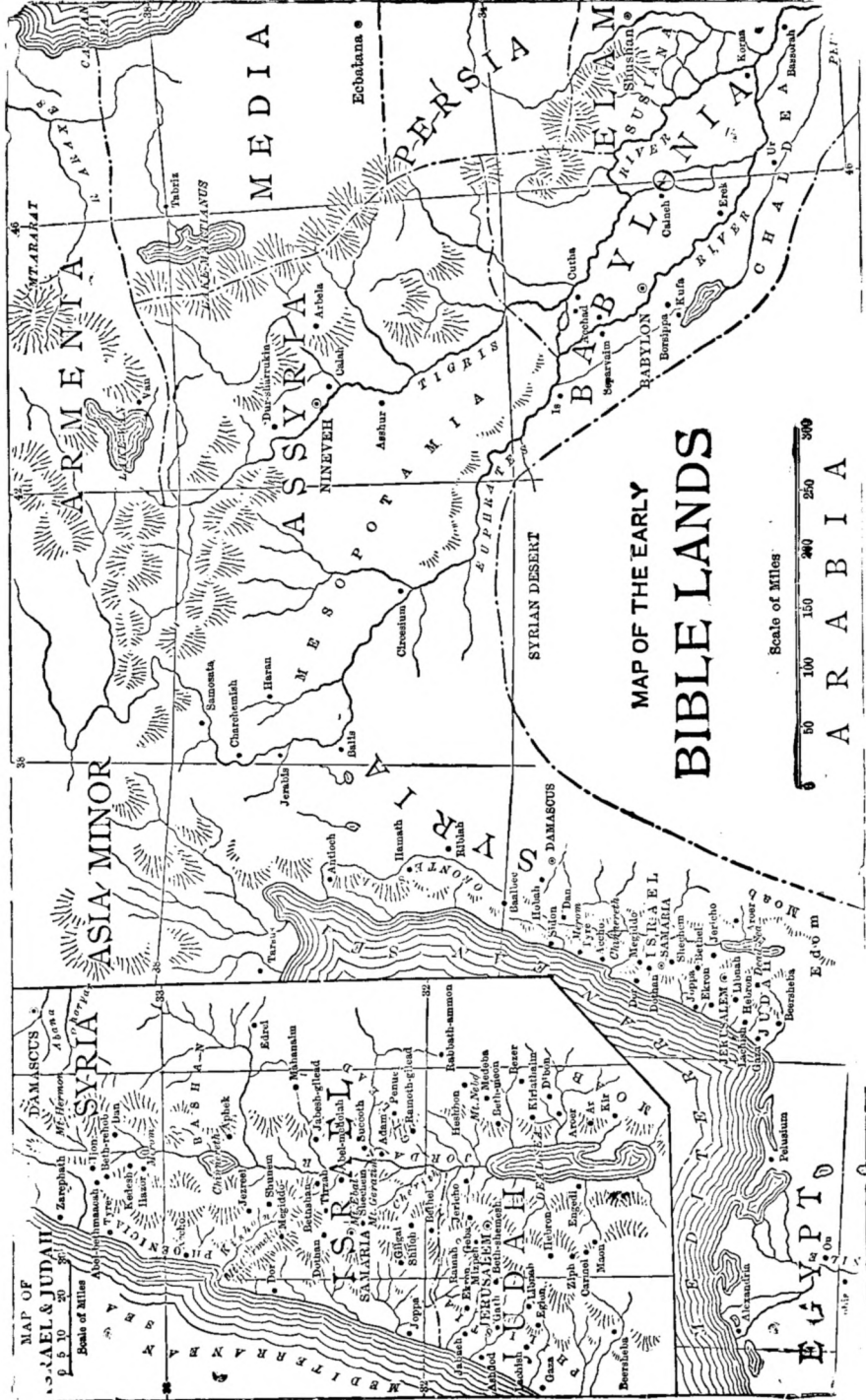
Ti-tus Justus, Acts 18: 7. A man of Corinth whose house Paul used for teaching.

Tro-as, Acts 16: 11. A city of Asia Minor where Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia asking for help.

Tro-phi-mus (foster-child), Acts 21: 29. A resident of Ephesus, and companion of Paul.

Ty-ran-nus (despot, tyrant), Acts 19: 9. A man of Ephesus in whose school Paul taught.

Zi-on (sunny), Isa. 2: 3. The name of a mountain in Jerusalem: and the name by which Jerusalem is sometimes called.



MAP OF
ISRAEL & JUDAH
0 5 10 20
Scale of Miles

MAP OF THE EARLY
BIBLE LANDS

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

FIRST QUARTER GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

AIM.—*To acquaint the student with the lives and characters of the great men and women of the Bible that he may profit by their example.*

Lesson I—January 3, 1954

ENOCH WHO WALKED WITH GOD

Lesson Text

Gen. 5: 20-24; Heb. 11: 5; Jude 14, 15.

20 And all the days of Ja'-red were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.

21 And E'-noch lived sixty and five years, and begat Me-thu'-se-lah:

22 And E'-noch walked with God after he begat Me-thu'-se-lah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

23 And all the days of E'-noch were three hundred sixty and five years:

24 And E'-noch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

5 By faith E'-noch was translated that he should not see death; and he

was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God.

14 And to these also E'-noch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?”*

(Amos 3: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Gen. 5: 1-19.

Daily Bible Readings

December 28. M.....	The Birth of Enoch (Gen. 4: 16-26)
December 29. T.....	Enoch, Father of Methuselah (Gen. 5: 21-24)
December 30. W.....	Faithfulness of Enoch (Heb. 11: 1-6)
December 31. T.....	Walking in Jehovah's Ways (Josh. 22: 1-5)
January 1. F.....	Walk in the Old Paths (Jer. 6: 1-16)
January 2. S.....	Walking in God's Ordinances (Jer. 37: 24-28)
January 3. S.....	Enoch, the Prophet (Jude 14, 15)

TIME.—FOR Genesis 3317 B.C.; for Hebrews A.D. 63; for Jude A.D. 65.

PLACES.—UNKNOWN.

PERSONS.—God and Enoch.

Golden Text Explained

1. The setting of the text. In order for us to get the setting of this text, it will be necessary for us to go back into the second chapter of Amos. There the reader will learn of the great sins of the people of the time of Amos, and these sins were making it impossible for God and Israel to walk together. In Amos 2: 6-8 the reader will find that God accused the people of six specific sins, which made it impossible for them to walk together. These sins were:

(1) They sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes; that is, they took bribes, and for these bribes rendered unjust decisions against the poor. (2) They panted after the dust on the heads of the poor. They were so greedy after land that they are pictured as actually panting for the dust on the heads of the poor, thus, they oppressed and took from the poor that which rightly belonged to them. (3) They turned aside the way of the meek; that is,

they were oppressive of the meek who would not take up for himself. (4) A man and his father go in unto the same maiden, thus committing unspeakable acts of fornication. (1 Cor. 5: 1-8.) (5) They kept the garments of the poor which were taken as security, and this contrary to the law of Moses. (Ex. 22: 7-26.) (6) They drank wine in the house of God. Following the enumeration of their sins, the prophet Amos enumerates many acts of the goodness and kindness of God to Israel. (Amos 2: 9-11.) The enumeration of the goodness of God to Israel made the sins of the people appear in even a darker light. Since Israel had committed these unspeakable sins in spite of the immeasurable goodness of God, it is no wonder that God would say to them that they could not walk together unless they were in agreement. Israel had gotten so far out of harmony with God and his will that it was not possible any longer for them to walk together.

2. **What walking: together implies.**

(a) Unity of purpose. If two people are going to work together on a certain project, they must have an understanding of what is to be accomplished, and they must have a common purpose if their efforts are to avail anything. So, when we walk with God, we must have the same purpose that God has. (b) Unity of action. Two cannot walk together and accomplish the same ends unless their actions are harmonious. In order for the operations of ten men to be called cooperation, those ten men must operate in the same direction for the same purpose. The fact that ten are in action does not mean that they are cooperating or that they are working together. There must be unity of action as well as unity of purpose, (c) There must be fellowship and communion among those who walk together. There must be a bond of sympathy one for another and of considerate understanding of each other if we walk together, (d) Walking with God implies our taking direction from him. Cooperation among human beings may be on a plane where each has the same rights as the other, but cooperation with God implies something different from that. We are ignorant and fallible but God is all wise and infallible. Hence, if we are going to walk with him, we must walk in harmony with his views.

We must take direction from him if we would walk right.

3. **Things which hinder our walk with God.**

(a) Too many business cares. It is right, even necessary, that men be engaged in the business activities of life. Men cannot provide for their own without becoming engaged in business affairs. (1 Tim. 5: 8.) But, it is entirely possible for an individual to become so engrossed in the affairs of his business that he forgets God. The man who thinks that he has to miss Sunday school in order to take care of affairs at his office or the shop will soon think it necessary for him to miss the worship Sunday morning, and after a while will take the whole day for his business and pleasure and thus rob God of the time and the worship that so justly belong to him. (b) Too much social life. Many church members are hindered in their walk with God because of their social engagements. Pressure is put upon them to miss Wednesday night prayer meeting or to miss the worship on Sunday night in order that they may go with their social crowd to one place or another. Card parties, television shows, and many other such like things that go with the social life of today take people away from church, consume time that ought to be spent in personal work and soul winning, and thus make it difficult for people to walk with God. (c) Worldly pleasures. While the things above mentioned may be among worldly pleasures, yet there are others of a slightly different nature which claim the interest of others; golfing, fishing, vacationing, etc. All of these may be legitimate in themselves but the excess to which many church members go in these activities make it impossible for them to walk with God. Two cannot walk together except they have agreed, and whenever an individual gives too much time, spends too much money in the pursuit of these worldly pleasures, he is not in agreement with God, hence cannot walk with him. (d) Fleshly lusts and passions. This is a step farther from the fellowship and communion of God than is suggested in the things listed above, but people do not take this step first. Usually they become involved in worldly pleasures and social life to the extent that they have drifted away from God and then they give

way to the baser lusts and passions of the flesh. For a detailed list of these works of the flesh which make it im-

possible for people to walk with God the reader should study Gal. 5:19-21.

Introduction

As we begin the study of another series of great Bible lessons, it will be well for us to think for a moment about the aim of these lessons. We aim, in these lessons to get acquainted with the great men and women of the Bible, and our purpose in getting acquainted with them is that we may profit by their example. (1) In order that we may profit by the example of these great men and women of the Bible, it will be necessary for us to see what it is in their lives that God approved. Since God never changes, he will approve in principle the same things today which he approved in the lives of men and women of ages past. (2) It will be necessary for us to look for some things of which God disapproved in the lives of these great men and women. God will disapprove in our lives today the same things he disapproved in their lives of the long ago. No one lesson is taught more clearly in the Bible than the fact that God approves of humble obedience on the part of his creatures and that he disapproves of proud and haughty disobedience on the part of his people. The things that people had to do in one age of the world

to obey God differ from the things which people had to do in other dispensations in order to obey God, but always the principle is the same; the obedient man is blessed, while the disobedient man is punished. (3) We may find encouragement in the fact that in every dispensation and generation, since the creation of man, people have been able to please God and to reap rewards therefor. And, if that be true, we may rest assured that in our generation we can, if we are determined so to do, live in such way as to please God and reap the reward of an obedient life. We should remember also that many of the ancient worthies lived under circumstances much more trying than those under which we live, and that they did not have the light nor the opportunities which we have for discerning the will of God and for living in harmony with his will. Hence, since our opportunities are greater, our responsibilities are greater. God will demand more of us; hence, we should give the more earnest thought and study to determine what is his will in order that we may meet these higher expectations.

Exposition of the Text

I. Enoch in the Old Testament

(Verses 20-24)

All the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years. Jared was the father of Enoch, the subject of our lesson. All we know of him is that he was the sixth patriarch from Adam, and that he was one hundred sixty-two years old at the time of the birth of Enoch. According to our best chronology, the human race was six hundred twenty-two years old when Enoch was born.

Enoch begat Methuselah. We are told that Enoch was sixty-five years old at the time of the birth of Methuselah. Of Enoch's son, Methuselah, we know nothing except that he was born, that he lived, begat sons and daughters, and died at the age of nine hundred sixty-nine. We know also that he died the year of the flood, but whether he died in the flood we have no way of knowing. A contrast was made between him

and his father, but we cannot be sure it is based on facts. Enoch walked with God, but no mention is made of such a pious life on the part of Methuselah. Some have regarded Enoch as actively good, while Methuselah was passively good. Enoch was one who did good, while Methuselah was one who did no evil.

Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah. Matthew Henry thinks that since we are told that Enoch walked with God through the years after he begat Methuselah, we are to conclude that Enoch did not walk with God before the birth of Methuselah. The conclusion is not well founded, though it does suggest that which is a fact in the lives of many men. When a child is born, they take life more seriously than before and hence begin to live a Godly life for the sake of their child.

And he was not; for God took him. Enoch lived on earth only three

hundred sixty-five years. His son lived nine hundred sixty-nine years, nearly three times as long as his father lived. We are led to believe that God took Enoch in order that he might reward Enoch for his pious life. This suggests that Paul told us the truth when he said it was far better to go on and be with Christ. (Phil. 1: 23, 24.) If there is not something better on the other side of the river of death, Enoch was not rewarded but cheated. It would be useless to speculate on how God took Enoch from the earth, but we do have some idea of how God took Elijah from the earth as related in 2 Kings 2: 9-12. It is interesting to note that in each dispensation of time God has taken one from the earth into heaven. In the patriarchal dispensation, Enoch was taken. In the Jewish dispensation Elijah was taken, and for the Christian dispensation, Jesus our Lord ascended in view of his disciples.

II. Enoch Walked by Faith (Heb. 11: 5)

By faith Enoch was translated. In this lesson we are taught that Enoch's exemption from death and his translation into heaven were on account of his faith. In the Old Testament we are told that he was taken because he walked with God. Putting these two together, we conclude that Enoch walked with God by faith, and as a result of that, he was translated to heaven. We may learn from this that if we expect to go to heaven we must walk with God by faith. To walk by faith simply means that we are to live in harmony with God's teaching. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10: 17.) Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5: 7.) Here, faith is contrasted with sight. Man naturally is inclined to walk by sight, but if he would be pleasing to God, he must walk by faith. Walking by faith, we do the things God commands us to do; hence, being directed by him in our walk, we are agreed with him and so have fellowship and communion with him. For a clear contrast of the two principles of life, one should study the story of Cain and Abel. Cain walked by sight while Abel walked by faith. Cain displeased God and was rejected by God. Abel pleased God and was accepted by God. So we today can be accepted by the Lord if we walk by

faith, but if we insist on walking by sight, by human wisdom, we will be rejected by the Lord.

That he should not see death. It is appointed unto men once to die. (Heb. 9: 27.) But Enoch was made an exception to the rule. By making Enoch an exception to the rule, God could teach the following lessons.

(1) The immortality of man. By taking Enoch without seeing death, God gave evidence of life beyond the experience we call death. (2) The conditions of immortality. Since Enoch was a man of faith who walked with God, his translation would teach the people of his day, and of subsequent times, that the condition of a peaceful life with God hereafter is walking with God by faith. (3) In this way God stimulated the desire of others to live a life of faith. This incident must have had a sobering effect upon the associates of Enoch. Furthermore, it should have encouraged those who were trying to follow the example of Enoch in walking with God.

He had been well-pleasing unto God. From this we learn that God is pleased when we walk by faith. God made an outward demonstration of his displeasure when Cain walked by human wisdom instead of faith. Whether he had made an outward demonstration from the days of Cain to the time of Enoch, we have no way of knowing, but this is the next recorded demonstration of his pleasure for one who walked by faith. Many people today practice things in their worship which they think will please God, but which they are not commanded in God's word to do. Every time God has openly manifested his pleasure for the works of man, it has been for those who obey his commandments; and when he has openly manifested his displeasure with the activities of man, it has been for those who acted contrary to his revealed will. Why should people think now that God would change and be pleased with those who walk according to human wisdom and not for those who walk according to his revealed will?

III. Jude Speaks of Enoch (Jude 14, 15)

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied. There has been much discussion as to where Jude got this quotation. There is a work known as the *Book of Enoch*, which had a

wide circulation in the days of the apostles and for some time later. It contains a statement very similar to this which Jude quotes and many think that Jude took this quotation from that book. Others say that this production could not have been written by Enoch, the seventh from Adam, and that, therefore, Jude got his statement of the prophecy of Enoch by revelation. We have not sufficient information to be dogmatic on the matter, but since Jude says that the Enoch which he quotes is the seventh from Adam, we may rest assured that the statement is from the Enoch of our lesson. But whether the statement was given him by the

revelation of God or whether he read it from a book, we cannot determine.

With ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment. Since Enoch walked with God and pleased God, while the majority of the people about him were ungodly, we may expect God to use him as a mouthpiece through which to warn the ungodly of the destruction that awaited them. Enoch could well be used as the mouthpiece of God to utter these warnings and condemnations because there was nothing in his life to compromise or to weaken the message and its effect upon the hearts of the people.

Lessons to Learn

1. Enoch did not change his associates in his translation, he only changed his place of association. He had walked with God and lived for God in this life, then he was translated where he still lives with God.

2. Enoch did not make a great change in his activities when translated. Here he served God and when translated he continued to serve God. If some people were immediately translated to heaven, they would have to make a great change both in

the character of their associates and the type of their activities. If there is too great a change to be made, we may conclude that we are not ready for heaven.

3. From Jude's statement we learn that Enoch was not in harmony with the majority of people in his day. He bore a message of condemnation for the people of his generation, and usually those who walk with God are out of harmony with the generation with which they live.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Why was it impossible for God and Israel to work together in the time of Amos?

State and discuss the six sins of which Amos accused Israel.

What made these sins appear in the darkest light possible?

Show how walking together implies unity of purpose.

Show why unity of action is essential to walking together.

What part do fellowship and communion have in walking together?

In what respect does our walking with God differ from our walking with another person?

Name and discuss four things which hinder our walk with God.

Are there other things which hinder members of this class from walking with God?

Introduction

What is the aim of the lessons for this quarter?

How can we profit from a study of Bible characters?

What lesson do we learn about obedience and disobedience from these characters?

Is obedience to God the same in all dispensations?

Name some advantages which we have over the ancient worthies in living obedient lives.

What effect will these superior advantages have on us in the day of judgment?

Enoch in the Old Testament

Who was Enoch's father, and how long did he live?

How old was the human race when Enoch was born?

Who was Enoch's son, and what do we know of him?

In what ways may we contrast the lives of Enoch and his son?

What fact is suggested by the statement that Enoch walked with God after he begat his son?

What lesson may we learn about heaven from a study of the translation of Enoch?

What do you know of other persons being taken into heaven?

Enoch Walked by Faith

What connection do you see between Enoch's faith and his translation?

With what does Paul contrast walking by faith?

Can you draw a clear contrast between walking by faith and walking by sight?

Name two Old Testament characters who illustrate these principles of walking.

To what general rule was Enoch made an exception?

State and discuss three lessons taught by making Enoch an exception to this rule.

Toward what activities of man has God always manifested his pleasure? and displeasure?

What conclusions should we reach from a consideration of these facts?

Jude Speaks of Enoch
 What did Jude say about Enoch?
 What do you know of the source of his information?
 How did Enoch differ from the majority of people about him?

What advantages would his way of life give him as a mouthpiece for God to his generation?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson II—January 10, 1954

NOAH FATHER OF THE NATIONS

Lesson Text

Gen. 9: 18-28

18 And the sons of Noah, that went forth from the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Ja'-pheth: and Ham is the father of Ca'-naan.

19 These three were the sons of Noah: and of these was the whole earth overspread.

20 And Noah began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard:

21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

22 And Ham, the father of Ca'-naan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

23 And Shem and Ja'-pheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and

covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done unto him.

25 And he said, Cursed be Ca'-naan; A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

26 And he said, Blessed be Je-ho'-vah, the God of Shem; And let Ca'-naan be his servant.

27 God enlarge Ja'-pheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Ca'-naan be his servant.

28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundance in the earth, and multiply therein"* (Gen. 9: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Gen. 9: 1-17.

Daily Bible Readings

January 4. M.....	God's Covenant with Noah (Gen. 9: 8-17)
January 5. T.....	Noah, "Preacher of Righteousness" (2 Pet. 2: 1-5)
January 6. W.....	Noah, Man of Great Faith (Heb. 11: 1-7)
January 7. T.....	Noah and Family Saved by Water (1 Pet. 3: 19-21)
January 8. F.....	God's Blessing on Noah (Gen. 9: 1-7)
January 9. S.....	Jesus Refers to Noah's Day (Matt. 24: 37-44)
January 10. S.....	The Generations of Noah (Gen. 10: 1-32)

TIME.—2347 B.C.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Echoes from Eden.** (a) It is interesting to compare the commission given the first pair with the commission given in this second beginning to Noah. The first commission given mankind reads, "and God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1: 28.) The language of our golden text is the

commission given to humanity in this second beginning of the race. In the first commission, man was told to subdue the earth as well as replenish it, but in the second commission, no mention is made of subduing the earth. Some think there is a significance to this, and that in sin man lost his right and power to subdue the earth. Hence, this was left out of the second commission. Again, in the first commission, man was told to have dominion over the fish, the birds, and every living thing that

moveth upon the earth; while in the second commission, no mention is made of this complete dominion, (b) It is interesting to note that in this second beginning God starts again with man as he is. Some have criticized God for beginning with a man who had the possibility of sinning and thus making a failure. If there had been a better way to do it, God could easily have wiped out the remaining eight lives, and started on another basis. But the fact that he made the second start on the same basis as he did the first is an indication of his wisdom in doing so.

2. **Man's responsibility.** In our text we learn that God made it the duty of man to be fruitful and multiply in the earth. In Gen. 1: 28; 2: 18-25; 3: 16; 4: 1, we learn that God intended that man should multiply and replenish the earth through the institution which we know as the family, (a) Since God intends that man shall multiply and replenish the earth, and since he provided the institution called the family, it becomes the duty of man to form such marriages with view to accomplishing man's mission. Man's mission is that of multiplying and replenishing the earth. Hence, man is obligated to form marriages with the view to multiplying on the earth. While this is certainly the general rule, Paul tells us that there can be exceptions to it. (1 Cor. 7: 32-35.) (b) Since this is the duty of man, it becomes a man to conduct the affairs of his home in harmony with this duty. To multiply himself upon the earth, man must of necessity accept certain responsibilities. He must be willing to work and provide food, clothing, and shelter for his offspring. He must be willing to accept the responsibility of teaching them and seeing that they are given an education sufficient to take care of themselves and discharge their duties to God and to mankind, (c) It becomes the duty of man to rear his children and to teach them that they have the same re-

sponsibility that he had. Each generation heirs from the preceding generation the duty of perpetuating the human race. Some people are so selfish that they do not wish to accept their responsibilities along this line. But they should remember that if every other person on earth were as selfish as they, the human race would become extinct in one generation. And no man has a right to conduct himself in such way that if every other person conducted himself in the same way, the human race would become extinct.

3. **Respect for God's laws.** Though the language of our text does not specify this point, other scriptures abundantly teach it, and its connection with our lesson makes it worth while, (a) In respecting the laws of God in reference to the multiplying and replenishing of mankind upon the earth, it should be observed that man should preserve the *unity* of the home. Lamech is the first man on record who destroyed the unity of the home by taking to himself two wives. (Gen. 4: 19.) The prophet tells us that God made only one wife for man because he sought a godly seed. (Mal. 2: 15.) If man wishes to replenish the earth with a godly seed, he must respect God's law concerning the unity of the home, (b) The sanctity of the home must not be sacrificed. If the unity of the home has been destroyed by polygamy, the sanctity of the home can be destroyed by fornication. Jesus tells us that God did not originally intend that man should put away his wife and marry again. (Matt. 19: 4, 8.) And in the following verse, **Jesus** tells us that if a man puts away his wife for any cause except for fornication and marries again, he commits adultery and whoever marries her that is put away commits adultery. In this way he guards the sanctity of the home. Paul gives much good practical advice as to how we may guard the sanctity of the home in 1 Cor. 7: 1-7.

Introduction

Our lesson this week deals with the second beginning of the human race. According to our best chronology, the first trial of the human race lasted 1656 years. During that time man fell from his purity and holiness in Eden to such a sinful degraded condition that it was necessary to

destroy all mankind except eight persons. As was the case with our first parents, so it was with Noah and his family. They were devoutly religious and God-fearing people. Noah's first act, upon coming out of the ark, was to build an altar and to offer clean beasts and birds upon **that**

altar as burnt offerings. (Gen. 8: 20.)

God made certain provisions for man in this new environment in which he found himself, (a) Food was provided for man. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; as the green herb have I given you all." (Gen. 9: 3.) At first it seems that God intended that man should be a vegetarian. (Gen. 1: 29, 30.) But in the second beginning God gives the flesh of beasts and birds to be food for man. (b) Another provision made for man was his protection. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." (Gen. 9: 6.)

Another interesting thing, by way of introduction, we find God making a covenant with man to the effect that he would never again destroy the world by a flood. And as a token of this covenant, God gave a rainbow. (Gen. 9: 12-16.) "Nature smiles through her tears, and the joint production of her smiling and weeping is the glorious arch of sevenfold splendor, painted on the dark

storm cloud, entrancing us into forgetfulness of the wrathful storm as we gaze upon the beautiful pledge of peace that touches earth and heaven. Thus the very waters that we dread combine with the sun to relieve our fears and to remind us of God's covenant of peace." (Evenings with the Bible, Vol. 1, p. 81.)

In these introductory matters it is worth while to mention that in this second beginning we have renewed emphasis and proof of the unity of mankind. The Bible teaches us that Eve was the mother of all living. (Gen. 3: 20.) There are many who deny this plain and positive statement of inspiration. But even if that were not true, we would still be impressed with the unity of mankind coming through Noah as the one head of the family in the second beginning. Since every human being, except Noah and his family, was destroyed in the flood, Noah becomes the second head of the human race, and from him all the various nations and families of the earth must have been derived.

Exposition of the Text

I. Noah and His Sons (Verses 18, 19)

Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Shem is usually regarded as the oldest son of Noah. However, conservative scholars have raised a question about the order of the birth of these sons of Noah. In Gen. 10: 21 we read, "And unto Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth." In the margin of the American Standard Version, instead of saying, "the elder brother of Japheth," we read "the brother of Japheth the elder." The Septuagint and a large number of prominent Jewish writers, together with Martin Luther, and others of later date, translate this verse to read, "the brother of Japheth who was older." Adam Clarke in his commentary also says that Japheth was the eldest son and that Ham was certainly the youngest of Noah's sons.

Of these was the whole earth overspread. For a detailed account of the descendants of these three sons of Noah, the student should read Gen. 10: 1-31. Scholars of the modernist group have denied the correctness of this table of nations given by Moses. But recent discoveries are turning the tide. "And the his-

torical truthfulness of the Mosaic document is further strikingly authenticated by the accredited results of ethnological science which, having undertaken a careful analysis of facts to establish the classification of races, has divided mankind into three primitive groups . . . corresponding not obscurely to the threefold arrangement of the present table, and presenting in each group the leading races that Genesis assigns to the several sons of Noah." (Pulpit Commentary.) This writer goes on to say that these recent discoveries not only divide the people of the world into three primitive groups, but also locates them in practically the same areas of the world that the Mosaic account locates them. The descendants of Japheth were located in Europe and northern Asia. The descendants of Ham were located in Egypt, Ethiopia, and a part of Arabia. The descendants of Shem were located between Japheth and Ham to the east of the Mediterranean, taking in Canaan and part of Assyria and Babylon. Another standard authority says, "The author groups the people of his day in such a way as to locate for us the chief descendants

of the sons of Noah, racially and geographically, though not always linguistically. The entire list of names has not yet been definitely located, but the progress made in recent years has surpassed all expectation. New light has come from many sources, and we expect in the not distant future every name to take its place among the families of that early day." (Monuments and the Old Testament, by Price.)

II. Sins of the Early Family (Verses 20-23)

Noah began to be a husbandman.

How long after the flood Noah began his activities as a farmer we have no way of knowing. Some suppose that Ham was already the father of Canaan at the time of the incident in our lesson. Canaan was the fourth son of Ham. (Gen. 10: 6.) Others suppose that Canaan had a part in his father's sin since the curse is pronounced upon Canaan. If that be true, the incident of our lesson happened a number of years after the flood. This verse throws some light upon Noah's activities to gain a livelihood.

He drank of the wine, and was drunken. Some writers try to justify Noah on the ground that this is the first time the grape had been cultivated and that Noah did not know that the juice of the grape would make him drunk. This is built upon a presumption. They presume that the grape had not been cultivated, and they presume that Noah was ignorant of the effect the wine would have upon him. They also presume that he got drunk the first time he tasted the wine. It is better to admit that a good man made a mistake than it is to indulge in false interpretations to cover up his mistakes.

He was uncovered within his tent. Strong drink caused Noah to do that which was unbecoming to him. Immediately following the death of Nadab and Abihu on account of their sin of offering strange fire (Lev. 10: 1-7), God told Aaron, "Drink no wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting, that ye die not. . . . and that ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean." In this there is the suggestion that one under the influence of strong drink cannot make a distinction between the clean and the un-

clean, between that which is holy and that which is evil.

Ham . . . saw the nakedness of his father. Ham's sin lay not in his accidental sight of his father in that shameful condition, but first, in wickedly rejoicing in what he saw, and second in reporting it undoubtedly with a malicious purpose to his brethren.

Shem and Japheth . . . covered the nakedness of their father. Ham showed a lack of refinement, a positive coarseness in his attitude toward his father, but Shem and Japheth showed a deep respect for their father and with something of a feeling of shame for his condition. They laid a garment upon their shoulder and walked backwards so as to cover their father that they might not see him in his shame. "The conduct of Shem and Japheth was such as became pious and affectionate children who appeared to have been in the habit of treating their father with decency, reverence, and obedient respect."

III. Prophetic Views of the Future (Verses 24-28)

Cursed be Canaan. Why the curse was placed upon Canaan instead of either of his three older brothers or upon Ham himself, we have no way of knowing. Those who think that this incident did not happen immediately after Noah left the ark take this verse as proof of their contention. They claim that Canaan was already a grown man and that he was already walking in the steps of his coarse, unrefined, and impious father. It should be remembered here also that the curse was a prophetic announcement of the relationship between the nations that should descend from these men and not a curse put on them personally in their personal relationships.

A servant of servants shall he be. This is the curse pronounced upon Canaan. He was to be a servant of both Shem and Japheth. This prophetic curse was fulfilled in the time of Joshua when the Israelites, descendants of Shem, partly exterminated and partly reduced to the lowest form of slavery the Canaanites, who were the descendants of Ham through his fourth son Canaan. And later the Persians, Macedonians, and Romans, who were descendants of Japheth, subjected the Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Egyptians, who

were descendants of the family of Japheth.

God enlarged Japheth. It was prophesied that Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem. Some have

taken this to mean that Japheth would drive out the descendants of Shem and dwell in his tents, but a more likely meaning is that Japheth would share in the blessings of Shem.

Lessons to Learn

1. Since all the races of mankind have a common origin, we should realize that we have a common purpose in life and a common destiny.

2. Strong drink renders a man incapable of using his right mind. It reduces him to shame and to poverty. Christians cannot afford to set ex-

amples before the world of tampering with that which is so destructive.

3. Even before Moses commanded children to honor their fathers and their mothers, it was the duty of sons to honor their parents. Ham and his descendants suffered because of a failure to follow this primitive rule.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Give the time, place, and persons.

Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

State the first commission God gave to mankind.

How do these commissions differ with reference to man's privilege of subduing the earth?

What proof do we have of the wisdom of God as manifested in making man as he is?

What other duty did God impose upon man with reference to the earth?

What institution did God give man through which to accomplish this task?

What does this responsibility suggest with reference to forming marriage union?

What responsibilities are suggested with reference to man in maintaining this union?

What duty does man have with reference to unity of the home?

Who was the first man on record to destroy the unity of the home?

What is meant by the sanctity of the home and how has our Lord legislated to preserve and protect that sanctity?

Introduction

How long did the first trial of the human race last?

Describe briefly what happened to man during that time of probation.

What was Noah's first act after coming out of the ark?

What two provisions did God make for man in Noah's time?

What covenant did God make with Noah and what was the sign of it?

What lesson have you learned about the unity of the human race?

Noah and His Sons

Name the sons of Noah in the order of their birth.

What is said in our lesson of the historical truthfulness of the Mosaic document?

In what part of the world did the descendants of Japheth live?

In what part did the descendants of Ham live?

Locate the descendants of Shem.

We are the descendants of which one of these sons?

From which one of these sons of Noah did our Lord come?

Sins of the Early Family

What occupation did Noah follow?

What do you know of Canaan?

What was Noah's first recorded sin after leaving the ark?

What does drunkenness usually cause people to do?

What did God say to Aaron about the effect of strong drink?

What was the sin of Ham on this occasion?

Contrast his actions with that of Shem and Japheth.

Prophetic Views of the Future

Who was Canaan and why was the curse pronounced upon him?

What does this suggest with reference to the time of the son of Ham?

What was the curse pronounced upon Canaan?

When was this prophetic curse fulfilled?

Who was to dwell in the tents of Shem?

What is meant by the dwelling in the tents of Shem?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—January 17, 1954

ABRAHAM THE FAITHFUL

Lesson Text

Gen. 12: 1-5; Heb. 11: 8-10, 17-19

1 Now Je-ho'-vah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing;

3 And I will bless them that bless

thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram went, as Je-ho'-vah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Ha'-ran.

5 And Abram took Sa'-rai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Ha'-ran; and they went forth to go into the land of Ca'-naan; and into the land of Ca'-naan they came.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not

knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a *land* not his own, dwelling in tents, with I'-saac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

17 By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up I'-saac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

18 *Even he* to whom it was said, In I'-saac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God *is* able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back.

Golden Text.—*“And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness(Rom. 4: 3.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 22: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

January 11. M.....	Abraham's Call (Gen. 12: 1-3)
January 12. T.....	Abraham and Lot (Gen. 13: 7-18)
January 13. W.....	Abraham and the Kings (Gen. 14: 13-24)
January 14. T.....	A Prayer of Faith (Gen. 18: 23-32)
January 15. F.....	The Triumphs of Faith (Heb. 11: 8-12)
January 16. S.....	Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22: 1-8)
January 17. S.....	God's Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17: 1-9)

TIME.—1921 B.C. for Genesis; A.D. 63 for Hebrews.

PLACES.—Haran and Canaan.

PERSONS.—Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Isaac and Jehovah.

Golden Text Explained

1. Abraham believed God. (a)

What Abraham believed. Our text is found in the writings of Paul to the church at Rome, but it is a quotation from Gen. 15: 6. And in the context of this passage in Genesis is found the thing which Abraham believed. In Gal. 3: 8 Paul says the gospel was preached beforehand unto Abraham. Some people think that Abraham believed the same gospel that we are to believe in order to be saved; but this is not true. The gospel which was preached to Abraham was the good news that in his seed all the nations should be blessed. Gen. 15: 3, 4. (b) Abraham believed this in spite of difficulties. In Gen. 18: 10-14 we have the record of the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, and there it is said that both Abraham and Sarah were old and well-stricken in age. Furthermore, that "it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women." Paul

sums up these matters in Rom. 4: 16-22 by speaking of Abraham being then as good as dead as far as accomplishing the purposes which God proposed to accomplish through him, and the "deadness of Sarah's womb." But Paul indicates that Abraham did not allow these seemingly impossible circumstances to hinder his belief of the word of God. He describes the faith of Abraham in these words. "Looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." This last statement seems to say that Abraham's faith was reckoned for righteousness because of the fact that it was capable of overcoming these seemingly impossible circumstances. (c) Abraham believed God and was willing to wait

for the fulfillment of the promise. Abraham's faith was a waiting faith. Abraham was seventy-five years old when the promise was first made to him that he would become a great nation. He was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. So for twenty-five years Abraham patiently waited for the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise. It takes a strong faith to wait twenty-five years for the beginning of a fulfillment.

2. Abraham's faith counted for righteousness. Some have made the mistake of interpreting this verse to mean that since man cannot live a perfectly righteous life, God accepts his faith instead of, or in the place of, righteousness. It is true that man does not live a perfectly righteous life. It is also true that man must have faith in God to be saved from his unrighteousness, but it is not true to say that God accepts a man's faith in the place of the righteousness which he demands of us. The word *reckoned* in our text means, "to count a thing to a person is to set it down to his advantage; to so value and use it, in reckoning, as to cause it to inure to his future benefit." (Lard's Commentary on Homans.) The word righteousness in our text simply means a state of justification. If the student will read Rom. 4: 5, he will find Paul saying that God *justifies* the ungodly and his faith is reckoned for *righteousness*. These two words, *justify* and *right-*

eousness, are translated from the same Greek word, one of them being the verb form, the other the noun form. Hence, our text might well read that Abraham believed God, and his belief was reckoned or set down to his account in order to his justification. From James we learn that faith was not the sole condition of his justification. (James 2: 21-24). Abraham was given credit for his faith toward his justification, but faith was not the sole condition of justification. His faith had to express itself in obedience to God. But if someone objects to this because Paul says in Rom. 4: 4, 5 that it is not the one who works that is justified, but the one that believes, thus contrasting salvation by works and salvation by faith, we insist that Paul had in mind the works of the law and not obedience to gospel commandments. Paul nowhere teaches that one can be saved or justified by faith apart from obedience to gospel commandments, but he does everywhere insist that one can be saved by faith apart from the works of the law. (Rom. 3: 28.) If Paul teaches that one is saved or justified by faith, apart from obedience to gospel commandments, he would be hopelessly contradicted by James. Not only would he be contradicted by James, but he would even contradict himself, for he declares that nothing avails anything in Christ except a faith which works by love. (Gal. 5: 6.)

Introduction

From Stephen's speech in Acts 7 we learn that Abraham's first call was received while he yet lived in Ur of the Chaldees. Many of us have thought of Abraham as leaving a place with no greater conveniences and no higher standards of living than he found when he came into Canaan, but archaeologists, in recent years, have unearthed remains in old Ur of Chaldea that show that the Chaldeans had attained a state of civilization much higher than the people of Canaan. In fact, we learn of buildings four and five stories high, which covered more than a city block of land. Many residences were two stories high. Great libraries have been unearthed in Ur. The city was the center of the worship of the sun god in that section of the country. We are told that the city of Ur, in the days of Abraham, would

compare very favorably with the modern city of Bagdad. Would we be willing to leave our homes in the cities, with all their modern conveniences, and go to a foreign land and live in tents in order to obey a command of God? This was a test of faith which many of us would fail to stand.

The greatness of Abraham's faith, in a day when there was so little faith on the earth, may be accounted for (1) by Abraham's frequent communion with God. God first visited him in Ur and then some years later in Haran. When Abraham had removed to Canaan, God visited him more frequently. Abraham reared an altar everywhere he went, except on his journey to Egypt, and worshiped God faithfully and regularly. From the fifteenth chapter of Genesis through the twenty-second we have

records of numerous visits of Jehovah with Abraham. These visits undoubtedly served to increase and strengthen his faith. (2) Abraham's continual exercise of his faith led to the strengthening of that faith. Faith unexercised will weaken and

die, but faith which is continuously exercised by obedience to the commands of God will grow. Abraham's prompt obedience to every commandment of God was a guarantee of the exercise of faith which would cause it to become strong.

Exposition of the Text

I. Faith Responds to the Call (Verses 1-5)

Get thee out of thy country. In Acts 7: 1-4 Stephen tells us that God called Abraham while he was yet in Ur of the Chaldees. In Gen. 11: 27-32 Moses tells us that Abraham came with his father Terah and Nahor his brother out of Ur of Chaldees into Haran, where they dwelt until the death of Terah. The call was for Abraham to separate himself not only from his country but from his kindred, even his father's house, to go into the land that the Lord would show him. The faith of Abraham is emphasized by the fact that he left his home country without knowing where he was to go. In Gen. 11: 31 we read that Abraham and his company went forth from Ur of the Chaldees to go "into the land of Canaan." But from that portion of our lesson text which is in Heb. 11 we learn that Abraham did not know where he was going at the time he left Chaldaea.

And I will make of thee a great nation. The nation which came out of Abraham may be called great (1) because of its numbers. Though the nation was never so great numerically at any one time as some other nations, yet its continued existence through the centuries causes it to rank numerically with the great nations of the earth. (2) The nation coming out of Abraham is great in its influence on the world. Moses made a great contribution to the legal world, and David made a great contribution to the world of music and poetry. (3) The nation coming out of Abraham was great in its spiritual contribution to the world. We are indebted to that nation for the Old Testament and for much of the New Testament. We are indebted to that nation for Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, and for the church built by him. Hence, the spiritual influence of that nation exceeds that of any other nation known to the world. No wonder Jehovah said that he would make the name of Abraham

great and that he should be a blessing.

I will bless them that bless thee. In this way God assured Abraham of providential protection through life. Those who had a kindly attitude toward Abraham were blessed by the Lord, while those who were hostile toward Abraham were cursed by the Lord.

In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. In Gen. 22: 18 we read "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Whether the promise is spoken of as being in Abraham or in his seed, it amounts to the same thing. Paul said that God had Christ in mind when he made the promise because he used the singular form of the word seed and not the plural form. (Gal. 3: 16.) So when God called Abraham out of Ur of Chaldees to make of him a great nation, and promised him that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, he had in mind Jesus, whom he would send into the world through the posterity of Abraham, that all the nations of the earth might be blessed in him.

Lot went with him. Lot was the son of Haran, who was the son of Terah. So Lot was the nephew of Abraham. There are at least three things that should be remembered about Lot. (1) The unwise choice which Lot made when he turned his steps toward Sodom. (Gen. 13.) (2) The destruction of Sodom and the deliverance of Lot who lost his wife because she looked back. (Gen. 19.) And (3) the descent of the Moabites and the Ammonites from the two daughters of Lot. (Gen. 19: 30-38.)

All their substance . . . and the souls that they had gotten in Haran. Our text tells us that Abraham gathered all the substance which he had acquired before he went into Canaan. We are told also that he gathered all the souls which he had gotten in Haran and went toward Canaan. Some believe that these souls are people whom Abraham had converted to his view of God, but likely

this refers to the servants which Abraham had acquired. In Gen. 14: 14 we learn that Abraham had three hundred eighteen trained men born in his house.

II. Faith Waits for the Promise (Heb.

11: 8-10)

By faith Abraham . . . obeyed. Faith was the moving principle of Abraham's obedience. Without faith there can be no obedience. Paul says we walk by faith. (2 Cor. 5: 7.) Without faith there can be no walking with God. Walking with God is faith in action. Paul teaches us that faith works by love. (Gal. 5: 6.) Abraham's obedience mentioned in our text is the work which Abraham did. So Abraham's faith worked.

A place which he was to receive for an inheritance. There are some who emphasize the fact that Abraham was to receive the land of Canaan as his inheritance, and of the further fact that he did not actually receive it as an inheritance himself, but that his seed received or inherited it after him. On this they build the theory that Abraham, and other Jews, are to be brought back to this earth that the promise may be fulfilled to him. But in Heb. 11: 13-16 we learn that Abraham understood that the promise was to be fulfilled in his seed after him and that he was to receive a better country, a heavenly one.

By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise. Here was the period of waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. During this period of waiting, the faith of the patriarchs never wavered. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." By their experiences and communion with Jehovah, their hopes were lifted above the temporal Canaan to that heavenly country for which reason "God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

He looked for the city which hath the foundations. If anyone has any doubt that Abraham lifted his eyes above the temporal Canaan to the heavenly land, this verse of our text should set them at rest. What a disappointment it would be for Abraham to be taken out of that city whose

builder and maker is God to be brought back to the old temporal Jerusalem and the Canaan surrounding it. To be taken out of that heavenly city and be brought back to that earthly city would be the greatest disappointment that could ever be brought to Abraham.

III. Faith Sorely Tried (Verses 17-19)

By faith Abraham . . . offered up Isaac. Here again faith is the motivating principle in Abraham. It was his faith which moved him to offer his son.

He that had gladly received the promises. The promises referred to here were to the effect that he should have a numerous posterity through his son Isaac, and that in one of that posterity all nations of the earth would be blessed. But now the command comes to offer his son as a sacrifice. This seemed to be contrary to the promises. How could these promises be fulfilled if the son were to be offered in sacrifice?

Accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead. Abraham believed that God was able to fulfill his promise that he would bless the world through his son, even though he must offer him as a burnt sacrifice. He believed that God would keep his promise to bless the world through Isaac, and yet he was willing to obey the command to sacrifice Isaac. The only way Abraham could harmonize the two was to expect God to raise Isaac from the dead. Hence, it was Abraham's *opinion* that, after he had offered Isaac as a burnt offering, God would raise his body back to life. Here we have a contrast between *faith* and *opinion*. It was Abraham's *faith* that God would bless the world through Isaac, and his faith was based upon God's promise. It was Abraham's *opinion* that God would raise Isaac from the dead, and his opinion was based, not upon evidence, but simply upon his conjecture or human reasoning.

From whence he did also in a figure receive him back. This statement tells us that Abraham figuratively received Isaac back from the dead. "Abraham received him back from the altar, as one raised from the dead. He had been *figuratively* sacrificed; and he was therefore now *figuratively* raised from the dead and restored to his father, as a reward

for his fidelity. For as Bloomfield says, 'Isaac was in a manner dead in his father's opinion and in his own,

and he was restored to his father from the gates of the grave.' " (Milligan.)

Lessons to Learn

1. Abraham could have believed everything God told him about a land which he would give him and yet never have left Ur of the Chaldees, but such a faith without works would not have profited Abraham. If he had not obeyed to go out into a land which God told him about, he would never have been called the father of the faithful. Faith without works is dead.

2. Those who see and appreciate only that which is temporal and physical in life can never be the genuine children of Abraham. Abraham was able to look beyond the temporal land of Canaan to a city that had foundations whose builder

and maker is God. Let us lift our eyes by faith from this world and the honors of this world unto heaven and the prospects of enjoyment of heaven with the redeemed throughout all eternity.

3. Let us never say that we believe any thing which we cannot read in God's word. Any idea or position which we hold, for which we cannot give a thus saith the Lord, is opinion, not faith; and let us remember that if Abraham, the father of the faithful, was wrong in his opinion about God raising Isaac from the dead, we will likely be wrong in our opinions.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word gospel?
What gospel was preached to Abraham at this time?
What was counted to Abraham for righteousness?
Show how Abraham believed in spite of difficulties.
Show how Abraham's faith was willing to wait for the fulfillment of the promise.
What is the meaning of the word reckoned?
What is the meaning of the word righteousness in our text?
What does James teach us about justification?
What kind of works is not essential to our salvation?
What kind of works does God require in order that we might be saved?
Can you harmonize the teaching of Paul with that of James on the subject of justification?

Introduction

Where did Abraham live when he received his first call?
Tell what you know of the state of civilization in Ur of Chaldee in Abraham's day.
What God was worshiped in the city of Ur?
Name and discuss two ways in which we may account for the great faith of Abraham.
What will prompt obedience to God's commandments have to do with the strength of our faith?

Faith Responds to the Call

Where was Abraham's first stop after leaving Chaldea?
Who accompanied him on this journey?

Did Abraham know where he was going when he left Chaldea?
What promise did God make Abraham with reference to a nation?
Name and discuss three ways which this nation was great.
What effect did people's attitude toward Abraham have upon their own lives?
Who were to be blessed in Abraham and his seed?
To whom did the word seed refer?
Who was Lot and what was said of him in our lesson?
What do you know of the souls which Abraham had acquired in Haran?

Faith Waits for the Promise

What was the moving principle of Abraham's obedience?
What is the relation between faith and walking with God?
How much of the land of Canaan did Abraham actually own?
In what way did Abraham understand the promise of God to be fulfilled to him?
What words are used to express Abraham's relation to the land of promise and what lessons are suggested by the use of these words?
For what did Abraham look?

Faith Sorely Tried

What was the greatest trial of Abraham's faith?
How did Abraham harmonize the promises of God with the command to offer his son in sacrifice?
Contrast Abraham's faith with Abraham's opinion.
What lesson should this teach us with reference to the accuracy of man's opinions in general?
From what did Abraham figuratively receive his son?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—January 24, 1954

JOSEPH WHO SAVED HIS PEOPLE

Lesson Text

Gen. 45: 6-13; 46: 2-7

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pha-raoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of E'-gypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all E'-gypt: come down unto me, tarry not;

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Go'-shen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for there are yet five years of famine; lest thou come to poverty, thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Ben'-ja-min, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in E'-gypt, and of all that ye have seen: and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

2 And God spake unto Is'-ra-el in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into E'-gypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4 I will go down with thee into E'-gypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Be'-er-she'-ba: and the sons of is'-ra-el carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pha-raoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Ca'-naan, and came into E'-gypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into E'-gypt.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee."* (Ex. 20: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 45: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

January 18. M. Joseph and His Brothers (Gen. 37: 1-8)
 January 19. T. Joseph Is Sold into Egypt (Gen. 37: 23-28)
 January 20. W. Grief of Jacob (Gen. 37: 29-36)
 January 21. T. Providence in the Life of Joseph (Psalm 105: 7-24)
 January 22. F. Joseph Visited by His Brothers (Gen. 42: 1-17)
 January 23. S. Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers (Gen. 45: 1-15)
 January 24. S. Joseph and Jacob in Egypt (Gen. 46: 1-7)

TIME.—1707 B.C.

PLACES.—Canaan and Egypt.

PERSONS.—Jacob, Joseph, and his brethren.

Golden Text Explained

1. Duties imposed upon children.
 The commandment for children to honor their fathers and their mothers poses two duties upon them. (1) Obedience. The wise man said, "My son, keep the commandment of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy

mother." (Prov. 6: 20.) Again, "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." (Prov. 23: 22.) The apostle Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and

mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. 6: 1-3.) From this we learn that in order for children to honor their parents they must obey them in the Lord.

(2) Helpfulness to aged parents. Not only must children obey their parents while they are young, but when the children are grown and independent, and the parents are old and in need of help, children must render assistance to their parents. If they refuse to render necessary assistance, they dishonor their parents. "For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God, he shall not honor his father." (Matt. 15: 4, 5.) The Jews had a tradition which allowed them to devote things to God in order to keep from sharing those things with their aged needy parents. A thing devoted to God could not be eaten, hence, they saved their face before their parents, and saved the animal which their parents needed to sustain their lives. Jesus condemned this tradition and said that by that tradition they had made void the word of God. But from this we learn that honoring father and mother includes helpfulness to needy parents.

2. **Promises made to children.** The promise which accompanied this commandment was that they might live long in the land which Jehovah would give to them, (a) This promise had an individual application.

The individual child which honored father and mother had the promise of long life. Certainly the Lord did not mean to say that obedience was the sole condition of long life. But the Lord does mean to teach that obedience to parents will contribute to a long life. Children who are obedient to parents will not indulge in dissipation and recklessness which often shorten people's lives. But aside from this natural consequence of obedience, the promise of God still holds true, that God will favor, will bless those children who are obedient to parents, (b) This commandment has also a national significance. Some commentators think that the national significance is all that was intended in the promise; that if children generally would be obedient to their parents they would also be obedient to God, and that their obedience would give them the right to live in their land, that the Lord would guarantee the nation long life and tenure of the land given to them on account of obedience.

3. **General good derived from honoring parents.** On this point we can do no better than quote from the Pulpit Commentary as follows: "Obedience to parents is the condition of national prosperity. (1) It is respect for law and loyal acceptance of the teachings of the past. (2) It is denial of the spirit of self will and self pleasing. (3) It guards youth from excess and vice. (4) It prepares for the understanding of and submission to the will of God. (5) It lays broad and deep in the nation's life the foundations of industry and strength and of moral, as well as material, greatness."

Introduction

Beginning with the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis we have the story of Joseph and his brethren. It will be necessary for the student to review these chapters in order to understand the lesson which we have for today. To get the proper setting for our lesson, it will be necessary to ask and answer two questions. (1) Why was Joseph in Egypt at the time of our lesson? In order to answer that question, it is necessary for us to remember that Joseph was the first son of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. Leah bare Jacob six sons. Each of the other three wives bare him two sons. Rachel was barren

until the other wives had borne ten sons to Jacob. Then came Joseph and a few years later Benjamin. Because of Jacob's love for Rachel and for the fact that she died while giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob loved her sons more than he loved the others. He was foolish enough to make a distinction between the sons, allowing the other ten to know that he loved these two more. Joseph had dreams of his brothers bowing down to him, and this caused the brothers to hate him even more. So when he went to check on their movements and bring word to his father, his brothers intended to kill him, but later decided

to sell him to Ishmaelites passing through the country. These men in turn sold him to Potiphar in Egypt, and thus we have the answer to our first question, why Joseph was in Egypt at this time. (2) Why did Joseph treat the brothers as he did when they came to buy grain? The student should read carefully the rough, harsh treatment which Joseph gave his brethren when they came to buy grain. In the first place Joseph probably did not care for his father, for he supposed that his father knew that his brothers had sold him and that he did not care enough for his son to spend his money bringing him back out of Egypt. He did not care for his brothers, for they were the murderous,

mercenary men who sold him into that life of bondage. Hence, he intended to treat them in such way that they would not return, yet he held one of them a hostage to guarantee delivery of Benjamin, his only full brother, who had no part in the injury done to him twenty-two years before. It was not until Judah made the speech, which is recorded in Gen. 44: 18-34, that Joseph learned that his father thought that he was dead. Nor was it until this speech was made that Joseph learned that his ten brothers had changed from the murderous, mercenary men that they were when they sold him unto men who respected their father and who were willing to suffer for protection of their younger brother.

Exposition of the Text

I. Joseph Sees the Hand of God in

His Life (Verses 6-8)

These two years hath the famine been in the land. At this time Joseph was thirty-nine years old. He was seventeen years old when he was sold by his brothers. (Gen. 37: 2.) He was thirty years of age when he was made ruler of Egypt. (Gen. 41: 46.) Our text tells us that there had been seven years of plenty and two years of famine at the time Joseph was made known unto his brethren, hence, the total number of years of Joseph's life was thirty-nine.

God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant. No doubt Joseph believed that God was with him, blessing him and guiding him in his activities in Egypt, but until now Joseph had not seen the hand of God in sending him into Egypt. All that Joseph could know was that his wicked brothers sold him and that his father did not care enough about him to find him and buy back his freedom. We often lose the practical good to be obtained from these Old Testament stories because we look upon them as being miraculous through and through. We also judge that the characters in these stories understood them while the action was going on in the same light in which we now understand them. But there is not anything miraculous in this whole series of events except the power given Joseph to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh and his servants; and while these events were transpiring, it was impossible for Joseph to know whether God was directing

the course of events or not. But when the series of events came to a head or conclusion, Joseph could then look back over them and see clearly the hand of providence in them.

So *now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.* These words are meant for the comfort and consolation of the brothers lest they worry too much over their crime of selling Joseph. The true sense of the statement is it was not you *only* that sent me hither, but God. The brothers had one purpose in selling Joseph into Egypt, and God had another purpose in sending Joseph to Egypt. The same statement could be made about the death of Christ. It could be said that it was not the Jews *only* who delivered up Christ to death, but God. (Compare Acts 2: 23 and 3: 13). God had one purpose in delivering him up, but the Jews had another purpose in delivering him.

He hath made me a father to Pharaoh. It is thought that the word father here is used in the sense of an official title, the name of an office. Others think that it simply means, "a wise and confidential friend and counselor."

II. Joseph Provides for His People

(Verses 5-13)

Come down unto me. Joseph gave his brothers instruction to hasten back to their father and tell him to come to him without delay. To encourage his father, he told his brothers to tell his father that he had been made lord of all Egypt. Joseph had

been raised to this position because of his wisdom and purity of life. Daniel was raised to a similar position in Babylon. And, again, we see that it was his wisdom and purity of life and his determination to live for God who enabled him to rise to such a position, though in captivity. Sometimes men in business think that they cannot be promoted without stooping to things beneath the Christian level, but this is a mistake. Even men in business appreciate and will honor truth, loyalty, and purity in a man. We do not have to sacrifice Christian character in order to succeed in legitimate business. If one must sacrifice these characteristics to succeed in business, he is in the wrong business.

Thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen. The land of Goshen was that portion of Egypt which was nearest Canaan. Travelers coming from Canaan down into Egypt would necessarily pass through Goshen. This part of Egypt was best suited for the Israelites, being shepherds. It was not as low as the land in the valley of the Nile. It was not overflowed as was the Nile valley and thus afforded good pasture land for sheep. It was somewhat cut off by the natural lay of the country, and so their tending the sheep and feeding of sheep and cattle would not be an abomination to the Egyptians. Since the Egyptians worshiped cattle, the habits of the Jews would be abominable in their sight. Hence, it was best that they live in a portion of Egypt which was somewhat secluded.

There will I nourish thee. Here we see more of Joseph's dreams being fulfilled. His brothers have already come, as his dream indicated they would, and bowed themselves down to him. Now his father is coming and will be dependent upon him for his nourishment. Hence, the dream in every detail, is being fulfilled. Joseph reminded his brethren that there were yet five years of the famine and that the family could scarcely survive those years of famine without coming to Egypt. Hence, it was for the saving of life, the preserving of the nation.

III. The Family Comes to Joseph

(Gen. 46: 2-7)

God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night. Though Jacob began his journey towards Egypt, it

seems that it was with some misgiving, for he stopped at Beersheba to offer sacrifice, and no doubt to inquire of God as to whether he should make that journey. Torn between his desire to see his beloved son Joseph and his fears of leaving the land of Canaan, he worships God in the hope that he may determine the will of God. Isaac had been forbidden to go into Egypt in a time of famine. (Gen. 26: 2.) The bondage of the people had been foretold to Abraham. (Gen. 15: 13.) No doubt Jacob knew of this prophecy and knew that his father Isaac had been forbidden to go; hence, he wished to ascertain the will of God in the matter.

Fear not to go down into Egypt.

In these words God quiets the fears of Jacob. The reasons why Jacob was not to be afraid to go to Egypt are: (1) God said he would make a great nation of him. Perhaps Jacob feared that his going into Egypt would make it impossible for his posterity to grow into a great nation, but God said that even in Egypt he would make of him a great nation. (2) God said I will go down with thee into Egypt. God promised to be with Jacob in Egypt as he had been with him in the promised land.

(3) I will also surely bring thee up again, said God. This would tend to allay his fears of going into Egypt. Jacob knew that Canaan was the land of promise, and so God said that he would bring him out of Egypt into Canaan again. (4) Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. This is a statement difficult to be understood until we remember, that in death, the eyelids have to be closed and held that way until set, and it was the custom of the people in those days to depend upon their children and those most loved to render that last little service. So God promised Jacob that Joseph would perform that service for him in Egypt, thus encouraging him to go to his son.

They . . . came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him. There has been some discussion as to actually how many people went into Egypt at this time. In Gen. 46: 8-27 we are given a list of the people who made the trip from Canaan to Egypt. In all there were sixty-seven people. Yet, in the last part of the twenty-seventh verse we are told that all the souls of the house of Jacob that went into Egypt were threescore and ten.

However, Joseph and his two sons were already in Egypt, and are included in that threescore and ten. Stephen says that there were three score and fifteen souls that went into Egypt. (Acts 7: 14.) On this point Brother McGarvey says, "Stephen, being an Hellenist, read the scriptures in the Greek translation, as did his adversaries in the foreign synagogue, and as did the great majority of the Jewish people, to whom the

original Hebrew was already a dead language. His Greek Bible, the Septuagint version, gives precisely the number of names which he here quotes. It reads: 'All the souls of the house of Jacob who went with Jacob into Egypt, were seventy-five souls'; and it makes the additional five, by giving, at verse twenty, the names of two sons of Manasseh, two of Ephraim, and one grandson of the latter."

Lessons to Learn

1. In the story of Joseph we see the providence of God in the care of not only a nation but of an individual. God's providence still operates for the care of his people. All things work together for good to them that love the Lord.

2. We see that God often has one purpose in a certain event, and men connected with the event have another purpose. The holy purpose

which God has does not excuse the unholy purpose which men have in the evil that they do.

3. Jacob's habit of worshipping God, of continual communion with God, enabled him to determine the will of God in the affairs of life. If we will live close to God, worship and serve him faithfully, we may realize that his overruling providence will guide us to do the will of God.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is the first duty imposed upon children by our text?
What does Solomon say about this duty?
What does the apostle Paul teach with reference to this duty?
What is the second duty imposed upon children by our text?
How did Jesus teach this lesson to the people of his day?
What promise accompanied this commandment to children?
Discuss this promise from the individual and national viewpoint.
State and discuss five reasons why obedience to parents is the condition of national prosperity.

Introduction

How many wives and how many sons did Jacob have?
How many sons did Rachel bare to Jacob?
What mistake did Jacob make in his attitude toward his sons?
How did this affect the attitude of Joseph's brothers toward him?
Why did Joseph treat his brothers harshly when they came to Egypt to buy grain?
How long had Joseph been in Egypt when his brothers first came?
What did Joseph learn from the speech which Judah made before him?
What change in life had come over Joseph's brethren since they had sold him?

Joseph Sees the Hand of God In His Life

How old was Joseph at the time of our lesson?

How old was Joseph when he was made ruler of Egypt?

What was God's purpose in sending Joseph to Egypt?

What was the purpose of his brothers in selling him?

What part did miracles play in God's dealing with Joseph?

When did Joseph fully realize the providence of God in his life?

How did Joseph give comfort and consolation to his brothers?

What is meant by making Joseph a father to Pharaoh?

Joseph Provides for His People

What did Joseph do to preserve the life of his family?

What lessons can business men learn from the purity of the life of Joseph?

In what portion of Egypt did Joseph's people dwell?

Why were they given this portion of the land for a dwelling?

Why would the activities of the Jews be abominable in the sight of the Egyptians?

In what ways were the dreams of Joseph fulfilled in the incidents of our lesson?

The Family Comes to Joseph

For what purpose did Jacob stop in Beer-sheba?

Why did Jacob fear to go to Egypt?

Name and discuss four reasons why God said Jacob should not be afraid to go to Egypt.

What is meant by putting one's hand upon another's eyes?

How many people went into Egypt at this time?

Can you harmonize this statement with that of Stephen in Acts 7?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—January 31, 1954

MOSES RECEIVES HIS COMMISSION

Lesson Text

Ex. 3: 11-22

11 And Mó'ses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pha-raoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Is'-ra-el out of E'-gypt?

12 And he said. Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of E'-gypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

13 And Mó'ses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Is'-ra-el, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Mó'ses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Is'-ra-el, I AM hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Mó'ses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Is'-ra-el, Je-ho'-vah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of I'-saac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

16 Go, and gather the elders of Is'-ra-el together, and say unto them, Je-ho'-vah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of I'-saac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and

seen that which is done to you in E'-gypt:

17 And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of E'-gypt unto the land of the Ca'-naan-ite, and the Hit'-tite, and the Am'-or-ite, and the Per'-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb'-u-site, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

18 And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Is'-ra-el, unto the king of E'-gypt, and ye shall say unto him, Je-ho'-vah, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Je-ho'-vah our God.

19 And I know that the king of E'-gypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand.

20 And I will put forth my hand, and smite E'-gypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the E-gyp'-tians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:

22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall despoil the E-gyp'-tians.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works”* (Acts 7: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ex. 7: 20-34.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 25. M..... Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter (Ex. 2: 1-10)
- January 26. T..... Moses Kills an Egyptian (Ex. 2: 11-15)
- January 27. W..... Moses' Call (Ex. 3: 1-8)
- January 28. T..... Moses Stands Before Pharaoh (Ex. 11: 4-10)
- January 29. F..... Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19: 1-6)
- January 30. S..... The Faith of Moses (Heb. 11: 23-31)
- January 31. S..... Song of Deliverance (Ex. 15: 1-10)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACE.—Midian, near Mount Horeb.

PERSONS.—Moses and Jehovah.

Golden Text Explained

1. The education of Moses. Though our text speaks only of the instruction in the wisdom of the Egyptians

which Moses received, yet we are led to believe that by far the most valuable education he received was not

from the Egyptians but from his mother. In Heb. 11 we are told it was by faith that Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, that he might identify himself with his own people. The only way a person could do a thing by faith was to do it in harmony with the revealed will of God. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10: 17.) So when Moses acted by faith, he acted in harmony with the expressed will of God. The only way that Moses could have learned the will of God, so far as our record goes, was to hear it from his mother. There is no doubt that she told him that he was not an Egyptian. Though he would be reared in Pharaoh's house, he must ever remember that he was an Israelite, and that he must use the powers, mental and physical, with which God endowed him for the good of his own people. No doubt his mother told him of the providence of God in his birth and early life and planted in him the belief that he was to be the deliverer of his people from their cruel bondage. This illustrates the power that parents may exert over the whole lives of their children while they are yet in their tender years. Parents have within their power to make out of their children what they want them to be. If they will give the time and attention and effort to teaching and training their children when they are young, they can determine largely their destiny.

But our text tells us that Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. It is admitted by all that they had attained unto the highest educational standards of antiquity. Excavations among the ruins of Egypt show great educational institutions, some comparing favorably with university campuses of our day. Great libraries with some thirty to forty thousand volumes have been unearthed. Their college courses were in such fields as arithmetic, geometry, poetry, music, medicine, and other arts and sciences. The art of magic was developed until the magicians of Pharaoh could produce some of the same wonders that Moses, by the power of God, produced. (Ex. 7: 11.) In the art of embalming, Egyptians have excelled all other nations. Moses was given the very best advantages; and being of the temperament that he was, he

used these advantages for his own good.

2. Accomplishments of Moses, (a)

In words. Our text says that Moses was mighty in words. Some have thought there is a discrepancy between that statement and the statement of Moses when he made excuse to God that he was not eloquent and was slow of speech. (Ex. 4: 10.) After forty years of silence in the deserts, Moses would likely be rather "rusty" in his eloquence, but that would not imply that Moses was not eloquent when he left Egypt at the age of forty. Nor would it imply that he did not regain the power of eloquence by speaking to the Israelites as much as he was called upon to do to carry out his work with them. But our text need not be limited to spoken words. Moses was a great writer. He wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, and if he had done nothing else, the statement of our text that he was mighty in words would be borne out. Again, Moses could have said that he was not eloquent, and yet when under inspiration by the Holy Spirit, he could have been great in words, (b) In works. A man who is mighty in word but not in work can only be half a success. Moses was great in deeds. If he had never done anything other than break the spirit and power of Egypt through the plagues which he brought upon that nation for the deliverance of the children of Israel, he could truly be said to be a great man in deeds. But as great as the deliverance of the people, the guidance of that people through forty years of wilderness wandering is even greater. The meekness, the patience, and long-suffering manifested by Moses during that period of murmurings by the people show him to be a great character. And the fact that he made but one mistake during all that forty years of murmuring and complaining and rebellion on the part of the people is another indication of the greatness of Moses. Again, Moses made this unusual record of forty years of government with only one mistake, in spite of the fact his own brother and sister, prominent in the leadership, rebelled against him and severely criticized him. Men can usually keep their heads and do the right thing when their trusted assistants are giving them loyalty and encouragement. **But when these trusted**

assistants turn against them, and unjustly criticize them and condemn them, they manifest an unusual ability when they keep their heads and

make no mistakes. This Moses did and earned the statement made by Stephen that he was mighty in his words and works.

Introduction

The life of Moses easily divides itself into three divisions of forty years each. Stephen tells us that he was full forty years old when it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel, to attempt the delivery of them the first time. (Acts 7: 23.) Again he tells us that Moses stayed in Midian another forty years. (Acts 7: 30.) And then in Deut. 34: 7 we learn that he was one hundred twenty years old when he died. For his eye was not dimmed nor his natural force abated. Very little is known of the first eighty years of his life. We know that he was nursed by his mother until he was able to leave home, and then was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. We know that he was educated in the schools and universities of Egypt and that he was allowed to enjoy the honor and the wealth of the royal palace, and we know that he left such surroundings of his own choice to identify himself with his own people. During the next forty years we know about as little of Moses and his activity. We learn that he met a priest of Midian who had seven daughters, that he married Zipporah, and that her first son which she bore him was called Gershom. We are told that he spent his time in this country herding sheep. This is about all that we know of the second forty years of the life of Moses.

During these eighty years, Moses was called upon to make two great decisions. (1) "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ

greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward." (Heb. 11: 24-26.) We are prone to think of these men being led miraculously and irresistibly into these decisions, but for them it was a perfectly natural thing. There was no outward evidence of even the providence of God, much less the miraculous intervention on the part of God. Moses had to make his decision just like we make important decisions in our life. He had to turn his back upon the riches, the honor, power, and position, which being the son of Pharaoh's daughter gave him, in order that he might ally himself with a slave people. No doubt his friends and associates thought he had lost his mind, and we likely would think the same of an individual today who gives up riches and position and allies himself with a group of people of no greater social prominence than were the slaves in Egypt. (2) Moses' second great decision was when God appeared to him near Mount Sinai in the burning bush and called him to deliver the people of Israel from bondage. During forty years of inactivity, Moses would lose his ambition and much of his desire to deliver his people from bondage. During that time of doing nothing but herding sheep, he would lose a lot of his mental ability as well as his ability to speak before audiences. No wonder he pled that he was not an eloquent man and was slow of speech and of tongue. (Ex. 4: 10.) But being assured of the presence of God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses rose to the occasion and had the courage to do that which he felt was the will of God.

Exposition of the Text

I. Moses Encouraged to Accept Commission (Verses 11, 12)

And Moses said unto God, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh. In the preceding verses of this chapter, we are told of God's appearances to Moses in the burning bush near Mount Sinai. God told Moses that he had seen the affliction of his people in Egypt, that he knew their

sorrows under their taskmasters, and that he had come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. In verse ten we read, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." Thus, God made known

to Moses that he was God's choice as a deliverer for his people. To this information Moses responds with this question, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" When we remember that Moses was alone, that he had no army, not even any bosom friends and associates with any power or influence, and when we remember that he is to go to the most powerful king of the most powerful nation on earth, and demand that some two million souls shall be released to leave the land, we can appreciate Moses' hesitancy. If one lone, unknown individual should go to the president of the United States and demand that a tenth part of the territory of the United States be cut off to itself, and this lone individual be allowed to be the ruler over the people of that country, it would appear no more foolish than Moses going to Pharaoh with the demand that he let the people of Israel go.

Certainly I will be with thee. God promised Moses that he would be with him in this undertaking in order to give him courage to accept responsibility. Certainly Moses knew that he could not do the job alone, but if God be with him, he would tackle the job. God and one man are a majority in any situation. It might be well for us to remember this when we undertake to do great things for God.

This shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee. Scholars differ as to what is meant by token. Adam Clarke says that the burning bush, which Moses had just seen, is the token intended. But according to the punctuation of the sentence the fact that Moses would bring the people to worship in that mountain would be the token of God's presence with him. The token, worshipping God on that mountain, had to be received by faith, but if Moses believed God's statement that he and the people would serve God on that mountain, then he would believe that he could deliver the children of Israel from bondage.

II. Success of Mission Based on the Name of Jehovah (Verses 13-17)

What is his name? Moses feared that his own people might not receive him. So he said when I tell them that God has sent me they will ask me what is God's name. He wanted to know how to answer that

question. The fear of Moses that his people would not receive him was no doubt based upon his first effort at deliverance as recorded in Ex. 2: 11-15.

I AM THAT I AM. This is the name which the Lord gave to Moses to give to the people whom he was to deliver. As to the meaning of this name in comparison to another, we read, "But while Elohim exhibits God displayed in his power the creator and governor of the physical universe, the name Jehovah designates his nature as he stands in relation to man, as the only, almighty, true, personal, holy being, a spirit, and the father of spirits (Num. 16: 22; compare John 4: 24), who revealed himself to his people, made a covenant with them, and became their lawgiver, and to whom all honor and worship are due. If the etymology above given be accepted, and the name be derived from the future tense of the substantive verb, it would denote, in accordance with the general analogy of proper names of the similar form, 'he that is,' 'the Being,' whose chief attribute is eternal existence." (Smith's Bible dictionary.) Adam Clarke says "It is difficult to put a meaning on the words; they seem intended to point out the *eternity* and *self-existence* of God." Jesus used a similar expression in John 8: 58 to denote his timeless existence. It would be encouraging to Moses and his people to know that the eternally existent one was delivering them.

Jehovah, the God of your fathers. In this statement the Lord unites the name Jehovah with the idea of the God of their fathers; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob.

This is my name for ever, . . . my memorial unto all generations. God had given different names along as he had revealed himself unto the people such as Almighty (Gen. 17: 1), but this was to be his name forever, a name which people would use not only in time but in eternity. We find a similar expression in Hos. 12: 5.

Go, and gather the elders of Israel. In these words God commissioned Moses to go to Egypt to deliver his people from bondage. He was first to gather the elders of the people together and work his signs as evidence of the fact that God had sent him, and when he had thus convinced the elders of the people, they were

to get a larger hearing of all the people and gain their confidence in his mission.

III. A Preview of Victory (Verses 18-22)

They shall hearken to thy voice. God assured Moses that the people of Israel would listen to him this time in spite of the fact that they rejected him in his former efforts; Moses is now assured that his own people will receive him as a deliverer.

Thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt After the people of Israel had been convinced that Moses was God's representative, their next objective was Pharaoh. Moses and the elders of the people were to go together to make the request of Pharaoh that he would allow the Israelites to go three days' journey into the wilderness that they might sacrifice to Jehovah their God.

I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go. God forewarned Moses of his difficulty with Pharaoh. Though it would be easy to convince his own people that he was God's representative, Pharaoh would not be so easily convinced. From the record we learn that not only was Pharaoh not convinced of the divine commission of Moses, but that he doubled the duties of the people of Israel and made their service unbearable. (Ex. 5: 1-14.)

I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders. In these words we have a suggestion of the ten plagues which the Lord, through Moses, brought upon the Egyptians.

After that he will let you go. Moses is assured that Pharaoh will not readily allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, but he is also assured that Pharaoh finally will be glad for the

people to go. Such a preview of the attitude of Pharaoh and the power of God was necessary to give Moses the courage he needed to accept the commission and begin the task of delivering his people.

I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Pharaoh's harsh treatment of the Israelites stirred sympathy in the hearts of the common people of Egypt. Again the power which Moses exercised in bringing the plagues upon Egypt impressed the common people greatly. In Ex. 11: 3, we are told, "Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." In these ways, and perhaps in other providential ways, God caused the people of Egypt to feel kindly toward the Israelites.

When ye go, ye shall not go empty. By this the Lord meant that when the children of Israel left Egypt, they would not go empty handed, for he said that every Israelite woman should ask of her Egyptian neighbor jewels of silver and gold and raiment, and he said that these Egyptians would respond liberally and would give the Israelites everything of that sort for which they asked. In Ex. 12: 36 we read, "And Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And they despoiled the Egyptians." Let it be remembered that the Israelites did not ask to borrow these things from the Egyptians. The Egyptians knew that when the people left they would not return. The Israelites asked for these things. The Egyptians gave them these jewels. It was not a matter of the Israelites deceiving the Egyptians, borrowing them with the implication that they would be returned later.

Lessons to Learn

1. We should be sure that God is with us before we undertake to do a thing for him. Moses attempted to deliver Israel when God was not with him. He failed, but when he waited for God's time and God's help, he succeeded.

2. From this lesson we should learn not to oppose anything that God proposes to do. Everyone wants to be on the winning side. No one

wishes to be allied with a losing cause. If the reader is not a Christian, let him know that he is allied with a losing cause, that God and the forces of righteousness will finally prevail.

3. When God commissions one for an undertaking, he also gives him the strength to do that. God has commissioned his church to take the gospel into all the world in each

generation. He would not commission the church to do that if it were impossible for the church to accom-

plish that task. Let us be sure that in our generation we do that which God has enabled us to do.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Who gave Moses the most valuable part of his education?
What influence did the mother of Moses have in determining the two great choices of his life?
What does this lesson teach us with reference to influence of parents in the lives of their children?
How did Egypt rank with other nations of that day in its educational system?
What have we learned about their knowledge of the arts of magic?
What did the Egyptians know of the art of embalming?
What is said of the ability of Moses with reference to words?
What did Moses say of his ability as a speaker?
What do you know of his ability as a writer?
What have you learned with reference to the works of Moses?
What traits of character did Moses manifest in dealing with his people.

Introduction

How old was Moses when he first attempted to deliver his people?
How long did Moses stay in Midian?
Whom did Moses marry in Midian and what was the name of their first son?
What was the first great decision Moses had to make in life?
Was he given miraculous aid in making this decision?
What did the associates of Moses think of him for making the decision he made?
What was the second great decision Moses was called on to make?

What would forty years of inactivity be calculated to do for Moses?

Moses Encouraged to Accept Commission

How did Moses respond to the call to become a deliverer?
How would you illustrate the magnitude of the responsibility Moses was called upon to accept?
What encouragement did God give Moses to accept this responsibility?
What token did God give as evidence of the success Moses would have?
How did this try the faith of Moses?

Success of Mission Based on the Name of Jehovah

What was the fear of Moses with reference to his own people?
What name of God was revealed to Moses at this time?
What is the meaning of this name?
What similar expression did Jesus use and what was its meaning?
How long was God to be known by this name?
To whom was Moses first to make known his plans of deliverance?

A Preview of Victory

To whom was Moses to go after he had convinced his own people?
Was Moses led to believe that Pharaoh would give his consent for the people to go?
What did God say he would do to make Pharaoh consent for the people to leave?
How did God give the Israelites favor in the sight of the Egyptians?
What benefit did Israel receive from this favor in the eyes of the Egyptians?
Did the Israelites borrow from the Egyptians or did they ask for gifts?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VI—February 7, 1954

AARON THE HELPER OF MOSES

Lesson Text

Ex. 4: 10-17, 29, 30

10 And Mó-ses said unto Je-ho'-vah, Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

11 And Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, Je-ho'-vah?

12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak.

13 And he said, Oh, Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

14 And the anger of Je-ho'-vah was kindled against Mó-ses, and he said, Is there not Aar'-ón thy brother the Le'-vite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth,

and thou shalt be to him as God.
17 And thou shalt take in thy hand this rod, wherewith thou shalt do the signs.

29 And Mó'-ses and Aar'-on went

and gathered together all the elders of the children of Is'-ra-el:

30 And Aar'-ón spake all the words which Je-ho'-vah had spoken unto Mó'-ses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God”* (Ex. 4: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Ex. 4: 16-28.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 1. M.....Aaron, Spokesman for Moses (Ex. 4: 10-17)
- February 2. T.....Aaron, Priest of Israel (Ex. 6: 16-23)
- February 3. W.Priestly Duties of Aaron (Lev. 1: 1-17)
- February 4. T.....Aaron and the Molten Image (Ex. 32: 1-6)
- February 5. F.....God's Anger Against Aaron (Ex. 32: 7-14)
- February 6. S.....Aaron's Excuse (Ex. 32: 19-24)
- February 7. S.Death of Aaron (Num. 20: 22-29)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACE.—Midian, near Mount Horeb.

PERSONS.—Moses, Aaron, and Jehovah.

Golden Text Explained

1. Advantages of this arrangement.

In our text we are told that Aaron was to be the spokesman of Moses unto the people. Moses was to give Aaron the message, and Aaron was to deliver that message to the people. This was God's provision for the inability of Moses to speak fluently, (a) This arrangement gave Moses someone to share with him the unusually heavy burdens of his office. Even with the help of Aaron, Moses was still not able to do all that was expected of him and later, after they had been in the wilderness for some time, seventy men were selected to hear the complaints, of the people and only the major complaints were to be brought to Moses. (Ex. 18: 13-26; Num. 11: 16.) (b) Another advantage of this arrangement was that it made use of talent that would not otherwise have been used. Had Moses accepted the responsibility of being the mouthpiece of God, Aaron's talent of eloquence would have gone unused, (c) This arrangement gave the people of Israel a representation in their government known to them. Aaron was better known to the people of Israel than Moses. Moses had been in Midian for forty years and the greater part of the first forty years of his life was spent in the court of Pharaoh. Hence, the people of Israel know very little about Moses at the time of their deliverance. But when Aaron was taken in and made second in com-

mand and the spokesman for their government, the people had a representative whom they knew. (d) This arrangement formed a bond of sympathy between Aaron and Moses which could never have existed otherwise. These brothers knew very little about each other. They had never had the opportunity of associating together as brothers usually do. So when God made Aaron the spokesman for Moses, this gave Moses an opportunity to get acquainted with his brother and to come to know and appreciate him in a way he never could have done otherwise, (e) This arrangement shows us God's resourcefulness in time of need. God is not dependent upon any one man in any generation. If one man declines to accept the responsibility to accomplish a certain task, God always has someone else who can do the work. No man is so big or has so many talents that he is indispensable to God.

2. **Disadvantages of this arrangement.** This arrangement prevented the fullest development of Moses. God never calls anyone to a work without qualifying that man for that work. If Moses had accepted the responsibility as God first offered it to him, certainly God's promise to be with him included giving him the ability to do whatever he asked him to do. But in his effort to excuse himself from that responsibility, Moses urged that he was not an elo-

quent or fluent speaker. Many people today fail to develop as fully in their Christian life as they would develop if they would accept responsibilities which are offered to them,

(b) Another disadvantage of this arrangement was that it hindered the power of the message to be given through another, and especially through one whose life was at times rather faulty. When a man must preach through an interpreter, he cannot put over his message with the force and conviction that he could if speaking directly to the people in their language. This fairly illustrates the loss of power and conviction when Moses had to deliver his message to his brother, then the brother give it to the people, (c) Another disadvantage was that it

somewhat divided the authority of Moses. While Aaron was given to understand that he was not in authority, and that he was to listen to Moses; yet, in the eyes of the people, Aaron shared the authority of Moses. (d) This arrangement placed temptation on Aaron. Anyone placed in an inferior position is liable to be tempted to envy the one in the superior position, and further, he may be tempted to grasp the authority, the honor that belong to the one in the place of honor. And, included in the mistakes of Aaron above, we noted that Aaron, along with Miriam, envied Moses for his place of power and influence and that they allowed this envy to lead them to murmur against Moses.

Introduction

Aaron was three years older than Moses. (Ex. 7: 7.) Miriam was older than either of the brothers. (Ex. 2: 4-8.) We know nothing of Aaron during the first eighty-three years of his life. However, we may be sure that he did not have the education which Moses had, nor had he the opportunities to develop socially and mentally as did Moses, (a) Aaron seems to have been of an impulsive nature. He did and said things without giving them too much thought, (b) Also we learn that he was rather unstable in his character. He was not so calm and deliberate as his brother Moses. No doubt Moses learned to act calmly and deliberately during the forty years of his shepherd life in Midian. (c) Aaron also betrays the trait of dependence on others. When the children of Israel were encamped around Sinai, he allowed the people to influence him to make the golden calf. He was ever dependent upon his brother Moses, though that was necessary often on account of his office. Again, we see his dependence upon another and the ease with which he could be swayed when his sister Miriam led him to murmur against Moses. (Ex. 32: 1-6.)

There were at least three major mistakes in the life of Aaron, (a) The first was at Sinai when the people insisted that they have a god in visible form to go before them. The record says that Aaron received their golden rings and fashioned them with a graving tool and made a gold-

en calf, and said, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (Ex. 32: 4.) Aaron offered sacrifice before the calf and ordered a feast unto Jehovah, but the feast seems to have gone beyond what he intended, and the people turned it into the lowest form of heathenish sensuality, (b) The second mistake he made is recorded in Num. 12: 1-15. There we learn that Miriam and Aaron were jealous of the power and influence of Moses. They hid behind the excuse that they disliked the wife of Moses. Miriam was smitten with leprosy and perhaps only his office saved Aaron from a similar sentence, (c) The third mistake of Aaron's career is recorded in Num. 20: 1-13. Here again Aaron was not alone in his mistake. This time he and Moses were together. From the record, it is impossible to know whether Moses was more responsible for this mistake than Aaron, or whether Aaron influenced Moses. The Lord seems to have held each equally responsible for the mistake and declared that neither one of them would be allowed to go into the land of Canaan.

While Aaron made his mistakes like other human beings, he was also entitled to several honors, (a) The first is the fact that he was the prophet for his brother Moses. He became the right hand man of Moses through the forty years of wilderness wanderings, and, with the exception of those mistakes mentioned, he served

faithfully in that office. Being older than Moses, Aaron may have found it difficult to play "second fiddle" to his younger brother, (b) The second honor which Aaron enjoyed is that of being the first high priest of Israel. (Ex. 28.) And Paul tells us that this is an honor which no man can take unto himself but one given him of God. (Heb. 5: 4.) (c) Another thing for which Aaron may be honored is the fact that he conducted himself in a manner pleasing to God when his sons were punished for their disobedience. In Lev. 10:

1-11 we learn that two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered incense with strange fire. When they thus profaned the service of God, they were struck dead. Aaron and his other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were told that they should make no demonstration of sorrow for the punishment meted out upon Nadab and Abihu. In this case they were commanded to put the honor of God and the purity of his worship above family feelings, and they were able to do so because of their respect for God and their reverence for his word.

Exposition of the Text

I. Moses Makes Excuses (Verses 10-13)

Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent. Some have sought to find a discrepancy between this statement of Moses and the statement of Stephen, used as our golden text last Sunday, in which he said that Moses was mighty in words and works. For an explanation of this, reread the golden text for last Sunday. For further information on this point, it will be well to condense a statement made by Adam Clarke on this point. He says it is possible that Moses was not intimately acquainted with the Hebrew language. The first forty years of his life was spent in the royal palace, and, he no doubt, spoke Egyptian. The next forty years of his life he spent in Midian and likely spoke their language. While either of these languages could have some similarity with the Hebrew, yet, not sufficient to make Moses an eloquent speaker in Hebrew. "On these accounts Moses might find it difficult to express himself with that readiness and persuasive flow of language which he might deem essentially necessary on such a momentous occasion; as he would frequently be obliged to consult his memory for proper expressions, which would necessarily produce frequent hesitation, and general slowness of utterance, which he might think would ill suit an ambassador of God."

Neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken. Moses urges that he was not eloquent before the Lord began to speak to him about being the deliverer, nor has his speech improved since the time the Lord began talking with him on this subject. There seems to be a slight accusation here on the part of Moses

to the effect that if the Lord had been going to remedy the fault in Moses' speech, he would have done so before this time.

Who hath made man's mouth?

This is the language of Jehovah and is meant as a reproof to Moses. If God makes a man's mouth, can he not give that mouth the power to speak? By a series of similar questions, God leaves the impression that the Creator gives man all his physical and mental powers—the power to see, the power to hear or to speak, thus implying that if Moses had trusted the Lord to make him able to accomplish the mission on which he wished to send him, he would not have raised this question of weakness or offered the excuse of a lack of eloquence.

Go, and I will be with thy mouth.

Regardless of the fact that the excuse of Moses was ill founded, God condescended to answer that excuse and to take away every inch of ground on which Moses stood. God said I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. This assured Moses that God would give him the message and the ability to deliver that message.

Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

This verse has been variously understood. Some contend that Moses meant, Lord, why don't you send the Messiah at this time? But Clarke and others reject this as a fanciful interpretation. Others say that Moses grudgingly consented to be the Lord's spokesman. But if Moses agreed to the Lord's plan, why was the Lord angered? The meaning seems to be, Lord send anybody who is willing to be sent, but don't impose this duty of spokesman upon me. Some think

this reply of Moses "shut up the divine bounty, prevented its outpour, and left Moses the ineffective speaker which he was content to be."

II. Aaron Appointed to Help Moses

(Verses 14-17)

The anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses. Moses had resisted the Lord's offer beyond the point of modesty and humility, and thus the Lord became angry. Pulpit Commentary suggests that the word anger is to be taken in no stronger sense than a displeasure, "at least, he did not punish the offender in any severer way than that of withholding of a gift that he was ready to bestow, and the partition between two of a position and a dignity which Moses might have had all to himself."

Is there not Aaron thy brother the Levite? It is difficult to understand why Aaron is referred to here as the Levite. Moses was as much of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron, and yet he was not so referred to. Some think that there is an intimation here of the fact that the Levites would be consecrated to a special service of God.

I know that he can speak well. Since Moses refused to act as spokesman, Aaron has been selected and is now appointed as the assistant to Moses. The Lord made it very clear to Moses that he was not to be excused from the responsibility of giving the message to Aaron. God would not agree to bypass Moses and give the message directly to Aaron. The message was to come from God to Moses and then from Moses to Aaron, and from Aaron to the people.

He will be glad in his heart. This is a statement concerning Aaron. The Lord said that Aaron was coming forth to meet Moses, and he assured Moses that when Aaron saw him he would be glad in his heart. Aaron had not seen Moses for forty years and very little had he seen of him during the first forty years of the life of Moses. And now that he is to be associated with Moses in the work of delivering the children of Israel was certainly sufficient reason for his being glad in his heart.

And thou shalt take in thy hand this rod. God is careful of details without giving us the reason at times. He insisted that Moses take this particular rod, which had been turned

into a serpent, as he went to accomplish his mission. In Ex. 4: 20 we learn that among other things of importance which Moses took with him, he took the rod of God in his hand and afterwards it was often referred to as the rod of God. (Ex. 4: 20; 17: 9.)

III. The Commission Executed

(Verses 29, 30)

Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders. In verses eighteen to twenty-six of this chapter we have the story of Zipporah and her children starting to Egypt with Moses, and the difficulty of the circumcision of the children arose, and Zipporah seems to have returned to her father. Then in verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight we have a record of the meeting of Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. It is said that Moses told Aaron all about *his* meeting with Jehovah and the commission which Jehovah had given him to deliver the children of Israel. He also told him about the signs which God had given him the ability to perform in order that he would cause the children of Israel to believe in them. They had several days to discuss these matters and to get acquainted with one another as they traveled on foot from Midian to Goshen. No doubt they laid their plans for operation while they were on that journey. First, they called the elders of the people together. These elders were not simply old men, but they were men of rank and authority among the Jews. They were not entirely without their tribal organization, even while they were in bondage.

And did the signs in the sight of the people. The writer combines a record of two meetings here. He first says they called the elders together and then he says that Aaron spoke all the words and did the signs in the sight of the people. Obviously they presented their case to the elders and asked permission of them to present the matter to the people generally, and the writer simply reports their actions as if it were in one meeting. The chapter closes with the encouraging note that the people believed Aaron and that they bowed their heads and worshiped when they heard that Jehovah had visited the children of Israel because he had seen their affliction.

Lessons to Learn

1. Offering excuses is an old device for escaping responsibilities. Moses may have been one of the first to offer excuses, but certainly he is not the last to do such. Church members often offer foolish excuses to escape profound responsibilities.

2. Aaron more readily accepted responsibility than did Moses but seems not to have realized the seri-

ousness as did Moses. We should be willing to accept responsibilities, but should also realize the seriousness of the matter to work for God.

3. Each encouraged by the other, these brothers went into their work with zeal and determination and not one time, after putting their hands to the plow, did they look back.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What advantage did Moses have in the arrangement mentioned in our text?

What advantage was there in this arrangement to Aaron?

How did the people generally profit by this arrangement?

How was the arrangement mutually beneficial to Moses and Aaron?

Show how this arrangement proves the resourcefulness in the time of need.

Name and discuss several disadvantages of this arrangement.

Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of this arrangement?

Introduction

What do we know of the relative ages of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam?

Compare Aaron and Moses with reference to opportunities for social and educational advantages.

Name and discuss three traits of character in Aaron.

What was the first recorded major mistake in Aaron's life?

Discuss Aaron's second major mistake and the influence of his associate.

Discuss Aaron's third mistake and the consequences of it.

Name and discuss three things for which Aaron is to be honored.

Moses Makes Excuses

What was the first excuse Moses offered?

How do you harmonize this with the statement that Moses was mighty in words?

What proof did Moses give that his lack of eloquence was a hindrance to him?

How did God answer Moses on this point?

What promise did God make Moses to take away his excuse?

How was the matter of a spokesman finally settled?

Aaron Appointed to Help Moses

What is said of God's attitude toward Moses over this affair of a helper?

Was Moses punished for his attitude? And if so in what way was he punished?

Why is Aaron referred to as the "Levite"?

Did God agree to leave Moses out of the chain of revelation?

What did God say would be Aaron's reaction to this arrangement?

How much equipment did Moses take with him to accomplish his mission?

What does this amount of equipment, in comparison to the enormity of the task, suggest with reference to the faith of Moses and Aaron?

The Commission Executed

Who started from Midian to Egypt with Moses? And why did they not continue the journey?

Tell of the meeting of Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

What do you think were the subjects of conversation between Moses and Aaron as they traveled toward Egypt?

Before whom did they first lay their plan after reaching Egypt?

What effect did their message and miracles have on the elders and the people generally?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—February 14, 1954

DEBORAH THE PROPHETESS

Lesson Text

Judges 4: 1-10

1 And the children of Is'-ra-el again did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, when E'-hud was dead.

2 And Je-ho'-vah sold them into the hand of Ja'-bin king of Ca'-naan, that reigned in Ha'-zor; the captain of whose host was Sis'-e-ra, who dwelt in Ha-ro'-sheth of the Gen'-tiles.

3 And the children of Is'-ra-el cried unto Je-ho'-vah: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Is'-ra-el.

4 Now Deb'-o-rah, a prophetess, the wife of Lap'-pi-doth, she judged Is'-ra-el at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deb'-o-rah between Ra'-mah

and Beth'-el in the hill-country of E'-phra-im: and the children of Is'-ra-el came up to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called Ba'-rak the son of A-bin'-o-am out of Ke'-desh-naph'-ta-li, and said unto him, Hath not Je'-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, commanded, *saying*, Go and draw unto mount Ta'-bor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naph'-ta-li and of the children of Zeb'-u-lun?

7 And I will draw unto thee, to the river Ki'-shon, Sis'-e-ra, the captain of Ja'-bin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand.

8 And Ba'-rak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for Je'-ho'-vah will sell Sis'-e-ra into the hand of a woman. And Deb'-o-rah arose, and went with Ba'-rak to Ke'-desh.

10 And Ba'-rak called Zeb'-u-lun and Naph'-ta-li together to Ke'-desh; and there went up ten thousand men at his feet: and Deb'-o-rah went up with him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."* (Judges 5: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Judges 5: 1-15.

Daily Bible Readings

February 8. M.....	Deborah Judge of Israel (Judges 4: 1-5)
February 9. T.....	Deborah's Call (Judges 4: 4-10)
February 10. W.....	The Victory of Deborah (Judges 4: 11-16)
February 11. T.....	The Song of Deborah (Judges 5: 1-11)
February 12. F.....	Jael, Wife of Heber (Judges 5: 24-27)
February 13. S.....	Helplessness of Unbelief (Heb. 4: 1-7)
February 14. S.....	Triumphant Faith (Heb. 11: 1-11)

TIME.—1305 B.C.

PLACE.—Mount Ephraim between Ramah and Bethel.

PERSONS.—Deborah and Barak.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Conditions in the time of Deborah.** From the context in which our golden text is found, we are able to learn some of the conditions of the age in which Deborah lived—Political and social conditions. In Judges 5: 6 we read, "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways." The condition of the highways of a country is a fair index to the commercial prosperity and social intercourse of a nation. In the days of Deborah, we are told that the highways were unoccupied and the travelers walked through byways. No doubt some of this was because of the danger incurred on the highways. The oppressors of the Israelites made traveling on the highway dangerous. But this gives us a picture of the commercial and social life in her day. We have the picture of people slipping around through byways in order to avoid meeting their oppressors on the highways. Next, in verse 7, we are told that the rulers ceased in Israel.

There seemed to be no one with the courage to oppose their oppressors. Jabin, the king of Canaan, ruled with an iron hand. He had a great army with hundreds of chariots in the field, chariots of iron, with which he emphasized his commandments, and the people of Israel did not have weapons, nor did they have sufficient organization or leadership to meet such opposition. Hence, they had ceased to try to have rulers among themselves and had given up to Jabin. Another statement which reveals their terrible condition is seen in verse eight. "They chose new gods." When Israel was faithful to God, they were a free people, able to overcome their enemies; but when they departed from the living God and chose new gods for themselves, the gods of the nations round about, they lost their courage and lost the fellowship of God; and, hence, they were unable to cope with their enemies and were brought into bondage. In the latter part of the eighth verse we find how totally these Israelites had been subjected. "Was

there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" So completely had Jabin subjected the people that he had taken from them their weapons of war so that Deborah raised the question whether one spear or shield could be found among forty thousand soldiers in Israel.

2. **A mother moves to better conditions.** Our text says that rulers ceased in Israel until Deborah, a mother in Israel, arose, (a) She was not out of her place. There was not a man to be found in Israel who had the courage to cope with the situation, so Deborah, a mother with children and their welfare at stake, took it upon herself, under the providence of God, to do something about it. Some homes would be in a terrible condition if the father only could be depended upon to control the situation. Sometimes fathers are too lax, indifferent, or lazy to do what needs to be done. Hence, mothers often rise to the occasion for the sake of their children and do the things that need to be done. Sometimes conditions in communities become unbearable and the men of the community have not enough courage or concern to do anything to better conditions, and women who have regard for their children and want a decent community in which to rear their children step in and start a clean-up campaign. This seems to have been the condition in Israel. The men were not willing to do the things that needed to be done, so a mother who had the lives, the characters, the welfare of her children on her heart arose to do the thing that needed to be done, (b) Her mission was to

inspire and encourage. Deborah was not a military leader nor did she seem to have any desire to put herself in a man's place and lead the armies of Israel. She was a prophetess, and that means that God spoke through her. The word prophet simply means one who speaks for another. She spoke for God. God spoke through her. Hence, she was used simply to inspire and encourage the men to do that which was necessary to do to throw off the yoke of bondage. This is entirely in keeping with two principles which the apostle Paul sets forth concerning the relationship of woman to man. (1) Woman is a helper of man and is not to exercise dominion over him. In 1 Tim. 2: 12-14 Paul bases this relationship on the fact that Adam was created first, then Eve, and that Eve was first in the transgression. (2) Paul says that woman was made for man, not man made for woman. (1 Cor. 1: 9.) The woman was made for man and so is to be his helper and to give him inspiration and encouragement and comfort. Deborah stayed well within the limits of these principles when she inspired and encouraged Barak to take upon himself the responsibility of leading the armies of Israel to victory, (c) Deborah sang praises for better conditions. When the armies, being moved by her inspiration and encouragement, had destroyed the army of Sisera, and had come back victorious over the enemy, Deborah composed a song found in the fifth chapter of Judges, and she and Barak led in the singing of this great song of victory.

Introduction

Since our last lesson the children of Israel have moved out of the wilderness and into Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Seven Canaanite nations had to be defeated and driven out in order to make room for the incoming Israelites. They were not extinguished, so many of them remained to be a thorn in the side of the Israelites. The people of Israel continually faced two dangers: (1) These Canaanite nations were continually regrouping and making efforts to regain the territory they had lost. (2) The Israelites were continually exposed to the influence of the religions of these seven Canaanite nations. As long as the

Israelites kept themselves free from the heathen religions of the nations round about, they were able to withstand the military might of the people; but when they gave way to the temptation to worship Baal, and other gods of the heathens, the Lord withdrew and allowed them to be captured by the nations. The Lord would allow them to remain in bondage as servants to the nations until they saw the folly of their idolatry and were ready to turn back to God. Then he would raise up a judge who had the ability to lead them, either in battle or through teaching, to come out from under the bondage of their oppressor. Deborah was one

of the teachers of Israel and through her teaching she was able to improve the standards of her people, and finally, with the cooperation of the warrior Barak, was able to throw off the yoke of bondage.

In this connection it is well for us to notice the influence of one outstanding character in that period of the history of Israel. In Josh. 24: 31 we read, "And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of Jehovah, that he had wrought for Israel." Joshua lived such a good life and exercised such a strong in-

fluence that he not only kept Israel free from idolatry and subjection to the nations round about during his life, but influenced those who labored with him to live such a life and to influence the people so strongly that they kept Israel free from idolatry and bondage to the nations. But when the people who had known personally the influence of Joshua had died, Joshua's influence did not reach to the next generation to save them from that idolatry. So, in the second generation after the death of Joshua, we find the people beginning to drift away from God and to become like the nations round about.

Exposition of the Text

I. Israel's Sin and Oppressor (Verses 1-3)

The children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. This statement occurs over and over again in the book of Judges. We are told in the third chapter of Judges that the seven nations of Canaan were left "to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah, which he commanded their fathers by Moses." (a) The people were commanded not to serve the gods of the people of Canaan, (b) The children of Israel were commanded not to intermarry with the nations of Canaan. In Josh. 2: 11 we learn that the children of Israel served the Baalim and forsook Jehovah the God of their fathers and followed other gods, the gods of the people around about them, and bowed themselves down unto them: and they provoked Jehovah to anger. Then in Judges 3: 6 we read, "And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons and served their gods." Hence, we see that both these primary commandments for the good of Israel were flagrantly violated by the children of Israel.

And Jehovah sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan. The word *sold* is a strong term. It implies that God handed over his people into the hands of their enemies as if he no longer possessed them, and as if he had said to their enemies, they are not mine, take them, do as you please with them. In Josh. 11 we learn that there was a Jabin, king of Hazor in the days of Joshua, who was captured, defeated

in the conquest of the land of Canaan. Some conservative authorities, such as Smith's Bible Dictionary, think there was only one encounter with Jabin, and that we have two records of it. However, others as scholars say that there was as much as one hundred fifty years of time between the two incidents and the two kings. Pulpit Commentary says, "If, however, the two events are distinct, we must suppose that the Canaanite kingdoms had been revived under a descendant of the former king, that Hazor had been rebuilt, and that Jabin was a hereditary name of its king."

The captain of whose host was Sisera. It is said that Sisera dwelt in Harosheth. The location of this city is doubtful. Some think that it was near the base of Mount Carmel and on the Kishon River. Others think it was farther to the east and north, near the west side of Lake Merom. But certainly it was in that portion of Canaan later known as Galilee.

He had nine hundred chariots of iron. Clarke thinks that these chariots were not necessarily made wholly of iron but that they had iron scythes projecting from each axle and could thus cut down infantry on both sides for some distance. If Sisera patrolled the highways with these chariots of iron, it is little wonder that we read in Judges 5: 6 that the highways were unoccupied and travelers walked through byways.

Twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. How far toward the south Jabin and Sisera extended their oppression we have no way of knowing. However, when

Deborah and Barak called for an army to deliver the people from bondage, they called only men of Naphtali and Zebulun. Since only these northern tribes took part in this battle of deliverance, it is possible that the oppression of Jabin did not extend to the south of Israel.

II. Israel's Deliverers Selected (Verses 4-10)

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth. All we know about Deborah is that which is related in this story. We know that her husband was named Lappidoth, and we know that she dwelt under the palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country. We are told that palm trees were very scarce in that section of the country and consequently would be a landmark. Since she made her home near or under this tree, it was a means of locating her residence. Again we are told that she judged Israel at this time. Moses set up a system of judges in the wilderness. (Ex. 18: 14-24.) But whether the children

of Israel continued this system of settling disputes among them is not known. The priests and Levites exercised considerable authority in the field of settling difficulties, but whether their authority extended through this period in which Deborah lived we have no way of knowing. These judges we read about in the book of Judges, about fifteen in number, were special people raised up by the Lord to serve in cases of emergency. Some of them seemed to be no more than military persons of the day who were able to raise armies sufficient to overcome the enemy and with the help and direction of God in times of national penitence, they were able to throw off the yoke of bondage.

And she sent and called Barak. This man Barak was a soldier who lived in Kedesh-naphtali. This simply means that this particular city called Kedesh was situated in Naphtali, to distinguish it from other cities of that name and especially one in the extreme south of Canaan.

Go and draw unto Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor is located about six or eight miles due east of Nazareth. It rises abruptly from the plain of Esdraelon. It is on the extreme eastern end of that plain of Esdraelon. The top of the mountain was flat

enough and extensive enough for fortifications to be built there and from about 50 B.C. it is known that a military fortress existed there. Deborah told Barak that God had commanded him to gather 10,000 men out of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and take them to Mount Tabor.

I will draw unto thee . . . Sisera. God said he would draw Sisera to the river Kishon, and there he would deliver Jabin's army, chariots and all, into the hands of Barak. In Judges 5 we learn that the forces of nature assisted Barak. "From heaven fought the stars, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon."

If thou wilt go with me, then I will go. This is the language of Barak to Deborah, and some have thought that it intimated cowardice and weakness. But it is possible that Barak, knowing Deborah to be a prophetess, and able to know and deliver the will of God, knew she was necessary for the success of this attack. Barak realized that he did not have the equipment which Sisera's army had, and that he would be dependent upon God, and he knew that the attack would have to be made in the right way at the right time. From verse fourteen we read the language of Deborah, "Up; for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thine hand." From the conduct of Barak in the battle, we have little right to say that he was a coward, so it seems better to say that Barak wanted Deborah to go along on the expedition so that she might tell him the time to make his attack so it would be successful.

The journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor. This is generally interpreted to mean that, since Barak demanded that a woman go along with him, he would get no honor for the victory, but that the honor for the victory would go to a woman. However, the woman into whose hands Sisera fell was not Deborah. In verses seventeen through twenty-two we learn that, when Sisera's army was routed, Sisera fled and took refuge in the tent of a woman named Jael, the wife of Heber, and that she gave him rest and sleep and that while he slept, she drove a tent pin through his temples, and thus she got the honor for slaying Sisera.

And Deborah arose, and went with Barak. Deborah was not only a prophetess, but she was a courageous woman. She could not bear to see

her people oppressed and her children grow up under the heel of an oppressor without doing everything she could to remedy the situation.

Lessons to Learn

1. From the experiences of Israel we should learn that, if we forsake God, he will forsake us. (2 Chron. 15: 2.)

2. Woman was made as a helper for man, and if we call the roll of such women as Sarah, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, and many New Testament

characters, we will find them helping men in every avenue of life.

3. Through Sisera had nine hundred chariots of iron and Barak had but few weapons of any kind, Barak had someone with him more powerful than all that were with Sisera. God and one man make a majority in any situation.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What do you know of the commercial and social conditions during the time of Deborah?

What is said of the rulers of the land in her time?

Who was Jabin and what is said of his army?

What do you know of the religious conditions in Israel at the time of Deborah?

What do you know of Israel's equipment for waging war?

Name and discuss the conditions which force women to take the lead in affairs of home and community.

What was Deborah's mission on this occasion?

How does this agree with Paul's teaching concerning the place and mission of women?

What part did Deborah have in celebrating the victory over the enemy?

Introduction

How many Canaanite nations had to be defeated to make room for the Israelites?

Were these nations of people completely destroyed? Why?

State and discuss two dangers which the people of Israel faced in Canaan.

What connection was there between their faithfulness to God and their ability to maintain freedom?

Who were the judges and why were they raised up?

What is said of Joshua and his influence on the people of his generation?

What is suggested with reference to the influence of Joshua's assistance?

Israel's Sin and Oppressor

What purpose did God have in leaving some of the inhabitants of Canaan in the land?

What was to be the attitude of God's people toward the gods of Canaan?

What was to be Israel's attitude with reference to the people of Canaan?

Did the people respect God's will in either of these matters?

How did God punish his people for their sins?

What is the meaning of the word "sold" in this text?

What do you know of the king into whose hand God sold his people?

Who was the captain of Jabin's forces?

What was Sisera's most destructive implement of war?

How long did Jabin's oppression continue?

What is suggested as to the extent of Jabin's oppression?

Israel's Deliverers Selected

What do you know of Deborah, her family, and place of residence?

Were Deborah and other judges of that time a part of that system which was set up by Moses?

Whom did Deborah select to help her in her work?

In what locality did Deborah choose to attack the enemy?

How did the forces of nature assist in this battle?

Why did Barak ask Deborah to go with the army?

Tell of the outcome of the battle.

Who got the honor for slaying Sisera?

What evidence do we have of the courage of Deborah?

What evidence do we have of her high standards of morals?

What evidence do we have of her sense of responsibility as a mother?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—February 21, 1954

RUTH THE FAITHFUL

Lesson Text

Ruth 1: 14-22

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Or-pah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return thou after thy sister-in-law.

16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God;

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Je-ho'-vah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

18 And when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her.

19 So they two went until they came to Beth'-le-hem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth'-le-hem, that all the city was moved

about them, and *the women* said, Is this Na-δ'-uṛi?

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Na-δ'-ππ, call me Ma'-ra; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and Je-ho'-vah hath brought me home again empty; why call ye me Na-o'-mi, seeing Je-ho'-vah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

22 So Na-o'-mi returned, and Ruth the Mo'-ab-i-tess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Mo'-ab: and they came to Beth'-le-hem in the beginning of barley harvest.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God ” (Ruth 1: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ruth 4: 13-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 15. M..... Ruth's Decision to Make (Ruth 1: 1-10)
- February 16. T..... .. Ruth's Choice (Ruth 1: 14-18)
- February 17. W.....Gleaning in the Field (Ruth 2: 1-13)
- February 18. T..... Ruth Favored (Ruth 2: 14-23)
- February 19. F.....Boaz Redeems Elimelech's Inheritance (Ruth 4: 1-11)
- February 20. S.....Honored Name in Israel (Ruth 4: 14-22)
- February 21. S. Excellence of Love (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

TIME.—1176 B.C.

PLACES.—Moab and Bethlehem.

PERSONS.—Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth.

Golden Text Explained

1. A declared determination, (a)

We should notice first the value of our determination, the value of having a determined mind. One who has the foresight to conceive of possible situations and determine beforehand what to do when in such situations is well armed for conflict. The one who waits until in the thick of temptation or trial to decide or determine what he will do under such a situation has more than half lost his battle to begin with, (b) We should consider also the value of making known our determination. The very expression of the determination of the heart gives force and strength to the determination and when that determination is expressed in the presence of others, there is added strength gained. If we know that others know of our determination and expect us to live up to that determination, we will make a greater effort to do so. Ruth was determined to go with Naomi, and she expressed her determination in words that bound her to do that which she in-

tended to do. Hence, we see the source of her courage and strength to do that which she wished to do.

2. **Following a determined course in spite of trials.** Wherever a person determines to do something right and good, the devil will see to it that there are plenty of obstacles in the way, plenty of trials to overcome. In our text Ruth sets for us a fine example of brushing aside all of the trials and temptations to keep following; the course upon which she had determined, (a) There was the trial of leaving her family and friends. To those who are deeply attached socially, this is a great trial. Some would make great missionaries in foreign lands, others could carry the gospel to sections of our own country where the church is weak or does not exist if they were able to break the social ties that bind them in districts where the church is strong and where they have little opportunities for development. One of Abraham's trials was leaving his family and friends back in Chaldea, (b) Another trial

which Ruth was determined to overcome was that of leaving the known and facing the unknown. For those who have a sense of patriotism and are deeply attached to the land of their forefathers, this is a real trial, and to get up and leave that which we have known and to face the unknown is rather a severe trial for some. And again we see that Abraham was called upon to face this trial by leaving the land which he knew and loved to go into a land of which he knew nothing, not even its location, (c) Another trial which Ruth's determination overcame was that of her going with Naomi in spite of the example of her sister-in-law Orpah. When Naomi called the attention of the girls to the fact that they were leaving their family, friends, and homeland, Orpah gave up and returned, but Ruth would not follow this example of weakness. Doing good and making sacrifices in spite of the example of one's family and friends to do otherwise is a mark of determined faithfulness to God. (d) Another trial which Ruth's determination overcame was the advice of Naomi. She not only refused to follow the bad example of Orpah, but she would do what she had determined to do in spite of the advice of the one she loved most.

3. Blessings to those determined.
God never allows people to make

great sacrifices, perform great services, without in return giving them great blessings and reward, (a) So we see Ruth gaining a better land and a better environment as a reward for leaving her own land to dwell in the land of the God of Naomi. (b) A part of her reward was to find a better family with a better future than she could possibly have known and enjoyed in Moab. In Bethlehem Ruth married Boaz and their first son was Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. (Ruth 4: 13-17.) This put Ruth in the ancestral line of Christ, the Messiah. Hence, she was rewarded with a better family and a brighter future, (c) As a blessing for determining to do that which was right, she found Jehovah for a God instead of Chemosh, the god of the Moabites. (Num. 21: 29.) The worship of Chemosh, as that of other ancient deities, included the offering of human sacrifice and certain forms of immorality. To leave a god of that character in Moab to find a God like Jehovah in Bethlehem was the greatest reward that Ruth could possibly have for following a good determination. To sum up the lessons of our text, let us be determined to do good and let us follow that determination in spite of any and every trial that may come in our pathway and depend upon God to bless us for our faithfulness in spite of our trials.

Introduction

1. Since Ruth was a Moabitess, it would be well for us to look into the beginnings of this nation of people. In Gen. 19: 30-38 we have a record of the beginning of the Moabites. When Lot and his family were delivered from the destruction of Sodom, the mother turned to a pillar of salt, and Lot and his two daughters went on to a little city of Zoar, where they dwelt for a time. Lest the name of their father should perish, the two girls caused their father to become drunk on wine and they conceived of him and bore sons. The name of the son of the oldest daughter was Moab, and the name of the youngest was Benammi. Moab became the father of the Moabites and Benammi became the father of the Ammonites. The Ammonites were a roving, warlike people, who traveled northeast of the place of their origin

and took possession of the pasture lands and waste tracts which lay on the fringe of the mountains on the east. The Moabites were more settled and peaceful than the Ammonites and remained near the place of their origin. Their land lay immediately east of the Dead Sea and extended as far north as the mountains of Gilead. Their district extended some forty or fifty miles in length and ten or twelve miles in width. It is said to be the most fertile land on that side of the Jordan and imminently fitted for pastoral pursuits.

2. The relations between Moab and Israel were of a mixed character. There are traces of feuds and hard feelings even at an early time and occasionally full-scale battles and a near destruction of Moab at one time or another, but still there was a

friendly commerce between the two peoples. Naomi felt free to go from Bethlehem into Moab to escape the rigors of the famine. Years afterward David felt free to take his father and mother to Moab for their protection while he was fleeing from Saul. (1 Sam. 22: 3-5.)

3. Events leading up to our lesson. The only note we have concerning the time the events of our lesson occurred is the fact that it was during the time the judges judged in Israel. This was a period of time between Joshua and Samuel extend-

ing over more than three hundred years of time. According to the story, there was a famine in the land of Canaan, and a man by the name of Elimelech and his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, who lived in Bethlehem, left their country and went into Moab. The boys married girls of Moab, Orpah and Ruth. Elimelech was the first to die, and not long afterwards both the sons died, leaving three widows. When Naomi heard that there was bread in Bethlehem again, she decided to return home.

Exposition of the Text

I. Character Contrast (Verses 14, 15)

Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. In verse seven we learn that the two daughters-in-law started to leave Moab. They accompanied Naomi for some distance, perhaps to the border between the two countries. Then Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house: Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, **each** of you in the house of her husband." Then it is said that Naomi kissed them and bade them goodbye. But they both said, "Nay, but we will return with thee unto thy people." Then Naomi argued the question with them. She told them that she had no sons left, and that if she should think of marrying to raise other sons, the daughters would be too old, and furthermore, they would not think of tarrying until those boys were grown. Naomi concluded her remark by saying, "Nay my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, for the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me." The argument of Naomi was sufficient to cause Orpah to turn back toward her homeland. We cannot be positive concerning the reasons why Orpah turned back. Some have suggested that she thought she might be a burden on Naomi back in Bethlehem and so returned to her own people. It is also possible that she weighed the possibilities of poverty and loneliness in a new country among new acquaintances, and that she preferred to stay in her own land among her own people. Regardless of why Orpah returned to her homeland, she committed no sin, but she

may be used as a type of many today who start out to serve the Lord and to go to the God of Naomi but who become unfaithful and turn back. There are many who fail to count the cost before they start. When they find that it will cost them a lot of self-denial and sacrifice, they turn back to the relationships to which they were accustomed and in which they find their greatest joy and satisfaction.

But Ruth clave unto her. In Ruth we find a more steadfast and resolute character than we find in Orpah. As Orpah may represent those who start for heaven but turn back because of the hardships and the prospect of suffering and sacrifice along the way, so Ruth may be used as a type of those who start and continue on their way to heaven with a determination. They have counted the cost, they have viewed the possibilities of sorrow, suffering, and sacrifice, and still they set their souls to go forward in spite of all the possible hardships.

Return thou after thy sister-in-law. When Orpah turned her back upon Naomi and walked down the road that led to Moab, Naomi pointed to her and insisted that Ruth follow her example. These words of Naomi were not an expression of dislike for Ruth nor a displeasure at having her accompany her to Bethlehem. We could not admire Ruth if we felt that she insisted on going with Naomi when she was not wanted. But Naomi wished that Ruth would understand that the young in this case had no responsibility for the aged, and that she need not feel that she must accompany the aged mother-in-law to take care of her.

II. Faithfulness Fittingly Expressed

(Verses 16-18)

Entreat me not to leave thee. "For simple pathos and unstudied eloquence, this language is unsurpassed.

. . . Here is the true outpouring of a fervent heart. Love and resolution are at their height. Thousands of human souls have expressed their mutual attachment in these words. They are not words of extravagance or of passion, but of feeling, of principle, of a fixed and changeless mind. Constancy must be admired, even by the inconstant." (Pulpit Commentary.) The beauty of this language and the depth of the emotions expressed are equaled by few, perhaps surpassed by no words of orators of our age; and coming from a young woman raised under the influence of idolatry in a land where the influence of Jehovah was not known, it is all the more to be appreciated.

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. This suggests that religious conviction had something to do with her being so determined to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. The only source from which she could have obtained information about the people of God and Jehovah was the family of Elimelech. This attitude, on the part of Ruth, certainly serves to commend Naomi and her sons for their influence on the people of Moab. Some people move into strange cities and are there for months or years without people knowing their religious affiliation. Others will affiliate themselves with the church when they move into a new city, but they are not anxious nor do they spend any time or effort to reach and teach others about the way of salvation, and influence them to accompany them on their journey toward heaven. But undoubtedly the family of Elimelech was not that indifferent to their religion while they lived in Moab. They lived such a life before Ruth that she wished to know more about and to have association with people like Naomi, so she would go to be with the people of Naomi. They worshiped in such fashion before Ruth that she was impressed with the God whom this family worshiped, and so impressed was she with the God of this family that she would turn her back upon the gods of Moab and worship the God of Naomi in Bethlehem,

She was steadfastly minded to go.

When Ruth bound herself by the curse of Jehovah to stay with Naomi until death, Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go, so she left off entreating her. Such faithfulness as this is seen only among the martyr class. We are reminded of Paul's statement that he was willing to preach the gospel, even though it cost him his life. (Acts 20: 24, 25; 21: 13, 14.)

III. Back in Bethlehem (Verses 19-22)

All the city was moved about them.

Of the events and hardships of this journey back to Bethlehem, we know nothing. But when they arrived in the city, all the people came about them, and from what is suggested, we conclude that Naomi was well known and highly respected by the people of Bethlehem. After having been gone for a number of years, she is recognized by her friends, and there is evidence that they were glad to see her and to receive her back. It is commendable when people live such lives in a community that all the people are glad to see them return.

Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.

The word Naomi means *pleasant*, while the word Mara means *bitter*; and she asked that she not be termed as the pleasant woman but as the bitter woman, for, she said, "The Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me." That the Lord was the author of her bitter experiences may or may not have been true. The fact that she is recorded as saying such is not to be taken as positive proof that the Lord was the author. That which the Lord allows Satan to do may rightly be spoken of as done by the Lord. When Satan was allowed to take all of Job's family and property, Job said, "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah." (Job 1: 21.)

"I went out full." Naomi and her husband seemed to have had plenty when they went into Moab, but she came back empty. This she took as testimony of the Almighty against her and as affliction from God. Again, we may say it may have been simply bad business judgment on the part of Elimelech. But, from another point of view, since Jehovah in his providence allowed such, it is correct to say that Jehovah gave

and took away. It is good for people today to see the hand of Jehovah in the every day affairs of their life. If they are in prosperity, health, and happiness, it is good for them to see the kind providence of God in their affairs. But, if they are in poverty and poor health and suffering, it is not wrong, but a healthful sign for them to see the disciplining hand of

God in the affairs of their lives. Those who see the hand of God in the everyday affairs of life will thank and praise him for the good things of life, but will pray for strength and for courage that they may overcome the hardships of life. Those who never see the hand of God in the affairs of their life are not pious, God-fearing people.

Lessons to Learn

1. Constant faithfulness to high ambitions and holy desires will always pay off.
2. All things work together for good to them that love God. So Ruth was rewarded for her faithfulness in her new relationship with God and God's people.
3. Naomi wished to wear the name

Mara, "bitter," because she was looking back upon past experiences; but she would have been glad to wear the name Naomi, "pleasant," if she had been able to look ahead and see the pleasant experiences awaiting her. So we sometimes mourn over the sorrows and reverses of the past when we should be joyfully looking to the successes of the future.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is the value of determination in our conflict with sin?
What is the value of expressing your determination in the presence of others?
From what source do we always expect opposition when we determine to do right?
State and discuss four distinct trials Ruth overcame to go with her mother-in-law.
What does God do for those who determine to do right?
State and discuss three distinct rewards Ruth received for going with Naomi.
State briefly a summary of the lessons taught in our text.

Introduction

Of what nation of people was Ruth?
Tell of the beginning of the Moabites and Ammonites.
What do you know of the dispositions of these two nations of people?
Where did the Moabites live?
What do you know of the relations between Israel and the Moabites?
What do we know concerning the time of the incidents in our lesson?
Give the background of persons and events which lead up to our lesson.

Character Contrast

What argument of Naomi was sufficient to cause Orpah to turn back?
Orpah may be used as a type of what class of people today?

Of what class of people today is Ruth the type?
Can you show how Ruth refused to follow a bad example?
Did Naomi intimate that she did not desire the company of Ruth on her journey homeward?

Faithfulness Fitly Expressed

What can you say of the beauty of the language of Ruth?
What statement shows the religious conviction of Ruth?
What evidence do we have that Naomi was missionary minded?
What does this story teach us about the influence of God-fearing people among godless people?
To what extent was Ruth determined to accompany Naomi?
What words of Paul reflects such determination on his part?

Back in Bethlehem

What evidence do we have that Naomi was widely and favorably known in Bethlehem?
What is the meaning of the word Naomi? And the word Mara?
Why did Naomi wish to be called Mara?
May we be certain that the Lord was the author of her unpleasant experiences?
What evidence do we have from the writings of Job on this point?
What lesson do we learn from Naomi's experiences with reference to the hand of God in ordinary affairs of our life?
Contrast the beneficent hand of God with the disciplining hand of God in the affairs of our lives.
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—February 28, 1954

ELIJAH THE PROPHET

Lesson Text 1 Kings 17: 1-12

1 And E-li'-jah the Tish'-bite, who was of the sojourners of Gil'-e-ad,

said unto A'-hab, As Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, liveth, before whom

I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

2 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto him, saying,

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Che'-rith, that is before the Jordan.

4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of Je-ho'-vah; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zar'e-phath, which belongeth to Si'-don, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zar'e-phath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand.

12 And she said, As Je-ho'-vah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

Golden Text.—"Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six morihs." (James 5: 17.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Kings 17: 13-24.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 22. M.....Elijah Hears Jehovah's Voice (1 Kings 19: 9-18)
- February 23. T.....Elijah Predicts a Drought (1 Kings 17: 1-4)
- February 24. W.....Elijah Is Fed by Ravens (1 Kings 17: 5-7)
- February 25. T.....Elijah Raises the Widow's Son (1 Kings 17: 17-24)
- February 26. F.....Elijah and the Prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18: 20-46)
- February 27. S.....Elijah's Discouragement (1 Kings 19: 1-7)
- February 28. S.....Elisha, Elijah's Successor (1 Kings 19: 19-21)

Time.—910 B.C.

Places.—The brook Cherith, near the Jordan River, and Zarephath, which belonged to Sidon.

Persons.—Elijah, Ahab, and the widow of Zarephath.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Elijah had no special advantage in prayer.** Our text tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions with us. By this James meant to convey the idea that Elijah was a common, ordinary human being like all of us and that he had no special advantage at the throne of grace because he was a prophet. Paul and Barnabas used the same language when they were talking to the people of Lystra who were about to worship them. (Acts 14: 15.) By telling the people of Lystra that they were men of like passions with the people, they intended to convey the idea that they were not worthy of worship. And so when James tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions with us, he simply means

to convey to us the idea that Elijah was not an extraordinary individual, that he had no special influence at the throne of grace because he was a prophet. People often lose the force of the teaching of the Bible on prayer when a prophet or an apostle is used as an example of answered prayer. For instance, in Rom. 15: 30-33, we have a prayer which Paul prayed. There are four items of that prayer, and we learn that each of the four items was granted to Paul. And when using that as an illustration that God will hear and answer prayer, people often say Paul's prayer was answered, but you must remember that he was an apostle. They make that answer as if the fact that Paul was an apostle gave him special

advantage at the throne of grace; but such is not the truth. The lowliest, most insignificant member of God's family has as much influence at the throne of God as the greatest apostle or preacher in the land, provided that lowly individual meets certain other conditions that are necessary to effectual prayer.

2. **Why Elijah's prayer was answered.** (a) He was a righteous man. The verse just preceding our text says, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." After saying that the prayer of a righteous man avails something, James gives Elijah as an example, so we conclude that Elijah was a righteous man and that his prayer was answered because he was a righteous man. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3: 21, 22.) (b) Elijah was unselfish in his prayers. In the devotional reading the student will learn that Elijah prayed that it might not rain because the people of God had forsaken God and were worshipping Baal. Elijah did not pray for a drought because he had produce, the sale of which depended on dry weather. He did not pray for a drought because it would take that for him to settle the score with Ahab or to get even with Jezebel. His prayer was purely unselfish. God will listen to people pray when they do not pray selfish prayers. "Ye ask,

and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." (James 4: 3.) (c) Elijah prayed for something for the glory of God. As stated above, the people of Israel had forsaken Jehovah and had taken up the worship of Baal and Ashtaroath under the influence of Jezebel and her prophets. Elijah prayed that it might not rain so he could create a condition which would bring honor and glory to God. God will listen to our prayers when we pray for things which will honor and glorify him rather than minister to our own selfish advantage, (d) Elijah was heard because he prayed fervently. Our text tells us that he prayed fervently that it might not rain. Dry, thoughtless, purposeless prayers, in which the one praying is hardly conscious of that for which he is praying, will not be heard or answered. But when we put our hearts into our prayers, they are likely to be answered.

3. The lessons for us. (a) Answer to our prayers does not depend upon the office we hold. Let no one think that he is at a disadvantage in prayer because he is neither apostle, prophet, nor preacher, (b) The answer to our prayers depends upon whether we meet the conditions of acceptable prayer. All the conditions of acceptable prayer are not mentioned in our lesson. We must believe in God and believe that our prayer will be answered. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matt. 21: 22.) See also James 1: 5-8.

Introduction

"Elijah the Tishbite has been well entitled the grandest and most romantic character that Israel had produced. Certainly there is no personage in the Old Testament whose career is more vividly portrayed, or who exercises on us a more remarkable fascination. His rare, sudden, and brief appearances, his undaunted courage and fiery zeal, the brilliancy of his triumphs, the pathos of his despondency, the glory of his departure, and the calm beauty of his reappearance in the mount of transfiguration throw such a halo of brightness around him as is equalled by none of his compeers in the sacred story. The ignorance in which we are left of the circumstances and antecedence of the man who lived

and who suffered so much doubtless contributes to enhance our interest in the story and the character. Elijah the Tishbite of the inhabitants of Gilead is literally all that is given us to know of his parentage and locality. It is in remarkable contrast with which the genealogies of the prophets and leaders of Israel are stated." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.) Elijah of the Old Testament compares favorably in dress, in character, in manner of life with John the Baptist of the New Testament. In fact, it is said that John the Baptist was to go before the face of the Messiah, "in the spirit and power of Elijah." (Luke 1: 17.) Both Elijah and John avoided the great cities and centers of population. They did

their work in the desert or in the mountains far removed from the corrupting influences of society. They were both abrupt, plain-speaking, hard-hitting preachers of righteousness. They both condemned sin in people without asking for favors. Elijah challenged the false prophets of his day to a contest on Mount Carmel to see whether God would answer their prayers or his. When God had answered his prayer by fire to consume the offering and his altar, Elijah then demanded the destruction of four hundred fifty false prophets. After the excitement of the day's work, Elijah fled from Jezebel, who said to him, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I

make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." (1 Kings 19: 2.) The student will read with interest the record of Elijah's flight from Samaria to Beersheba and then to Horeb or Sinai, where God taught him the lesson that God is not necessarily in the strong and mighty things of this world such as the thunder, the lightning, and the storm, but he is often in the still small voice. "Not in the persecutions of Ahab and Jezebel, nor in the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, but in the seven thousand unknown worshipers who had not bowed the knee to Baal, was the assurance that Elijah was not alone as he had seemed to be."

Exposition of the Text

I. Elijah Moves to Destroy Idolatry

(Verse 1)

And Elijah the Tishbite. Of this unusual Old Testament character Brother Errett has well said, "Like Melchizedek, 'he is without father, without mother, without genealogy, without mother, without genealogy, life.' He stands before us for what he is worth in his own personality, shining in no borrowed luster save in that which he derived from heaven, sustained by no family or tribal prestige; in a very peculiar sense a 'man of God.' How often does Jehovah, in selecting his men, pour contempt on the pride of ancestry and on all the fictitious sources of human greatness! All that we know of Elijah's antecedents is found in a single sentence: 'Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead,'—and as if even this were too much to be known, the term 'Tishbite' is of doubtful meaning, and if there was such a place as Tishbi or Thisbe, its locality is unknown. There may be a glimmer of light in his name. Elijah means 'Jehovah is my God.' It is possible we trace here the loyalty to Jehovah of his parents in a time of widespread idolatry, or a prophetic announcement of that championship of Jehovah to which he was destined from his birth. This would involve a careful religious training in the knowledge and worship of Jehovah." (Evenings with the Bible.)

Of the sojourners of Gilead. All we know of Elijah is that he came

from Gilead. We do not know whether the word Tishbite is the name of a town, and if so, we do not

know the location of the town. Gilead was the country east of the Jordan, where the two and a half tribes dwelt. Smith's Bible Dictionary says it was a "country of chase and pasture, of tent villages, and mountain castles, inhabited by a people not settled and civilized like those who formed the communities of Ephraim and Judah, but of wandering, irregular habits, exposed to the attacks of the Nomad tribe of the desert, and gradually conforming more and more to the habits of these tribes; making war with the Hagarites, and taking the countless thousands of their cattle, and then dwelling in their stead. (1 Chron. 5: 10, 19-22.)"

There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. Guided by the Lord, Elijah decided to create a situation which would make possible the manifestation of the power of God above the power of the heathen gods to whom Israel had returned. Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, and daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, had led or forced the people of Israel into idolatry. Under her unscrupulous and fanatical influence, Ahab had built an immense temple to Baal in Samaria and had adorned it with idolatrous images of the figure of Baal and had employed four hundred fifty prophets to serve in that temple. (1 Kings 18: 19.) Under her influence, Ahab had also built a temple and a royal palace at Jezreel, and a temple to Asherah, the Canaanite Venus and four hundred priests ministered in that temple. By bringing a prolonged drought upon the

land, Elijah proposed to make the people feel their dependence upon God. He would then show the superiority of Jehovah over the gods which Jezebel had led them to worship.

II. Elijah at the Brook Cherith (Verses 2-7)

Hide thyself by the brook Cherith.

So little do we know of Elijah that we have to admit again that we do not even know the location of this brook. Authorities on the Holy Land differ in their guesses as to which brook this might be. There is one which rises in the mountains of Ephraim and runs into the Jordan about fifteen miles north of Jericho. It runs through a deep gorge in the sides of which are found many inaccessible caverns where ravens, eagles, and vultures are seen in abundance.

I have commanded the ravens to feed thee. Adam Clarke has argued at great length that instead of ravens feeding Elijah, the text means that Arabians, inhabitants of a city called Oreb, or Orbo, are meant. Smith's Bible Dictionary rejects this principle of interpretation saying, "There is no escape from the plain meaning of the words ... or from the unanimity of the Hebrew manuscripts, of all the ancient versions, and of Josephus." On this point Brother Errett says, "The attempt to change *Orebin*, ravens, into *Arbin*, Arabs, so as to make Arabians feed Elijah, has not generally been approved. It is unsustained by any of the Hebrew manuscripts." Again, we have to say that we do not know the source of Elijah's food. Granting that the ravens brought his food, which is the belief of this writer, we still do not know where they obtained it. But Elijah is God's prophet, and God cares for him in his own good way to accomplish his own purposes.

III. Elijah at Zarephath (Verses 8-12)

Arise, get thee to Zerephath, which belongeth to Sidon. As if God would mock the idolatrous Jezebel, he sent his prophet who was to destroy the worship she had brought into Israel into her homeland to be cared for until the time of destruc-

tion. Tyre and Sidon were the two chief cities of Phoenicia, and Zarephath was near Sidon.

Behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. God moves in mysterious ways his purposes to accomplish. He sent his prophet to a widow who was so poor that she not only was unable to care for him but was even unable to care for herself and her son. She was then gathering sticks to build a fire to cook the last handful of meal and the last drop of oil that she had in her possession.

Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water. This is the first request that Elijah made of the widow. She promptly and willingly complied with this request. Seeing in her the disposition to help one in need, Elijah made a more difficult request, asking her to bring him a morsel of bread. Her generous disposition would not allow her to refuse this request, though she explained that she had only enough for herself and her son to eat one meal and then expect to die. She spoke of Jehovah as the God of Elijah, thus intimating that Jehovah was not her God. We may conclude, therefore, that she was a worshiper of heathen gods. Yet, in her was the God-like disposition of sympathy and a willingness to relieve the needs of the poor. No doubt this fact is the reason why God sent Elijah to this particular woman. "And is such goodness ever in vain? Never. For, 1. the soul is nobler for it, and the purest happiness the soul ever knows—that of doing good—is worth all it costs. 2. In the righteous workings of God's providence, this supreme devotion to goodness is never left unrewarded. O, if niggardly souls could but know what inevitable curse attends their selfishness withering the best sympathies and smothering the noblest impulses of their own soul; if they could but see what a world of beautiful and blessed compensations they have barred themselves out; they would loathe and curse the meanness of their self inspiration, enjoyably give up all the wealth so meanly earned for the inevitable peace and joy that filled the heart of the poor widow of Zarephath." (Errett.)

Lessons to Learn

1. We know nothing of the tribal relations, the parentage, or the social background and environments of Elijah. Was he an owner of property?

Could he make good in his hometown? In Elijah we should learn to accept people for what they are and what they are able to accomplish

for God and not because of their ancestry or their social standing.

2. God is the maker and preserver of every living creature. He has the right and the power to use any or every creature in the universe for the accomplishment of his purposes. In our lesson we see him using the fowls of the air to care for his prophet. Who then would doubt the providence of God toward those who would do the will of God and bring honor and glory to his great name?

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of this lesson?

Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What lesson are we taught in the statement that Elijah was a man of like passions with us?

What other men used the same language to prevent being worshiped as gods?

Did the office of apostle or prophet give a person an advantage at the throne of grace?

Give the teaching of the Bible concerning righteousness as a condition of prayer.

Can you show that unselfishness is a condition of acceptable prayer?

Can you show that Elijah had the glory of God in mind when he prayed?

What does fervency have to do with the success of our prayers?

What lessons have you learned with reference to acceptable prayer?

Introduction

What do we know of the parentage and ancestry of Elijah?

With what New Testament character does Elijah compare favorably?

Give some instances of similarity between the work of Elijah and that of John the Baptist.

What seems to you to be the biggest day's work Elijah ever did?

Who was the one person from whom Elijah fled in fear?

To what famous mountain did Elijah go when he fled?

What important lesson did Elijah learn at that mountain?

3. God often uses the mean and despised things for the accomplishment of high and holy purposes. (1 Cor. 1: 26-31.) In our lesson we see him using not only the birds of the air but a poor widow who was not even able to sustain her own life, in order that he might sustain the life of his prophet. From this we might learn that God can make us able to do what he wants us to do. (2 Cor. 9: 8-11.)

Elijah Moves to Destroy Idolatry

In what respect does Elijah resemble Melchizedek?

What is the meaning of the word Elijah?

How does God in the person of Elijah pour contempt on pride of ancestry and other sources of human greatness?

From what portion of Canaan did Elijah come?

What do you know of the nature of the country from which Elijah came?

Who was king in Israel at this time? And who was his wife?

What was the influence of Jezebel in Israel?

What message did Elijah deliver to Ahab?

What did Elijah hope to gain through a prolonged drought?

Elijah at the Brook Cherith

What is known about the book Cherith?

How was Elijah's life sustained while he lived by the brook?

Elijah at Zarephath

To what country was Elijah sent?

What other person mentioned in our lesson came from this country?

What was the condition of the widow to whom Elijah was sent?

What was the first request Elijah made of her?

What was Elijah's second request, and what was the widow's reply?

What God-like disposition did Elijah see in this reply?

How was the widow rewarded for her kind and generous disposition?

What is said in our lesson of the influence of selfishness on our soul?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson X—March 7, 1954

ELISHA AND NAAMAN

Lesson Text

2 Kings 5: 1-3, 8-14

1 Now Na'-a-man, captain of the host of the king of Syr'-i-a, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him Je-ho'-vah had given victory unto Syr'-i-a: he was also a mighty man of valor, *but he was* a leper.

2 And the Syr'-i-ans had gone out in bands, and had brought away cap-

tive out of the land of Is'-ra-el a little maiden; and she waited on Na'-a-man's wife.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Sa-ma'-ri-a! then would he recover him of his leprosy.

8 And it was so, when E-li-sha the

man of God heard that the king of Is'-ra-el had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Is'-ra-el.

9 So Na'-a-man came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of E-li'-sha.

10 And E-li-sha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Na'-a-man was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Je-ho'-vah his God, and wave his

hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 Are not Ab'-a-nah and Phar'-par, the rivers of Da-mas'-cus, better than all the waters of Is'-ra-el? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Golden Text.—*“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men”* (1 Cor. 1: 25.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Kings 5: 15-27.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 1. M.....Elijah Taken Up into Heaven (2 Kings 2: 1-12)
- March 2. T.....Elisha Takes Elijah's Mantle (2 Kings 2: 13: 25)
- March 3. W.....Elisha and the Widow's Oil (2 Kings 4: 1-16)
- March 4. T.....Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (2 Kings 4: 17-44)
- March 5. F.....Elisha and Naaman (2 Kings 5: 1-27)
- March 6. S.....Elisha's Illness (2 Kings 14: 13-19)
- March 7. S.....Elisha's Death (2 Kings 14: 20, 21)

Time.—894 B.C.

Places.—Damascus in Syria and Samaria in Israel.

Persons.—Elisha, Naaman, and a Jewish maid.

Golden Text Explained

1. Examples of God's foolishness and weakness. Our text says that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. By this he meant that God could use things which in the eyes of men were foolish or weak and accomplish more with these things than men could accomplish in the things which they call wise and strong, (a) In our lesson today we have the story of Naaman being cured of leprosy. All the wisdom of men could not cure one case of leprosy. But Elisha could send Naaman to the river Jordan to dip seven times and be healed of his leprosy. In the eyes of Naaman, and of all other reasoning men, dipping seven times in the river has no power to heal a disease. From man's point of view it was perfectly foolish to think that he could be healed of leprosy, an incurable disease, simply by dipping himself in the water. And yet God used that which, in the eyes of man, was foolish to do that which man, with all of his wisdom, could

not accomplish. (b) In the sixth chapter of Joshua we have the record of the capture of Jericho. God told the people to march around the city thirteen times, then the priests were to blow the ram's horn, and the people were to give a great shout, and he assured them that, when such was done, the walls would fall down flat and the soldiers could march up directly before where each stood and partake of the spoils of the city. Such a plan would seem foolish to anyone and certainly to a military man. But in spite of the fact that the plan seemed foolish to those schooled in the arts of war, the city was destroyed and God's purposes accomplished. By using that which, in the eyes of man, was foolish, God accomplished his purpose, (c) In John 9: 1-12 we have the story of the healing of a blind man. Our Lord spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and anointed the man's eyes, and told him to go wash in the pool

of Siloam. The man went and came back able to see. If you were to ask an eye specialist what he thought of such a treatment for blindness, he would think that you were foolish. Yet, God used this means to restore sight to this man. Man with all of his wisdom and power could not have given this man sight, since he was born blind, but God, by the use of that which seems foolish to man, accomplished this purpose.

2. **Application of these lessons, (a)** In the establishment of the church. Jesus came into the world to establish his kingdom. He wished to establish a kingdom that would overcome and destroy and outlast all other kingdoms. Yet our Lord made no effort to gather an army greater and better equipped than any nation of the earth had, nor did he seek to gather around him men of wealth, influence, and education. He gathered a few ignorant fishermen, a tax collector, and other men with no special qualifications or abilities. He taught them for more than three years and then left them with a mission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and to teach those that were baptized so that they might live and worship according to God's will. If you were to ask some wise statesman today if he thought that a great and lasting nation could be built in any such way as that, he would think that you were foolish. Yet, Jesus built a kingdom that shall stand forever, one that even the devil cannot overthrow, (b) We have the application of the same principles in the need of salvation. Man is spiritually ill. Sin is the disease of the soul. Man must be cured of this disease. Jesus tells us that we must believe in him as the Son of God, that we must turn away from, our sins and genuinely repent, that we must confess him before men, and be buried with him by baptism unto death and be raised to walk in newness of life in order for us to be

saved from our sins. If you ask the man of the world what he thinks of this as a means of overcoming sin, as a means of being saved from sin, he will tell you that it is foolishness. And yet God proposes by that which the world calls foolishness to accomplish that which man, in all his wisdom, has not been able to accomplish. Being baptized in water for the remission of sins is just as foolish as dipping in the Jordan seven times to be cleansed of leprosy. Yet the God who would use the one to cure a man of his leprosy might be expected to use the other to secure the forgiveness of man's sins. In the case of Naaman it was not the water that cured him of his leprosy, but God cured Naaman when he did what the prophet told him to do. And, in the case of baptism, it is not the water that saves a man from his sins, nor is it the act of being baptized in the water that saves the man from his sins, but it is God forgiving man of his sins when he obeys the will of God. (c) We see the application of this principle in the items of worship. The simple New Testament worship taught and practiced by the apostles of our Lord seems foolish in sight of men. Man has always wanted to conduct his worship in such fashion as will appeal to the intelligence of man. Men put on long flowing robes and peculiar garbs. They gather great choirs and sing to the accompaniment of expensive organs, thinking that they can impress God with their ability to render music of their own making. And on these things the religious world depends, not only to make their impression upon other men, but to commend themselves to God. Yet our Lord demands that we worship him in song, in prayer, in taking the Lord's supper, in giving our money for gospel means, and in the study and meditation upon the truths that are revealed in his will. These simple items of worship exhaust the list used by the apostles and commanded by our Lord.

Introduction

The first mention we have of the prophet Elisha is in 1 Kings 19: 16, where Elijah is told that he is to appoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, to be the prophet in his stead. The word Shaphat means judge, and the word Abelmeholah means, "the meadow of the dance."

So this phrase describing Elisha's connections may simply mean no more than that his father was a judge in the fertile valley of the Jordan. In 1 Kings 19: 19-21 we have the record of Elisha's call to be the prophet in the place of Elijah. He was in the field plowing when Elijah passed

by and cast his mantle upon him. This was the sign of his call to be a disciple and a successor of the prophet who cast his mantle upon him. Elisha asked that he might have time to tell his parents goodbye, but Elijah knowing the hardships that he would have to endure, and knowing that only the very hardiest and the most determined would make a success at being his successor, said, "Go back again; for what have I done to thee?" But Elisha was determined to give his life to the cause which Elijah had so bravely represented and defended, and so he took the yoke of oxen with which he was plowing, boiled their flesh, and gave to the people about him and left his home to minister unto Elijah. For seven or eight years Elisha ministered unto Elijah and was known as "Elisha the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." (2 Kings 3: 11.) During these seven or eight years that Elisha served Elijah, it is very probable that Elijah reorganized the schools of the prophets and was preparing a number of young men in all parts of the country to be instructors of the people and to try to lead them out of idolatry and into the right way of worshiping Jehovah. Elisha learned much from association and the teach-

ing of his teacher Elijah. There is such a great contrast between the characters of Elijah and that of Elisha that it seems difficult that the one could follow successfully the other. "Each seeks in the other that which he lacks in himself. Elijah was rough, stern, fiery; Elisha was smooth, gentle, complacent. Elijah was fond of wild solitudes, and dwelt apart from courts and busy throngs; the free ranges of Gilead, the wilderness of Sinai, and the cave at Horeb were charming to him, while the thronged streets of Samaria and the splendor of the royal palace at Jezreel were detestable. Elisha loved men, delighted in society, was at home in crowded cities or by the campfires of armies. We find him at Jericho, Dothan, and Damascus, and in the stirring scenes of military life with the armies of Israel and Judah on their march against Moab. (2 Kings 3: 11.) Elijah's spirit is symbolized by the earthquake, the tempest, and the fire; Elisha's by the "still small voice." If Elijah, in his spirit and power, foreshadowed John the Baptist in his asceticism and fiery energy, Elisha's spirit is rather suggestive of him who would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax." (Evenings with the Bible, Errett.)

Exposition of the Text

I. A Great Man But a Leper (Verses 1-3)

Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria. Of this man Naaman we have no information except that which is furnished in the context. He was captain of the army of the king of Syria. The king of Syria, at this time, was Benhadad. The king in Israel, with capital in Samaria, who thought that the Syrians were trying to pick a quarrel with him in this incident was Jehoram. (2 Kings 5: 7.) We are told that Naaman was a great man with his master. From this we would conclude that he had served his king well in his military capacity and that he had a good standing with the king, and could be depended upon to execute his king's orders. We are told also that he was an honorable man. From this we conclude that he was a man of good principle and was respected by all who knew him.

By him Jehovah had given victory unto Syria.. This is given as a reason

why he was great in the eyes of his master and held as an honorable man. It was through his wise leadership in battle that the victory had been given unto Syria. This was a victory, which our text says, Jehovah gave. Of this victory we know nothing for sure. Some think this is the victory which he won in the battle of Ahab. The reader will find the record of this battle in 1 Kings 22: 29 following. There is a tradition among the Jews that Naaman was the Syrian soldier which "drew his bow at a venture" and killed Ahab, who was disguised in the garb of a common soldier.

A mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Since leprosy was a loathsome and repulsive disease, Naaman was considerably embarrassed. No doubt he felt that he could be much greater, more prominent, and better liked among the people if he had not this loathsome disease. There is a certain similarity between Naaman and the apostle Paul. Naaman was

a great man, but he had leprosy. Paul was a great man, but he had a thorn in the flesh. (2 Cor. 12: 6-10.) Naaman seems never to have learned that leprosy was good for his pride, but Paul learned that the loathsome thorn in his flesh was good for his pride, and he used it for the purpose for which God gave it, and so profited by it.

The Syrians had gone out in bands. Our text says that these Syrians had gone out in small bands to plunder the land of Israel. In 2 Kings 6 there is an interesting story of how Elisha, the prophet, aided the king of Israel to know about the movements of such bands of Syrian soldiers. These marauding bands not only captured cattle and grain but occasionally took children captive.

Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria. On one occasion a band of soldiers captured a Jewish maid, and she became the servant of Naaman's wife. And while living in the home, no doubt enjoying the kindness and goodness of Naaman and his wife, she came to respect, and perhaps to love, her master and mistress. And knowing that her master had a loathsome disease, she wished that he might be healed. She knew of Elisha and of the fact that he was a prophet of God, that he had the power to work miracles. She believed that he could heal Naaman's leprosy, and so she told Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in Samaria who could recover Naaman of his leprosy. Immediately Naaman was informed of this, and he went to his king with the information. The king wrote a letter to the king of Israel, asking that he might recover Naaman from his leprosy. The king of Samaria misunderstood or misinterpreted the letter and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive; that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? but consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." (2 Kings 5: 4-7.)

II. Elisha and His Message (Verses 8-10)

Elisha the man of God. Jehoram was the king, but Elisha was the man of God. Someone has said he would rather be right than be President. Elisha had the advantage of Jehoram. It was better to be the man of God than to be the king of Israel, and when we today put world-

ly honors and position above a right relationship with God, we are placing the wrong values on things material and spiritual.

He shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. Elisha intended the conduct himself in such way that Naaman would know that there was a prophet of Jehovah in Israel. Preachers have the opportunity today, both in the community and in the pulpit, to conduct themselves in such way that the people will know that there is a man of God among them.

Naaman came . . . and stood at the door of Elisha. Naaman came in all the pomp and glory of the great Syrian army. No doubt he thought he was conferring a great honor upon the poor prophet in Israel and not thinking that he was asking a favor of one greater than himself. "The proud Syrian hero expected a flattering reception. His own personal greatness, and the splendid gift he bore, amounting to more than fifty thousand dollars, would, he was sure, secure to him the most obsequious service of the prophet and the punctilious performance of the most elaborate religious rights. He knew that such a gift would purchase from any Syrian priest the profoundest reverence and the most imposing ceremonies. He thought Elisha would come out to him with fawning and flattery, and stand before him, and call on the name of Jehovah, his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." (Errett.)

Go and wash in the Jordan seven times. Elisha did not so much as honor the proud and haughty Syrian with his presence. He simply sent his messenger out to him and told this proud Syrian to go dip himself in the Jordan seven times. As an encouragement to do this humiliating thing, the prophet assured Naaman that "thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

III. Naaman Humiliated and Cleansed (Verses 11-14)

But Naaman was wroth. Naaman's wrath and indignation were stirred in him because this despised Israelite would give him no more personal attention and respect for his position and power. "A disgusting leper enraged because the military dress and equipage that cover and surround his blotches and scales and hideous sores are not worshiped! He turned

and went away in a rage. And how many, like him, who cover their moral leprosy with the gay robes of wealth and fashion, turn away from what they deem the humiliating demands of the gospel of salvation. But their leprosy clings to them, as did Naaman's, and will cling to them forever, unless, like him, they learn to listen to the voice of truth and mercy." (Errett.)

Behold, I thought. Naaman expected (1) the personal service of the prophet, (2) elaborate ceremonies on the part of the prophet, and because the prophet did not do as Naaman expected, he was humiliated and would go away in rage. And so people today have an idea how God ought to act in saving them from their sins and when the truth is preached to them and they find out that God is not going to act according to the way they thought he should, they turn away in disappointment and disgust.

The rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel. No rivers around Damascus are known by the names given in our text. Hence, it is impossible to locate the rivers which Naaman had in mind. National pride would lead Naaman to make such a statement. However, it is known that the rivers around Damascus are of unusually clear sparkling water and the Jordan is usually muddy. We could, therefore, agree with Naaman that for some purposes the waters of Damascus were better than the waters of the Jordan, but for the purpose of being cleansed from his leprosy, the Jordan was much better simply because it was the river designated by the Lord.

If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing. Naaman would have been willing to spend his fortune, but he was not willing yet to humiliate himself and do that which seemed to him a senseless thing. In like manner there are many people today who cannot conceive of God, the Creator and Preserver of this great universe, asking people to do some little simple thing

to be saved from sin. Such a little simple thing as baptism is out of harmony with their conception of the greatness and the grandeur and the glory of the God who created and maintains this universe. Hence, it appears to them to be a foolish thing and they, like Naaman, refuse to humiliate themselves by doing that which they deem foolish.

How much rather . . . wash, and be clean. Since it was not Naaman nor the thing which he would do primarily which would cleanse him, but God who directed him through the prophet, why not much rather do some simple thing that God directs him to do than to demand some pompous ceremony God had not directed, and with which God would have nothing to do? If Naaman will do that which God directs, God will give the blessing. But regardless of how great and how pompous a thing Naaman might do which God has not directed, God will not give the blessing. This is a lesson which religious people ought to learn today. If they are willing to do the simple things which God has directed, God will give them a blessing; but man is unable to do a thing so pompous and splendid that God will be obligated to give him a blessing.

Dipped himself seven times . . . according to the saying of the man of God. When Naaman gave sober consideration to the advice of his servant, he turned himself about and went to the Jordan. In the despised waters of Jordan Naaman dipped himself seven times, according to the directions of the man of God. That is an expression worthy of the consideration of everyone who seeks to please God and obtain his blessings. If we do that which is according to the saying of the man of God, the prophet of God, the inspired man, we can hope to obtain the blessing. But if we do that which is according to human wisdom and contrary to the commandments given through the man of God, the inspired man, we need not hope for the blessing of God.

Lessons to Learn

1. The Syrian maid, though a captive in a strange land, used her opportunities to do good and bless a life.
2. Elisha, the man of God, did not bow and scrape before the wealth of

the world. He was not upset, as was his servant Gehazi, by the glitter and the tinkle of the gold of Naaman.

3. God's ways are not man's ways. Naaman had his idea what God

would do, but it was far removed from the simple thing God told Naaman to do. So man's ways today are

far different from God's ways, but God's ways bring the blessing and man's ways bring the curse.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is meant by God's foolishness and weakness?
How does the story of Naaman illustrate the power of the foolishness of God?
How does the capture of Jericho illustrate the power of the foolishness of God?
Tell the story of Jesus healing a blind man and show how it illustrates the thought of our text.
How is the lesson of our text illustrated in the establishment of the church?
How does Bible teaching on the subject of baptism illustrate the meaning of our text?
Can you show how this truth is illustrated in the items of Christian worship?

Introduction

What is the first mention we have of the prophet Elisha?
What was Elisha doing when he was called to be the successor of Elijah?
What sign did Elijah give that he was calling Elisha to that office?
In what act did Elisha bid farewell to his family and friends?
How long did Elisha serve as the minister to Elijah?
Contrast the characters of Elisha and Elijah.
What two New Testament characters may be contrasted in a similar way?

A Great Man But a Leper

Who was the king of Syria?
Who was the captain of the armies of Syria?

What was Naaman's standing with the king and the people of Syria generally?
Why was Naaman great in the eyes of his king?
What similarity can you show between Naaman and the apostle Paul?
What do you know of Elisha and the Syrian bands of soldiers?
Who first set in motion the chain of circumstances which led to Naaman's cure?
To whom was Naaman first sent to be cured of his leprosy?
What did the king of Israel think Naaman was trying to do?

Elisha and His Message

Who was the king of Israel at this time?
What term is used to describe Elisha and what do you think of its value?
Why did Elisha send for Naaman?
How did Elisha show his disinterestedness in the proud Syrian and his money and position?
What simple command did Elisha give Naaman?

Naaman Humiliated and Cleansed

Why was Naaman disappointed?
What did Naaman expect from Elisha?
How did Naaman show his prejudice for his own country?
What advice did Naaman's servant give?
What commandment of God today affects people similarly to the way this commandment affected Naaman?
Was Naaman progressively cleansed as he dipped seven times or did the healing come at the end of his obedience?
Can you show how this lesson teaches us to respect the word of God?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—March 14, 1954

ESTHER THE QUEEN

Lesson Text

Esther 2: 5-11, 16-18; 4: 13-17

5 There was a certain Jew in Shu'shan the palace, whose name was Mor-de-cai, the son of Ja'-ir, the son of Shim'-e-i, the son of Kish, a Benja-mite,

6 Who had been carried away from Je-ru'-sa-lem with the captives that had been carried away with Jec-oni'-ah king of Ju'-dah, whom Neb-uchad-nez'-zar the king of Bab'-ylon had carried away.

7 And he brought up Ha-das'-sah, that is, Es'-ther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mor-de-cai took her for his own daughter.

8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shu'shan the palace, to the custody of He'-gai, that Es'-ther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of He'-gai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with her portions, and the seven maidens who were meet to be given her out of the king's house: and he removed her and her maidens to the best place of the house of the women.

10 Es'-ther had not made known

her people nor her kindred; for Mor'-de-cai had charged her that she should not make it known.

11 And Mor'-de-cai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Es'-ther did, and what would become of her.

16 So Es'-ther was taken unto king A-has-u-e'-rus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Te'-beth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Es'-ther above all the women, and she obtained favor and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vash'-ti.

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Es'-ther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the king.

13 Then Mor'-de-cai bade them return answer unto Es'-ther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 Then Es'ther bade them return answer unto Mor'-de-cai.

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shu'-shan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mor'-de-cai went his way, and did according to all that Es'-ther had commanded him.

Golden Text.—*“Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Esth. 4: 14.)

Devotional Reading.—Esther 5: 5-14.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 8. M..... Rejection of Vashti (Esth. 1: 13-22)
- March 9. T..... Selection of Esther as Queen (Esth. 2: 15-18)
- March 10. W..... The Plots of Haman (Esth. 3: 8-13)
- March 11. T..... Faithfulness of Esther (Esth. 4: 13-5: 3)
- March 12. F..... Mordecai Honored (Esth. 7: 4-11)
- March 13. S..... Destruction of Haman (Esth. 8: 1-10)
- March 14. S..... Esther and the Feast of Purim (Esth. 9: 1-32)

Time.—461-453 B.C.

Place.—Shushan the capital of Persia.

Persons.—Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai, Esther, and Haman.

Golden Text Explained

1. **God's purpose in his gifts.** God has a purpose in everything he does. He has a purpose in the gifts and abilities which he bestows upon each one of us. (a) God gave Esther power and position. Being a poor orphan slave, she might have known that she was not brought to that position of power for her own sake. She might have known that she did not get there because she deserved to be there, (b) God gave Esther unusual opportunity to serve others. Our text suggests that it was entirely possible that she was brought to the throne at this time so that she might have opportunity to serve her people. God often gives us positions of influence and power. He entrusts us with these things that we may use them

for his glory. Surely none of us have so exalted an opinion of ourselves that we think these unusual positions of power and influence are given to us because we deserve them. Rather they are given to us in order that we may serve our fellow man and honor our Creator.

2. Recognizing our gifts. Every child of God should recognize his gifts and abilities as being from God and expressions of God's goodness toward us. It seems never to have occurred to Esther before this time that she was brought to the throne for any special purpose. In the language of our text, Mordecai helps Esther to see that she was brought to the throne to render a service to her people. Many of us today use the abili-

ties God has given us for our own personal pleasures and benefits, never realizing that these are gifts from God to be used for the good of our fellow man and for the glory of God.

3. Using our gifts to accomplish God's purposes. Esther had two things to consider. First, she had to consider the danger in which her people were involved. Next, she had to consider the question why was she brought to the throne at that time. When she considered the plight of her people, she was enabled to see the purpose of her being brought to that position of power, (a) Esther was led, through these considerations, to use faithfully and courageously the position she was given, and the

use of these gifts in this way brought blessings and honor to her. (b) People who fail to use God's gifts, either through fear or selfishness, are rejected by the Lord and usually dishonored by people. Joseph was brought to power in Egypt in order that he might save his people from the famine. (Gen. 45: 6, 7.) If his hatred for his brethren had caused him to refuse to do that for which God exalted him, he would have been punished, and we would not now respect the name of Joseph. Had Esther failed to summon the courage to go, uninvited, before the king, though to do so laid her liable to death, her people might have suffered, and she would have been dishonored.

Introduction

1. Why Esther was made queen. By way of introduction to the story of Esther, we are told that Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, gave a great feast for the princes over the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of his kingdom. This king is known in profane history as Xerxes. During the last week of this six months' conference with the nobles and princes of the kingdom, the king made a great feast to which he invited both the great and small. When they were well through with their feast and were well intoxicated, it occurred to the king that it would be well to show the beauty of his queen. So he called for Vashti to make an appearance before these drunken nobles. It was such an appearance as the daughter of Herodias made before Herod that caused John the Baptist to lose his head. (Matt. 14: 1-12.) But Vashti had more character than Salome had, so she refused to make the appearance. The king took up the matter of Vashti's conduct with his brain trust, consisting of seven princes of Persia and Media, to see what should be done with the rebellious queen. It was their unanimous opinion that the conduct of Vashti not only reflected upon the conduct of the king himself but would cause the wives all over the realm to disobey their husbands. Hence, it was decided that she must be deposed and another put in her place.

2. Why the Jews were in danger at this time. About this time a man named Haman was promoted to the place of authority next to the king.

All the king's servants bowed and did reverence to Haman except Mordecai. Mordecai's refusal to reverence Haman caused Haman a lot of grief, but he could not afford to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, finding that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman decided to bring about the destruction of all the Jews in order that he might get even with Mordecai. Haman convinced the king that it was not good for the Jews to live in the kingdom and secured permission to destroy the whole Jewish population. In order to make up for the loss of income to the national treasury, Haman agreed to pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasury. This amounted to between twelve and sixteen million dollars in our money. Competent scholars tell us that Xerxes held this long conference to make plans for his expedition against Greece. They also tell us that it was known that the king was in need of money to finance this expedition, hence, the reasonableness of accepting Haman's offer. The king immediately signed a decree that the Jews were to be destroyed and that all of their property was to be confiscated.

3. Salvation of the Jews and feast of Purim. Following our lesson text, we learn that Esther went in to the king and asked the king and Haman to come to a banquet. At a second banquet, which she prepared for them, she made known the fact that both she and her people had been sold into destruction. The king asked who had devised such a wicked scheme. Esther told him that Haman

was the man responsible for their proposed destruction. Haman was hanged immediately on the scaffold which he had prepared for Mordecai. But the decree for the destruction of the Jews had to stand. It could not be altered. The best thing that could be done was to arm the Jews and give them the right and the ability to defend themselves. So in the twelfth month, the month of Adar, when the Persians attempted to destroy the Jews and take their property, they found the Jews equipped to defend themselves. We do not know how many of the Jews lost their lives on that day, but we are told that the Jews slew 75,000 of the

Persians. However, they would not take any spoil from those whom they slew. In commemoration of the events of those two days the feast of Purim was instituted. The word purim means lots. The day on which the slaughter was planned by Haman was determined by casting lots. Hence, the name lots was given to the feast. Unbelievers have denied the story of Esther. But the feast of Purim stands as evidence of the events narrated in this book of scripture. As the Lord's supper is evidence of the death of Christ, so the feast of Purim is evidence of the truth of the events narrated in this book.

Exposition of the Text

I. Esther and Her Family (Verses 5-11)

In Shushan the palace. The city of Shushan is better known by the name of Susa, sometimes called Susanna. It is thought to date back as far as the time of Chedorlaomer of Genesis 14. When Persia extended its conquest into the west, it was necessary to have the capital west of the Zagros mountains, and Shushan was chosen in preference to Babylon because of a better climate and a better water supply, and because it was nearer his eastern possessions.

Mordecai, the son of Jair. We are told that Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was associated with the tribe of Judah in the southern kingdom, and was the last to be carried into captivity.

Who had been carried away from Jerusalem. This seems to refer to Mordecai as having been carried away captive from Jerusalem. If Mordecai was born in Jerusalem, he was at least one hundred forty years old at the time of our story. Nebuchadnezzar made his second raid on Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoniah (Jehoiachin) in the year of 599 B.C. (2 Kings 24: 14, 15.)

He brought up Hadassah. This is another name for Esther. We are told in this connection that Esther had neither father nor mother, that she was fair and beautiful, and that, after the death of her father and mother, Mordecai took her for his own daughter. Our text tells us that Esther was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle; hence they were cousins.

Esther was taken into the king's house. Mention is made here of the king's commandment and decree. This refers to the decree which deposed Vashti from her place and instituted the search for maidens, out of which number one was to be chosen to take the place of Vashti.

She obtained kindness of him. These maidens were brought into the palace and were placed in the custody of Hegai. This man appointed seven maidens to take care of each of the young women brought in as candidates for the place of queen. We see the providence of God working here when Esther obtained kindness or favor of this keeper of the women. If we take a natural view of this matter, we would be forced to think of the wealthy, prominent families of Persia bringing all the influence of wealth and social position to bear, both on this keeper of the women and the king himself, to select one of the socially elite of the Persians. Bribes would be offered by the wealthy and government positions would be offered by the princes if this keeper of the women would show favor to the daughters of the wealthy and the politically prominent. Esther had neither social nor financial backing to assist her in gaining the place. Only her natural beauty and the providence of God secured the place for her.

Esther had not made known her people nor her kindred. There was not sufficient racial dissimilarity between the Persians and the Jews to prevent Esther keeping the secret of her people. Had she revealed the fact that she was a Jewess, she would

not have received the favor of the keeper of the women nor would she have had a chance with the king to be accepted by him.

Mordecai walked every day before the court. Mordecai was so intensely interested in the outcome of this affair that he walked before the court of the women's house that he might learn of her progress. From Esth. 3: 3 we learn that Mordecai's regular place was the king's gate with the rest of the servants. But his interest caused him to leave that place and walk before the court of the women's house.

II. Esther Chosen Queen (Verses 16-18)

So Esther was taken unto King Ahasuerus. The maidens were kept in the court of the women for twelve months before they were presented to the king. Six months of this time was spent in purification with oil and myrrh. The next six months were spent in the use of sweet odors. Of this process of purification moderns know very little. It is thought, however, that the purpose of this purification was to remove any unpleasant body odors and to give the body a soft texture and to put it in the very best of health. We are told in verse fifteen that Esther followed the instructions of the keeper of the women in order that she might make the best progress in her purification and that she might make the most successful appearance before the king.

And the king loved Esther above all the women. We are told that kings of the time of Esther had three different houses in which the women of the harem were kept. (1) The residence of the queen, the primary wife of the king. (2) One for the secondary wives or concubines. (3) One for the virgins who were eligible to become concubines. When a virgin was called from this third house to be with the king, she did not return to this house but to the second house where she was numbered with his secondary wives. Some have thought this to be the position to which Esther was selected. Mention is made of this second house in verse fourteen. When Esther was called to go in unto the king, she made such an impression upon him that he set the royal crown on her head, that she might take the place of Vashti.

Then the king made a great feast. Not only did the king give a great feast for all concerned, but it is said that he "made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts." This release was an exemption from taxation or perhaps from military service, or both, during a certain period of time.

III. Esther Saves Her People (Verses 13-17)

Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house. This is the language of Mordecai to Esther. Since Esther has become queen, Haman has come to hate Mordecai because of his refusal to bow before him. And because of this, Haman has determined to destroy all the Jews. He has induced the king to make and sign a decree for the destruction of all the Jews in Persia. Lots were cast to determine the time of the destruction of the Jews, and the lot fell upon the twelfth month and the thirteenth day of the month. When Mordecai learned of this plot for the destruction of his people, he put on sackcloth and cried with a bitter cry before the king's gate. Esther sent clothing for Mordecai, but he refused to take it, continuing to wear his sackcloth. Then she sent a servant to determine the cause of his grief. Mordecai sent word back to Esther of the intended destruction of the people and told her that she need not think that she could escape the destruction simply because she was in the king's house.

Will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place. Mordecai suggested three things for Esther's consideration. (1) You cannot escape because you are in the king's house. Unless something was done for the salvation of the Jews, both Esther and her father's house would perish. (2) Mordecai believed that God would bring deliverance to the Jews from another place if Esther refused to use her position and power to bring about their deliverance. (3) Mordecai suggested that God had brought Esther to this place of power for the very purpose of saving her people. If she did not measure up to that which God had made it possible for her to do, though it involved her in a dangerous attempt, both she and her father's house would be destroyed.

Gather together all the Jews. This was Esther's instruction to Morde-

cai. He was to gather all the Jews in Shushan. They were to fast, neither eating nor drinking, for three days and three nights. She and her maidens, in like manner, would pray and fast. Not only her life but the life of all her people was at stake. Hence, the necessity for solemn fasting and praying.

So will I go in unto the king. Esther said that her going into the king at this time was contrary to the law. The law was that none of the wives of the king could come into his presence unless he sent for them. If they came into his presence uninvited and he extended his sceptre toward them, and held it extended until they touched the tip of it with their finger, they were safe. But if he did not extend the sceptre, or if he did not hold it extended until she touched it with the tip of her finger, the guards would take her out and kill her.

If I perish, I perish. This shows the height of self-sacrifice to which Esther arose on this occasion. From

verse eleven of this chapter we learn that it had been thirty days since Esther had been called into the presence of the king. "Esther put on her royal apparel. She arrayed herself in all possible beauty and dignity, that she might appear lovely in the king's eyes, and then, so far as the record goes, she went alone into the court, in sight of the king, and modestly and tremblingly awaited his command—for life or death. Here is another instance in which everything seems to hang on the caprice of this most capricious despot. The chances are that in the first flash of indignation at this daring intrusion—this bold defiance of the royal will as taught to all the women in the land by the fate of her predecessor, Vashti, he would doom her to instant death. But, no; the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre. She was safe. His mind was swayed toward her, and not away from her." (Errett.)

Lessons to Learn

1. God often uses the little insignificant things of life to accomplish great results. Esther was a poor, homeless, insignificant character, socially and politically, as compared with many of the young women of Persia. Yet, God uses this insignificant little creature to effect the deliverance of a nation of people.

2. We see in this lesson the providence of God not only in nations but in the lives of individuals. God used not only the righteous Mordecai and

Esther, but he used the wicked king and his prime minister in order to bring about the purposes he had in the Jewish people.

3. The resourcefulness of God is abundantly illustrated in this story. Mordecai told Esther that, if she did not use her position and influence to save the people, God would raise up a deliverer from another source. God is not dependent upon any one individual or any set of individuals to accomplish his purposes.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Give the time, place, and persons.

Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What have you learned about the purposes of God from this text?

What have you learned about the purpose God has in bestowing gifts upon us?

What is the usual penalty for failing to use our gifts for the glory of God?

How does Joseph in Egypt illustrate these same principles?

Introduction

Who were the king and queen of Persia in the time of Esther?

What request did the king make of the queen, and what was her attitude toward that request?

Of what New Testament characters does this incident remind you?

What was done with Vashti, and how was the decision reached?

Why were the Jews in danger of being destroyed at this time?

How much did Haman agree to pay to bring about their destruction?

How were the Jews saved from destruction?

To what end did Haman come for his part in this plot?

What Jewish feast commemorates their deliverance by Esther?

Esther and Her Family

By what other names was Shushan called?

What do you know of its history and location?

What do you know of Mordecai and his age at the time of our lesson?

Who was Hadassah, and what do you know of her family?

What competition would you naturally expect Esther to have for the position of queen?

Was her nationality known when she was selected as queen?

How did Mordecai show his interest in the outcome of these matters?

Esther Chosen Queen

How much time was consumed in the selection of a queen?
 What do you know of the process of preparation through which Esther went?
 What three divisions were in the ordinary harem of a king of that day?
 In what way was the selection of Esther celebrated?

Esther Saves Her People

How was the time of the destruction of the Jews determined by Haman and the king?
 How did the news of the intended destruction of the Jews affect Mordecai?

Could Esther escape destruction because of her position?
 Was God dependent upon Esther to save the Jews from destruction if Esther failed to do what she could to save her people?
 When Esther decided to do what she could, what request did she make of the Jews?
 Why was it dangerous for Esther to go uninvited into the presence of the king?
 What preparation did Esther make to go before the king?
 With what immortal words did she express her decision to go before the king?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—March 21, 1954

MARY WHO ANOINTED JESUS

Lesson Text

John 12: 2-6; Mark 14: 6-9

2 So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Laz'-a-rus was one of them that sat at meat with him.

3 Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Je'-sus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

4 But Ju'-das Is-car'-i-ot, one of the disciples, that should betray him, saith,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings, and given to the poor?

6 Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he

was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein.

6 But Je'-sus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7 For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always.

8 She hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying.

9 And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Golden Text.—*"She hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body for the burying"*(Mark 14: 8.)

Devotional Heading.—Matt. 26: 6-13.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 15. M.....Jesus and His Friends (Luke 10: 38-42)
- March 16. T.....Jesus in the Midst of Enemies (Luke 11: 14-26)
- March 17. W.....Jesus and the Pharisees (Luke 11: 37-44)
- March 18. T.....A Test of Friendship (John 16: 25-33)
- March 19. F.....Friends Who Failed Him (Matt. 26: 26-46)
- March 20. S.....Friends of Jesus (John 15: 8-16)
- March 21. S.....Fellowship (John 17: 1-13)

Time.—A.D. 30.

Place.—Bethany.

Persons.—Jesus, Simon, Mary, the disciples.

Golden Text Explained

1. Significance of Mary's act. (a) Inanimate objects were sometimes anointed to signify that they were set apart to a religious service, or that they henceforth should have some religious significance. For this reason

Jacob poured oil upon the stone at Bethel which he used for a pillow. (Gen. 28: 18.) And the furniture of the tabernacle was anointed to signify that it was set apart to religious service. (Ex. 30: 26-28.) (b)

Anointing with oil was a gesture of respect which the host was to give the visitor. Jesus complained that the Pharisee had not shown him this respect. (Luke 7: 46.) (c) Preparation of the body for burial is also called anointing. (Mark 16: 1.) (d) Men were set aside for the offices of prophet, priest, and king by anointing. (Lev. 8: 12; 1 Kings 19: 16; 1 Sam. 10: 1.) Jesus indicates that the significance of Mary's act was in preparation for his burial. Certainly she had no intention of setting him apart to the office of either prophet, priest, or king.

2. Lessons taught by Mary's act.

(a) Love should be manifested. We have no way of knowing how much time Jesus spent in the home of Mary nor can we know how much time she spent listening to him as he taught or beholding him as he worked his miracles. But she had come to believe in him as the Son of God and had come to love and respect him as God. She had received her brother back from the dead, and now she wishes to show her love and appreciation for him who has done so much for her. Genuine love will not long remain hidden. It will manifest itself, and so in this deed of sacrifice, she shows her love for Jesus, (b) Love rejoices in sacrifice. From the complaint of the disciples, we gather that the price of this ointment used by Mary was out of line with her ability to give. The value in our money was more than fifty dollars. And at that time that amount was a considerable sum to be poured out on the head of an individual. But Mary's love yearned for the opportunity to express itself, and this seemed the most fitting. She had been greatly blessed by the Lord, and she desired to show her appreciation in the best way possible. Love will find a way to do that. In the absence of expression, we may conclude that there is no love, (c) Sacrifice makes selfishness uneasy. When Mary made this unusual sacrifice, the disciples, led by Judas Iscariot, grumbled about so much value going to waste. They thought it could have been used to better advantage if it had been used to feed the poor. They were not so much interested in the poor as

they were in saving their own faces. They were not willing to make as great sacrifice as Mary had made, and they did not want to be put in the light of being selfish and stingy. Sometimes the little liberal gifts of the poor put to shame the large but niggardly gifts of the rich, (d) Rich gifts to Christ are not a waste. When the disciples murmured at the expense of this gift of Mary, Jesus commended her for it. Since it is impossible for us to repay the Lord for all he has done for us, and for that which he will do for us in the future, it would be impossible for us to give too much to him. Also, since he has guaranteed to repay us an hundred-fold in this life for all that we give in sacrifice to him, it would be impossible for us to impoverish ourselves by giving to Christ. One might go bankrupt materially giving to the Lord, but it would be impossible for one to go bankrupt spiritually for making great sacrifices for the Lord.

(e) We may expect our best services to be criticized. This act was the expression of unselfish love of an unusually good woman for the Lord. One would think that men would be slow to criticize such an unselfish act of such a worthy woman. But regardless of her goodness and purity, and regardless of the unselfishness of her act, she was criticized. If she was criticized for her act, people today may expect to be criticized regardless of how good they are, or regardless of unselfish their act or how pure the motive behind the act.

(f) Jesus knows our motives and rewards our services. Though the rest of the apostles joined Judah in the criticism of Mary, Jesus took her part and commended her for her deed. Jesus was able to read the heart of Mary and to see the motives that prompted this unselfish service. We may find a lot of comfort in the fact that Jesus knows our hearts, is able to read our motives and purposes, which are not always plainly revealed in the deeds through which we strive to serve the Lord. His attitude toward Mary on this occasion assures us of his ability to understand and to sympathize with us in our earnest efforts to manifest our love for him.

Introduction

Our store of information concerning the Mary who anointed Jesus is very meager. When first she enters

the story of the life of our Lord, we see her sitting at his feet listening to his instructions. Jesus was a guest

in the home of Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. Martha was busy with the affairs of the house, but Mary sat at the feet of Jesus. Some have thought that Martha was not interested in the teaching of Jesus, but the very fact that she complained to the Master is sufficient evidence of her interest. However, she was more interested in the affairs of the house. She thought the house must first be set in order and then she would listen to Jesus. But Mary realized that listening to Jesus was more important than material affairs of life; hence, she neglected affairs of the house to sit at his feet. (Luke 10: 38-42.) When next we see Mary we find her weeping because of the death of her brother Lazarus. (John 11.) When Jesus came to see Mary that time, she met him with the statement that, if he had been there, her brother would not have died. She believed that Jesus had the power to prevent death, but it seems that

she had not conceived of his power to raise the dead to life. Nor did she have quite the faith of the centurion, who believed that Jesus did not have to be present with the sick in order to raise them up. (Luke 4: 42-44.)

In the preceding chapters we learn that Jesus, in company with a great host of people, was coming toward Jerusalem for the passover feast. He arrived in Bethany one week before the passover. This week is commonly called the "busy week" of our Lord. Perhaps he was no busier this week than any other week of his life, but more of his deeds and discourses of this week are recorded than of any other week in his life. The Jews used this week to go through their ceremonies of purification, that they might be ready to observe the feast of the passover. Jesus used this week to teach the people and to make his last and greatest bid for their recognition of his messiahship.

Exposition of the Text:

I. Jesus Attends a Supper (Verse 2)

So they made him a supper there. Matthew and Mark tell us that this supper was given in the house of Simon who had been a leper. There are some who think that the supper spoken of by Matthew and Mark is different from that spoken of in John. But since they were both in Bethany, and the same incidents occurring, we may well suppose that they are recording the same event.

And Martha served. John is the

only one who mentions the fact that Martha served. This is in keeping with all that we know of her. When Jesus visited in their home, Mary sat at his feet to listen to his teaching, but Martha was cumbered with the service to be done in the home. Here again we find her interested in the practical things of life, while Mary is of the religious type.

But Lazarus . . . sat at meat with

him. It would be difficult to get a more interesting group of characters together than we have in this lesson. Simon had been cured of his leprosy. Undoubtedly Jesus had performed that cure, and Simon now wishes to show his gratitude and his love for the Lord, and gives him a supper as a manifestation of that

love and gratitude. Mary and Martha are present to show their love for the Lord and their appreciation for his blessing to their household in the raising of their brother from the dead. Martha shows her love in the practical way while Mary, with a religious fervor and a depth of sympathy, understands of which only she was capable, anticipates his sorrows and anoints him for the burial. And last, there is Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. In Simon we have evidence of the power of Jesus to save from leprosy, which is the very symbol of death; while in Lazarus we have a symbol of the power of our Lord to save from the reality of death. Simon was saved from a living death that is often viewed as worse than death; while Lazarus was saved from physical death that he might live a while longer upon the earth.

II. Mary Anoints Jesus (Verse 3)

Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious. Whether Mary used a liquid or an ointment to anoint Jesus is impossible for us to determine. Mark tells us that it was put up in an alabaster cruse and that it was ointment, but yet he uses the expression, "pure

nard," and the word pure is "liquid" in the margin. The cruse was generally a long-neck receptacle, which was closed at the top with wax and so tightly closed that it was necessary to break the long neck of the cruse to pour out the liquid or ointment. This nard or perfume was made from a plant which grew in the Himalaya Mountains. The fact that it had to be imported explains its unusual value.

Anointed the feet of Jesus. Matthew and Mark say that Mary poured the ointment on the head of Jesus. Critics have pointed to this as a contradiction. "She probably poured it both on his head and his feet. Matthew and Mark having recorded the former, John, who wrote his gospel in part to record events omitted by them, completes the account by saying that the ointment was also poured on the feet of the Saviour. To pour ointment on the head was common. To pour it on the feet was an act of distinguished humility and of attachment to the Saviour, and therefore deserved to be particularly recorded." (Barnes.) Others think that there was so much of the ointment that it ran from his head down to his feet.

Wiped his feet with her hair. The gift of the ointment spoke eloquently of Mary's love. But wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair spoke even more eloquently of her self-abandonment and humility. Taking the hair down and allowing it to go loose was a mark of unusual self-abandonment, and Mary was willing to subject herself to this in order that she might render this act of humble service to her Lord.

III. Mary Criticized by Disciples

(Verses 4-6)

Why was not this ointment sold?

This is the language of Judas Iscariot. Mark simply tells us that there were some who were indignant because they thought the ointment had been wasted, but Matthew tells us that the disciples were the critics of Mary on this occasion. So we conclude that the disciples followed the lead of Judas Iscariot to criticize Mary for this use of the ointment. We learn that the ointment could have been sold for three hundred shillings. This amount in our money would be about fifty-one dollars.

Not because he cared for the poor. Judas and the other disciples criticized Mary for using this amount of money to buy perfume and pour it on Jesus, when that amount could have been spent for food and clothing for the poor.

Because he was a thief. Judas was not concerned for the welfare of the poor. He was concerned for his own welfare. He carried the bag, so our text tells us, which simply means that he acted as treasurer for the group of the disciples. He preferred that the perfume be sold and the money put in the treasury, that he might handle it as he saw fit. This reveals an uncomplimentary human trait in Judas. He had an ulterior motive in his heart, but he expressed a good motive for his criticism. It is easy for us to criticize and raise objections for some petty reason, but when called upon to state our reason, we bring up other reasons and motives, which have a better appearance. This is a kind of hypocrisy all too common among church members.

Having the bag took away what was put therein. This statement is usually understood to mean that Judas stole from the treasury. The words "took away" in verse six simply mean that he carried what was put in the bag. But since it is mentioned in the preceding phrase that Judas was a thief and since the Greek word may also mean that he bore away, or bore for his own use, we may conclude that Judas wanted the ointment sold and the money put in the treasury so that he might steal it and use it for himself.

IV. Mary Commended by Jesus

(Mark 14: 6-9)

She hath wrought a good work on me. In these words Jesus puts his stamp of approval on the use to which Mary put the ointment. In our selfish and materialistic view of things we often hold a different position and have different ideals from that which our Lord has.

Ye have the poor always with you. Jesus gave two reasons why Mary had wrought a good work on him in her use of the ointment. The first is that it was a timely gift. He would not be with them long, and she would not long have the opportunity to do good to him. The poor

would be with them always, and whosoever they would they could do good to the poor.

She hath done what she could. There were some things that Mary could not do for Jesus. She could not preach the gospel publicly, she could not protect him from the mob that was even then plotting the death of her Lord. But she could render this service, showing him her love and appreciation. Jesus does not overlook the things that we do and does not reject the little things that we do when they are all we can do. Jesus expects us to do all we can.

She hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying. This is the

second reason why Jesus said that Mary had wrought a good work on him. The disciples would not criticize the spending of that amount of money to anoint the dead body of Jesus; why should they criticize Mary for spending that amount to anoint his body in preparation for the burial?

Shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. Jesus promised that whosoever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, this act of Mary should be told as a memorial for her. The disciples would have Mary rebuked for her act, but Jesus would have her remembered always for this act of love.

Lessons to Learn

1. Jesus was a sociable man. He loved his friends and loved to be in their company. He attended a wedding. He accepted an invitation from a Pharisee to dine. He accepted Matthew's invitation to a feast in his honor, and here he dined with his intimate friends.

2. Jesus appreciated courtesies of his friends. He rebuked the Phari-

see of Luke 7 for not showing him the common courtesies of the day. He commended Mary for showing him this act of loving courtesy and rebuked the disciples for criticizing her for this act.

3. Right doing, based on simple loving faith in Jesus, will be cherished and remembered by our Master, though despised by our associates.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Why were inanimate objects sometimes anointed?
Give examples of this type of anointing.
For what purpose might a host anoint a visitor?
What connection between anointing and a burial?
To what offices were people commonly anointed?
Under which of these classifications does Mary's anointing of Jesus fall?
State and discuss as time permits six lessons taught by Mary's act of anointing Jesus.

Introduction

Where was Mary, and in what way was she occupied when we first meet her?
Name the other members of Mary's family.
Discuss the difference between her and her sister.
How did Mary's faith in the power of Jesus compare with that of the centurion mentioned in our lesson?
What is the last week of our Lord's life commonly called?
How did the Jews use this week before the passover?
In what was Jesus engaged during this last week?

Jesus Attends a Supper

In whose house was this supper given?

What is said of Martha at this feast?
Name the persons attending this feast and give something of particular interest about each one.

Mary Anoints Jesus

What is said of the part of the body of Jesus that Mary anointed?
What do you know of the nard which Mary used on this occasion?
From what place was this nard imported?
What significance was attached to anointing the feet of a person?
What was the significance of wiping the feet of a person with the hair?

Mary Criticized by Disciples

Who led the criticism of Mary?
What was the value of the nard Mary used?
What sin of Judas is revealed in his criticism of Mary at this time?
Did Judas state his real reason for opposing this act of Mary?

Mary Commended by Jesus

What did Jesus say of Mary's act?
What did Jesus say about the poor and our opportunity to serve them?
What two reasons are suggested as to why Jesus spoke of this act of Mary as a good work?
What reward did Jesus say would be Mary's for this act?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XIII—March 28, 1954 AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

Lesson Text

Acts 18: 1-4, 24-28; Rom. 16: 3, 4, 5

1 After these things he departed from Ath'ens, and came to Cor'-inth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aq'-ui-la, a man of Pon'-tus by race, lately come from It'-a-ly, with his wife Pris-cil'-la, because Clau'-di-us had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them;

3 And because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tentmakers.

4 And he reasoned in the syna-gogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

.....

24 Now a certain Jew named Ap-pol'-los, an Al-ex-an'-dri-an by race, an eloquent man, came to Eph'-e-sus; and he was mighty in the scriptures.

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fer-vent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Je'-

sus, knowing only the baptism of John:

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Pris-cil'-la and Aq'-ui-la heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more ac-curately.

27 And when he was minded to pass over into A-cha'-ia, the brethren en-couraged him, and wrote to the disci-ples to receive him: and when he was come, he helped them much that had believed through grace;

28 For he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Je'-sus was the Christ.

3 Salute Pris'-ca and Aq'-ui-la my fellow-workers in Christ Je'-sus,

4 Who for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gen'-tiles:

5 And salute the church that is in their house. Salute Ep-ae-ne'-tus my beloved, who is the first-fruits of A'-si-a unto Christ.

Golden Text.—“*Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 16: 3.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 18: 18-21.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 22. M.....Paul's Contact with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18: 1-3)
- March 24. T. . . Paul, Aquila and Priscilla Leave Corinth (Acts 18: 18-21)
- March 24. W.....Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos (Acts 18: 24-28)
- March 25. T.....Aquila and Priscilla, Helpers in Christ (Rom. 16: 1-3)
- March 26. F.....Salutations from Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor. 16: 19)
- March 27. S.....Other Salutations (2 Tim. 4: 19)
- March 28. S.....Church in Their House (1 Cor. 16: 19-21)

Time.—For Acts A.D. 54; for Rom. A.D. 58.

Place.—Corinth and Ephesus.

Persons.—Paul, Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos.

Golden Text Explained

1. An example for Christian fami-lies in mission fields. Paul speaks of these people as his fellow workers in Christ Jesus. To be a fellow worker in Christ means (a) to work for the sake of Christ. People are not taken into heaven as soon as they are converted. Someone has said that they are left in this world, first, for the sake of Christ; second, for

the sake of the lost; and third, for their own sake. We are left here for the sake of Christ that we may bring others to him that his name may be honored and glorified, that his life and his death may not have been in vain. We are left here for the sake of Christ that we may bring others to him that his name may be honored and glorified, that his life

and his death may not have been in vain. We are left here for the sake of others that we may bring them to Christ, that their lives may not be wasted here, and that their souls may not be lost in eternity. We are left here for our own sake that we may develop into better characters, purer, stronger characters; that we may develop a character like that of Christ, (b) To be workers in Christ Jesus means that we will do our work in the name of Christ. To do a thing in the name of Christ is to do it by the authority of Christ. Christ authorizes us by and through his word. Hence, we are authorized to do that which Christ, through his word, revealed by the apostles, teaches us to do. Aquila and Priscilla had learned to spend their time use their efforts and energy in doing the things which Jesus has authorized people to do. Many religious people spend a lot of time, energy, and money doing work which they think is for the Lord, but since the things they do are not authorized by the Lord, they are not working for the Lord, (c) To work in Christ Jesus means that we do our work with a view to the approval of Christ. Paul said, "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.)

Not only is this family an example to us as workers in Christ Jesus, but they are also a good example for us in the manner in which they went about that work, (a) This was a devoted family. They were wholly given over to the work of the Lord. They were not ashamed to devote their time and energy to the work of the Lord. They were not too indifferent, too cold, to use their time and effort and money in working for the Lord. We need more devotion in our work. We need to be more wholly consecrated to the Lord, to remember, to realize, that we are the Lord's servants, his slaves, and that all we have and all we are belong to the Lord, and that we must use it for his glory, (b) This family used their social influence for Christ. As they associated with people in the common everyday affairs of life,

they influenced others for Christ. Their social contacts were made fruitful for the Lord, (c) They were not ashamed to speak of Christ to their business associates. Through these business connections, they came in contact with a number of people, and they used these for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls. We need more business men who are not ashamed to invite their customers to church, who are not ashamed to ask their customers if they may come and visit in their home, and to speak to them about Christ and about their soul, and about where they expect to spend eternity. Too many business men are afraid that they will lose customers. Others are so involved in their business affairs that they simply do not think to talk with their customers about such things.

2. **Fellow laborers with the preacher.**

Paul speaks of Aquila and Priscilla as his fellow workers. This means that they were partners with him in the work of the Lord. A good consecrated Christian family can render a lot of valuable assistance to a preacher on the mission field or even in communities where the church is well established, (a) A good Christian family can encourage the preacher. There come times when preachers are discouraged, and they need someone with whom to counsel, someone to speak words of encouragement to them. Not only does the preacher need encouragement, but he needs words of counsel. He needs to see the other side of a difficult problem. He needs to hear someone else express his conviction about things. Two ideas may give birth to an altogether different idea which would be nearer the truth than either of the original ideas, (b) A good consecrated Christian family can render financial support on the mission field. In recent years several Christian families have sold their possessions in communities where the church was well established and have moved into mission fields solely for the purpose of encouraging and supporting preachers in those mission areas. Young families grow up in large churches where they have little or no opportunity for individual responsibilities, especially in respect to public work of the church. But if they would move into communities where the church

is small and struggling, they would have more opportunities for spiritual development. We read of Abraham, who left his home in Chaldea, and went to Canaan. We look upon that as a great venture of faith and sometimes wish that we had opportunities to do such a great thing. The fact is every one of us has similar opportunities. We could get up and leave our homes and go into areas where the church is weak or does not even exist, and there we could build our homes, work for the Lord, establish the church, and help it along until it has become strong and active. It would entail as much sacrifice and self-denial as Abraham's venture entailed, and the reward would be equally great, (c) People of this type have opportunities to teach some who will not listen to the preacher. Through business and social contacts, families have opportunity to get closer to people than the preacher. Through business and of ideas which people have about preachers. There is a distance between them and preachers which does not exist between them and their everyday business and social associates.

3. Open fields for such work today.
Elders of the churches in cities in

the southland should encourage families to move into the northern half of the United States where churches are few and weak. Many churches are interested in sending preachers into these areas, but it is not wise to send one family, the preacher and his wife, into such place without someone to be associated with him in that work. Paul was alone in Athens and accomplished but little. When he went to Corinth and found Priscilla and Aquila and had other associates join him there, he was encouraged, and his work was more successful. If elders and preachers in the South would take sufficient interest to encourage young families which are well grounded in the faith to move into the northern areas and settle there, no doubt many churches would result from it. We are overlooking one of the most fruitful means of establishing churches in areas where they do not now exist. The families that make that move and render that service would be blessed beyond measure and souls would be saved, congregations started, that would influence thousands of people for generations to come. Why not start such a movement in your congregation at once?

Introduction

We have very little information concerning the characters about whom we study today. Outside of the Scripture texts, included in our lesson, there are but three references to these people. The first is in Acts 18: 18. In this passage we learn that, after trouble arose in the church at Corinth, Paul soon took his leave from the little church and went to Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila went along with him. Paul left these Christian people at Ephesus while he went on to Jerusalem and Antioch, with a promise to return to Ephesus for a longer stay. The next reference is found in 1 Cor. 16: 19, where Paul says, "Aquila and Prisca salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." Since the Corinthian letter was written from Ephesus, we take it that this Christian couple had remained in Ephesus until the time of the writing of this letter. We also learn from this reference that this Christian couple were still faithful to the Lord

and that there was a church meeting and worshiping in their house. The next reference that we have to these fellow workers with Paul is found in 2 Tim. 4: 19. Again Paul says, "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the house of Onesiphorus." Sometime after these people accompanied Paul to Ephesus, they went back to Rome, for in our lesson text, from the Roman letter, we find Paul sending salutations to Aquila and Prisca. Evidently the trouble for which Jews were excluded from Rome by Claudius had been settled, and they had gone back to their former home. But by the time Paul reached Rome, they had left Rome again and were back in Ephesus. Timothy was in Ephesus when Paul wrote the second letter addressed to him. And since Paul sends salutations in that letter, we conclude that these disciples had gone back to Ephesus. Some think that Paul had requested them to go that they might assist Timothy, as they had assisted him in the beginning of the work in that city. Aquila

and Priscilla were Jews and doubtless had Hebrew names, but these names are not known. It was common custom for Jews, outside of Palestine, to take Roman names, and undoubtedly the people had done so.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Finds Fellow Workers (Verses

1-4)

He departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. Athens was the center of Greek learning, and Paul had little success there. (Acts 17: 34; 1 Cor. 1: 22-25.) Corinth was another city of southern Greece. It had an unusual location for commerce, being situated between two ports, one on the west and one on the east, and considerable traffic between the two which passed through Corinth. With reference to this city Barnes says, "It was one of the most populous and wealthy cities of Greece, and at the same time one of the most luxurious, effeminate, ostentatious, and dissolute. Lasciviousness here was not only practiced and allowed, but was consecrated by the worship of Venus; and no small part of the wealth and splendor of the city arose from the offerings made by licentious passion in the very temples of this goddess. No city of ancient times was more profligate. It was the Paris of antiquity; the seat of splendor, and show, and corruption. Yet even here, not withstanding all the disadvantages of splendor, gaiety, and dissoluteness, Paul entered on the work of rearing a church; and here he was imminently successful."

He found a certain Jew named Aquila. When Paul went to Ephesus, Luke tells us he found certain *disciples*, but when speaking of his find, Aquila and Priscilla, he does not call them disciples, but simply says he found a certain *Jew*. From this it is generally concluded that Aquila and Priscilla were not Christians when Paul first found them.

Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. Luke tells us that Aquila was born in Pontus, which is a division of Asia Minor. He had settled in Italy, whether in the city of Rome, we do not know. A Roman historian, Seutonius, says that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because tumults were excited under their leader Chrestus. The Greek form for Christ would differ from this word only in the change

There is a tradition to the effect that Aquila was a freed man and that his master had been Aquila Pontius, who was a Roman senator of that era. But we have insufficient foundation upon which to base this conclusion.

of *e* to *i*, *Christus*. It is probable that this historian refers to the same incident which Luke mentions here as the cause for Aquila and his wife leaving Rome.

Because he was of the same trade, he abode with them. Every Jewish boy was taught to work with his hands that he might make his living. Teachers, lawyers, etc., were poorly paid, if at all, and consequently needed to have a means of livelihood. There was a saying among the Jews that a father who did not teach his boy a trade taught him to steal. So both Paul and Aquila were taught to make tents for a livelihood. Though Paul was an ambassador for the King of kings, he was not ashamed to work with his hands, nor did he think it out of harmony with his profession as a preacher of the gospel and an apostle of Jesus Christ. While churches should not make it necessary for faithful, efficient preachers of the gospel to labor with their hands, these preachers should not feel that they are too good, if conditions make it necessary, for them to labor with their hands that they may support their families while they preach the gospel. It is very probable that, while Paul worked with Priscilla and Aquila, he taught them the truth and brought them to Christ.

He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath. It is interesting to note Paul's method in the synagogue of teaching. First, it is said he *reasoned*. Thayer defines the Greek word used here "to converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss, drawing arguments from the scriptures; with the idea of disputing prominent in Acts 24: 12." Of this word, Pulpit Commentary says it is "especially used of discussions and arguments in which two persons or more take part." Paul did not use all of his time arguing or proving his doctrines, but he used a part of his time in persuading, and this comes from a word which means "to induce one by words to believe (Acts 18: 4); to induce one by persuasion to do something (Acts 13:

43; 26-28.)" Another authority says, "Swayed their minds, persuaded them to embrace Christianity." The preacher who combines his efforts at proving and persuading will prove most effective.

II. Aquila and Priscilla at Work

(Verses 24-28)

A certain Jew named Apollos . . . came to Ephesus. All we know about Apollos we learn from this passage of our text and 1 Cor. 1: 12; 3, 5, 6; 4: 6; Tit. 3: 13. This passage tells us that he came from Alexandria, Egypt, and that he was an eloquent man and that he was mighty in the scriptures. This last expression refers to his knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures and his ability to analyze, organize, and arrange the material. The eloquence refers to his ability to express his ideas in a convincing and persuading manner.

This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord. He knew the teachings of the Old Testament prophecies with reference to the Messiah, and he had been instructed concerning Jesus as the fulfillment of these prophecies. He had sufficient knowledge of these things to speak and teach accurately the things concerning Jesus.

Knowing only the baptism of John. It is difficult to understand how a faithful Jew of the standing of Apollos could have gone this long without knowing of the events of the Passover and Pentecost of Acts 2. Jews were supposed to go to Jerusalem for the observance of these feasts. Obviously, Apollos had not done so. He had either been taught by some Jew, a disciple of John the Baptist, or had had some contact with John himself.

Priscilla and Aquila . . . took him unto them. We are told that Apollos was fervent in spirit. He did not allow opportunities to go by unused to preach what he knew of Jesus. So when he came to Ephesus, and opportunity was afforded him to speak, he used the opportunity to speak boldly in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla were attending there also in order that they might have opportunities to influence people for the Lord.

Expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. The word expounded here comes from a Greek word which means to set forth or to declare. Priscilla took part in this work of expounding or setting forth

the way of teaching of the Lord. Since her name is mentioned before Aquila's, we may conclude that she had the leading part in the teaching; that is, she did more of the work of teaching Apollos than Aquila did. There may be two reasons why they took him apart from the public gathering in the synagogue. First, that they did not wish to embarrass Apollos by contradicting him publicly and second, because Priscilla could not do her work of teaching in the public gathering in the synagogue. Since Apollos knew and was teaching the baptism which John administered, and since he had to be taught the way of the Lord more accurately, we gather that the baptism which John administered is no longer valid. By reading Acts 19: 1-7, the student will see this matter more clearly set forth.

He was minded to pass over into Achaia. Achaia was the province of which Corinth was the capital city. Apollos went there, and we are told that the brethren encouraged him, wrote to the disciples at Corinth to receive him, and that he helped them much that had believed through grace. His work was with the believer. Paul mentioned the same thing when he said that he planted at Corinth and Apollos watered. (1 Cor. 3: 6.)

He powerfully confuted the Jews. The Greek word translator *confuted* is used only here in all the New Testament. It means "to confute with rivalry and effort as in a contest." Another authority says, "The word does not prove that Apollos convinced them, literally he argued them down; but to confute is not of necessity to convince. A double compound is a very strong word, not found elsewhere." This is nearer our form of debating than any other word used to describe methods used by gospel preachers in the New Testament. According to Luke, the efforts of Apollos at this time were to prove, by the scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ. His enemies sought to disprove this proposition; hence, they debated the question whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ promised in the Old Testament scriptures.

III. Aquila and Priscilla Serving

Others (Rom. 16: 3, 4, 5)

Who for my life laid down their own necks. Paul sends his salutations from Corinth to Rome and called Prisca and Aquila his fellow workers

as we noticed in the treatment of the golden text. Then he speaks of them as people who were so faithful and loyal to others that they were willing to risk their own lives. The expression, *to lay down their necks*, is simply a way of saying that they exposed themselves to the danger of ending their life in order that they might save the life of Paul. When they risked their lives to save Paul we are not told. It could have been during the trouble under Gallio, mentioned in Acts 18: 12-17, or it could have been in Ephesus when the silversmiths caused such a stir because Paul was hurting their trade in the shrines of Diana (Acts 19: 23-34). For this sacrifice on their part, Paul says that he gave thanks, and not only he but all the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks because their great apostle had been saved.

Salute the church that is in their house. These people were so faithful and devoted to the Lord and his work that they were willing to make room in their house for the church to carry on its work and worship. They were not embarrassed to invite their neighbors in for a period of worship nor were they embarrassed to allow their neighbors to learn that they were so interested in their religion that they would use their home and house for a meeting place. Nor were they so wholly taken up with worldly pleasures and social events that they had no time or place in their home for religious services. Many church members would be embarrassed today if they were asked to allow their home to be used as the home of Priscilla and Aquila was used.

Lessons to Learn

1. Our social and business contacts afford a very fruitful field for bringing people to the Lord, if we but use them as we should.

2. Priscilla and Aquila were tactful in their method of handling Apollos, saving him embarrassment and doing their work most effectively.

We should study and pray God to give us wisdom that we may do our work most effectively.

3. True fellowship, partnership, in gospel work led Aquila and Priscilla to hazard their lives to save Paul. We may learn from this the lesson of serving others in preference to ourselves.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Name and discuss three reasons why Christians may be left in the world.

What is meant by working in the name of Christ?

How does Christ authorize us to work and worship?

Illustrate how it is possible for people to spend time and money doing things which the Lord has not authorized.

What should be our primary aim in life?

Can you show that this family was devoted to the work of the Lord?

Can you show that they used their social influence for Christ?

Name and discuss three ways in which a consecrated Christian family can render valuable assistance to a preacher on the mission field.

Discuss as time will permit open fields for such mission work today and how strong established churches can encourage and promote establishment of churches in mission areas.

Introduction

Where were Aquila and Priscilla when first we meet them in this picture?

To what city did they accompany Paul?

What statement is made to suggest their continued faithfulness to the Lord?

How do we know that these people returned from Asia to Rome?

What evidence do we have that they had formerly lived in Rome?

What evidence do we have that they left Rome a second time to go to Ephesus?

Paul Finds Fellow Workers

What do you know of Paul's success in Athens?

What do you know of the moral and religious conditions of Corinth?

What proof do we have that Aquila and Priscilla were not disciples of the Lord when Paul found them?

Why did Aquila and Priscilla leave Rome to come to Corinth?

What caused Paul and this Christian couple to be associated with one another?

What was Paul's attitude toward manual labor?

What form of teaching did Paul use in the synagogue at Corinth?

Discuss the second form of teaching used by Paul.

Aquila and Priscilla at Work

What preacher came to Ephesus at this time, and what do you know of his ability as a preacher?

What knowledge did Apollos have of Jesus?

What service did Aquila and Priscilla render Apollos?

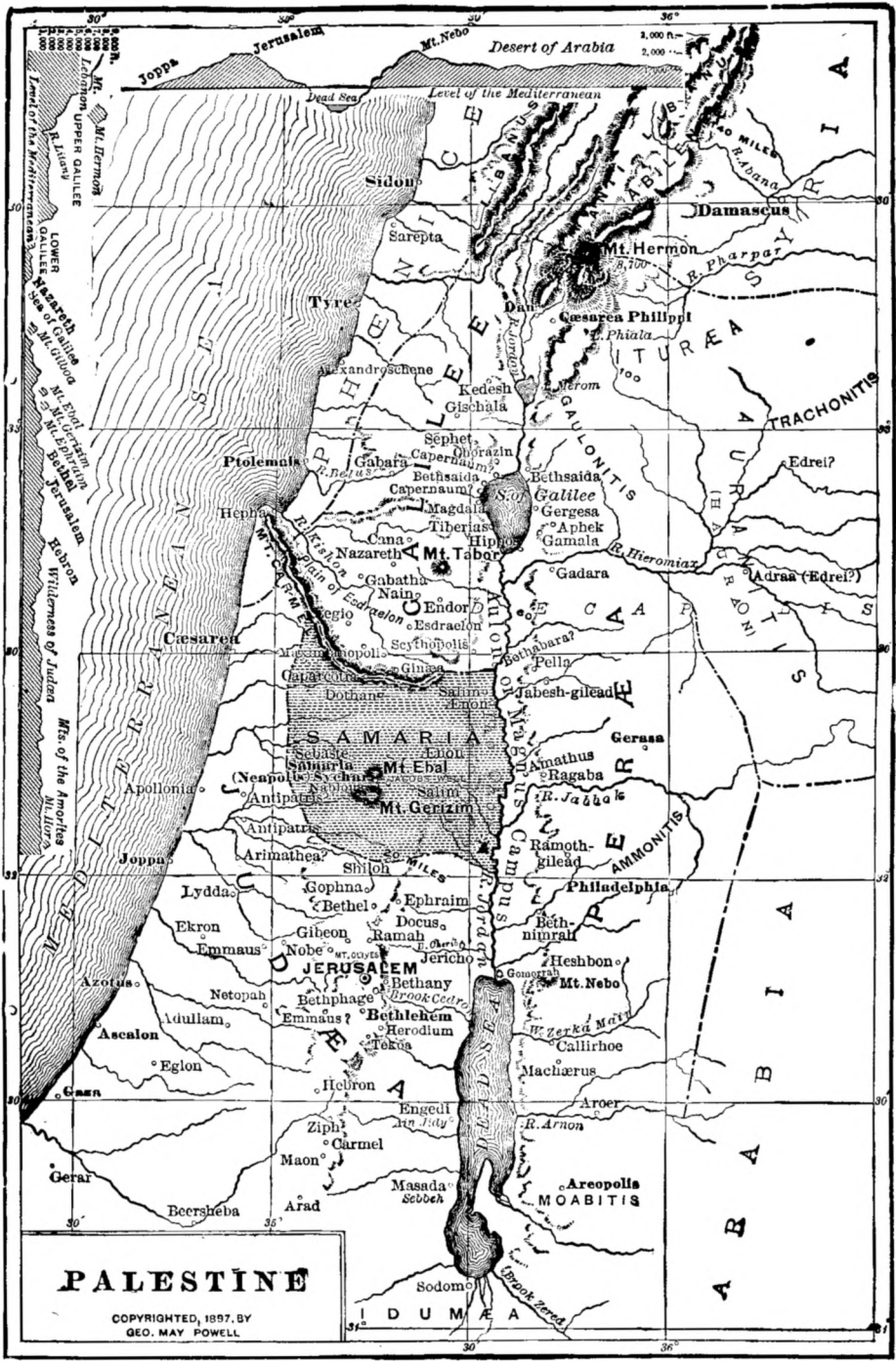
What proof do we have that the baptism of John was not the way of the Lord at the time Apollos preached it?

From Ephesus where did Apollos go to work?
How does Paul speak of his work in Corinth compared with that of Apollos?
What type of preaching is suggested by the word confute?

Aquila and Priscilla Serving Others

How had Aquila and Priscilla proved their loyalty to Paul?
What incidents in Ephesus may have

afforded Aquila and Priscilla opportunity to lay down their necks for Paul?
Who joined Paul in this thanksgiving for their loyalty?
How did these people show their faithfulness and devotion to the Lord?
In what way can our homes today be used to further the service of the church?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?



PALESTINE

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English Miles

Roman Miles

SECOND QUARTER

AIM.—To impress the student with the importance of the life and service of a great man at a critical time in Israel's history.

Lesson I—April 4, 1954

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 1: 12-22

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before Je-ho'-vah, that E'-li marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore E'-li thought she had been drunken.

14 And E'-li said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before Je-ho'-vah.

16 Count not thy handmaid for a wicked woman; for out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then E'-li answered and said, Go in peace; and the God of Is'-ra-el grant thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thy handmaid find favor in thy sight. So the woman

went her way, and did eat; and her countenance was no more *sad*.

19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before Je-ho'-vah, and returned, and came to their house to Ra'-mah. And El'-ka-nah knew Hannah his wife; and Je-ho'-vah remembered her;

20 And it came to pass, when the time was come about, that Hannah conceived, and bare a son; and she called his name Sam'-u-el, *saying*, Because I have asked him of Je-ho'-vah.

21 And the man El'-ka-nah, and all his house, went up to offer unto Je-ho'-vah the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned; and then I will bring him, that he may appear before Je-ho'-vah, and there abide for ever.

Golden Text.—"Then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life." (1 Sam. 1: 11.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 1: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

March 29. M.....	Hannah's Vow (1 Sam. 1: 9-18)
March 30. T.....	Hannah's Vow Fulfilled (1 Sam. 1: 21-28)
March 31. W.	Hannah's Song of Thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2: 1-10)
April 1. T.....	Duties of Parents to Children (Deut. 6: 1-9)
April 2. F.....	Picture of a Worthy Woman (Prov. 31: 25:31)
April 3. S.....	A Godly Household (Eph. 6: 1-9)
April 4. S.....	A Happy Home (P'salm 128)

Time.—1171 B.C.

Places.—Ramah and Shiloh.

Persons.—Elkanah, Hannah, Samuel, Eli.

Golden Text Explained

1. Seeking comfort through prayer.

In verse ten we read that Hannah was "in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto Jehovah, and wept sore." Naomi said the Lord had dealt very bitterly with her. (Ruth 1: 20.) Naomi had lost her husband in death, but Hannah had to share her hus-

band with an arrogant, insolent woman, incapable of sympathetic understanding. Death strikes swiftly and, though the wound is deep and painful, it will heal in time; but the wounds in Hannah's heart were opened daily, not only at home, but even when they went to Shiloh for

solemn worship. Elkanah loved the sorrowing Hannah more than he loved the arrogant Peninnah and insisted that he was worth more to her than ten sons. (Verse 8.) But this did not bring relief from the stinging ridicule and the haughty slurs of the proud Peninnah. Whether Hannah could have forced Elkanah to send Peninnah and her children away, as Sarah insisted that Abraham do with Hagar and Ishmael, we have no way of knowing. (Gen. 21: 1-21.) But Hannah did not expect relief from her sorrows from any human source. She took her cause to the Lord. With David she could say, "The righteous cried, and Jehovah heard, and delivered them out of all their troubles. Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but Jehovah delivereth him out of them all." (Psalm 34: 17-19.) And again, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46: 1.)

2. **Unselfishness in prayer.** Hannah did not pray that God would take Peninnah away from the home or that any calamity would come upon her that would give relief from the sorrows which she was causing Hannah. She did not pray that she herself should be removed from that situation from whence her sorrows arose. Nor did she pray for a child that she might hold and keep it all its life to give her joy and satisfaction where she now had sorrow. Giving birth to a child would take away the reproach which Peninnah was heaping upon her continually. If she could but have that reproach removed, she was willing to give the child back to God. James teaches us that many times we do not have blessings because we do not ask for them. And then at other times we fail to receive the blessings for which we ask simply because our prayers are selfish prayers. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleas-

ures." (James 4: 3.) While that for which Hannah prayed would bring her much joy and satisfaction, yet her prayer was unselfish, in that she was willing to share her blessings with the Lord. So when we pray we should remember that we should pray for things which would benefit others and glorify God as well as doing good for ourselves.

3. **A good example for all mothers.** Hannah longed to be the mother of a child who would honor and glorify God. Too many women had rather enjoy a career in business or society than to settle down at home, bear and rear children who will honor and glorify the Lord. In this respect Hannah set a good example for Christian women of our generation. But she was a good example in many other ways, (a) Hannah was a patient woman as we see in that she bore her sorrows without complaint and without trying to force Elkanah to send Peninnah away, (b) She was a devoutly religious woman, taking her problems to God and leaving them with him to settle. She might have insisted on settling her difficulties with Peninnah in her own way, using force or trickery, or she might have replied in kind, matching wits with her rival, but she preferred to take her problem to God in prayer, (c) She was an unselfish woman as we have noticed in her prayer, being willing to give her son to God if only her reproach could be taken away. (d) Hannah was trustworthy in that she kept her vow to God. With many women it would have been too great a sacrifice, and they could easily have justified themselves by saying that they did not realize what they were doing at the time they made the vow. She could have urged that her provocation was great and that her desire was so great that she was not responsible for making such a rash vow under such mental strain, but Hannah did not resort to any such efforts of self-justification. She lived up to her vow without a word of complaint.

Introduction

The importance of the life and service of Samuel in Israel's history can hardly be overestimated. Had it not been for the ability of God to raise up leaders who stood head and shoulders above all others of their day, it would have been impossible

to bring his people through the experiences to such a climax as we see in Jesus Christ and the church established by him. Abraham was more than the average man of his day. Joseph stood out above, not only his brothers, but other men with whom

he associated. Moses was a man raised up for a certain task and was not just an ordinary man. Joshua exerted an influence over his generation which none of his successors were able to continue to exert. For more than two hundred fifty years Israel did not have a leader that could compare with these great men. The men who served as judges were not always good men. Some of them were immoral. They were able to gather armies and repulse the foe and throw off the bondage for the time being. In this way they served God and brought relief to God's people. During this long period of time the morality and spirituality of Israel came to a very low ebb. The people were so displeasing to God that God was willing for the Philistines to capture the ark of the covenant and give the impression that their god Dagon was greater than Jehovah. The high priest was a weakling, and his sons were immoral. There was great need for someone to arise who would have the approval of God and who could set a good example for the people. Samuel proved to be that man.

Let us now get a picture of Hannah, the mother, and of the home from which Samuel came. Hannah was only one of the wives of her husband Elkanah. The other wife Peninnah was the mother of children, but Hannah was barren. Conditions in this home remind us of the conditions in another home long

before the time of Hannah. Jacob married two sisters, and one of them, Rachel, was barren while Leah bore children. Jacob loved Rachel more tenderly than he loved Leah, yet that love did not make up for the lack of children to love and the haughty superior look and attitude of her sister. So Hannah enjoyed the special love of her husband, but it was not equal to the joy of children, nor was it enough to outweigh the insolent provocation of Peninnah. "H e r proud and arrogant behavior, in her prosperity, toward the amiable Hannah, in her humiliation, has stamped her name, so far as it is thought of at all, with undying infamy. She was as graceless as she was immodest—and as mean as she was ignorant and senseless—and as proud as she was hypocritical—and as wicked as she was audacious and disgusting. ... It seemed sufficiently afflictive to endure the reproaches of her adversary when at home; and she had a right to expect, at least when abroad with strangers—and, most of all, when at the annual worship and sacrifice, and within sight of the ark of God—that she might be at peace. But when she perceived, from year to year, that these public and solemn occasions were specially selected as opportunities of pouring contempt upon her, she wept in the bitterness of her soul, and refused to be comforted by human sympathy." (Adams.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Hannah Accused By Eli (Verses 12-16)

She continued praying before Jehovah. Hannah was not satisfied to pray a short, formal, general prayer. Too many times we pray about everything in general and nothing in particular. Hannah was not afraid to ask for the same thing over and over. Like the woman before the unjust judge (Luke 18: 1-8), Hannah continued to ask the Lord for relief from her troubles.

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart. She formed her petition in her heart but did not utter a sound with her mouth. "Possibly silent prayer was something unusual. It requires a certain advance in civilization and refinement to enable a supplicant to separate the petitions from the outward expression of it

in spoken words, and a strong faith before anyone can feel that God hears and knows the silent utterances of the heart." From Rom. 10: 1 some contend that unless we speak words we are not praying. But the inspired writer here says that Hannah prayed "but her voice was not heard." We therefore conclude that a person can pray to God without uttering a sound.

How long wilt thou be drunken? Eli was the high priest. When he saw Hannah going through the motions of praying to God and yet heard no sound escape her lips, he thought she had drunk too much wine. Eli was about ninety years old at this time. He was a stout man. He built a seat near the gate where he could watch the people as they worshipped before the tent of meeting.

(1 Sam. 4: 15, 18.) It was while sitting in this seat and watching the people in their worship that he found Hannah in her sorrowing condition.

I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. This was Hannah's reply to Eli. Something of her character is revealed in this calm, courteous reply to the old high priest, (a) She did not meet an unjust accusation with resentment and retaliation, (b) She gave evidence of a good, clear conscience by her calm answer under accusation, (c) She took time to give a full and complete explanation of the conditions which caused her to be falsely accused, (d) She implied her estimation of a drunken woman when she said, "Count not thy handmaid for a wicked woman." Eli accused her of being drunken and she replied that she was not a wicked woman. Hence, her estimation of a drunken woman is clearly revealed.

Out of the abundance of my complaint. Hannah seems not to have gone into details of the matter. She had a good opportunity to accuse her rival of unkindness and lack of sympathy, but she did not deal in that type of thing. She simply said she had an abundance of complaint and provocation, but did not name the parties involved. She was big enough to rise above personalities.

II. Hannah Blessed by Eli (Verses 17, 18)

The God of Israel grant thy petition. How much power Eli had to grant this petition, we have no way of knowing. This statement is simply a prayer which Eli prayed in Hannah's behalf. But we can learn a lesson here which will help us in our dealings with our fellow men. Eli had falsely accused Hannah. Hannah did not fly into a rage and bawl him out for misunderstanding her, but rather she explained the matter fully and kindly, supposing that, if Eli had known the truth, he would not have falsely accused her. This kindness on her part put Eli under obligation to return the kindness, and so he joined her in her petition for relief from her sorrows. It is easy for us to make friends out of those who would otherwise be our enemies if we would but be friendly toward them.

Let thy handmaid find favor in thy sight This was Hannah's bid for the continued good will of Eli. Han-

nah had all the enemies, and more, than she desired. One enemy is too many for any of us. We should not needlessly make enemies. We should studiously strive to make friends. Hannah's conduct toward Eli on this occasion was calculated to make him her friend, and she wished that she might remain in his favor and that she might continue to enjoy his prayers in her behalf.

And her countenance was no more sad. Hannah went to the place of prayer with a sorrowful heart and a sad countenance. She came away from that place of prayer with a glad heart and a light countenance. What happened to change her heart and countenance? First, she had poured out her complaint unto the Lord; second, she had prayed to God to give her a release from her sorrowful situation; third, she had promised to share the blessing which she asked of the Lord with the Lord himself; fourth, she had made a friend of the high priest and had secured his prayer in her behalf. There was not a thing miraculous in the whole procedure. There was nothing in the situation which might not be enacted in our case today. Why should people today continue through long periods of sorrow and grief? They are exhorted to carry their troubles to the Lord, to cast their cares upon him. They are assured that he cares for them and that he will answer their prayers. Hannah believed that God was a good and loving Father and that he would do for her that which was best. When she poured out her complaint to him, she left it with him and went her way believing that whatever God did would be for her own good. If she, in the dim distant past, with so little of revelation shining upon the subject of prayer, could thus pour out her sorrows and troubles before the Lord, and leave them there and go away with a light heart and happy countenance, surely we in this day, with full and perfect revelation concerning our privilege of prayer, ought to be able to do equally as well.

III. Hannah Keeps Her Vow (Verses 19-22)

Came to their house to Ramah. For the full name of Samuel's birthplace, see 1 Sam. 1: 1. The town was situated about five or six miles

north of Jerusalem. In the first phrase of verse nineteen, we learn that Elkanah and his family worshiped God before they returned to Hamah. In this we have an indication of the piety of this family. They not only went through the periods of worship in connection with the feast, but before they left the town and started back for their home, they worshiped God. Hence, we conclude that worshiping God was a real genuine experience with them. It was not simply a stated number of prayers to say, or a certain ritual or ceremony to be enacted.

And Jehovah remembered her. God is often spoken of as remembering his people and remembering the covenant he has with them. (Ex. 2: 24.) And he has promised that he will never forget nor forsake his people. (Isa. 49: 15.) God's remembrance of Hannah at this time was simply an answer to her prayer.

She called his name Samuel. The word Samuel means, "asked of God." Giving her son this name would serve two purposes. (1) She would acknowledge her prayers to God and Samuel as answer to her prayers.

(2) Each time Samuel's name was called, he would be reminded that he came to his mother as a gift from God. No doubt this would have a great influence on the boy and would

keep him reminded continually of the fact that his life on the earth was through the grace of God and that he was obligated to live for God.

Hannah went not up . . . until the child be weaned. Elkanah and his family continued to go to the annual feast, but Hannah remained at home until her son was old enough to take to the temple and leave there.

And there abide for ever. Hannah vowed to give her child to the Lord. She kept her vow by taking the child to the temple and leaving him there in the care of Eli. So far as we know, Hannah did not consult Elkanah about making the vow to give the child unto the Lord. Since the child was given to her by promise, it seems that she felt that she had the right to dispose of the child as she saw fit. It is a compliment to Hannah that Elkanah had enough confidence in her and enough respect for her wishes that he was willing to make a sacrifice equal to that which she made and allow her vow to stand and the child to be given to the Lord. According to the law, Elkanah had a right to disallow Hannah's vow. (Num. 30: 6, 7.) But he seemed to have deemed her vow his, for we read in verse twenty-one that Elkanah went up to Shiloh to offer Jehovah the yearly sacrifice, "and his vow."

Lessons to Learn

1. Apparent ground for censure is often found by reasonable inquiry to be no ground at all. The most excellent of persons are often misjudged, especially in religious matters, by those who are not too observant.

2. Good men in high office may, in a moment of carelessness, misjudge

those who are innocent. Eli did not intend to do Hannah an injustice, but through lack of information and investigation he falsely accused her.

3. Since our judgment of others is the standard by which we are to be judged, we ought to be very slow in judging others and be sure that we judge righteous judgment.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text

Golden Text Explained

What peculiar sorrow did Hannah have to bear?
How did Elkanah show his love and sympathy for Hannah?
Compare Hannah's sorrow and relief with that of Sarah.
Discuss the unselfishness of Hannah's prayer for a child.
What New Testament teaching on prayer does this unselfishness of Hannah illustrate?
How did Hannah set a good example for women of our time?

Name and discuss four characteristics in which Hannah further sets an example for women today.

Introduction

Name and discuss briefly some great Hebrew leaders who illustrate the ability of God to raise up men to carry out his purposes.
During what long period was there a dearth of such leadership?
How did God show his displeasure toward the people of that period?
Who were the father and mother of Samuel?
Compare this home with that of Jacob's.
What do you know of the character of Peninnah?

Hannah Accused by Eli

Point out several good characteristics of Hannah's prayer.

What do you learn from this lesson about silent prayer?

Of what did Eli accuse Hannah?

What characteristics in Hannah are manifested by her reply to Eli?

How did Hannah arise above personalities, and what is your estimation of her character at this point?

Hannah Blessed by Eli

Can you show how Hannah was repaid for her kind friendliness to Eli?

What effort did Hannah make to retain Eli's friendship?

Name and discuss four things which changed Hannah's countenance from sadness to gladness.

What lessons does Hannah's experience in prayer teach us today?

Hannah Keeps Her Vow

What was the full name of Samuel's birthplace, and where was it located?

How does Elkanah and his family manifest their piety?

What is said of God remembering his people?

What two purposes did Hannah have in naming her son Samuel?

When did Hannah next go to Shiloh for worship?

Did Elkanah have the right to cancel Hannah's vow to give their son to the Lord?

What do you learn about the characters of Hannah and Elkanah from this experience of the vow?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson II—April 11, 1954

THE BOY SAMUEL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 1: 24-28; 2: 18-21

24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one e-phah of meal, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of Je-ho'-vah in Shiloh: and the child was young.

25 And they slew the bullock, and brought the child to E'-li.

26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto Je-ho'-vah.

27 For this child I prayed; and Je-ho'-vah hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

28 Therefore also I have granted him to Je-ho'-vah; as long as he liveth he is granted to Je-ho'-vah. And he worshipped Je-ho'-vah there.

18 But Sam'-u-el ministered before Je-ho'-vah, being a child, girded with a linen eph'-od.

19 Moreover his mother made him a little robe, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

20 And E'-li blessed El'-ka-nah and his wife, and said, Je-ho'-vah give thee seed of this woman for the petition which was asked of Je-ho'-vah. And they went unto their own home.

21 And Je-ho'-vah visited Hannah, and she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Sam'-u-el grew before Je-ho'-vah.

Golden Text.—*"My son, give me thy heart; And let thine eyes delight in my ways (Prov. 23: 26.)*

Devotional Heading.—1 Sam. 1: 1-23.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 5. M..... Samuel's Vision (1 Sam. 3: 1-10)
- April 6. T..... Samuel's Faithfulness (1 Sam. 12: 1-5)
- April 7. W..... Samuel's Wise Advice (1 Sam. 12: 14-25)
- April 8. T..... A Wise Son (Prov. 1: 1-9)
- April 9. F..... Answering God's Call (Luke 5: 27-32)
- April 10. S..... The Reward of Faithfulness (Rev. 3: 7-13)
- April 11. S..... Safety in the Lord (Psalm 125: 1-5)

Time.—1165 B.C.

Place.—Shiloh.

Persons.—Elkanah, Hannah, Samuel, and Eli.

Golden Text Explained

1. The heart which God demands.

When the Bible speaks of the heart of man, it does not refer to that flesh-

ly organ, the blood pump, which keeps the blood flowing to all parts of the body. It refers to the inner man,

that which is the offspring of God, and that which lives forever. (Psalm 22: 26.) (a) The heart is man's intellect. We reason in our hearts. (Mark 2: 8.) We know in the heart. (Josh. 23: 14.) We believe in the heart. (Rom. 10: 10.) (b) Emotion is the heart of man. We love with the heart. (Matt. 22: 37.) We trust God with the heart. (Prov. 3: 5.) We love one another with the heart (1 Pet. 1: 22.) (c) Will power is the heart. We obey from the heart. (Rom. 6: 17.) We serve God with all the heart. (Deut. 10: 13.) We do the will of God from the heart. (Eph. 6: 6.) So when God asks us to give him our heart, he simply means that we shall use our intellect to know the truth and to believe in him and in his Son as our saviour and judge. He asks us to love him with all our heart, to trust him for our salvation. He asks us to give him our obedience to do his will sincerely, and when we have given him our intellect, emotion, and will power; when we have devoted these to him, in his appointed way we have given him our hearts.

2. **Substitutes often offered.** (a) When God asks us to give him our heart, we sometimes give him zeal without knowledge instead of the heart as he requests. That is the mistake which was made by the Jews in the time of Paul. (Rom. 10: 2.) It is not an uncommon thing today to find people who are very zealous, but they do not have sufficient knowledge to guide their zeal into profitable and pleasing ways of service to the Lord. Paul found the men of Athens worshipping in ignorance. (Acts 17: 23.) No one can acceptably worship God who has not arrived at a knowledge of God. No one can have an acceptable knowledge of God without serious study of the Bible. Hence, those who do not have time or who, for any reason, do not study the Bible cannot worship God intelligently; therefore, cannot give him their hearts.

(b) Knowledge without love. Paul teaches us that it is possible for one to have all knowledge and understand all mysteries, yet not have love. The one who has such knowledge but has no love is not profited thereby. If one could quote the entire Bible and give the correct interpretation of each separate verse, and yet did not love God sufficiently to cause him to obey the Lord's will, he would not be saved, (c) Wealth, honor, fame, etc. God asks for our heart, not our money. God asks us to give him our heart, not honor and fame. People who put their trust in these material things instead of giving their hearts to God in the way he asks will find that they have based their hope upon perishable things rather than upon the things which will endure. There is no substitute for the heart. God asks for us to give him our hearts, and there is nothing else in all the world that will take its place with him.

3. **Delight in God's ways.** God not only asks us to give him our heart, but he insists that we let our eyes delight in his ways, (a) There is no possibility of our eyes delighting in the ways of the Lord until first we have given him our hearts. Man does not by nature love and appreciate the things that are heavenly, (b) God's way in which we are to delight is the way of purity. "But like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1: 15, 16.) (c) God's way is a way of humble service. While Jesus was on earth, he was God in the flesh, and he left his disciples an example which they should follow. His was the example of humble service. When the disciples quarreled about who should be the greatest in the kingdom, he girt himself with a towel, took a basin of water, and washed their feet to show them the way of greatness.

Introduction

Since Hannah promised the Lord that Samuel would be a Nazirite all the days of his life, it will be worthwhile for us to see what the Bible teaches on the subject of vows. In this connection the student should read Num. 6: 1-21. (a) There was no ceremony in connection with the beginning of the vow. One simply took the vow, consecrated himself for a

period of time, and began living in keeping with the conditions of the vow. (b) Nothing is said in the Old Testament with reference to the length of time of the Nazirite vow. It might be a matter of weeks, months, years, or it might be for one's entire lifetime. (c) During the term of the vow one was bound to abstain from wine, grapes, or intoxicating liquors of any

kind. He was not to cut his hair nor to come near a dead body, even that of the nearest relation, (d) If, during the term of the vow, the person should accidentally become defiled by touching a dead body, or through weakness drink wine or eat grapes, he had to bring two turtle doves or young pigeons to the priest and offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In addition to that he offered a lamb a year old as a trespass offering and then began the term of his vow over again. The time that he had served did not count. When the period of his vow was fulfilled, he was brought to the door of the tabernacle and was required to offer a he lamb for a burnt offering, a ewe lamb for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering, with the usual accompaniments of peace offerings (Lev. 7: 12, 13) and of the offering made at the consecration of

priests (Ex. 29: 2). He also had to bring a meal-offering and a drink-offering, which appear to have been presented by themselves as a distinct act of service. He then cut off the hair which had grown during the term of his vow at the door of the tabernacle and burned it under the sacrifice under the altar. The priest then placed in his hands the sodden left shoulder of the ram with one of the unleavened cakes and one of the wafers and then took them again and waved them for a wave offering. After they were waved before the Lord, the breast and the thigh, or right shoulder, which had been offered were given to the priest as his portion. In addition to this portion, the Nazirite was also to give the priest a present proportioned to his financial ability. There is little doubt that the ceremony mentioned in Acts 21: 20-26 was that of the Nazirite.

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel Offered to Jehovah (Verses 24-28)

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her. It was common for Jewish children to be weaned at the age of two or three years, but it was not at all uncommon for them to go five or six years. Some contend that the word wean refers to a child being able to get along without the mother's care, as well as being able to do without milk from the mother's breast. So it is impossible for us to know Samuel's age at the time he was offered to Jehovah.

With three bullocks, and one ephah of meal. Instead of "three bullocks," some versions have "one bullock three years old." But since the law prescribes one-third of an ephah of flour to be offered with a bullock in connection with vows (Num. 15: 8-10), and since Hannah took one ephah of meal with her, we conclude that she must have had three bullocks. There would have been no need to take one ephah (seven gallons and a half) of meal if they took only one bullock. Hannah also took wine, since it was required in connection with vows for a drink-offering. (Num. 15: 10.)

Brought him unto the house of Jehovah in Shiloh. The tabernacle was moved from place to place in Canaan. When first they entered, the tabernacle was located at Gilgal. (Josh. 4: 19.) Next, it was in the valley between Ebal and Gerizim. (John. 8:

30-35.) It was found again at Gilgal. (Josh. 9: 6; 10: 15, 43.) It came next to Shiloh. (Josh. 9: 27; 18 1.) While at Shiloh, the ark was taken from the tabernacle never to return. (1 Sam. 4: 17.) Next, we see the tabernacle at Nod. (1 Sam. 21: 1-6.) And the last location mentioned is in Gibeon. (1 Chron. 16: 39.)

And brought the child to Eli. Eli was a descendant of Aaron through Ithamar, the youngest of Aaron's sons. Nadab and Abihu died because they offered strange fire before Jehovah. (Lev. 10.) Eleazar was the third son of Aaron, and, hence, became the second high priest. His sons then became high priests after him until after the time of Eli. Eli is the first high priest of the family of Ithamar, who was the fourth and youngest son of Aaron. How and why the priesthood changed from the line of Eleazar to that of Ithamar we have no knowledge. The high priesthood continued in the family of Ithamar and the descendants of Eli until the time of Solomon. The high priest took part in Adonijah's rebellion against David and his attempt to seize the throne. And when Solomon came to the throne, he rejected that high priest and chose Zadok of the family of Eleazar. (1 Kings 2: 26-35.) Eli made a failure of rearing his own sons, (1 Sam. 2: 22-26), but he did a good job of teaching Samuel.

I am the woman that stood by thee

here. This is the language of Hannah as she presented her child to Eli. In this language she reminds him of the incident years before when she was praying for a child, and Eli thought she was drunken. (1 Sam. 1: 14-16.)

I have granted him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth. In this we see that Hannah kept her vow, which she made at the time she prayed for a child. (1 Sam. 1: 11.) She promised to give her son to Jehovah and then set about to teach him and guide him in such a way as would cause him to be willing to fulfill her promise to God.

II. Samuel Serves Jehovah (1 Sam. 2: 18-21)

Samuel ministered before Jehovah. In 1 Sam. 3: 1 We read, "Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli." He was left in the care of Eli for instruction and guidance in the service of Jehovah. Eli was both judge and high priest. Samuel, not being of the priestly family, would not serve Eli in his office of priest but would be able to serve him in the office of judge.

Girded with a linen ephod. The ephod was originally intended for high priests only. (Ex. 28: 4.) But it came to be worn by ordinary priests and then by those who assisted the priests, and kings sometimes wore them. (2 Sam. 6: 14; 1 Chron. 15: 27.) The ephod was a garment somewhat resembling a vest or sleeveless sweater. The front and back of the ephod were solid and were fastened together over the shoulders. The difference between the ephod worn by Samuel and that worn by the high priest was that the high priest's gar-

ment was made of new linen, while Samuels was made of ordinary linen.

Moreover his mother made him a little robe. This was not the long flowing robe or stole worn by orientals, but it was a second or upper tunic. The first tunic was "skin tight" and came only to the waist. The upper or second tunic spoken of here as a robe was longer and looser fitting. Our text tells us that Hannah made one such garment each year and brought it to Samuel when she came with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.

Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife. The blessing which Eli pronounced was "Jehovah give thee seed of this woman for the petition which was ask of Jehovah." This was the reward which Elkanah and Hannah received from God for their devotion and for the service they had rendered to God. They had given to God a servant who would serve God for a lifetime. God rewards them for this valuable gift.

She conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. Hannah emptied her home when she took Samuel to Shiloh to give him to the Lord, but the Lord filled her home with three sons and two daughters. Hannah gave all she had with no thought of a reward. God rewarded her five-fold for her sacrifice. God never fails to relieve the oppressed or exalt the humble or reward the faithful. If we think our burdens are hard to bear or the way out of our troubles is obscure, take the matter to the Lord as Hannah did. The Lord will show us a way out, will give us strength to bear our burdens, will relieve us of our anxieties, and will bless us abundantly for our efforts.

Lessons to Learn

1. Hannah kept her vow. We should be careful lest we break our vows to God. When we confess Jesus as Christ the Lord, we put him as our ruler, and pledge ourselves to live according to his law. When we become unfaithful, we break that vow.

2. Hannah bore and reared a child for God. Every Mother should realize that she is rearing children for God or for the devil. The very thought that we might be rearing a child for the devil is unbearable. Yet, many parents give little thought as to whether

they are rearing their children for God or for Satan.

3. Samuel, being given to God in Childhood, remained faithful to God as long as she lived. His mother must have impressed upon him the idea that he was given to her of God and that she was giving him back to God, and this idea must have had a great influence in molding his life. Children are gifts from God. (Psalm 127:

3.) We should regard them as such and impress upon them the thought that we are giving them back to God to live for his glory as long as they live.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons of the lesson.

Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Of what does the Bible part consist?
Explain what is meant by giving our heart to God.
Can you show how people can give zeal without knowledge as a substitute for giving the heart?
How can one substitute knowledge for the heart for which God asks?
Can we substitute wealth and honor for the heart which God requires?
What must we do before our eyes can delight in the ways of the Lord?
Name and discuss some characteristics of the way of the Lord in which we should delight.

Introduction

Was there a ceremony in connection with the beginning of the Nazirite vow?
For how long was the Nazirite vow binding?
From what was the Nazirite required to refrain?
What was the Nazirite required to do if he broke some condition of his vow?
What do you know of the offerings to be made when the Nazirite vow was fulfilled?

Do we have an example of the Nazirite vow in the New Testament?

Samuel Offered to Jehovah

What do you know of Samuel's age when he was given to the Lord?
Of what did Hannah's offering consist when she took Samuel to the tabernacle at Shiloh?
What do you know of the various locations of the tabernacle in Canaan?
What do you know of the sons of Aaron and Eli's connection with them in the high priesthood?
How did Hannah identify herself to Eli?

Samuel Serves Jehovah

What two offices did Eli hold?
In which of these offices would Samuel assist and why?
What do you know of the linen ephod?
What did Hannah bring to Samuel each year?
What blessing did Eli give Elkanah and his wife?
How many children did Elkanah and Hannah have?
Name and discuss three things mentioned in our lesson which the Lord never fails to do.
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—April 18, 1954

THE LORD CALLS SAMUEL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 3: 10-21

10 And Je-ho'-vah came, and stood, and called as at other times, Sam'-u-el, Sam'-u-el. Then Sam'-u-el said, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 And Je-ho'-vah said to Sam'-u-el, Behold, I will do a thing in Is'-ra-el, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against E'-li all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of E'-li, that the iniquity of E'-li's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15 And Sam'-u-el lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of Je-ho'-vah. And Sam'-u-e;

feared to show E'-li the vision.

16 Then E'-li called Sam'-u-el, and said, Sam'-u-el, my son. And he said, Here am I.

17 And he said, What is the thing that *Je-ho'-vah* hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he spake unto thee.

18 And Sam'-u-el told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is Je-ho'-vah: let him do what seemeth him good.

19 And Sam'-u-el grew, and Je-ho'-vah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Is'-ra-el from Dan even to Be'-6r-she'-ba knew that Sam'-u-el was established to be a prophet of Je-ho'-vah.

21 And Je-ho'-vah appeared again in Shi-loh; for Je-ho'-vah revealed himself to Sam'-u-el in Shi-loh by the word of Je-ho'-vah.

Golden Text.—*“Speak; for thy servant heareth”* (1 Sam. 3: 10.)

Devotional Heading.—1 Sam. 3: 1-9,

Daily Bible Readings

April 12. M.....	Samuel Ministers (1 Sam. 2: 18-22)
April 13. T.....	Samuel and Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7: 12-17)
April 14. W.....	Samuel's Call (1 Sam. 3: 1-14)
April 15 T.....	Jesus Called Disciples (Mark 1: 14-20)
April 16. F.....	Paul's Call (Acts 26: 9-20)
April 17. S.....	Samuel Before the People (1 Sam. 10: 17-24)
April 18. S.....	Samuel's Character (1 Sam. 12: 1-5)

TIME.—1142 B.C.

PLACE.—Shiloh.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Samuel, and Eli.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Our text expresses complete surrender of Samuel's will to the will of God.** This is the fundamental of all first principles. No one can be pleasing to God without first making a complete surrender of his will to the will of God. Jesus said if any man willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching. (John 7: 17.) We must cultivate the will to do God's bidding. Samuel had been impressed by his mother with the fact that he belonged to God. He was God's gift to her, and she had given him back to God. Now he speaks of himself as the servant of God. He recognizes the fact that he is God's slave. He belongs to God. It is the business of the slave to be submissive to his master, so Samuel is completely submissive to his master. This is the lesson that we as Christians must learn if we would please our master. He bought us with his blood. We belong to him body and soul. Our time, our talent, our possessions, all we have and all we are belongs to him, and we are to be completely surrendered to him and his will, having no ambition in life other than to please him.. If all parents today would do as good a job instilling this principle into the minds of their children as Hannah did in instilling this principle in the mind of Samuel, there would be more people surrendered to God and devoted to his service.

2. **Samuel's answer in our text promises prompt obedience to commandments of God yet unknown to Samuel.** Samuel's readiness to hear whatever Jehovah has to say to him is a promise of his prompt obedience to the commandments whatever they may be and however difficult they may be. This is the type of faith and trust that we need today. Too many of us are unwilling to pledge ourselves to do things without first

knowing what those things are. It is unreasonable that one man should expect another man to promise obedience to unknown duties. But it is not unreasonable for a man to pledge himself to do things which God has not yet revealed to him. Abraham went out from Ur to a land unknown to him, not knowing where he was going, and so we launch out upon the path of submission and obedience to God. We do not know the details of the service we are to render. We do not know the difficulties and the problems which we shall be called upon to bear and to solve. But with faith in God and a reliance upon him to do only that which is for our good, we can promise prompt obedience though the commandments are yet unknown. "It was a strange, long road on which Samuel put his foot when he answered this call, and he little knew where it would lead him. But the blessing of submission is that we do not need to know. It is enough to see where to put our lifted foot. What comes next we can let God settle." (Maclaren.)

3. **The answer of Samuel in our text pleads for further light on the pathway he was to tread.** Samuel's complete surrender to the will of God put him in position to ask for further direction and so he said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." This implies that light is shed upon the pathway we travel through the spoken word of God. Solomon said, "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light." (Prov. 6: 23.) David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path." (Psalm 119: 105.) This desire for further direction is a proof of the complete surrender which Samuel had made to God. Everyone who has fully surrendered himself to God's will will be looking for things to do. **He will be**

studying the revelation of God that comes through the spoken and written word of God. He will be unwilling to take directions from the written word of God. People who are

unwilling to take direction from the written word of God either disbelieve that word or they have not completely surrendered themselves to God.

Introduction

From a statement made in 1 Sam. 1: 1 it seems necessary that something be said about the tribe and family from which Samuel came. In that verse we are told that Elkanah was a descendant of Zuph, who was an Ephraimite. Ordinarily this would suggest that Elkanah was of the tribe of Ephraim. However, from 1 Chron. 6: 27, 28, 33-38, we learn that Samuel was of the tribe of Levi. Hamah, the birthplace of Samuel, actually is situated in the territory of Benjamin, but is said to be on Mount Ephraim because this limestone range extended to and kept its name almost up to the city of Jerusalem. The mountain range takes its name from Ephraim because it rises there and lies principally in the territory of Ephraim, but extends into the territory of Benjamin. So Ramah could be said to be in Mount Ephraim and one who lived there might be referred to as an Ephraimite. There is another probable explanation as to why Elkanah was called an Ephraimite. The people who lived in Ramah were the descendants of this one Zuph as the name of the town in this verse suggests. The town is called Ramathaimzophim. The last word of that long name, *zo-phim*, means the descendants of Zuph. There were several towns in Israel called Ramah. Samuel's birth-

place is marked out as that Ramah which was inhabited by descendants of Zuph. Scholars suppose that Zuph had formerly lived in the territory of Ephraim. It is a known fact that Levites were often called by the tribal name to which that particular family was attached. If Zuph lived in Ephraim and was thus attached to the tribe of Ephraim, it would be natural to call him an Ephraimite. Though Samuel was a Levite, he was not and could not have been a priest. Levites were divided into three families; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Priests were in the family of Kohath, and so was Samuel in that family, but not from the proper division of that family to be a priest. Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar (Am-min-adab), Hebron, and Uzziel. Amram was the father of Aaron, and Aaron was the father of all the priests; but Samuel came not through Amram from Kohath, but he came from Kohath through Izhar or Amminadab as the name is given in verse twenty-two of 1 Chron. 6. So Samuel was from the wrong division of the family of Kohath to be a priest. Though this may not seem too important now, we will have need for it further on in the lessons of this quarter

Exposition of the Text

I. Jehovah's First Visit to Samuel

(Verses 10-14)

Jehovah . . . called as at other times. This refers to the incident recorded in the preceding verses. There we learn that Jehovah appeared to Samuel and called him by name. But Samuel thought he was called by Eli, so he went in the night to Eli to see why he was called. When Eli told him that he had not called for him, he went back to his bed. This was done three times. When Samuel came to Eli the third time, the old priest realized that Jehovah was speaking to Samuel, and Samuel knew it not. So he told him to lie down again and when the voice came, Samuel was to say, "Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth."

And Jehovah said to Samuel. In

1 Sam. 3: 1 we read, "And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision." The word precious in this verse is to be taken in the sense of rare. God did not often speak to the people. Such was the degraded and debased condition of the people enslaved to the gods of the nations round about that God did *no*: often speak to them. Since this was Samuel's first revelation from God, and since God did not frequently speak to his people in those days, we can understand why Samuel was slow to recognize this as an appearance of God.

The ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. "This implies the announcement of some event so fright-

ful and unlooked for that the news shall, as it were, slap both ears at once, and make them smart with pain. And such an event was the capture of the ark, and the barbarous destruction of the priests and sanctuary of Shiloh. The phrase was again used of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 21: 12; Jer. 19: 3), a calamity which Jeremiah compares to the fall of Ghiloh (Jer. 7: 12, 14; 26: 6, 9), in as much as both of these events involved the ruin of the central seat of the Jewish religion, and were both accompanied by revolting cruelties." (Pulpit Commentary.)

I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house. In 1 Sam. 2: 27-36 we have a record of what God said would happen to the house of Eli. God charged that Eli, in allowing his two sons to act so wickedly, had honored his sons above Jehovah. Next, God charged that Eli and his sons had despised Jehovah. On account of these things the priesthood was to be taken away from Eli's family and "there shall not be an old man in thy house." This simply means that his posterity would die in the flower of their youth, none of them living to be old men. And, as a sign to Eli that all these things would come to pass, God said that his two wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas would die in one day.

He restrained them not. Though Eli himself was not a wicked man and did not partake in the abuses of his sons, yet God punished Eli because he had the authority to restrain his sons and did not do it. Eli knew that his sons were guilty of fornication with the women who did service at the door of the tabernacle. Yet the only thing Eli did was to remonstrate with them mildly saying, "Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings from all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make Jehovah's people to transgress." If Eli was punished for the transgressions of his sons because he did not discipline them, some parents today should take warning and discipline their children lest they suffer on account of the evil which their children will do.

The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated. Our text says that neither sacrifice, by which is meant a bloody offering, nor an offering, by which is meant an unbloody sacrifice, could possibly expiate the sins of Eli's

house. "Eli hardened himself in his weakness, and took no steps to vindicate God's service from the slur cast upon it by an unworthy priesthood. His sons hardened themselves in crime, and made their offerings a reproach."

II. Samuel Delivers His First Inspired Message (Verses 15-18)

Samuel lay until the morning. We are told that Samuel's place to sleep was "in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was." (1 Sam. 3: 3.) Whether Samuel slept in the most holy place or in a room which had been built immediately adjacent to it is a matter of dispute but of very little value. It seemed to be Samuel's duty to open the doors of the tabernacle in the morning and perhaps to care for the lights in the tabernacle.

What is the thing that Jehovah hath spoken unto thee? Samuel's first assignment as a prophet was a most difficult one. He had to tell the man who had reared him, taught him, trained him, that he and his house were to be destroyed. No wonder we read that Samuel feared to show Eli the vision he had had during the night.

God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me. In this way Eli impressed Samuel with the importance of telling him all that God had revealed. If he refused through sympathy or fear to tell anything which God had revealed, that thing should happen to Samuel himself.

Samuel told him every whit. Samuel was faithful both to God and to Eli. Eli had no doubt instructed him to be honest and dependable. Samuel follows that instruction, even though the thing revealed would hurt Eli. Samuel is faithful to God in spite of his human relationships. No doubt he loved Eli and did not wish to say or do anything that would hurt him, yet when God gave him a message, he felt his submission to God of greater importance than his regard for his benefactor. Preachers need to learn this lesson today. They need to know that they must be faithful to God, though the thing they preach will condemn even their own families to eternal torment.

Let him do what seemeth him good. This is the language of Eli when he heard what Jehovah had revealed to Samuel. Though Eli had neither the courage nor the zeal to do what was

his duty to do with reference to the wickedness of his sons, yet he was humble and resigned to God. He was willing for God's will to be done in his life, though it meant the loss of his priesthood and of his family. While we cannot honor him for his indifference and negligence, yet there is something beautiful about his spirit of humility and resignation to the will of God.

III. Samuel Established as the Prophet of Jehovah (Verses 19-21)

And Samuel grew. We cannot determine the age of Samuel at the time this first vision was given. According to the usual chronology, he was twenty-nine years old. However, in 1 Sam. 3: 1 he is called a child, which word would hardly be used of a twenty-nine year old man.

And Jehovah was with him. As

Lessons to Learn

1. From Eli and his sons we should learn again that the wages of sin is death and that the way of the transgressor is hard.

2. From the conduct of Samuel in delivering his first inspired message we should learn that we are to put duty to God before our social and

evidence of the presence of Jehovah with him, we are told that none of Samuel's word fell to the ground. By that it is meant that none of his predictions failed. The counsel and advice which he gave to those who came to him were sound and reliable.

All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba. This is the language used to tell us of the widespread influence of Samuel. All Israel from one end of the country to the other came to know of him, depend upon him, as their prophet. Of the word *establish* in our text we are told, "It is one of those pregnant words common in Hebrew, containing two cognate meanings. It says, first, that Samuel was faithful in his office; and, secondly, that because he was found trustworthy he was confirmed and strengthened in the possession of it." (Pulpit Commentary.)

conjugal relations. We are to be faithful to God even though we have to separate from friends and family to do so.

3. Faithfulness to God caused Samuel to be honored and respected from Dan to Beersheba. We should learn that it pays to be faithful to God.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Give the time, place, and persons of the lessons.

Repeat the golden text.

Give the time, places, and persons.

Golden Text Explained

What is the fundamental of all first principles?

What term did Samuel use which implies his submission to God?

What does this suggest as to our relation to Christ?

What bearing does Samuel's statement in our text have upon his future?

Do we like Samuel pledge of submission to unknown duties and responsibilities to God?

Through what avenue does our text suggest that Samuel was to learn what God expected of him?

What does this desire for further direction indicate on the part of Samuel?

Was the spoken word of God to Samuel more binding upon him than God's written word is binding on us today?

Introduction

Is there anything to suggest that Samuel might be of the tribe of Ephraim?

How may we be sure that Samuel was of the tribe of Levi?

The tribe of Levi was divided into what families?

In which of these families were the priests?

Why could Samuel not have been a priest?

Jehovah's First Visit to Samuel

Tell of the confusion in Samuel's mind when Jehovah first spake to him.

What evidence do we have that God did not often speak to his people in that time?

What was the nature of the news God was about to reveal to Samuel?

Why did God say the priesthood was to be taken away from Eli?

What punishment was to come upon the posterity of Eli?

What was to be the sign to Eli that these things would actually happen?

What proof do we have that Eli was not a good father?

What statement is made which emphasizes the degree of iniquity of Eli's house?

Samuel Delivers His First Inspired Message

Where was Samuel's bedroom?

Why was Samuel's first assignment as a prophet a difficult one?

Was Eli willing to hear all that Samuel had to say?

What lesson can preachers learn today from Samuel's faithfulness to reveal all that God gave him?

Samuel Established As the Prophet of Jehovah

What do we know of the age of Samuel when he gave his first revelation?

What evidence are we given of God's presence with Samuel?

What is said of the widespread influence of Samuel?

What two thoughts are suggested in the word *establish*?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—April 25, 1954

SAMUEL THE REFORMER

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 7: 3-13

3 And Sam'-u-el spake unto all the house of Is'-ra-el, saying, If ye do return unto Je-ho'-vah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ash'-ta-roth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Je-ho'-vah, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines.

4 Then the children of Is'-ra-el did put away the Ba'-al-im and the Ash'-ta-roth, and served Je-ho'-vah only.

5 And Sam'-u-e; said, Gather all Is'-ra-el to Miz'-pah and I will pray for you unto Je-ho'-vah.

6 And they gathered together to Miz'-pah, and drew water, and poured it out before Je-ho'-vah, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against Je-ho'-vah. And Sam'-u-el judged the children of Is'-ra-el in Miz'-pah.

7 And when the Phi-lis'-tines heard that the children of Is'-ra-el were gathered together to Miz'-pah, the lords of the Phi-lis'-tines went up against Is'-ra-el. And when the children of Is'-ra-el heard it, they were afraid of the Phi-lis'-tines.

8 And the children of Is'-ra-el said to Sam'-u-e;, Cease not to cry unto

Je-ho'-vah our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines.

9 And Sam'-u-el took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto Je-ho'-vah: and Sam'-u-e; cried unto Je-ho'-vah for Is'-ra-el; and Je-ho'-vah answered him.

10 And as Sam'-u-el was offering up the burnt-offering, the Phi-lis'-tines drew near to battle against Is'-ra-el; but Je-ho'-vah thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Phi-lis'-tines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten down before Is'-ra-el.

11 And the men of Is'-ra-el went out of Miz'-pah, and pursued the Phi-lis'-tines, and smote them, until they came under Beth'-car.

12 Then Sam'-u-el took a stone, and set it between Miz'-pah and Shen, and called the name of it Eb'-en-e'-zer, saying, Hitherto hath Je-ho'-vah helped us.

13 So the Phi-lis'-tines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Is'-ra-el: and the hand of Je-ho'-vah was against the Phi-lis'-tines all the days of Sam'-u-el.

Golden Text.—*“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well: seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow”* (Isa. 1: 16-17.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 7: 14-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 19. M. A Minister Before God (Ex. 28: 1-5)
- April 20. T. A Servant of the Sanctuary (Num. 18: 1-7)
- April 21. W. An Unfaithful Priest Rebuked (1 Sam. 2: 27-35)
- April 22. T. An Unfaithful Priest Punished (1 Sam. 4: 12-18)
- April 23. F. Samuel, a Prayerful Man (1 Sam. 7: 3-12)
- April 24. S. A Reforming Prophet (1 Kings 17: 1-7)
- April 25. S. Faithful Prophets (Heb. 11: 32-40)

Time.—1120 B.C.

Place.—Mizpah.

Persons.—Samuel and all Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. Inward cleansing: our first duty.

The language of our golden text is that of Isaiah to the people of Is-rael when they were in a state of moral and religious decay. Their

condition in the time of Isaiah compared very favorably to their condition in the time of Samuel. Isaiah realized that the injustice and oppression of the strong and the wick-

edness and immorality of the people were due to a godless heart. So he admonishes them to clean up their hearts that their lives may be what they should be. It is taught that "from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornication, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7: 20-23.)

2. Outward reformations follows,

(a) This outward reformation is first of a negative type. They were to put away the evil of their doings before the Lord's eyes. They were to cease to do evil. Peter expressed the same thought in these words. "Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." We are then to long for the spiritual milk that we may grow unto salvation. (1 Pet. 2: 1-3.) Since it is impossible for one to grow spiritually until he has put away wickedness of every form, Peter exhorts us to put these things away and then begin our growth. As the physical body cannot grow while it is poisoned with disease germs, so the spiritual body cannot grow so long as it is poisoned by sin. (b) Learn to do well is the positive side of this outward reformation. Some seem to think that if they simply refrain from evil they are all the Lord expects them to be, but that is only half of our duty. We are to refrain

from evil, but in addition we are to learn to do good. Notice that Isaiah insists that we are to *learn* to do good. We are not, by nature, inclined to do good. Not many of us have to learn to do evil. We can do evil without studying or without practicing very much, but it is more difficult to do good. Hence, we must study, and we must practice if we expect to do good. (c) Isaiah descends to details in the matter of doing good. First he says that the people should seek justice; that is, they should seek to do good; they should seek to deal justly, honorably, and righteously with one another. Next, they were to relieve the oppressed. God has always been the friend of those who are oppressed. And those who would be pleasing to God must relieve those who are oppressed. Next, he says they are to judge the fatherless; that is, they are to take up for, they are to defend, the orphan child; and in connection with that they should plead for the widow. By this he means that they are to plead for the widow's cause. They are to defend her rights and see that she is not oppressed, that her property is not taken from her, and that she has food, raiment, and shelter. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." (Psalm 68: 5.) "Jehovah preserveth the sojourners; he upholdeth the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down." (Psalm 146: 9.) Compare this with the pure religion of James 1: 27.

Introduction

As a connecting link between the lesson of last week and our present lesson, some things are worthy of mention. First, the Philistines came to attack Israel in Aphek. The Philistines won the battle and slew about four thousand Israelites. In order to overcome the Philistines, the men of Israel decided to take the ark into battle with them. But in spite of the presence of the ark of God, Israel was again defeated and some thirty thousand footmen lost their lives. In this battle the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed. When the news was brought back to Shiloh, Eli fell from off his seat backward and broke his neck and died immediately. The wife of Phinehas also died upon hear-

ing the news. God allowed the ark to be taken as an indication of his displeasure with the moral and spiritual condition of the people, and as an indication of his departure from them until they should repent.

But the Philistines did not fare so well with the ark in their keeping. The Philistine god Dagon proved to be no match for the God of the ark of the covenant. The Philistines took the ark into the temple of their god Dagon and set it by the image of Dagon. Next morning they found Dagon on his face prostrate before the ark. They put him in his place again, and the next morning when they came in they found Dagon broken before the ark, with his head and hands cut off lying on the thresh-

old. Furthermore, Jehovah afflicted the Philistines with tumors in the body and with mice in the fields and houses. After seven months of this affliction, the Philistines were willing to return the ark of the covenant to Israel. So they made a cart on which they placed the ark, and along with the ark they made images of tumors and mice and put in the ark. They yoked two milk kine to the cart and started them out toward Israel. They said if these cows do the natural thing, return to their calves, we will know that our afflictions were of a natural source; but if these cows, contrary to nature, go away from their calves and take

the ark of Israel, we will know that these afflictions were of Jehovah. It is said that the cows went along pulling the cart, lowing as they went and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left. The ark first came to Bethshemesh, where a number of people allowed their curiosity to cause them to look into the ark and perish. From Bethshemesh the ark was taken to Kir-jath-je-a-rim. It seems never to have been taken back to Shiloh, but where it was kept is uncertain. Nothing more is said about it until the time David removed it to Jerusalem. (2 Sam. 6: 3-11; 1 Chron. 13: 13; 15: 24, 25.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel Destroys the Foreign Gods

(Verses 3, 4)

If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your heart. According to our best chronology, Eli had been dead about twenty years. Israel had been subject to the Philistines all this time. Strong units of their army were garrisoned in strategic points throughout the land. Samuel promised the people that if they would return unto Jehovah with all their hearts, put away the foreign gods from among them, Jehovah would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines. Here we have the same order of conversion and reformation that Isaiah suggested in our golden text. First, they were to turn to Jehovah in their hearts. Second, there was to be a reformation in their lives. They were to put away the foreign gods and learn to do good.

Put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth. The word Ashtaroth is the plural of Ashtareth. This is also another name for Astarte of the Greeks and Romans. Baal was the male god of the Philistines coming from the Phoenicians. And Ashtareth was the female goddess of the Phoenicians, adopted by the Philistines. Baal symbolized the generative power while Ashtareth symbolized the productive power. Since these deities had to do with generation and production, we may expect their worship to be connected with the impurities and licentiousness which were so common in that day. "To cast off the Philistine deities was equivalent to a rebellion generally against Philistine supremacy. Baal and Astarte, the husband and

the life, represented the reproductive powers of nature, and under various names were worshiped throughout the East, and usually with lude and wanton orgies." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only. Samuel emphasizes the twofold nature of their conversion. He emphasizes that their hearts must be cleansed and directed unto Jehovah, and next he insists that they must serve Jehovah only. Service without repentance from the heart would be of no avail, and the heart cleansed without giving any service to Jehovah would avail nothing. The Lord wants our hearts to be clean, but he does not want an indifferent negligent heart. He wants an active obedient heart.

Did put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth. The word Baalim is the plural of Baal. Some scholars contend that when the plural form of these words is used it refers to their images, but when the singular form is used, it refers to the god behind or represented by the images.

II. The People Confessed Their Sins

(Verses 5-9)

Gather all Israel to Mizpah. Until this time it seems that Samuel had done his work more or less secretly. At least he had not had a gathering of all the people. He had been going among the people, from one end of the land to another, teaching them, exhorting them to put away their gods, and to return in their hearts and lives unto Jehovah. Now he thinks the time has arrived when he can call for a public gathering of Is-

rael in spite of the oppression of the Philistines. Mizpah was a city in the territory of Benjamin a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was one of the three cities where Samuel did much of his work. (1 Sam. 7: 16.)

Drew water, and poured it out before Jehovah. The drawing of water was perhaps a symbol of their dependence upon some greater power for their protection. The pouring out of water upon the ground has been used by the Israelites to signify their deep penitential sorrow. (Isa. 12: 3; Psalm 22: 14.)

We *have sinned against Jehovah.* They not only poured out water on the ground as an indication of their deep penitence of sin, but they fasted that day and made full confession of their sins. Until one is ready to make full, complete confession of his sins, there is little indication that he will quit his sins. Under Samuel's instructions and exhortation, the people had been brought to the point where they realized their sinfulness, their lost condition as separated from God, and were willing to be instructed by him as to how to return to God. He had instructed them first to return in their hearts, and second to return in their lives unto God. By their fasting and worship on this occasion and their confession of sins, they had indicated their willingness to accept Samuel's instruction.

Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah. Up to this time Samuel seems to have had only the office of prophet among the people. He had promised only that he would pray for them and encouraged them to believe that God would deliver them from the Philistines, but there is no indication that he had acted as a judge until this time.

The lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. The calling of the people together in this public way was virtually a declaration of war. At least it meant that they were breaking the bonds of the Philistines and that they intended to serve them no longer. To the Philistines this meant war.

Cry unto Jehovah our God for us. This was the plea of the Israelites when they saw the Philistine army coming toward them. They were virtually unarmed, and they were not experienced in the arts of war. They had been so long in the bondage of the Philistines that they were

unprepared for war, so they depended upon Samuel and his power to intercede for them to the Lord.

And Samuel cried unto Jehovah for Israel. In connection with his prayer, Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering unto Jehovah. The offering of a whole burnt offering was a symbol of the people giving themselves wholly unto God. Samuel was not a priest nor was this offering made on the altar before the tabernacle. Yet the exigencies of the occasion demanded it and seemingly justified it.

III. Samuel Leads to Victory (Verses 10-13)

Jehovah thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines. While Samuel was in the act of offering the burnt offering, the Philistines made their attack against Israel. Israel was practically unarmed and poorly organized, so Jehovah thundered with a great thunder against the Philistines. The Hebrew word for thunder in this verse is *voice*, and what effect the voice of Jehovah had upon the Philistines we cannot know. The text says that they were *discomfited* and were smitten down before Israel. After this had been done, the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and smote more of them. This is about the extent of Samuel's military enterprises. He was not a military man. He was a teacher. He expected his purposes to be accomplished in Israel through teaching and prayer, not through the use of carnal weapons.

Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen. This was a memorial stone. Samuel called it Eb-en-e-zer. The meaning of this word is, "hitherto hath Jehovah helped us." Many people sing the verse, "Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I have come; and I hope by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home," and yet do not realize the historic significance of the lines.

So the Philistines were subdued. This battle broke the back of the Philistine power over the Israelites for some time to come. Our text says, "They came no more within the border of Israel." But the passage must not be taken to mean that the Philistines were never again

a threat to the peace of Israel, for in 1 Sam. 13: 5, we learn that the Philistines were able to gather a force of thirty thousand chariots and

six thousand horsemen and people as the sand which is of the seashore in multitude to come against Israel in Michmash.

Lessons to Learn

1. We should be encouraged to believe that God will help us, deliver us from our troubles, if we but thoroughly turn to him in our hearts and in our lives.

2. We should be reminded by this lesson that God is resourceful and that he is not dependent upon carnal weapons to wage a war in our defense, that he has ways in helping us of which we are not capable of conceiving.

3. As Samuel raised a stone to commemorate God's help, so we should be mindful of the part that God plays in our lives, and we should be careful to give him all the praise and the thanksgiving that we are capable of rendering unto him. After we have done all in our power to show our gratitude, we will still be far short of doing what we should.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is the first thing essential to a clean life?
Can you name the things which Jesus says come from the heart?
Isaiah and Peter both teach what order of reformation of life?
What is implied in the command to learn to do good?
What lessons are implied in the command to seek justice?
What is our duty toward those who are oppressed?
What does Isaiah say we should do for the fatherless?
What is our duty toward the widow?
How does this teaching of Isaiah compare with that of James?

Introduction

Why did the Israelites take the ark of the covenant into battle with them?
What calamities came to the family of Eli as a consequence of this battle?
What happened to the ark of the covenant in this battle?
What was the name of the god of the Philistines?
How did this god fare in the presence of the ark of the covenant?
How long did the Philistines keep the ark of the covenant?
How did they return the ark to Israel?
What do you know of the ark from this time until David removed it to Jerusalem?

Samuel Destroys the Foreign Gods

About how long from the death of Eli to the time of our lesson?
What had been the condition of Israel all this time?

Samuel promised relief from oppression on what two conditions?
What is meant by the term "foreign gods and the Ashtaroth"?
What do you know of Baal and Astaroth?
What is the twofold conversion which Samuel demanded of the people?
What is the possible meaning of the plural form of these gods?

The People Confessed Their Sins

How had Samuel hitherto done his work of teaching?
For what purpose does he now call a meeting of the people?
In what city was this meeting called?
What was the significance of drawing water and pouring it on the ground before Jehovah?
In addition to pouring water on the ground, what did they do to show their deep penitence?
What did the people do which indicated they were actually ready to quit their sins?
What additional service did Samuel begin to render the people at Mizpah?
How did the Philistines react to this public meeting of Israel?
Was Israel prepared for a war with the Philistines?
What did Samuel do to gain the help of Jehovah?

Samuel Leads to Victory

How did Jehovah give Israel the victory that day?
For what type of leadership is Samuel distinguished?
What is the significance of the stone which Samuel set upon this occasion?
In what song in our day is reference made to this stone?
What did this battle mean for the peace and prosperity of Israel?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—May 2, 1954

SAMUEL THE JUDGE

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 7: 12-17; 8: 1-3

12 Then Sam'-u-el took a stone, and set it between Miz'-pah and Shen, and called the name of it Eb'-en-e'-zer,

saying, Hitherto hath Je-ho'-vah helped us.

13 So the Phi-lis'-tines were sub-

dued, and they came no more within the border of Is'-ra-el: and the hand of Je-ho'-vah was against the Phi-lis'-tines all the days of Sam'-u-el.

14 And the cities which the Phi-lis'-tines had taken from Is'-ra-el were restored to Is'-ra-el, from Ek'-ron even unto Gath; and the border thereof did Is'-ra-el deliver out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines. And there was peace between Is'-ra-el and the Am'-or-ites.

15 And Sam'-u-el judged Is'-ra-el all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth'-el, and Gil'-gal,

Golden Text.—*“When the righteous are increased, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man beareth rule, the people sigh”* (Prov. 29: 2.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 13: 16-21.

Daily Bible Readings

April 26. M.....	Samuel a Righteous Judge (1 Sam. 7: 3-12)
April 27. T.....	Strength in Jehovah (Josh. 1: 1-9)
April 28. W.....	Strength in Weakness (Joel 3: 9-17)
April 29. T.....	Chosen for Service (Acts 6: 1-8)
April 30. F.....	God's Spokesman (Deut. 18: 15-22)
May 1. S.....	Divine Appointment (Ex. 3: 1-12)
May 2. S.....	Length of Samuel's Service (1 Sam. 7: 13-15)

TIME.—1131 to 1095 B.C.

Places.—Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah.

Persons.—Samuel, his sons, and the people of Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. The blessings of good government. Our text in the King James version reads, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.” So when our text says that the people rejoice when the righteous are increased, we take this word *increased* to mean in authority. When the righteous people outnumber the wicked in a nation, and when the righteous have the upper hand in government, the people generally are prosperous and in a state of rejoicing, (a) When righteous people are in authority, the people enjoy religious liberty. Some devoutly religious people would take our freedom of worship from us. But being devoutly religious and being righteous are two different things. Devoutly religious people are in control of the government in Italy, yet they do not allow religious freedom as we understand and enjoy that in our country. But if the people in control of the government in Italy were righteous, in the sense in which that term is used in the Bible, they would allow

and Miz'-pah; and he judged Is'-ra-el in all those places.

17 And his return was to Ra'-mah, for there was his house; and there he judged Is'-ra-el: and he built there an altar unto Je-ho'-vah.

1 And it came to pass, when Sam'-u-el was old, that he made his sons judges over Is'-ra-el.

2 Now the name of his first-born was Jo'-el; and the name of his second, A-bi'-jah: they were judges in Be'-er-she'-ba.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice.

everybody the liberty to worship as he sees fit through a study of the Bible, (b) Equitable judgment in court. When the righteous are in authority, the people can expect just laws and equitable decisions in the courts of the land. Samuel challenged the people to accuse him of any injustice in his decisions or of any tendency on his part to take bribes or show favoritism in any way. (1 Sam. 12: 1-5.) But it was not always thus in Israel. For in Isaiah's day the Lord complained that he had brought his people from bondage into a land flowing with milk and honey and he “looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry.” (Isa. 5: 3-7.) At about the same time Isaiah was complaining of injustice, Micah wrote, “Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand and they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man

and his house, even a man and his heritage." (Mic. 2: 1, 2.) Again, "Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently; the prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth the evil desire of his soul: thus they weave it together." (Mic. 7: 3.) (c) People are encouraged in morals. When the righteous are in authority, they encourage people generally in maintaining a high standard of morals. (1) The example of men in high office will encourage those who are under their rule to follow somewhat in their footsteps. If men in high office are upright and clean in their morals, they will influence the people to follow them. (2) People will be encouraged to live clean morally because the laws made by righteous people are favorable to clean morals. (3) People will be encouraged to clean and high standards of morals because those who live otherwise will be punished. Paul teaches us that the law, the government, exists for evildoers and the reward of them that do well. (Rom. 13: 3-5.) Hence, in the punishment of evildoers and the reward for righteous living, people are encouraged to a high standard of morals.

2. The curse of bad government.

The second division of our text says that when a wicked man beareth rule the people sigh, (a) They sigh or mourn because of the loss of the things mentioned above. When the wicked are in power, the common people lose the good example and the benefits to be derived from the punishment of evildoers. Wicked men cannot be depended upon to enforce righteous laws. Neither can they be depended upon to protect the weak and the poor. Since the wicked are not interested in the progress of the cause of religion, we may expect the enemies of religion to get legislation enacted which will be favorable to

their schemes and causes. Hence, the cause of religion will suffer when the wicked are in authority, (b) The people mourn when the wicked are in authority, because correction of such conditions is a long, hard process. Even in a democratic form of government such as ours, it is most difficult to get an administration out of office when it has entrenched itself through many years of legislation and unprincipled favoritism. Cities sometimes awake to find themselves in the hands of an unprincipled political boss. It takes a long, hard fight on the part of the righteous people of the city to clear out such a group of unprincipled politicians, (c) Rebellion against evil rulers brings suffering and death. When a nation of people find themselves in the clutches of an evil set of men, they must either continue to bear it or rebel. This seems to be the situation in which the common people of Russia today find themselves. The free nations of the world are making an effort to help the common people. But alter all, the responsibility rests largely with the common people, and they must bear the brunt of the fighting that will be necessary to bring freedom to their land, (d) The curse of bad government is seen also in the difficulty of rearing children. The rearing of children under good government is difficult enough, but when sin is winked at in high places and where crime goes unpunished, it makes it all the more difficult to impress children with the need of being upright and with the danger and the sinfulness of doing wrong. A low standard of morals among high government officials in our generation has contributed to the decline of morals generally throughout the land. The more general becomes immorality and dishonesty among the leaders and rulers of our land, the more general will it become among the young people of the land.

Introduction

"Samuel continued to be the center of authority, passing through the country on a judicial circuit, settling strifes, punishing wrongs, rebuking oration already begun. We are left to imagine the details of his work, but it is clear that, in addition to the ordinary duties of the judge, he performed the high and sacred functions of a prophet, acting as a special mes-

senger of God to man. As far as these rude times would allow, he reorganized society, reestablished the priesthood and the worship of the sanctuary, and had an oversight of all civil and military as well as ecclesiastical affairs. Step by step he recovered the nation out of the chaos in which he found it, and caused it to be respected by all the heathen prin-

cialties around about. He was at once the deliverer, the religious guide, and the civil ruler and judge of the nation. That in all this he kept his hands clean from bribe, and his life free from stain, is evident from his challenge to the people in his old age. . . . In view of a power almost absolute, and opportunities for self aggrandisement ever recurring, and the general propensity of those in power to rob and oppress, this is a remarkable testimony at the close of a long and official life. Here is a

character that deserves to be studied in these days of political corruption. It is a noble picture of disinterested patriotism, unsullied righteousness, and unflinching loyalty to the King of Israel. It reinvigorates one's faltering faith in humanity to contemplate such an instance of lifelong devotion to truth and righteousness, under the greatest difficulties, with every temptation to an opposite course, and the largest liberty to abuse the power lodged in his hands." (Errett.)

Exposition of the Text

I. The Righteous in Power (Verses 12-17)

Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.

This statement shows that Samuel, the ruler of the people at this time, recognized the overruling providence of God in the affairs of the nation. It is a sad day for any nation when its rulers refuse to recognize God's overruling providence. We see in Nebuchadnezzar an example of a ruler who refused to recognize the providence of God in the affairs of his nation. He was bereft of reason, was driven from his palace to live in the fields like an animal for seven years. During this time, he was taught in the severest manner possible that God rules in the nations, that he raises up kings and deposes them. We hear him praise the most high, "for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou? . . . Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are truth, and his ways justice; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." (Dan. 4: 34-37.) (a) A man who thus recognizes the providence of God in the affairs of the nation and in the affairs of his own life will have a great reverence for God. We need rulers from the king or the president on down to the lowliest community ruler who have a reverence for God and respect for the authority of his Christ, (b) A ruler who thus recognizes the providence of God in the affairs of a nation will generally live a pious life. And that piety will per-

vade all his public expressions and activities. When our president and our governors curse and swear, when they drink and otherwise show disrespect for the laws of decency and the high standard of morals which is good for the nation, we can hardly expect the young people to do otherwise. (c) A man who thus recognizes the providence of God in the affairs of a nation will delight in his people coming to a knowledge of God and to a practice of righteousness in their individual lives. It is good for the rulers of the land to be interested in maintaining world peace and in cultivating a good relationship with the various nations of the earth. But when their outward look robs them of the time and attention to give to an inward look and they forget the welfare of their people, they are not serving their country as they should. We need presidents and governors who themselves are deeply pious and devoted to their understanding of what is right, men who will be interested in leading their people into a greater knowledge of God, a better understanding of his word, and a deeper consecration to the cause of right and purity in the land. As Samuel set up this memorial stone and named it Ebenezer because God had been with them and helped them to that point in their experiences, he exemplified all these characteristics in a ruler.

The hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

In this we see the power of a righteous life. Because of Samuel's recognition of God's providence in their affairs, and because of his gratitude for the goodness of God and his expression of that gratitude, God protected the nation from their enemy during the lifetime of Samuel. God

promised the people that if they would obey his commandments and keep his statutes their enemies would never prevail over them in battle. (Deut. 28).

The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored. How long it took Israel to regain these cities we are not told, but those which formerly belonged to Israel, but were captured by the Philistines, are now restored to Israel. Here again we see the influence of a righteous ruler, God giving him power to lead his people to victory.

And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. In verse fifteen we are told that Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He lived for a number of years after Saul was anointed king. How much authority, and for what reason, he had over Saul, we do not know. Perhaps it was on account of his prophetic office, being the mouth-piece of God, he could tell Saul, the king, what to do and what not to do. These three cities in his annual circuit were northeast of Jerusalem. In these cities he met with the people to counsel, advise, to reprove, and to encourage.

And his return was to Ramah. This was his home city, and there he spent more time judging Israel than he spent at either of the other three, and there we are told he built an altar. For what reason it was built there instead of Shiloh we do not know.

II. The Wicked in Power (1 Sam. 8: 1-3)

When Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Our text says that Samuel was old at the time his sons were made judges, but we do not know how old. The average guess is that he was about sixty years of age. His sons were appointed, not as judges in their own right, but as the assistants to their father.

We are told that his firstborn was named Joel and his second was named Abiah and that they judged the people in Beersheba. This was the southern portion of the country, and no doubt their authority extended over the portion south of Jerusalem. The names of these sons, though common in that time, show the faith and piety of Samuel. Word Joel means *Jehovah* is God, and the term Abiah means *will of Jehovah*.

His sons walked not in his ways. We are not told why Samuel's sons were wicked. Some have thought that Samuel gave too much time to teaching and directing the affairs of other people and did not give sufficient time to teaching his own sons. This is a mistake which preachers can easily make and one which they should studiously avoid.

Turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice. The law of Moses demanded that the judges of the people were to judge righteously. "Thou shalt not wrest justice; thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe; for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee." (Deut. 16: 18-20.) When rulers accept gifts, regardless of what form those gifts take, they lay themselves liable to the accusation of being unfair and partial in their judgments. No man or company of men will continue to give large gifts to men in office unless they receive something in return. So when men in office continually receive gifts from the people whom they serve, they may expect to be accused of partiality and dishonesty. With such men in office, the poor are neglected and the rich are pampered. This condition in turn contributes to vice and immorality of every kind.

Lessons to Learn

1. In America the people have a right to determine whether they shall be under righteous or wicked rulers. This is a blessing which all of us should appreciate enough, first, to thank God for it; second, to work hard to preserve it.

2. Children are not good simply and solely because their parents are good. Eli was a good man so was

Samuel, but their children were not good men. We must not only be good ourselves but must teach and train our children to be good.

3. Public office brings its temptations to accept bribes and pervert justice. Not all who hold public office are guilty of these sins, but all are tempted to commit these sin s.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word increased in our text?
What is the first freedom which righteous rulers allow the people?
What proof do we have that Samuel was always equitable in his judgments?
How did this differ from conditions in the time of Isaiah and Micah?
Name and discuss three ways in which people generally will be influenced to a higher standard of morals when the righteous are in authority?
What is the first reason given why people sigh when the wicked are in power?
Why is moral progress more difficult under a set of wicked rulers?
Why is rebellion against a set of wicked rulers a cause for mourning?
What effect does bad government have on the rearing of children in the way they should live?
What can we the common people do to purify the moral conditions of government?

Introduction

How much authority did Samuel have among the people?
What type of work did he do among the people?
What was his total effect of his influence upon the nation?
What is said of Samuel's just and honorable conduct in office?

The Righteous in Power

Can you contrast Samuel and Nebuchadnezzar in their recognition of God's

overruling providence in the affairs of nations?
How were Nebuchadnezzar's views on God's overruling providence changed?
Do you believe that God exercises such a providence in the affairs of nations today?
State and discuss three ways a ruler will be affected by the recognition of the providence of God in the affairs of a nation.
How and why did Jehovah bless Israel all the days of Samuel?
What visible expression of God's presence and blessing was made to the people?
What three cities were included in Samuel's circuit to judge the people?
Did Samuel continue his influence after Saul was made king?
In what city did Samuel live?

The Wicked in Power

About how old was Samuel when he made his sons judges over Israel?
Were these sons made judges in their own right?
What were the names of Samuel's sons?
In what portion of the country did they live and do their work?
What is said in a general way of the conduct of the sons of Samuel?
Of what sins were these young men guilty?
What did the law of Moses say with reference to these sins?
Why is it wrong for office holders to accept large gifts from men and corporations?
How does such conduct in office affect the morals of people generally?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VI—May 9, 1954

SAMUEL ANSWERS THE DEMAND FOR A KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 8: 1-11

1 And it came to pass, when Sam'-u-el was old, that he made his sons judges over Is'-ra-el.

2 Now the name of his first-born was Jo'-el; and the name of his second, A-bi'-jah: they were judges in Ber-she'-ba.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice.

4 Then all the elders of Is'-ra-el gathered themselves together, and came to Sam'-u-e; unto Ra'-mah;

5 And they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

6 But the thing displeased Sam'-u-61, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Sam'-u-e; prayed unto Je-ho'-vah.

7 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, Hearken unto the voice of the

people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of E'-gypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10 And Sam'-u-e; told all the words of Je-ho'-vöü unto the people that asked of him a king.

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you he will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"It is better to take refuge in Jehovah than to put confidence in princes"* (Psalm 118: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—1 Sam. 8: 12-22.

Daily Bible Readings

May 3. M.....	Samuel's Farewell Address (1 Sam. 12: 1-5)
May 4. T.....	People's Request for a King (1 Sam. 12: 19-25)
May 5. W.....	The King Revealed (1 Sam. 9: 15-21)
May 6. T.....	The King Chosen (1 Sam. 10: 17-24)
May 7. F.....	Jehovah's Choice of a King (Deut. 17: 14-17)
May 8. S.....	Samuel's Prayer for the People (1 Sam. 12: 19-23)
May 9. S.....	Samuel Tells the Manner of the Kingdom (1 Sam. 10: 1-25)

TIME.—1112 B.C.

PLACES.—Beersheba and Ramah.

PERSONS.—Samuel, his sons, and the elders of Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. Danger of trusting in men. (a)

Men are lacking in wisdom. Viewing our text in the light of our lesson, we would say that it is better for men to have Jehovah for their ruler than to have fallible men. It requires a lot of wisdom to guide safely the affairs of a great nation of people. No one man has sufficient wisdom to do this, and very few men have been able to assemble an organization which can conduct the affairs of the nation for any great period of time without making grave and serious mistakes, (b) Men lack the power to merit the confidence of a nation. David said, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." (Psalm 146: 3.) Often we read that the help of man is vain. (Psalm 60: 11; 108: 12.) A human ruler's power is limited by the extent of cooperation he can command of his subjects, and that further is limited by their number and willingness to cooperate as compared with their enemies. (c) Human rulers are unstable. We have a good example of this in the first king selected and appointed for the rule of Israel. Saul was a very humble man, putting his trust in God when he was first appointed. We are told that Saul was little in his own sight when he was made king (1 Sam. 15: 17), but being king turned his head. He became proud and rebellious and had to be rejected and another put in his place. Solomon is another example of the instability of human beings in such responsible places. He was humble and determined to discharge the duties of his office in a way acceptable to the Lord, but he allowed his foreign wives to turn his head and

his heart and cause him to become oppressive of the people and unfaithful to God.

2. We are to trust in Jehovah.

(a) It is better to trust in Jehovah because he is all wise. In Job 37: 14-16 the wisdom of God is discussed, and there it is said that he is perfect in knowledge. Again in Psalm 147: 4 we are told that he counts the number of the stars and calls them all by their names. In Psalm 147: 5 we are told that his understanding is infinite. In 1 John 3: 20 we learn that God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things. Paul praises his knowledge in Rom. 11: 33 in these words. "Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." In this connection the student should read Psalm 139. In Isa. 46: 9, 10 we learn that God knew the end of all things from the beginning. And in 1 Pet. 1: 20 we are told that he knew of the sacrifice of Christ even before the foundation of the world. And in Eph. 1: 4, 5 we are told that we are chosen in him before the foundation of the world and adopted unto him as sons through Jesus Christ.

(b) It is better to trust in Jehovah because he is all powerful. In Job 42: 2 we are told that God can do all things, and in Gen. 18: 14 we are assured that there is not anything hard for Jehovah. While in Matt. 19: 26 we are told that with God all things are possible. When we look into the natural world about us, we are amazed at the exhibition of power, but when we remember that there are countless billions of stars on out beyond that which the naked

eye can see, and that even beyond all them there are other universes, we are still made to wonder at the omnipotence of God. The student should read Psalm 33: 6-9, Nah. 1: 3-6, and similar passages in this connection. Not only is our world, but the universes about us, subject to the power of God; not only these but all angels are subject unto him and even the fallen angels and the devil himself absolutely subject to the will of God. He who has power to subject all these things to himself and rule them without the smallest mistake is certainly worthy of our trust, (c) It is better to trust in Jehovah because of his immutability. It is not enough that our rulers should be all wise and all powerful, for his wisdom and power might be used one day for our good and the next day for our hurt. But he must be both good and im-

mutable, or unchangeable, along with his wisdom and power. Let the student read Psalm 102: 26, 27; James 1: 17; Heb. 13: 8. (d) It is better to put our trust in Jehovah because he is faithful. The word faithful as used here means that God is such a person that we can absolutely rely upon him in every emergency of life; such a person that we can stay ourselves upon him under all circumstances, both in time and in eternity. God's faithfulness to his people has been manifested in keeping his promises to his people. Again his faithfulness is manifested in not allowing us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10: 13), and last his faithfulness is manifested in his willingness to forgive his children of their sins when they confess him and turn in their hearts toward him (1 John 1: 9).

Introduction

The demand for Samuel to give the people a king was the consummation of a long-standing desire. We have evidence of this desire for more than one hundred twenty-five years. In Judges 8: 22, 23 we have the record of Gideon's victory over his enemies and the people demanding him to be their king. They said, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah shall rule over you." The people of Israel showed their lack of wisdom and their lack of respect for God's arrangement of matters with reference to them. But Gideon showed his humility, is wisdom, and his respect for God's authority over them and God's arrangement for ruling the people. Gideon had only to refuse the offer of the people and remind them that Jehovah was their ruler, but during one hundred twenty-five years which followed, the desire to be like the nations round about them grew to the extent that they would no longer listen to their ruler's admonition, and so demanded that Samuel give them a king.

The demand for a king in Samuel's time was made in spite of a demon-

stration of the success of the theocracy. "Uniting in himself all the highest offices of his nation—its supreme prophet, its virtual high priest, and its acknowledged ruler—his influence was intensified by the lofty singleness of his life and aim. Men could not forget as his age increased how Jehovah had chosen to make revelations through him while he was yet a child; how he had grown up in the sacred shadow of the tabernacle; how he had been a Nazirite from his birth; how fearless and loyal had been his enthusiasm for Jehovah; how incorruptible he had been as a judge; and how well his life had illustrated the high morality and godliness he had enforced. They had seen the religious revolution he had accomplished. The state as a whole, in its great characteristics, owed, in fact, its noble future to his work, for he had in effect founded the order of prophets; he had prepared the way for the kings; and his revival of the Mosaic religion brought with it the future temple and its priesthood. Before his time Israel had had no real national existence, and seemed likely to perish entirely; yet he left it proud of its dignity as the people of God, and on the threshold of its highest glory under David." (Geikie.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Corruption Among: the Judges (Verses 1-3) *When Samuel was old, . . . his sons*

walked not in his ways. In our last lesson we noticed that Samuel must have been at least sixty years old at

this time, and that perhaps on account of his age and the increasing duties, he placed his sons over the southern portion of the land, and their headquarters were in Beersheba. Samuel's circuit was in Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he made his home at Ramah. All these places are north and northeast of Jerusalem. So Samuel took care of the duties of the office north of Jerusalem, and his sons, Joel and Abiah, took care of the southern portion of the country, making their capital at Beersheba.

They turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice.

Since some comment was made on this passage in our last lesson, we will approach it this time from a different angle and learn some worthwhile lessons. (1) These men sinned against the light of the example and instruction of their father. Samuel was a great teacher. He gathered young men into groups or bands and instructed them. He is credited with establishing the first school for the teaching of God's word. (1 Sam. 19: 20.) On one occasion he assured the people that he would not sin against them, "in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way." (1 Sam. 12: 22, 23.) Since their father was a great teacher, these young men had opportunity to know the will of the Lord. Their sin was therefore all the more inexcusable because of their opportunities to know. In the next place their father set a fine example of honesty and uprightness before them. On one occasion he challenged the people to witness against him and accuse him of any wrongdoing in discharging the duties of his office. The people said, "Thou has not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." (1 Sam. 12: 4.) (2) These boys sinned in that they violated the confidence of their father and that of the people. It is difficult to believe that these young men were wicked at the time they were appointed to their office in Beersheba. One cannot conceive of Samuel appointing even his own sons to an important office when he knew that they were dishonest and covetous. We can hardly conceive of Samuel appointing his sons to this office without considerable evidence of their uprightness and dependa-

bility. Hence, we conclude that, at the time of their appointment to office, they were honorable, upright, and dependable. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, according to thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. Thou shalt not wrest justice: thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee." (Deut. 16: 18-20.) Samuel knew this teaching of the law and appointed his sons because he believed they were the type of men who would follow this teaching. But high office turns the heads of many men, and when they had added opportunity to enrich themselves, they accepted bribes, and they perverted justice to use their friends and to enrich themselves. To do this they violated the trust which their father placed in them, and forfeited the respect of both their father and their people. (3) The conduct of these young men brought on a revolution in the government earlier than it would have otherwise come. The people used the dishonesty and injustice of Samuel's sons as a lever to force Samuel to grant them a king. So the wicked conduct of these young men gave the people an added reason for demanding that God relinquish his rule over them and allow them to have a king.

II. The People Ask for a King
(Verses 4-8)

The elders of Israel gathered themselves together. All through the history of Israel we find mention of the power and influence of the elders of Israel. As early as the call of Moses, we find mention of gathering the elders together to put over a proposition and initiate a movement among the people. (Ex. 3: 16.) And in the days of our Lord the elders, along with the chief priests, were a great influence among the people. "The demand, therefore, for a king, though a sort of revolt against Samuel's authority, was at least made in a constitutional manner, and came before him with all the weight of a formal decision on the part of the

representatives of the nation." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. The elders gave two reasons why they wanted a king at this time; the age of Samuel was the first reason. They seemed to imply that if they could keep a man of his integrity and ability and who was young enough to lead them vigorously, as he did in his younger days, they would be satisfied with that form of government. Their second reason for wanting a king was the fact that his sons did not walk in his ways; therefore, the prospects of a continuation of his same high type of government were not bright. Of course, they had no guarantee that their king would be any better man than Samuel's sons, but it gave them a talking point to bring about the thing they already desired in their heart and were now ready to demand.

And Samuel prayed unto Jehovah. The request that the elders made was very displeasing to Samuel, but he did not scold and berate them for their request, but he took the matter to the Lord in prayer. This sets for us a mighty fine example when things do not go to suit us.

They have not rejected thee, they have rejected me. This is the language of Jehovah to Samuel in answer to his prayer. God was their ruler, and Samuel was but their prophet or God's mouthpiece to the people. So their rejection of that form of government was really not a rejection of Samuel but a rejection of God who ruled them through the prophet.

According to all the works which they have done since the day I brought them up out of Egypt. This is the language of Jehovah to Samuel. He said to Samuel that this demand for a king was not out of harmony with their usual line of conduct. They had been rebellious ever since he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

III. Samuel Issues a Warning: (Verses 9-11)

Now therefore hearken unto their voice. Since the people had been rebellious ever since they had been a nation, there was little hope that they would change. So God said, "Hearken unto their voice." God did not change his mind about the righteousness or advisability of that form of government, but, since his people rebelled and demanded that they have a king, he consented.

Thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of a king. Samuel was to make it clear to the people that it was not the will of God that they should have a king, and second he was to show them what a king would do for them, and how he would impose upon them. "As they were asking not for the developing and perfecting of their own institution, but for a government modeled upon the institutions of the heathen round them, Samuel shows what are the dangers inherent in the establishment of a despot such as the kings of the heathen were." (Pulpit Commentary.)

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. First, Samuel says he will take your sons for war. In 1 Sam. 14: 52 we learn that the very first king, Samuel, did just that. For, "when Saul saw any mighty man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him." Kings exercised their authority through armies and in order to have a strong standing army, they would have to conscript the young men, the flower of the country, to serve in the army. In verse thirteen Samuel said he will not be satisfied with taking your sons, he will also take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. Not only will the king take your children, but he will take your fields and your vineyards as is said in verse fourteen. And this we see fulfilled when the king took Naboth's vineyard from him. (1 Kings 21.)

Lessons to Learn

1. We should not become discouraged if some of our labors seem to come to naught. Samuel saw his sons turn from the paths of righteousness and commit iniquity. He saw the first king whom he anointed turn from the way of righteousness and turn toward sin and rebellion.

2. God's way is best. The people thought that if they could have a king like the nations about them, their troubles would all be over. We sometimes wish we could change God's arrangements and his conduct of affairs. But if we did, it would be for the worse instead of the better.

3. We should take our problems to God for their solution. The people arrived at a conclusion as to what they wished, and they made their

demands without ever stopping to pray. But Samuel refused to speak his mind on the subject until he had gone to God in prayer.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

State and discuss three reasons why it is dangerous to put your trust in men.

Can you show how these reasons apply to Israel in rejecting God as their king and accepting a man?

State and discuss as time will permit four reasons why it is better to trust in Jehovah than in man.

How is God's faithfulness manifested toward us?

Introduction

Whom did Israel first attempt to make a king?

How long was this before Samuel's day?

What characteristics did Gideon manifest when he refused to become their king?

Did the people want a king because the theocracy had failed?

What can be said for the progress of the nation of Israel under Samuel's leadership?

Corruption Among the Judges

In what city did Samuel's sons live and judge the people?

Where did Samuel live and what cities were in his circuit?

What is said generally of the conduct of Samuel's sons?

Show how these boys sinned against a fine example.

Do you think Samuel knew his sons

were dishonest when he appointed them as judges?

What did the law of Moses say about the character of men appointed as judges?

What did the conduct of these young men have to do with the revolution to change the form of government?

Which of these three sins appears to you to be the greatest and most inexcusable?

The People Ask for a King

What habit among the Jews indicates their democratic way of doing things?

What two reasons did the people give for wanting a king to take the place of Samuel?

What was Samuel's first move in consideration of the people's request?

What was God's attitude toward the request of the people?

What general characteristic of Israel did God's statement to Samuel reveal?

Samuel Issues a Warning

Did God agree with the people that it was better for them to have a king?

What two things was Samuel to make clear to the people with reference to their king?

What was the first thing Samuel told the people their king would do?

What was the next unpleasant thing the king would do to the people?

Name the third thing Samuel said the king would do and give an illustration.

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—May 16, 1954

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 9: 17-10: 1

17 And when Sam'-u-el saw Saul, Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Behold, the man of whom I spake to thee! this same shall have authority over my people.

18 Then Saul drew near to Sam'-u-el in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

19 And Sam'-u-el answered Saul, and said, I am the seer; go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day; and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thy heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Is'-ra-el? Is it not for thee, and for all thy father's house?

21 And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Ben'-ja-mite, of the smallest

of the tribes of Is'-ra-el? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Ben'-ja-min? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?

22 And Sam'-u-el took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the guest-chamber, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, who were about thirty persons.

23 And Sam'-u-el said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

24 And the cook took up the thigh, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Sam'-u-el said, Behold, that which hath been reserved! set it before thee and eat; because unto the appointed time hath it been kept for thee, for I said, I

have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Sam'-u-el that day.

25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, he communed with Saul upon the housetop.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Sam'-u-e; called to Saul on the housetop, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Sam-u-el, abroad.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king"* (1 Pet. 2: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—1 Sam. 9: 1-18.

Daily Bible Readings

May 10. M.....	Saul's Call to the Kingdom (1 Sam. 10: 1-8)
May 11. T.....	The Crowning of Saul (1 Sam. 11: 12-15)
May 12. W.....	Saul's Courage (1 Sam. 14: 47-52)
May 13. T.....	The Jealousy of Saul (1 Sam. 18: 6-11)
May 14. F.....	Saul's Death (1 Sam. 31: 1-6)
May 15. S.....	The Secret of Strength (1 Cor. 10: 9-13)
May 16. S.....	Righteous and Wicked (Psalm 1)

TIME.—1095 B.C.

PLACE.—Ramah.

PERSONS.—Samuel and Saul.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Love the brotherhood.** The word brotherhood includes all the children of God. As a Christian, a child of God, I am obligated to love every individual that makes up this great family or brotherhood. John tells us that the man who does not love his brother is not of God. (1 John 3: 10.) Again, John tells us how we ought to show our love for the brethren. Jesus showed his love for us in that he laid down his life for us. "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 16-18.) The absolute necessity of loving the brethren is seen in the fact that if an individual does not love the brethren he cannot love God. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen." (1 John 4: 20.) No man can go to heaven unless he loves God. But no one can love God unless he loves the brethren. Therefore, no one can go to heaven unless he loves the

27 As they were going down at the end of the city, Sam'-u-el said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still first, that I may cause thee to hear the word of God.

1 Then Sam'-u-e; took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not that Je-ho'-vah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?

brethren. When some brother has sinned against us, we are inclined to draw a circle and leave him out and declare that he is not a child of God and that it is not our duty to love him. We should remember that it is not our place or privilege to draw the line which determines who are the children of God and who are not. But even if we had that privilege, and we declared him outside the family of God, and therefore an enemy, Jesus teaches us that we must love him anyway, for we should love our enemies and pray for them. (Matt. 5: 43-48.) 1 Cor. 13: 4-7 will show us how love for the brotherhood is to be manifested.

2. **Fear God.** Solomon tells us that to fear God and to keep his commandments is the whole duty of man. (Eccles. 12: 13.) And Peter tells us that all of every nation who fear God and work righteousness are acceptable to God. (Acts 10: 34, 35.) Job said, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28: 28.) These passages teach us that it is very wise to have a healthy fear of Jehovah. Certainly we are not to fear Jehovah as we would fear a monster. But we are to fear God in

the sense that we have reverential awe of him. Solomon tells us that our fear of Jehovah causes us to depart from evil. (Prov. 16: 6.) Paul accounted for the sins of the Jews by saying, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3: 18.) When people in our country feared God enough to read the Bible everyday and pray with and for their children each night before retiring, we had no juvenile problems, but today there is wickedness on every hand, even among teen-agers. All of this may be traced to the fact that they are not taught to fear God. Many church members lament the fact that their children are not members of the church, and they request the preacher and the elders to talk with their children to attempt to convert them. If through daily teaching and prayer, they had led their children to fear God, they would long ago have

obeyed the gospel and turned from iniquity.

3. **Honor the king.** While we do not live under a king, we are to respect the head of our government. If the president should act in such a way as to be unworthy of our confidence and respect, we would still be obligated to respect the office. Peter tells us that the Lord knows how to reserve for punishment those who despise dominion, who are self-willed and tremble not to rail at dignities. (2 Pet. 2: 9, 10. See also Jude 8-10.) David refused to kill Saul because he was the Lord's anointed. (1 Sam. 24: 6.) Paul apologized for speaking sharply to a high priest after that office had been abolished. (Acts 23: 1-5.) Paul (gives us a lesson on honoring a king by being in subjection to the higher powers. (Rom. 13: 1-7.)

Introduction

In the beginning of this lesson, it would be well for us to note some practical lessons. First, the majority of people are determined to have that which they want regardless of whether it is according to God's will or not. We pointed out in our last lesson the fact that the people had been desiring a king ever since the day of Gideon. Had they been as submissive to the will of the Lord as they should have been, they would have concluded, during this more than one hundred twenty-five years, that it was not the will of the Lord for them to have a king or the Lord would, before this time, have given them one. In 1 Sam. 8: 10-18 we have the record of Samuel telling the people just what the king would do for them. He pointed out a number of ways in which the king would abuse his privileges in the effort to dissuade them from their demand for a king. Their reply to all the earnest warnings of Samuel was, "But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." (1 Sam. 8: 19, 20.) Human nature has changed but very little, and so we see people today following a course of action when they have been warned that it will bring grief and misery. Young peo-

ple are warned that certain types of recreation will bring sorrow, yet they go headlong, heedless of warning to find out by bitter experience that they should not have engaged in such. People are warned that they should not marry out of the Lord, and yet heedless of this warning, they go into marriage with unbelievers only to find out that those who issued the warning were right. Congregations sometimes take worldly courses and adopt worldly social programs against the warning of preachers who know more of the teaching of the Bible than the leaders of the congregations know, only to find out by bitter experience, that the warning of the preachers should have been heeded. We may sum up the matter by reminding the reader that God's ways are not our ways, that it is not in man that walks to direct his steps, and that he should be very humble and inquire for the old paths and walk therein. (Jer. 6: 16; 10: 23.)

Another thing we should learn in the beginning of this lesson is the difference between the attitude of Samuel, with reference to this matter, and the attitude of the people. The people demanded a king, and they did not care what God thought about the matter. It was of no concern to them that the Lord was not in agreement with their desires, but when the thing was brought to Samuel, we learn that he prayed about it. (1 Sam.

8: 6b.) Then when Samuel had issued his warning, with reference to the follies and unrighteousness of a king, and the people refused to listen, Samuel went a second time to the Lord with the matter. (1 Sam. 8: 21.) Then again, when the king had been anointed and had been installed in his office. Samuel assures the people that he will not sin against them in ceasing to pray for them. (1 Sam. 12: 23.) Samuel was a man of prayer, willing for God to have his way in his life. The people were not in the habit of praying. They did not have the proper attitude to pray. They were not willing for the Lord to have his way in their life, and in the life of their nation. Hence, they were not in that disposition of heart that would make it possible for them to pray to God. When we today are determined to satisfy our own inclinations and desires, to live our own lives regardless of God's will, we are not in a position to pray, and consequently we will not lead a prayerful life. Each one of us should ask himself this question: Does this ungodly attitude have anything to do with the lack of prayer in my life?

When Samuel took the matter to Jehovah, and laid it before him, Jehovah told Samuel to hearken to the voice of the people and to give them a king. Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Go ye every man unto his city." (1 Sam. 8: 22.) We call attention here to the confidence which the people had in Samuel. When Samuel learned that it was the will of the Lord that the people should have a king, because they had demanded a king, he simply told the people to go home and leave the matter to him. Perhaps no nation of people in any age of the world ever demanded a king without having some particular individual in mind to be their king. Israel had no one in particular in mind. They simply wanted a king. They had confidence in Samuel to give them a king, and they were perfectly willing to leave the matter entirely in his hands, allow him to select and anoint a king over them. The thing they were interested in, the thing they demanded, was that they have a king, but they were not so concerned about the person who should be that king.

Exposition of the Text

I. Saul Seeks Samuel (Verses 17-21)

Behold, the man of whom I spake to thee. This refers to a former conversation which Samuel had had with Jehovah, a record of which is found in the two preceding verses. God had told Samuel that on the following day a man would appear who was to be anointed as the king which the people demanded. There is an indication here of the continual communion and fellowship which Samuel enjoyed with Jehovah. Samuel was told that the one approaching was the man whom God had selected to have authority over the people.

Where the seer's house is. Samuel was preeminently the seer of the Old Testament. This usual Hebrew word for seer in the Old Testament is used seven out of ten times to refer to Samuel. The word is derived from the common verb, "to see," but of course is used with reference to prophetic vision. There is another Hebrew word translated seer in 1 Chron. 29: 29. How much difference in meaning there is, scholars are not able to say definitely, and whether these words translated seer differ radically from the word translated

prophet, we are not able to learn. One author says that the word translated prophet is used to refer to men who belonged officially to the prophetic order, while the two words translated seer denote those who receive prophetic revelations. (Smith's Bible Dictionary.) However, Samuel certainly belonged to the order of prophets, and was the teacher of prophets in his day.

Will tell thee all that is in thy heart. Saul's companion insisted that they go to see Samuel to gain help in finding the animals they were searching for, and he said that Samuel was a man held in great honor, and that all that he said surely came to pass. (1 Sam. 9: 6.) Samuel was called a seer because he could tell what was in people's hearts, and he had the power to tell Saul where his lost animals were. This gives us some idea of the meaning of the word seer.

My family the least of all the families. This is Saul's humble statement of his position among his own people and the position of his tribe among the other tribes of Israel when Samuel intimated to him that he was

the desire of the people as their ruler. He was a member of the tribe of Benjamin and says that that was the smallest of all the tribes of Israel. The tribe of Benjamin was not the smallest when they left Egypt, nor was it the smallest tribe when they entered Canaan. (Num. 1 and 26.) In Judges 20 and 21 we have a story of the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin. So nearly complete was that destruction that it was necessary for the other tribes to assist Benjamin in their recovery. This accounts for the fact that Benjamin was the smallest tribe in the time of Samuel.

II. Saul Dines with Samuel (Verses 22-24)

Made them sit in the chiefest place. This was Samuel's way of showing Saul the honor which the future king should enjoy. Samuel had prepared a feast for about thirty persons, and Saul was made a guest of honor.

Bring the portion which I gave thee. This is Samuel's instructions to his cook. From this we see that special preparation had been made for this meal and the serving of it. The cook was to give a certain portion to Saul, and that was the portion of the honored guest. The King James Version says it was the shoulder, and the margin in our American Standard Version gives the word shoulder in place of the word thigh. In Lev. 7: 28-34 we find that the priest was to have the right shoulder or thigh, and the left side was the portion of the one who made the offering. Hence, we see Saul receiving that portion of meat which belonged to the anointed of God. Verse twenty-four of our text is a repetition of some that has been said before but suggests again that great preparation had been made for the meal and the serving of the meal in such way as to give honor unto Saul.

III. Saul Anointed by Samuel (1 Sam.

9: 25-10: 1)

When they were come down from the high place. This feast was served not in Samuel's dwelling, but in the high place. This must have been a public house and perhaps at the place of worship since it was called the "high place." The house had a room which is called the guest chamber. In verse twenty-two in the King James Version it is called the parlor. When they reached Samuel's dwelling, it is said that they went upon the housetop to commune with one another. In this we see clearly a distinction between the house in which the feast was served and the house in which they visited.

They arose early. This would suggest that Saul spent the night with Samuel, and about the spring of day, or about daybreak, they arose, and Samuel went with Saul for some distance to send him away.

At the end of the city. When they reached the city limits, Samuel asked Saul to bid his servant to pass on before them, and when the servant had gone on, Samuel told Saul to stand still that he might cause him to hear the word of the Lord.

Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince. This is the language of Samuel to Saul as he emptied a vial of oil upon Saul's head. It should be noticed that the anointing of a king was not necessarily a public affair. David was anointed in the presence of his immediate family. (1 Sam. 16: 13.) Jehu was anointed king of Israel in absolute secrecy. (2 Kings 9: 2, 3.)

Prince over his inheritance. In this verse Israel is called the inheritance of God. We find the expression used by Moses. "For Jehovah's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deut. 32: 9.) And Paul teaches that those who are in Christ are the Lord's heritage. (Eph. 1: 11, 18.)

Lessons to Learn

1. While performing a most humble task, Saul was called to a most honorable position. Let us not fret because our present tasks are humble and insignificant. They may be stepping-stones to greater things if faithfully performed.

2. Samuel was being replaced as leader of the people by a younger man, yet Samuel is willing to give him the place of honor at a feast

given in honor of the one who was taking his place. This is an indication of humility, unselfishness, and the lack of envy.

3. Saul proved a capable leader from the human point of view, but measured by the Lord's standard, he was a failure because he allowed self-will and a worldly policy to prevail in his heart instead of being humble and obedient to God.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Whom are we as citizens obligated to love?
How are we to show our love for the brethren?
What is taught of the necessity for loving the brethren?
If someone sins against us, may we cease to love him because we put him outside the circle of those we regard as brethren?
If we could put a man out of the brotherhood, would we cease to have the obligation to love him?
According to Solomon, what is the whole duty of man?
What does Peter say on this matter?
How does Job's statement compare with these?
What is the meaning of the word *fear* in our text?
What will a healthy fear of God cause men to do?
Can you emphasize the importance of parents teaching their children to fear God?
What is to be our attitude toward the government under which we live?
What should be our attitude toward an unrighteous man in high government office?
Can you show how David and Paul showed respect for high office in their times?

Introduction

During how long a period of time do we know that Israel had desired a king?
What reasons did they have to know that it was not God's will for them to have a king?
Why do people sometimes today show their determination to live contrary to God's will?
What did Jeremiah teach about man walking in his own ways?

Contrast Samuel's attitude with that of the people concerning this matter of demanding a king.

What effect does our headstrong self-will have on our prayer lives?
What individual did the people have in mind to be their king?
In what way did the people show unusual confidence in Samuel?

Saul Seeks Samuel

What indication do we have of Samuel's continual communion with God?
What is the meaning of the word *seer*?
Are you able to distinguish between a prophet and a seer?
For what reason did Saul and his companions go to see Samuel?
What indication do we have of Saul's humility?
Why was the tribe of Benjamin the smallest among the Jews?

Saul Dines with Samuel

What place was Saul given by Samuel at the table?
What evidence do we have of special preparation on the part of Samuel for Saul?
What portion of meat was set before Saul and why?

Saul Anointed by Samuel

Where was this feast in Saul's honor served?
Where did Samuel and Saul commune with one another?
How far did Samuel accompany Saul on his journey?
Describe the service of anointing on this occasion.
What is the meaning of the word *inheritance* in this text?
What word is used in this text to describe our relationship to God today?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—May 23, 1954

SAMUEL INTRODUCES SAUL AS KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 10: 17-27

17 And Sam'-u-el called the people together unto Je-ho'-vah to Miz-pah;

18 And he said unto the children of Is'-ra-el, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, I brought up Is'-ra-el out of E'-gypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the E-gyp'tians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you:

19 But ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Je-ho'-vah by your tribes, and by your thousands.

20 So Sam'-u-ël brought all the tribes of Is'-ra-ël near, and the tribe of Bōn'-ja-mm was taken.

21 And he brought the tribe of Ben'-ja-min near by their families; and the family of the Mat'-rites was taken; and Saul the son of Kish was taken: but when they sought him, he could not be found.

22 Therefore they asked of Je-hó'-vah further, Is there yet a man to come hither? And Je-ho'-vah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage.

23 And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24 And Sam'-u-el said to all the people, See ye him whom Je-ho'-vah hath chosen, that there is none like

him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, *Long live the king.*

25 Then Sam'-u-el told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Je-ho'-vah. And Sam'-u-el sent all the people away, every man to his house.

26 And Saul also went to his house to Gib'-e-ah; and there went with him the host, whose hearts God had touched.

27 But certain worthless fellows said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

GOLDEN TEXT. — “*And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, Long live the king*” (1 Sam. 10: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING. — 1 Sam. 10: 9-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 17. M.....Jehovah Rejected (1 Sam. 8: 1-9)
- May 18. T.....Jehovah's Choice (Deut. 17: 14-20)
- May 19. W.....The King's Folly (1 Sam. 13: 5-14)
- May 20. T.....God's Righteousness Above Man's (Isa. 55: 8, 9)
- May 21. F.....Saul Is Introduced to the People (1 Sam. 10: 23-25)
- May 22. S.....Some Rejected Saul (1 Sam. 10: 27; 11: 12-15)
- May 23. S.....Learning Jehovah's Law (Psalms 119: 1-8)

TIME. — 1095 B.C.

PLACE. — Mizpah.

PERSONS. — Samuel, Saul, and all Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. *Saul presented as Jehovah's choice.* Our text says that Samuel said to all the people, “See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen.” For the sake of unity and harmony, Samuel wished the people to know that the choice had not been left to the prophet alone, but that he had acted as God's representative in the choice of the one who should be their king. Since the king came from a small tribe, the tribe of Benjamin, the larger tribes might be jealous and might resent the fact that they were overlooked. The tribe of Ephraim had shown signs of such jealousy on two occasions before. The first was when Gideon had won his victory without giving Ephraim the attention they felt they should be given. (Judges 8: 1-3.) The record says that Ephraim “did chide with him sharply.” But Gideon handled the affair very smoothly, commending them for a piece of work they had done, which, in comparison with what he had done, was an unusually great piece of work. Then the record says, “Their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.” The second instance of Ephraim's jealousy is seen in connection with Jephthah. Jephthah made a general call for an army, and the Ephraimites did not respond. The men of Ephraim felt that they deserved more attention than a general

call, so they threatened to burn Jephthah's house down upon his head. (Judges 12: 1-6) Jephthah did not deal with them as smoothly and gently as Gideon. He required all who passed the fords of the Jordan to say Shib-bo-leth, but the Ephraimites could not frame so as to pronounce the word correctly, and Jephthah slew 42,000 of them. Samuel did not want a recurrence of such things at the beginning of the new kingdom. Hence, he wanted it made clear that Saul was the choice of Jehovah.

2. *Saul had qualities the people desired in a king.* When the people rejected Samuel as God's representative or ruler, they said, “We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” (1 Sam. 8: 19, 20.) The people were not looking for a spiritual leader. They were looking for a political and military leader. Saul was a great military leader and did much to unify the nation, to give them courage to meet their enemies, and to resist the encroachment of especially the Ammonites and the Philistines. Though God would give them the kind of king they desired, he would limit them by legislating with reference to the king and his activities. Even Moses, foreseeing the pos-

sibility of such a change in the form of government, legislated with reference to their king. "When thou art come unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shall possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations, that are round about me; thou shalt surely set him king over thee, whom Jehovah thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother." (Deut. 17: 14, 15.)

3. *The people's response to their king.* Our text says that all the people shouted, "Long live the king." However, a long acceptable life of the king was conditioned upon his obedience to the law of God with reference to kings. According to the law which Moses gave with reference to kings, he was not to multiply horses to him-

self, nor cause the people to return to Egypt. Neither was he to multiply wives lest they should turn his heart away. Nor was he to multiply to himself silver and gold. As to the piety which should characterize the king, we read, "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Deut. 17: 18-20.)

Introduction

When Saul had been anointed, Samuel gave him three signs to look for as he journeyed home. The purpose of these signs was to strengthen his faith, to cause him to know that the anointing was of God, and that he was God's selection to be the king over Israel. The first sign was as follows: "When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah." These men were to tell Saul that the asses belonging to his father, for which he had been looking for the past few days, were at home, and that Kish was no longer anxious about them, but was becoming anxious about his son. The second sign was as follows: At the oak of Tabor Saul was to meet three men going up to worship God at Bethel. One would be carrying three kids, another would be carrying three loaves of bread, while the third would be carrying a bottle of wine. They would salute Saul and give him two loaves of bread, which he was to receive of their hands. The details of these signs were such that they could not come to pass by chance. They had to be directed by the Lord to transpire in the way described. This would give Saul faith in Samuel's ability to reveal the mind of God and would give Saul faith in Samuel as the prophet of Go. The third sign involved Saul in quite a change

of nature and character. He was told that when he came to the hill of God, where there was a garrison of Philistines, he would meet a band of prophets, and that the spirit of Jehovah would come mightily upon him, and that he would prophesy with the prophets, and that he would be turned into another man. (1 Sam. 10: 5-7.) The words *prophets* and *prophecy*, as used in this connection, are not to be taken to mean the foretelling of events. The primary meaning of the word prophet is simply one who speaks for another. Aaron was to be the prophet of Moses. (Ex. 4: 14-16; 7: 1.) "Coming among the sons of the prophets, on whom the Spirit of the Lord rested, and who were under the instruction of Samuel, (Chapter 19, 20), while they worshipped God with music and supplication, Saul also was made a partaker of the same divine influence, and prophesied, i.e., made prayer and supplication among them. To see one who did not belong to the prophetic school thus incorporated with the prophets, pouring out his soul in prayer and supplication, was an unusual sight, which could not pass unnoticed, especially by those of Saul's acquaintance who probably knew him in times past to have been as careless and ungodly as themselves (for it was only now he got that other good spirit from God, a sufficient proof that he had it not

before.)" (Adam Clarke) That these signs were given to Saul to convince him of the presence and the direction of God, is seen from the statement which follows the third sign. "And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion shall serve thee; for God is with thee." (1 Sam. 10: 7.) These signs should have served two useful purposes for Saul. (1) They should have given him encouragement. Being unaccustomed to public affairs and the responsibilities of leading a great

people like Israel, Saul would need help from some higher source than his or any of his associates. Hence, he would take courage from the fact that God was with him, directing the course that he should follow. (2) These signs should have been a warning to Saul. When he would be inclined to depart from the way which Samuel had pointed out the king should live and serve the people, he should have been warned by the presence of God in his life to resist any such inclination to temptation.

Exposition of the Text

I. Saul Selected by Lot (Verses 17-21)

Samuel called the people together unto Jehovah at Mizpah. Mizpah was a city of Benjamin not far from Ramah and Gibeon. It is spoken of as one of the three holy cities which Samuel visited in turn as judge of the people. (1 Sam. 7: 6, 16.) When the ark was established in Jerusalem, the sanctity and importance of Mizpah seems to have declined. It ceased to be the center of religious interest and activity.

Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel. With this statement Samuel begins to relate some of the things that Jehovah had done for the people. He first reminded them of the fact that God delivered them out of Egypt, out of the hands of the Egyptians. Next he reminds them of the fact that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Canaanitish kingdoms that oppressed them. Over against this continued and unmeasured goodness of God, Samuel puts the fact that Israel had rejected God and refused to have him as their king.

Who himself saveth you out of all your calamities. Samuel wished to impress upon the people of Israel the fact that God had not only, in the past, saved them from their enemies, but he saveth, that is he continues to save you out of all your calamities and distresses. He does let the people forget that it was this kind of God to whom they said, "Nay, but set a king over us."

Present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes. The people were to arrange themselves in this assembly in twelve sections, one tribe to each section. This was done for the purpose of making the casting of lots a success.

II. Saul Presented to the People (Verses 22-24)

He brought the tribe of Benjamin near. The first lot fell upon Benjamin, indicating that the king was to be selected from that tribe. We should remember that the events which took place when Saul visited Samuel and was anointed by him were not known by the people. When Saul returned home and was asked about the incidents on his journey, he did not even tell his family. (1 Sam. 10: 14-16.)

Saul the son of Kish was taken. When the tribe was determined to be that of Benjamin, they then brought that tribe by families, and the family of the Matrites was taken. When it was determined by lot that the king was in this particular family, another lot was cast to determine which member of that family. Perhaps, though it is not mentioned, Kish was taken, and then a lot cast to determine which of the family of Kish. But eventually the lot fell on Saul. But the record says he could not be found.

He hath hid himself among the baggage. We are not told why Saul hid himself among the baggage of the army, but there are indications that it was on account of his humility. When Samuel first mentioned the matter of being king to Saul, he replied, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest to me after this manner?" (1 Sam. 9: 21.) Again, when Samuel rebuked Saul for not destroying the Amalekites as commanded by the Lord, Samuel said, "Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made head of the tribes of Israel?" (1 Sam. 15: 17.) Since Samuel had told Saul that he was to

be king and had privately anointed him sometime before, Saul knew what would be the outcome in the casting of lots. Therefore, before the lots had been cast on his family he had hid himself in the baggage. "For though a noble change had taken place in him, yet no really worthy man was ever promoted to high office without having to overcome his own unwillingness, and no one probably ever worthily discharged solemn duties without having felt oppressed and humbled with the consciousness of his own unfitness to undertake them. As a matter of fact, Saul was called to a most weighty responsibility, and he failed and was rejected, though not without proving that he was a man of extraordinary genius and power." (Pulpit Commentary.)

He was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. This reminds us of the description given of Saul when first we meet him in the sacred page. "A young man and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." (1 Sam. 9: 2.) When Saul was brought forward, Samuel presented him to the people in the language of our golden text, and the people responded by the cry, "Long live the king."

III. S a m u e l ' s Solemn Warning:

(Verses 25-27)

Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom. Samuel not only told them the manner of the kingdom, but it is said that he wrote what he told them in a book and laid it before Jehovah. Samuel did this because he was instructed by Jehovah to do so. We read, "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shall show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." (1 Sam. 8: 9.) There is no way of knowing what Samuel wrote, but likely it was some form of compact or covenant between the king and the people for the protection of the people, and to act as a warning to the king lest he should exceed his rights and privileges. "The heathen kings were

despots subject to no higher law, and Samuel, in chap. 8: 11-18, speaks with merited abhorrence of their violation of the natural rights of their subjects; but under the theocracy the king's power was limited by laws which protected, in the enjoyment of their privileges, the people, the priests, and the prophets. The latter class especially, as being the mouthpiece of Jehovah, formed a powerful check upon the development of despotic tendencies. In sketching Saul's kingly rights Samuel would be guided by Deut. 17: 14-20, and would give the king his true position as the representative of Jehovah both in all matters of internal administration and of war." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Saul also went to his house to Gibeah. When Samuel had told the people the manner of the kingdom, he dismissed them, going home with that which they had demanded of the Lord, and which they had been given but not without solemn warning as to the suffering their action would eventually bring upon them. The record tells us that God had touched the hearts of some men of valor, hosts, in our text, so that they went with Saul somewhat as his body-guard. When it is said that God had touched their hearts, it means no more perhaps than we would mean by saying that God put in their hearts to go along with Saul.

How shall this man save us? This was the language of some "certain worthless fellows" who were not satisfied with the selection of the king. It is said that they despised him and brought him no presents. From this we would conclude that the majority of people expressed their joy and appreciation by bringing presents to Saul, but these worthless, baseless fellows would not go along with the majority of the people, but they despised him and insisted he was incapable of doing them any good.

But he held his peace. The margin says, "but he was as though he had been deaf." This simply means that he paid no attention to the attitude and the statements of these worthless fellows who refused to recognize his authority as king. This is another indication of the fine humble spirit of Saul at the beginning of his reign.

Lessons to Learn

1. Though Samuel knew the will of the Lord with reference to who was to be their king, he wanted the

selection made public so that all would be satisfied. It is always best in congregational matters to proceed

openly and above board. It fosters unity and harmony, but to do otherwise breeds discontent and division.

2. Saul's humility and his submissiveness to Samuel's direction at the beginning, and the total absence of these qualities at the end of his career, should be a solemn warning to all of us that we should follow Paul's warning, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

3. In spite of the fact that the people had become dissatisfied with Samuel's reign over them, and wanted a change, Samuel was interested in their welfare and looked out for their good to the very last. It was in the interest of the people that he told them "the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah."

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Why did Samuel wish for the people to know that Saul was Jehovah's choice?
How had the tribe of Ephraim shown jealousy on previous occasions?
What type of leadership did the people demand in their king?
What legislation did Moses give respecting the selection of a king?
What was the people's response to the appointment of Saul as king?
What did Moses warn the king to refrain from multiplying?
What did Moses say concerning the piety of the king they should select?
What promise was made to the king who would thus learn to fear Jehovah?

Introduction

Name and discuss three signs which Jehovah gave Saul on his return journey.
Did the nature of these signs rule out the possibility of chance in their happening?
What change was brought about in the heart and habits of Saul?
What is the meaning of the word *prophecy* as used in this lesson?
What was the general purpose of these signs?
What two useful purposes did they serve to Saul?

Saul Selected by Lot

What do you know of the city of Mizpah?
Of what two things did Samuel remind the people?
How did Samuel arrange the people before Jehovah?

Saul Presented to the People

Of what tribe was Saul a member?
Did the people generally know of the anointing of Saul?
From what family in the tribe of Benjamin was Saul a descendant?
What evidence do we have of Saul's humility when he was first selected?
Was this timidity in Saul commendable or inexcusable?
What is said of Saul's physical appearance?

Samuel's Solemn Warning

What did Samuel write and lay up before Jehovah?
What do you think was the nature and purpose of this writing?
How were despotic tendencies checked in the kingdom of Israel?
Where was Saul's home?
Who followed him to his home and for what purpose?
What indication do we have that the people generally sent Saul presents?
What is said of those who refused to give presents to Saul?
What was Saul's attitude toward those who despised him?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—May 30, 1954

THE NOBLE LIFE OF SAMUEL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 12: 1-5, 16-23

1 And Sam-u-el said unto all Is'-ra-el, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you; and I am old and greyheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day.

3 Here I am: witness against me before Je-ho'-vah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I

taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

5 And he said unto them, Je-h6'-vSh is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they said, He is witness.

16 Now therefore stand still and see this great thing, which Je-h6'-vah will do before your eyes.

17 Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto Je-ho'-vah, that he may send thunder and rain; and ye shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, in asking you a king.

18 So Sam'-u-e; called unto Je-ho'-vah; and Je-ho'-vah sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared Je-ho'-vah and Sam'-u-e;.

19 And all the people said unto Sam'-u-el, Pray for thy servants unto Je-ho'-vah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20 And Sam'-u-el said unto the

people, Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aside from following Je-ho'-vah, but serve Je-ho'-vah with all your heart:

21 And turn ye not aside; for *then would ye go* after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.

22 For Je-ho'-vah will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased Je-ho'-vah to make you a people unto himself.

23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Je-ho'-vah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

Golden Text.—“I will instruct you in the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12: 23b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 12: 6-15.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 24. M.....Samuel, the People's Friend (1 Sam. 28: 8-25)
- May 25. T.....Samuel, a Prayerful Man (1 Sam. 8: 4-9)
- May 26. W.....Faithfulness Rewarded (Rev. 3: 7-13)
- May 27. T.....Samuel's Devotion to Duty (1 Sam. 12: 1-5)
- May 28. F.....An Upright Man (Psalm 101: 1-8)
- May 29. S.....Samuel's Mother (1 Sam. 1: 9-18)
- May 30. S.....Samuel's Dedication to Jehovah (1 Sam. 1: 24-28)

TIME.—1095 B.C.

PLACE.—Gilgal.

PERSONS.—Samuel and all Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. Our need of instruction. Our text implies that Samuel understood that the people needed instruction in the good and the right way. People do not accidentally find the good and the right way to walk in, nor do we by nature walk in the good and right way. Men walk in God's way only as they are taught to walk in that way. "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10: 23.) David rejoiced in his knowledge of the law of the Lord which made him wiser than his enemies and helped him to refrain his feet from every evil way, and taught him to hate every false way. (Psalm 119: 97-104.) Paul teaches us that God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. He also says, "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1: 21.) Again

Paul tells us that he preached a wisdom which the people of the world did not know. But he says God revealed these things to the apostles through the Spirit which searcheth all things, even the things of God. "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." (1 Cor. 2: 13.) He told the church at Ephesus that the content of his preaching was not known in other generations as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 3: 4, 5.) So the gospel of Christ that saves men's souls is a system of revealed truth. Man is not capable of attaining unto a knowledge of God and of the way of salvation through his own wisdom and philosophy. Man is dependent upon a revelation of God through Jesus Christ and his Spirit-filled apostles. As Samuel needed to instruct the people of his day that they might walk in the

good and the right way, there is still need of instruction today that people may know God and the way to God. And that individual who closes his ears to the message of God in the Bible will fail to find peace and satisfaction in this life and eternal happiness in the world to come.

2. **God's way is good,** (a) God's way is good for us. Samuel assured the people that he would instruct them in the good and the right way. God's way was the good way then; it is still good for us. It is good for us because by living according to God's way we may have a clear conscience. God is the only being in the universe that has the right to make a law demanding certain moral standards of us, which, if violated, will cause us to have an uneasy conscience. But there is something about man that makes him fear a higher power and a judgment to come. And when man has failed to walk in harmony with that which he believes to be God's way, there is something in him that causes him to feel uneasy and uncertain. That is something that we call conscience. So if we wish to have an easy conscience, we will walk in the good way revealed to us in the scriptures and taught to us by faithful parents and teachers. Next, God's way is good for us because it relieves us of the dread of the future. To give account of our conduct to our superiors is as natural as our relationship to our fellow men. And if we give account to our superiors in this life, it is reasonable that we shall be called upon to give an account in the last great day to the one who is superior to us all. There is implanted in the human mind the idea of accounting to God. If we walk in the good way, as revealed in God's word, we will have no dread of the future. But if we realize that we have not walked in that way, there is every reason to have a dread for what the future holds for us. And Next, God's way is good for us because it leads to eternal life. Nothing is more clearly taught in the Bible than the fact that disobedience leads to eternal destruction, while obedience leads to eternal life. (Matt. 7: 21; 2 Thess. 1: 7-10; Rev. 21: 8; 22: 14.) (b) God's way is good for us because it makes us good for others. It makes our life a useful life. If we follow in the

revealed way, our lives will be useful to our fellow men, but if we refuse to walk in that good way revealed, our lives will be selfish, self-centered, and of no use to our fellow men.

3. **God's way is right.** Samuel promised not only to teach them the good way but the right way. (a) Let us notice that Samuel promised to teach them the good and the right way. That word way is singular, not plural. God does not have a number of right ways. There is but one right way. God never, in any age of the world, had more than one right way. All this talk about heaven being like a city with a number of highways leading into it, so we may choose the way we wish to live and be assured that it, like many others, will lead us to heaven, is unscriptural and cannot be proven by God's word. Paul pronounced a curse upon man or angel who would preach any other way or gospel than that which he preached. (Gal. 1: 8, 9.) And Paul condemns the man who would teach a different doctrine from that which he taught. (1 Tim. 6: 3-5; Rom. 16: 17.) (b) Any way which differs from that which is right is wrong. Since God has but one way that is right, any way and every way which differs with or is contradictory to that way revealed in the Bible is bound to be a wrong way. Hence, if our teaching or conduct differs from that which is revealed in the Bible, we should be warned that we are headed in the wrong direction and that we cannot hope to enter into heaven and enjoy the rewards with those who have lived the right way. (c) The great need of today is an army of teachers, both men and women, who like Samuel would teach people the good and the right way. We need teachers who will not be led off after every vain philosophy of man nor be attracted by every fanciful theory that some man sets forth nor be led to accept every theory that tends to make life easy, to take the pain and the sorrow and the hardships out of Christian living. Too many people are looking for something easy, and a life of hardship does not appeal to them, so they refuse to walk in the good and the right way in order that they may walk in the easy and attractive way.

Introduction

Samuel was one of the very few in his day who rose above the ignorance and idolatry and immoral corruptions common among the people. One writer describes conditions of those days in the following words: "The state of things, both religious and political, must have impressed itself deeply on a mind trained under such community at large; the too general prevalence of a licentious and gross influences. The profligacy of Eli's sons; the dissolution of morals in the idolatry; the weakness of Eli as judge and his unfitnes for the times, could not fail to be noted." (A. Maclaren.) Tarbell says, "Politically and morally the Israelites had sunk very low during the time of the judges. When Samuel was born, the tribes were scattered, disorganized, and degenerate. He was raised up to save them from being engulfed in the heathenism of the people by whom they were surrounded." Samuel's efforts to live "in the good and the right way," which he promised to teach Israel, was a great success. If any man ever practiced, in his own life, what he taught other people to live, surely that was Samuel. No man of Old Testament times ever rose to a greater height of purity and loyalty and unselfish devotion to the good of his people than Samuel. He was able at a ripe old age to challenge the people whom he had served to point to one thing wrong in his public life either as prophet or judge. Few men who serve the public for any length of time can afford to make the challenge. "In view of a power almost absolute, and opportunities for self-aggrandizement ever recurring, and the general propensity of those in power to rob and oppress, this is a remarkable testimony at the close of a long and useful life. Here is a character that

deserves to be studied in these days of political corruption. It is a noble picture of disinterested patriotism, unsullied righteousness, and unflinching loyalty to the king of Israel. It reinvigorates one's faltering faith in humanity to contemplate such an instance of lifelong devotion to truth and righteousness, under the greatest difficulties, with every temptation to an opposite course, and the largest liberty to abuse the power lodged in his hands." (Errett.)

There were two great influences in the life of Samuel which enabled him to live such a pure, noble life, and to render such a great unselfish and loyal service to his people and to his God. These were his parents and the teaching and training of Eli. There are a few exceptions, but by far the great majority of the great heroes of Bible stories come from righteous ancestors. Samuel had a godly father and a praying mother. (1 Sam. 1.) Though his parents were limited in their opportunities to influence Samuel because they gave him to the Lord so early in life, yet they undoubtedly made good use of the time and the opportunities which they had for teaching and training their son. And a mother that prayed so earnestly that she might have a son to give to the Lord surely did not cease to pray for him after she had given him to the Lord. While a mother's prayers alone cannot keep a boy in the way of righteousness and purity, yet those prayers will wield an influence for good in the molding of a boy's character and in the guiding of his feet in the way he should go. Parents who are so indifferent to the welfare of their children as to neglect or forget to pray for them are not faithful parents, and they need not be surprised if their children follow their unfaithful example.

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel Asserts His Integrity (Verses 1-5)

I have hearkened unto your voice. In this statement Samuel refers to the fact that he, at the instruction of Jehovah, had given into the demands of the people for a king. In I Sam. 8: 4-9 we have the record of Samuel giving into the demand of the people and agreeing to appoint or select for them a king.

The king walketh before you. It was the desire of the people that they might have a king to go before them, especially to lead them in wars. Samuel did not retire to private life when Saul was appointed king. He maintained his position of teacher and judge among the people. Not only was Samuel a teacher and a judge, but he was God's representative and sometimes asserted and ex-

erced his authority over the king. (I Sam. 13: 8-15; 15: 17-25)

My sons are with you. It was the ungodliness of Samuel's sons that the people used as a lever to force Samuel to give them a king. They said, "Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways." (I Sam. 8: 5) His sons so far failed to walk in his ways that they took bribes and perverted justice. (I Sam. 8: 3) The fact that Samuel said his sons were with the people on that day has been taken by some to mean that Samuel removed them from their offices, and that they were no longer the rulers of the people.

Witness against me before Jehovah. Not many men can safely challenge their lifelong acquaintances to witness against them or to convict them of wrongdoing. But Samuel had lived such a faithful consecrated life that he was not afraid to challenge his friends and enemies to bring an accusation of wrongdoing against him. This reminds us of the courage and the purity of our Lord who said to his enemies, "Which of you convicteth me of sin!" (John 8: 46)

Whose ox have I taken. Samuel made it easy for the people to bring accusations against him by descending to details and naming those things which rulers are in the habit of doing to oppress the people. He had not taken their property from them. He had not defrauded them in any way. He had not oppressed them, nor had he taken a ransom or a bribe to blind his eyes to justice. These are the sins of which his sons were guilty, but he challenges the people to accuse him of having any connection with his sons in committing these crimes.

Thou hast not defrauded us. The people were quick to respond by affirming that Samuel had neither defrauded them nor oppressed them nor taken bribes of their hands. The word ransom, in this connection, is used in rather a peculiar sense. "Literally it signifies a covering, and was used of money given by a guilty person to induce the judge to close or blind his eyes, and not see his sin. It does not mean, therefore, any bribe, but only that given to buy off a guilty person." (Pulpit Commentary.) Human nature has not changed in all the years between Samuel's day and ours. Men in high office are still departing from the good and the right way by defraud-

ing their fellow men, by oppressing them, and by taking bribes from their hands to pervert justice. We need men of wisdom and far-reaching vision in the places of national leadership today. But what we need more than wisdom is integrity. We need men, who like Samuel, cannot be swayed by flattery nor turned from the path of right by bribery.

Jehovah is witness against you. Samuel had reminded them that they were in the presence of both Jehovah and his anointed. The word anointed here refers to Saul, who had recently been anointed as king. And now he calls upon both Jehovah and the king to witness to the fact that the people had been unable to accuse him of any wrongdoing.

II. God Bears Witness to Samuel (Verses 16-18)

Stand still and see this great thing. Samuel had reminded the people of God's dealings with them in the past. He started with the appointment of Moses to be their leader to bring them out of Egyptian bondage and hurriedly reviewed their history from that time to Samuel's day, in proof of the fact that God had been good to them, had blessed them in every way that was for their benefit. He closed these remarks by reminding them that they had demanded a king when it was not God's will that they should have one. But he also assured them that, in spite of this unrighteous demand, God would continue to bless them if they would not rebel against the commandment of Jehovah. And to impress them with the solemnity of the occasion, and the imperative necessity of obeying the Lord, he calls upon Jehovah to manifest his goodness and his strength in an unusual way.

That he may send thunder and rain. Samuel reminded the people that it was time to harvest wheat and yet, in spite of it being the dry season of the year, he would ask God to send rain. It is a well-known fact in Palestine, in the time of harvest, from the last of May till the last of July, it is a very rare thing to have any moisture at all.

Ye shall know and see that your wickedness is great. Samuel asks the Lord to send a sign from heaven in proof of the wickedness of the people in demanding a king and in proof of his presence with them and his power either to bless or destroy. This is

what we call a sign as distinguished from an ordinary miracle. A sign was something from heaven without the use of human instrumentality. Another example of such may be seen in 1 Kings 1: 10. Another example may be seen in the people asking Jesus for a sign and his statement that no sign would be given but the sign of Jonah the prophet. (Matt. 12: 38-40.)

All the people greatly feared Jehovah and Samuel. When Jehovah sent the thunder and rain, it accomplished the purpose which Samuel had in mind. He wished to lead his people to fear Jehovah and to respect him as Jehovah's prophet. When people cease to fear Jehovah and respect the message and the messengers for Jehovah, there is little hope for them. Paul summed up the evils of the Jewish people by saying that there is no fear of God before their eyes. (Rom. 3: 18.) Perhaps there is no one short statement that could be made which would more clearly describe or adequately account for the sinful condition of our present generation.

III. Samuel Comforts the People

(Verses 19-23)

Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah. Samuel had pointedly accused the people of a great sin in rejecting Jehovah as their ruler and demanding a king to rule over them. And he had called upon Jehovah to bear witness of the truth of his statements by sending thunder and rain. When the people saw that Jehovah had testified to the truth of Samuel's accusation, they feared they would die. Hence, they begged Samuel to pray unto Jehovah for them that they might not die. Though they realized they had sinned in asking for a king, yet, they were not sorry they had demanded a king, or they would have been willing to retrace their steps, get rid of their king, and be satisfied with God's rule over them. They were sorry for their sins but not sorry enough to give up that which was displeasing to God.

Turn not aside from following Jehovah. Samuel comforted them by telling them not to be afraid that God would destroy them because of their sins, but he took occasion to warn them that they should not turn aside from following after Jehovah. Their king would be tolerated and God would work through their king with

them, provided they and their king would recognize God's overlordship.

Serve Jehovah with all your heart. The heart of man, with which we serve God, is composed of intellect, emotion, and will power. So to serve God with the whole heart means (1) to serve him intelligently. God does not put a premium on ignorance and so does not accept worship or service that is offered in ignorance. (2) God demands that our worship and service be not formal, but that it comes from the heart, that we be sincere in our worship. He demands that our worship and service be the outpouring of our stirred emotions; that they be the expression of our love and devotion to him. (3) Since the heart is composed of will power, if we serve God with the whole heart, we will bring our will power into subjection with the demands of God. We are to have no will of our own but to be guided solely by the Lord's will.

Vain things which cannot profit nor deliver. Samuel warns them not to turn aside from the way of Jehovah, for to do so would cause them to go after these vain things which cannot profit nor deliver. In this we see that anything which differs from God's revealed way is a vain thing, and that anything different from God's way is a vain thing that does not profit nor deliver. Things contrary to God's way are vain because they do not accomplish the purpose for which they are practiced. They cannot deliver because following false teaching will not bring freedom from sin.

Jehovah will not forsake his people. The statement that God will not forsake his people is a conditional statement. For we read, "But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples." (2 Chron. 7: 19, 20.) Again, God said that, if his people should forsake him and break his covenant, his anger would be kindled against them in that day, "and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles

shall come upon them. (Deut. 31: 17) God never forsakes the weak, needy, humble, dependent souls, but he has never promised to stand by and protect the proud, haughty, disobedient, and defiant souls.

Far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you. Samuel pledges himself not to commit this one great sin against Jehovah, to cease to pray for the people. If we fail to realize our responsibility toward our fellow man and if we fail to discharge that responsibility, not only in working for and doing good to our fellow man, but in praying for our fellow man, we will have sinned against Jehovah.

Lessons to Learn

1. Samuel gives us a good example of one discharging his duties in the fear of God without showing partiality to men.

2. God does not demand sinless perfection as a condition of fellowship with him. He bears with our weaknesses and forgives our frailties. But

We should remember that not only was Samuel obligated to pray for the people, but we are told to pray one for another, and we are to have anxious care one for another. And this anxious care or concern for our brethren, for our fellow men, will lead us to express our desires to God with reference to them.

But I will instruct you. Not only are we to pray for our fellow men, but we are to teach them. The Christian who fails to realize this twofold duty of praying for and instructing his fellow man is not the servant that Samuel was, and he is not the servant that the Lord expects him to be in our day.

if we turn in our heart from him and cease to love him, he will turn away from us.

3. Samuel, the leader of the people, would both instruct his people and pray for them. This is a wonderful example for preachers and elders of our day.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

How do people find the good and the right way in which to live?

What did David say enabled him to refrain from evil?

What did Paul say about the ability of the world to arrive at a knowledge of God?

How does Paul say that knowledge is given to us?

What will be the result of closing our ears to the revelation of God?

What relation between our conscience and our walking in the right way?

What does walking in God's way have to do with our attitude toward the future?

What connection is there between walking in the good way and our eternal life?

How does walking in this good way make us good for others?

What is implied by the fact that the word *way* is singular in number?

What is the nature of that which differs from right?

What is suggested in our lesson as to one of the greatest needs of today?

Why is the good and right way not attractive to some people?

Introduction

How does Samuel's character compare with the ordinary man of his day?

How does Samuel's character compare with the ordinary ruler of his day?

What challenge did Samuel make in his old age to the people over whom he had ruled?

What two great influences contributed to the building of Samuel's character?

Why were his parents limited in the influence they could exert on Samuel?

What unusual opportunity did Eli have to contribute to the building of Samuel's character?

Samuel Asserts His Integrity

Did Samuel retire to private life when the king was anointed?

Can you cite instances when Samuel asserted authority over the king?

What reference was made at this time to Samuel's sons?

In what way did Samuel challenge the people to point out wrongdoing in his

What characteristics are most needed among government officials today?

God Bears Witness to Samuel

On what condition would Jehovah continue to be with his people in spite of their sin in requesting a king?

At what time of year was this meeting held?

What sign was given from heaven on this occasion?

What is the difference between a sign and an ordinary miracle?

What was the primary purpose of this sign from heaven?

Samuel Comforts the People

What request did the people make of Samuel?

What indicated their sorrow for their sin and the extent of that sorrow?

What is meant by serving God with the whole heart?

According to the language of our text, what is a vain thing?

Was the promise that God would not forsake his people unconditional?

What two things did Samuel promise to continue to do for the people?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson X—June 6, 1954

SAMUEL CONDEMNS SAUL'S SACRIFICE

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 13: 5-15

5 And the Phi-lis'-tines assembled themselves together to fight with Is'-ra-el, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up, and encamped in Mich'-mash, eastward of Beth-a'-ven.

6 When the men of Is'-ra-el saw that they were in a strait (for the people were distressed), then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in coverts, and in pits.

7 Now some of the Hebrews had gone over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gil'-e-ad; but as for Saul, he was yet in Gil'-gal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Sam'-u-el had appointed: but Sam'-u-e; came not to Gil'-gal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither the burnt-offering to me, and the peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering.

10 And it came to pass that, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Sam'-u-el came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 And Sam'-u-el said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou earnest not within the days appointed, and that the Phi-lis'-tines assembled themselves together at Mich'-mash;

12 Therefore said I, Now will the Phi-lis'-tines come down upon me to Gil'-gal, and I have not entreated the favor of Je-ho'-vah: I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt-offering.

13 And Sam'-u-el said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of Je-ho'-vah thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would Je-ho'-vah have established thy kingdom upon Is'-ra-el for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: Je-ho'-vah hath sought him a man after his own heart, and Je-ho'-vah hath appointed him to be prince over his people, because thou hast not kept that which Je-ho'-vah commanded thee.

15 And Sam'-u-el arose, and gat him up from Gil'-gal unto Gib'-e-ah of Ben'-ja-min. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of Jehovah thy God, which he commanded thee*” (1 Sam. 13: 13a.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—1 Sam. 13: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

May 31. M.....	Saul Anointed King (1 Sam. 10: 1-8)
June 1. T.....	Saul's Disobedience (1 Sam. 15: 10-16)
June 2. W.....	Saul's Rejection (1 Sam. 15: 17-26)
June 3. T.....	Obedience Essential (1 John 2: 1-4)
June 4. F.....	Disobedient Punished (2 Thess. 1: 7-9)
June 5. S.....	Obedience Better Than Sacrifice (Psalm 40: 1-8)
June 6. S.....	Failure Through Disobedience (Isa. 42: 18-25)

TIME.—1093 B.C.

PLACE.—Gilgal.

PERSONS.—Samuel, Saul, and Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. *Disobedience reveals character.*

(a) It shows a lack of love. John teaches us that our love for God is demonstrated by our keeping the

commandments of God. (1 John 5:

3.) Jesus says, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.” (John 14: 15.) When Saul disobeyed God,

as he spoke through Samuel, Saul revealed a lack of love for God and for his commandment, (b) It shows a lack of respect for authority. When children disobey parents, we know immediately that they do not respect the authority of their parents, and when people violate the laws of the land, we know that they do not have respect for the authority back of those laws. So, when Saul disobeyed the commandment of God through the prophet Samuel, we know that Saul was lacking in respect for the authority of God. The fact that Saul had excuses for his foolish action is no proof that he respected the authority of God. (c) It shows that one is self-centered instead of God centered. Disobedience reveals a self-centered character. Those who are God-centered are careful to ascertain and obey the will of God, while those who are self-centered are seeking only their own pleasure and to satisfy their own whims, lusts, and desires. Saul was one of those characters who found more pleasure in serving his own way than he found in doing God's way.

2. *Disobedience is foolish.* When Samuel saw that Saul had not waited for his arrival but had made the sacrifice without the approval of Samuel, he said, "Thou hast done foolishly." Sin, disobedience, is always extremely foolish. It matters not how many excuses we may have for our wrongdoing. Excuses are but feeble efforts at self-justification in wrongdoing. (a) Disobedience is foolish because it is compared by our Lord to one who builds on the sand instead of on the rock. (Matt. 7: 24-27.) Jesus said that the man who hears his sayings and does not do them is like one who built his house on the sand which fell when the storm and the flood came. So Saul acted foolishly on this occasion, as much so as one who builds on the sand, (b) Disobedience is foolish because it fails to take into consideration the terrible consequences of sin. If Saul could have looked into the future and could have seen his sons falling in battle and himself taking his own life, on account of the course which he was about to follow, surely

he would have repented and refused to follow that course. He did not realize that the sin which he was committing at that time would lead him to such a terrible end. We are prone to think that our sins are not deadly, that they are not of the type and the kind that will lead to eternal death and destruction, (c) Disobedience is foolish because it is a challenge to God. Living in sin is in reality daring God to carry forth his threat against disobedience. It is impossible for us to do a thing more foolish than to follow a course which God said would lead only to eternal destruction.

3. Disobedience is expensive, (a) It is expensive because it robs us of the company of good men here. When Samuel had rebuked Saul for his sin, he departed and went to Gibeah of Benjamin. On a later occasion when Saul sinned again, Samuel rebuked him, and the record says, "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." (I Sam. 15: 35.) Thus we see that Saul's sins cost him the fellowship and the guidance which the company of Samuel could have given him. (b) Sin is expensive because it robs us of the peace of mind to which we are entitled. God gave man a conscience to make him feel uneasy in wrongdoing, to prod him back into the path of righteousness. If one sins to the point where his conscience no longer hurts him, there is little hope of his salvation, but until a man has reached that point, he cannot sin without the loss of peace of mind, (c) Sin is expensive because it robs of God's company while here on earth. We can walk with God only as we walk in the path of righteousness. We have fellowship with him while we walk in the light. (1 John 1) (d) Sin is expensive because it robs us of the joys of heaven. The last three chapters of the last book in the Bible tell us over and over that there will be no sin in heaven, that those who live in sin here cannot enter that beautiful place. Sin is indeed the most foolish thing in the world and no man can call himself wise in any sense who indulges in sin.

Introduction

The inspired historian does not presume to give us a chronological detailed account of the incidents which occurred during the reign of Saul.

On account of the different translations of the various versions in 1 Sam. 13: 1, it is difficult to know just what the meaning of the verse is. Prob-

ably Adam Clarke has a good explanation as any. He says that the writer intends that the things written in the preceding chapters relate to the events which occurred during the first year of Saul's reign, and that beginning with chapter thirteen he relates things occurring in the second year of Saul's reign. We have a rather dark picture of the condition of Israel at the time of our lesson. Though Saul had won a victory over the Ammonites soon after he was anointed king, and Israel had gotten considerable encouragement from this victory, we should remember that the Ammonites were not the chief enemy of Israel at that time, nor were they as strong as the Philistines. The Philistines had such complete control of the country of Israel that they did not allow the Israelites to have any weapons of any kind, nor did they allow them to work with iron. The Israelites had to go down to the Philistines "to sharpen every man his

share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock; yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to set the goads." (1 Sam. 13: 19-21.) In this same connection we are told that not a man except Saul and Jonathan in all Israel had a sword or a spear. This reminds us of the condition of Israel in the time of Deborah and Barak. (Judges 5: 8.) And we know that the Philistines were intent on keeping Israel in subjection, for which they had soldiers garrisoned throughout the country. We read of one such garrison at Gibeah called the "hill of God" in 1 Sam. 10: 5, and another garrison of this kind was in Geba. It was this garrison that Jonathan and his army of one thousand men attacked immediately preceding the incidents of our lesson. Jonathan's attack on the Philistine garrison at Geba was the incident which caused the Philistines to begin mass movements and preparations for a war against Israel.

Exposition of the Text

I. Israel Fears the Philistines (Verses 5-7)

The Philistines assembled themselves to fight with Israel. News of Jonathan's attack on the garrison of the Philistines at Geba soon reached the ears of the Philistines, and immediately they began to assemble themselves and to make movements for an attack upon Israel. Our text says that the Philistines assembled thirty thousand chariots. Adam Clarke remarks, "There is no proportion here between the chariots and the cavalry. The largest armies ever brought into the field, even by mighty emperors, never were furnished with thirty thousand chariots." He tells us that both the Syriac and the Arabic versions read three thousand instead of thirty thousand, and he explains that only a slight change in the word or form of the word was necessary to change it from thirty to three. This is an example of some of the mistakes which have crept into our text that serve as the basis for criticism of a lot of skeptics. Instead of such mistakes causing us to lose faith in the accuracy of the word of God, we marvel that the mistakes made by copyists through the centuries are so few and so insignificant.

The people did hide themselves in caves. In verse three we are told

that Saul was in Mich-mash, but in verse five we are told the Philistines encamped in that place. Hence, we conclude that after Jonathan smote the Philistine garrison in Geba the Philistines came in force and pushed Saul and his army of two thousand men eastward from Mich-mash toward Gilgal. Jonathan had such a position in Gibeah of Benjamin, in the mountain region, that it was impossible for the Philistines, with their clumsy war chariots, to dislodge him and his army of two thousand men. But the Philistines had hopelessly divided the Israelites by pushing Saul as far eastward as Gilgal, which was near Jericho. By consulting a map the reader will see that these cities and communities were located north and east of Jerusalem. The Philistines made such a show of strength that the Israelites were afraid and hid themselves in caves and thickets and in coverts and pits. These pits, we are told, were artificial reservoirs or cisterns dug to hold water to supply the people during the long dry season of the year.

Some of the Hebrews had gone over the Jordan. In verse six we are told that the people were distressed. We are told that the literal meaning of the word distressed is "were squeezed or pressed together." The fact that they hid themselves in

caves and thickets is an indication of how they were distressed. And now in this verse we are told that some of them were so distressed they did not stop until they had crossed the Jordan and had hid themselves in the land of Gad and Gilead. However, Saul was able to keep enough men about him to maintain his position on the west side of the Jordan in the district of Gilgal.

II. Saul Sacrifices in Gilgal (Verses 8-10)

He tarried seven days. In 1 Sam. 10: 8 we find Samuel telling Saul that he is to wait in Gilgal for seven days and a prophet would come and show him what he should do. Adam Clarke thinks this does not have reference to the incidents of our lesson, since there were several months, perhaps a year, between the time in 1 Sam. 10: 8 and the time of our lesson. Furthermore, in 1 Sam. 11: 14, we find a meeting of Samuel with Saul in Gilgal, and Clarke thinks that this was the meeting of which Samuel spoke in 1 Sam. 10: 8. However, other scholars take a different view and say that the orders of 1 Sam. 10: 8 refer to this meeting outlined in our lesson. (See Pulpit Commentary.)

The people were scattered from him. Day after day Saul waited for Samuel to appear. The longer he waited for Samuel, the more of his people deserted him, to hide themselves in caves or to cross the Jordan into the land of Gilead. This was a severe trial of Saul's faith and his respect for the word of Samuel as the prophet of God.

He offered the burnt-offering. On the seventh day Saul's faith wavered, and he threw aside his caution and restraint and made the offering himself. We cannot know positively whether Saul made this offering with his own hands or through the priest, Ahiah, who was with him at this time. Being king did not give Saul the right to officiate at the altar, and so, if he offered it with his own hands, he was out of place, but even if he had the priest to make the offering, his action was still sinful. Matthew Henry gives the following analysis of Saul's offense.

1. He did not send any messenger to Samuel, to know his mind, though he had enough about him that were swift of foot. 2. When Samuel came, he rather boasted about

what he had done, and seemed pleased with the opportunity of letting Samuel know that he could do well enough without him. 3. He charged Samuel with breach of promise, therefore, if anything was amiss, Samuel must bear the blame. 4. When charged with disobedience, he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign at all of repentance for it.

III. Samuel Rebukes Saul (Verses 11-15)

I saw that the people were scattered from me. This is Saul's first effort at self-justification for his sin. He bases it on the ground of prudence. He thought it was the prudent or wise thing to do to make the offering that he might hold his people in this time of distress. This was a backhanded accusation against Samuel. Saul was accusing him of either not knowing the gravity of the situation or knowing the seriousness of it, not caring enough about the welfare of the nation to come as quickly as Saul thought he should.

Thou earnest not within the days appointed. This was the second attempt of Saul to justify himself in his wrongdoing. It too is a backhanded slap at Samuel. It was an outright accusation that Samuel did not keep his promise. The truth is that Samuel came on the seventh day. He did not come the first hour of that day, neither did he promise to come the first hour of the day. He simply promised to be there on the seventh day, and Saul did not have enough faith and patience to wait until the end of that day.

The Philistines assembled themselves together at Mich-mash. This is Saul's third argument in favor of his justification. These statements are his three reasons why Saul thought his offering was the wise thing to do. The presence of an enemy so strong and numerous, the flight of his own soldiers, and the tardiness of Samuel made it look pretty good for Saul. Yet, the fact that he had disbelieved God's prophet, that he had usurped the place of God's priest, and showed a willingness to disregard the will of God, to do as he pleased, far outweighed his human reasonings.

I have not entreated the favor of Jehovah. Having argued the wisdom of his course, he now turns to present his piety. He pictures himself as

about to be forced into battle, and, as not wishing to engage in that battle without first having entreated the favor of Jehovah. But when a man disobeys one commandment of God to make a show of his piety in keeping another commandment, we may justly have grave doubts concerning his sincerity. Saul made the same mistake some years later when he brought back Agag, the king, and the best of the cattle to make a big display at sacrificing in Gilgal. (1 Sam. 15)

I forced myself therefore. In these words Saul made another attempt to lessen his guilt. It was as if he had said, I knew I should not make the offering before your arrival, Samuel, but since it seemed the wise thing to do, I forced myself to go through with it. In other words, Saul thought it would have been a greater sin for him to have let his entire army vanish, through fear, or to meet the enemy without entreating the favor of God, than it would be for him to make the offering before Samuel arrived.

Now would Jehovah have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. After telling Saul that he had done foolishly, Samuel explains that this was a test of his faith in God, and his submission to God's

word. If Saul had stood the test, the kingdom would have been established in his family always.

Now thy kingdom shall not continue. Since Saul failed to stand the test of faith and loyalty, the kingdom will be taken from him and given to another.

Jehovah hath appointed him to be prince over his people. Samuel said that God had selected one who would be a man after his own heart. And he speaks of the appointment as having already been made, so sure and certain were the plans and foreknowledge of God that a thing many years in the future is spoken of as having been already accomplished.

Because thou hast not kept that which Jehovah commanded thee. Here again we are reminded of the fearful consequences of disobedience. Saul was not the only one who suffered because of his disobedience. His son failed to become king because of the father's disobedience, and his family, for hundreds of years to come, suffered because of his disobedience. Though the guilt of sin cannot be inherited, the consequence of sin can be inherited for many generations to come. Let us therefore be careful that we leave not our posterity such an unwelcome legacy as the consequence of our sin and folly.

Lessons to Learn

1. Sin is the parent of fear and weakness. The Israelites were living in sin. They were lacking in the faith and courage necessary to meet the situation which faced them.

2. Men often convince themselves that they have good reasons for well-doing but awake to find out that

what they thought were reasons were only their wishes.

3. God is not dependent upon any man, or group of men, to carry out his purposes upon earth. If, through negligence or disobedience, we disqualify ourselves to carry on his work, he will in his own good time raise up others who will do his will.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

State and discuss three characteristics manifested by our disobedience.

State and discuss three reasons why disobedience to God is foolish.

State and discuss three reasons why disobedience to God is expensive.

Introduction

Over what nation did Saul win his first victory?

Who was the strongest enemy of the Israelites?

To what extent had they brought Israel into bondage?

Under what previous judge had Israel been delivered from such abject bondage?

What action did the Philistines take to keep Israel in such bondage?

Israel Fears the Philistines

What was the spark which touched off the attack of the Philistines?

What is said of the number of chariots owned and operated by the Philistines?

How many soldiers did Saul and Jonathan have under their commands?

Where were most of the men of Israel when the battle began?

Saul Sacrifices in Gilgal

How long had Saul been told to wait for Samuel before the sacrifice was to be made?

In what way did this period of waiting try Saul's faith?

Did Saul, as king, have a right to make this offering?

Did Saul have the right to direct the priest with him to make the offering since Samuel had told him to wait for his arrival?

Samuel Rebukes Saul

What was Saul's first effort at self-justification?
 How did this effort at self-justification reflect on Samuel?
 Of what did Saul openly accuse Samuel?
 What was Saul's third argument in favor of his justification?
 From the human point of view what can you see in favor of Saul's action on this occasion?

How did Saul suggest his piety and reverence for God?
 What did Saul lose by this foolish self-willed act?
 Did Saul learn at this time that the kingdom was to be taken away from him?
 What reason was Saul given for being deprived of the kingdom?
 How can our sins affect our posterity?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—June 13, 1954

SAMUEL REPROVES SAUL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 15: 17-28

17 And Sam'-u-el said, Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Is'-ra-el? And Je-ho'-vah anointed the king over Is'-ra-el;

18 And Je-ho'-vah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Am'-a-lek-ites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Je-ho'-vah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah?

20 And Saul said unto Sam'-u-el, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Je-ho'-vah, and have gone the way which Je-ho'-vah sent me, and have brought A'-gag the king of Am'-a-lek, and have utterly destroyed the Am'-a-lek-ites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah thy God in Gil'-gal.

22 And Sam'-u-el said, Hath Je-ho'-vah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Je-ho'-vah? Behold, to

obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and ter'-a-phem. Because thou hast rejected the word of Je-ho'-vah, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

24 And Saul said unto Sam'-u-el, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Je-ho'-vah, and thy words, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship Je-ho'-vah.

26 And Sam'-u-el said unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of Je-ho'-vah, and Je-ho'-vah hath rejected thee from being king over Is'-ra-el.

27 And as Sam'-u-el turned about to go away, Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his robe, and it rent.

28 And Sam'-u-el said unto him, Je-ho'-vah hath rent the kingdom of Is'-ra-el from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15: 22b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 15: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 7. M.....Saul's Instructions Regarding Amalek (1 Sam. 15: 1-7)
- June 8. T.....Amalek Spared (1 Sam. 15: 8-10)
- June 9. W.....Jehovah's Displeasure (1 Sam. 15: 10-12)
- June 10. T.....Saul's Effort at Justification (1 Sam. 15: 2-16)
- June 11. F.....Samuel's Rebuke (1 Sam. 15: 17-19)
- June 12. S.....Saul's Confession (1 Sam. 15: 20-31)
- June 13. S.....Agag's Destruction (1 Sam. 15: 32-35)

TIME.—1079 B.C.

PLACE.—Gilgal.

PERSONS.—Samuel and Saul.

Golden Text Explained

Saul was given the commandment to destroy utterly the Amalekites. He disobeyed this commandment in order that he might make a sacrifice. He brought Agag the king, and sheep and oxen, that he might make a great display of his victory. Samuel termed his conduct rebellion against Jehovah. Our text is the statement that Samuel made to Saul as the ground for the rejection of Saul. When Samuel says that obedience is better than sacrifice, he has in mind a full, complete obedience, rendered from the heart. His use of the word sacrifice here is to be taken as the outward formal act divorced from the inner submission. With this in mind, we learn the following lessons:

1. Essential versus circumstantial.

A full, complete obedience which springs from the humble submissive heart is essential on account of the relationship between man and his God. Being the all-wise Creator and Preserver, God has the right to direct man's life. Being dependent upon God for life, preservation, and all things, man is obligated to be submissive to the will of God. The offering of an animal in sacrifice is an isolated piece of obedience which arises out of a circumstance of man's sin. To elevate this one item above, and make it contrary to the general law of complete obedience from the heart, was to give to this formal item entirely too much importance. It elevated the ceremonial above the moral. It created a conflict between the ceremonial and the moral. When viewed in their true light, there can be no conflict between the moral and the ceremonial. But to elevate the ceremonial above, and make it more important than the moral, was Saul's mistake and is wrong even in us today.

2. **Eternal versus positive.** Complete obedience from the heart is an eternal law. In all ages God has required obedience. All creatures, angels included, are required to be obedient to God their Maker. Saul could not make himself an exception to this rule. Animal sacrifice was a positive law. By that we mean that it was commanded by God of the people of that time, and it rested, not on any moral principle, but upon the positive command of God. Obedience rests upon our relationship to God. It is moral and eternal, but ani-

mal sacrifice was not based upon a moral principle, but rather upon the positive commandment of God. Saul's action, on this occasion, exalted the positive above the moral and eternal. His action brought the positive into conflict with the eternal. When viewed in the proper light, there can be no conflict between the eternal law and the positive law. It is never necessary to violate one of God's moral eternal laws in order to obey a positive law. This was Saul's mistake. He disobeyed God's word with reference to destroying the Amalekites and all their property in order to obey a positive command to offer sacrifice. But it was not necessary for him to do so. If he wished to offer sacrifices, he should have destroyed the property of the Amalekites, as commanded by the Lord, and have offered animals of his own in sacrifice.

3. **Innocency versus sin.** Complete obedience is the law of innocency. Adam and Eve in their state of innocence were required to obey the commandments of God. So obedience is not the consequence of sin. Obedience rests, as stated above, on the relationship which man sustains to his Creator and his Preserver, but sacrifice came about as a result of man's sin. If man had never sinned, man would never have been required to offer animal sacrifices. This is just another reason why it is better to obey than it is to offer sacrifices. Hosea states the matter in these words, "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." (Hos. 6: 6.)

4. **The whole man versus partial gift.** Complete obedience brings the whole man in submission to God. His intellect, his emotions, and his will power are brought into harmony with the will of God. But sacrifice, when viewed as a ceremonial act, does not necessarily involve the whole man. As stated in the beginning, the word sacrifice in this connection must be viewed simply as the outward ceremonial act. This is another reason why God prefers obedience above sacrifice. Here again, it should be remembered that, if Saul had been completely obedient to God, his sacrifice in Gilgal would not have been out of place, but since he was disobedient to the command to destroy all the Amalekites, this sacrifice in

Gilgal, consisting of sheep and oxen devoted to destruction, shows that Saul prized the ceremonial act of offering sacrifice above that of giving the whole man in full obedient sub-

mission to God. We must never feel that any one act, or series of acts of worship, will make up for, or atone for, our lack of complete submission to the will of God.

Introduction

In spite of the ill-advised sacrifice of Saul in Gilgal, Jehovah gave Israel two great victories at Mich-mash and Bethaven. Jonathan, Saul's son, was in command of the forces at Mich-mash. He decided that he and his armor bearer should go alone to the garrison of the Philistines and, if certain statements were made by the guards of the garrison, Jonathan would know that Jehovah intended to give him the victory. If these words were not spoken, he would know that his mission was not of the Lord and would be unsuccessful. When he and his armor bearer ascended the crags, and the Philistines saw them, they said jeeringly, "Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves." The Philistines then invited Jonathan and his helper to "come up to us, and we will show you a thing." This was the statement for which Jonathan looked and in which he was assured that Jehovah would give him the victory. Hence, he and his armor bearer attacked the guards and killed about twenty men. Then the Lord, by an earthquake, caused a great panic among the Philistines. Saul and his army camped some miles east of Jonathan, saw and heard the confusion among the Philistines, and joined in the battle to complete the victory.

Immediately following this victory,

the people who had been working several hours wished to take out time to eat. But Saul said, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until it be evening, and I be avenged on mine enemies." Saul was so intent upon a personal victory and upon reaping vengeance upon his enemy that he would not take out time to eat. This was a foolish decision from two points of view, (a) The people had long been without food and were too weak for a long pursuit of the enemy. It would have been better to have taken some time for them to have regained their strength, to regroup, and then follow the enemy, (b) Not all his soldiers were present when that curse was pronounced, and some of them might take of food in ignorance of the curse, and bring punishment not only upon themselves but upon the whole army. Jonathan was the one to take of food, not knowing his father had pronounced a curse upon anyone who would do so. The guilty person was determined by the casting of lots, and when Saul learned that it was his son Jonathan he said, "God do so and more also; for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan." But the people reversed Saul's foolish decision and said, "Far from it: as Jehovah liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day."

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel Convinces Saul of Sin

(Verses 17-23)

Though thou wast little in thine own sight. When Samuel first approached Saul about being king, Saul said that he belonged to the smallest tribe and his family was the least in the tribe of Benjamin. (1 Sam. 9: 21.) And when he was about to be anointed, he had to be pulled out from among the baggage of the army on account of his backwardness, and his feeling of inferiority and unworthiness. (1 Sam. 10: 22.) But the high position, the authority that comes with it, and the praise that comes as a result of victories in the field of battle, turned the head of

Saul and caused him to be proud, arrogant, and self-willed.

Utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites. The Amalekites had opposed the children of Israel on their march through the wilderness, and God said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the years of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." (Ex. 17: 14.) And in his last days Moses reminded the people of the fact that Amalek was to be destroyed. (Deut. 25: 17-19.)

Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Jehovah. The commandment was simple and easily under-

stood. Hence, there was no need for Saul to misunderstand. Next, Saul had it in his power to obey the command completely, so there is no need for him to spare Amalek and a portion of the cattle.

But didst fly upon the spoil. Here Samuel indicates that there was some covetousness and selfishness in the heart of Saul. In verse twelve of this chapter we learn that Saul took enough out of the country of Amalek to build him a monument in Mount Carmel. So there was pride, covetousness, and a desire for personal honor and glory involved in this sin of Saul.

I have obeyed the voice of Jehovah. This is the language of Saul in answer to the accusation of Samuel, and with much pride Saul pointed to Agag, the king of Amalek, as proof of the fact that he had destroyed the Amalekites. Saul seemed to think that, as long as he did in a general way what was expected of him, Samuel should be satisfied. He was too big and important in his own sight to be bothered with details. Many religious people today have this same attitude. So long as they worship God, they think it matters little whether they do exactly as God says do or not. They feel that God should be satisfied with the fact that they are worshipping him, even though they may substitute their own way for the way which God directs.

But the people took of the spoil. Saul, like Adam, wished to lay the blame for his misdoing on others. Having the authority of a king, Saul should have directed the people to do what God commanded. He could not escape responsibility by accusing the people.

To sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God. In these words Saul seeks to justify the act of the people because they were going to use the cattle in sacrifice. He seemed to think that a great display of devotion in the act of sacrifice would blind God to the fact that they had disobeyed his commandment. Furthermore, Saul implies that Samuel ought to be willing to overlook the fact that his commandment was not carried out completely, because the people were going to sacrifice to his God. Saul seemed to think that he was doing Samuel and Jehovah a great favor by sacrificing a large number of sheep and oxen in Gilgal. Some people today seem to think they have done the preacher a great favor when they attend church,

especially both Sunday morning and Sunday night.

Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings? Sacrifices which come from proud, haughty, disobedient hearts are an abomination to God. Jehovah spoke through Isaiah to say that he had enough of burnt-offerings and of the fat of fed beasts, that he delighted not in blood of bullocks or of lambs, but that these things were vain oblations, that they were an abomination unto him. He concluded by saying, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isa. 1: 11-17.) Going through the forms of worship means nothing to God; if the heart is not in the form, the form is vain and sinful.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. In Samuel's analysis of Saul, he found two things wrong with Saul. First, Saul was guilty of rebellion, and next, he was stubborn in his rebellion. Samuel declares that rebellion is as sinful in the sight of God as witchcraft, and that stubbornness is as bad in the sight of God as idolatry or the worship of teraphim. "With this temper of mind he could be no fit representative of Jehovah, and therefore Samuel dethrones him. Henceforward he reigns only as a temporal, no longer as the theocratic king." (Pulpit Commentary.)

II. Samuel Predicts Saul's Failure (Verses 24-28)

I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah. Saul's regard for Samuel as the voice of Jehovah led him to realize that his situation was dangerous. It was Samuel who anointed Saul, and it was Samuel who presented him to the people, and gave him his office. Now this same man tells him that he is rejected from being king. This strikes terror to the heart of Saul. His rebellion and stubbornness made it impossible for his penitence to be very deep.

Because I feared the people. Since Saul makes this statement, while under conviction of sin, we must admit that the desire of the people had a great influence on him, and that, therefore, he had some reason for making the statement he made in verse twenty-one. Being king, Saul had the responsibility of seeing that

the people obeyed the voice of God. In this case Saul preferred the favor of the people rather than that of God and so proved himself unworthy of his office.

I pray thee, pardon my sin. This is the language of Saul directed to Samuel. Instead of saying this to Samuel, he should have been directing this language to God. This indicates that he was more interested in having the favor of Samuel, who appointed him as king, and who had the right to depose him as king, than he cared for the favor of God.

I will not return with thee. This was Samuel's answer to Saul's request to go with him to the place of worship. Samuel at first refused to go with Saul on the ground that Saul had rejected the word of Jehovah, and because Jehovah had rejected Saul from being king over Israel. But in verse thirty we find Saul pressing Samuel to go with him, and in that way honor him before the elders of the people. This may be an indication that Samuel realized that it was not time for the rejection of Saul to be made public. He would therefore honor Saul by his accompanying him to the place of worship, in order

to preserve peace and harmony within the kingdom until Saul's successor could be selected and anointed.

Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his robe, and it rent. When Samuel turned to leave Saul, when first he refused to go to worship with him, Saul took hold of the skirt or border of his outer garment and tore it in pieces. This is another indication of Saul's stubbornness, his determination to have his own way in matters. He would resort to physical force to take Samuel to the place of worship.

Jehovah hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day. Samuel used the rending of his garment as a symbol of the rending of the kingdom out of Saul's hands.

To a neighbor . . . better than thou. Samuel told Saul that the kingdom, which was taken from him that day, would be given to someone who would do a better job than he. Samuel did not know who the next king would be, but through inspiration, he was able to say that the next man would be a better king than Saul had been. This does not refer to his moral character, but rather to his ability to discharge the duties of the king.

Lessons to Learn

1. It is much easier to make excuses for our sins than it is to make a full humble confession of them and turn from them.

2. Great and abundant blessings from God obligate us to great and careful consideration of his commandments and to great and earnest exertions to obedience to those commandments. The greater our bless-

ings, the greater our obligation we have to do God's will.

3. Willful disobedience to God cannot be covered up by great show of piety and devotion in public acts of worship. Giving big sums of money for church buildings and orphan homes will not cover up the sin of dishonesty in business or worldliness in our social life or immorality.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the words *obedience* and *sacrifice* as used in our text?
Why is man required to render complete obedience to God?
What place did sacrifice have in man's life and why?
What was Saul's mistake in his view of the relation between sacrifice and obedience?
What is a positive law?
Can you show that we are not to violate a moral eternal law in order to obey a positive temporal law?
Can you show that the ceremonial should not be exalted above and made to conflict with that which is moral and eternal?
Under what circumstances would it have
Is obedience to God a consequence of sin?

Is sacrifice a consequence of sin?

Can you show that complete obedience involves the whole man but sacrifice as used in our text involves only a part of man?

Introduction

Relate how Jonathan started the battle with the Philistines at Michmash.

How did the Lord assist them in this battle?

What foolish restriction did Paul place upon the soldiers?

Why was this restriction extremely foolish?

Who violated this restriction?

What preserved Jonathan from death at the hands of his father?

Samuel Convinces Saul of Sin

Contrast Saul's character at the time he was anointed and at the time of this sacrifice in Gilgal.

Why was the nation of Amalek to be destroyed?

What evidence do we have that Saul was guilty of pride, covetousness, and desire for personal glory?
 Do you think Saul was honest in contending that he had obeyed the voice of Jehovah?
 On whom does Saul lay the blame for taking the spoil of Amalek?
 How did Saul betray his overemphasis on outward ceremony?
 Why did Jehovah not delight in the animal sacrifices which he had commanded?
 What two sins did Samuel find in Saul?
 With what other sins did Samuel compare these two sins of Saul?

Samuel Predicts Saul's Failure
 What caused Saul to regard his situation as dangerous?
 What confession did he make and what reasons did he give for it?
 What did he ask Samuel to do for him?
 Why did Samuel finally agree to go with Saul to the place of worship?
 What lesson did Samuel teach Saul from the rent robe?
 In what way was the successor of Saul described?
 In what way was Saul's successor to be better than Saul?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—June 20, 1954

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 16: 1-13

1 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Is'-ra-el? fill thy horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jes'-se the Beth'-le-hem-ite; for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Sam'-u-el said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And Je-ho'-vah said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Je-ho'-vah.

3 And call Jes'-se to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

4 And Sam'-u-el did that which Je-ho'-vah spake, and came to Beth'-le-hem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jes'-se and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on E-li'-ab, and said, Surely Je-ho'-vah's anointed is before him.

7 But Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, Look not on his countenance, or

on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for *Je-ho'-vah seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Je-ho'-vah looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jes'-se called A-bin'-a-dab, and made him pass before Sam'-u-el. And he said, Neither hath Je-ho'-vah chosen this.

9 Then Jes'-se made Sham'-mah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Je-ho'-vah chosen this.

10 And Jes'-se made seven of his sons to pass before Sam'-u-el. And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Je-ho'-vah hath not chosen these.

11 And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Je-ho'-vah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he.

13 Then Sam'-u-el took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Je-ho'-vah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Sam'-u-el rose up, and went to Ra'-mah.

Golden Text.—“For Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16: 7b.)

Devotional Heading.—1 Sam. 16: 14-23.

Daily Bible Readings

June 14. M.....Saul Rejected as King (1 Sam. 16: 1, 2)
 June 15. T.....David Anointed (1 Sam. 16: 4-13)
 June 16. W.....David Chosen of God (Psalms 78: 70-72)

June 17. T.....David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17: 41-49)
 June 18. F.....David's Sin (2 Sam. 12: 1-7)
 June 19. S.....David's Repentance (Psalm 51: 1-13)
 June 20. S.....A Psalm of David (Psalm 23: 1-6)

TIME.—1063 B.C.

PLACE.—Bethlehem.

PERSONS.—Samuel, Jesse, David, and his brothers.

Golden Text Explained

1. The incidents in our lesson illustrate the truth of our text; that Jehovah does not see as man seeth.

The reason why Jehovah does not see as man seeth is stated in our text because man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart. Man does not have the power to look within the heart, and so can judge only by outward appearance, or by actions of the individual to indicate the heart; but God can look into the heart of a man and see what is behind the outward action or word. Judging by outward physical appearance, Samuel thought surely that Eliab, the oldest son of Jesse, was the one whom God intended for him to anoint. But God, looking at the heart, did not see in Eliab those qualities which he could see in David that would make the kind of king he wanted Israel to have.

2. **God's view of true greatness differs from man's view.** It was difficult for the apostles of Jesus to learn the standard of true greatness. Their idea was that sitting on the right hand or on the left hand of Jesus in his throne was true greatness. So they argued among themselves as to who would have the first and the second place in the kingdom. But Jesus taught them that true greatness did not consist in the place they occupied, but rather in the service they rendered in the kingdom. Another indication of man's idea of true greatness is seen in the monuments of the world which have been erected for the world's great men. For whom are the monuments erected? They are erected for the great military leaders, the great kings, and those who have distinguished themselves in a worldly sort of way. But if God were to erect such monuments, the names on those monuments would represent some of the most obscure people on earth. The names of the Marys and the Marthas, Lazarus, a few publicans, and the social outcasts who loved the Lord, who loved right, who were penitent for wrong, and who desired to do right; the people who

served their fellow men humbly, faithfully, and those who feared God. Those are the names the Lord would put on the monuments instead of those who excelled in physical brute force, or who slew his thousands in victorious marches against an enemy, or who, by enslaving a nation, brought that nation to the front commercially and financially. Head what has been called "the hall of fame" in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Those who are eternally great and honored in the sight of God were those who were wandering in deserts, in mountains, in caves, and in the holes of the earth. They were those who were despised and persecuted and finally slain because of their faith in God. Of most of them the world took little notice nor long remembered what they had done on this earth or that they had ever lived, but their names are forever inscribed in God's hall of fame, all because God does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart.

3. **God and man do not agree on what constitutes success in life.** There are at least three things which the world requires of a man before it will accept him as a success in life, (a) Wealth. If a man does not have sufficient wealth to be at ease, he is not a success. If he has not sufficient money to enjoy the modern conveniences and some of the luxuries and keep up with the average standards of living of our day, he is not a success, (b) The world demands that an individual be accepted socially before he is regarded as a success. He must be acquainted with and conform to the social niceties and requirements of his day and community if he expects to be accepted as a success. If some of these requirements are contrary to the moral standards of the Lord, he must be able to swallow his conscience and conform to the demands of society, (c) A man must be patriotic. He must be loyal to his government, regardless of what the government is

doing. If the government is doing something wrong, he must conform and go along without criticism. A man may be free of bi-partisan matters, but where the nation is united on a project such as the prosecution of a war, the man who does not line up and go along will not be counted a success. However, not one of these three are necessary in God's sight for a person to be eminently successful. Man can live a full and fruitful life without either wealth or social ac-

ceptance or patriotism, if his country is following a wrong course. A Christian is a good citizen, but he does not subscribe to the theory that he will be for his country right or wrong.

4. God and man differ on what constitutes true worship. Rich and ponderous forms and ceremonies appeal to men, while God is not concerned with these. While man looks to the forms and ceremonies, God looks for the humble, sincere, contrite heart.

Introduction

In our last lesson we saw Saul rejected as the king of Israel. In our lesson today we will see David anointed as the new king of Israel. When Samuel told Saul that he was to lose the kingdom, he also said that the kingdom would be given to one that was better than Saul. (1 Sam. 15: 28.) A brief contrast of the two characters will show us in what way David was better than Saul. (1) Both were humble and retiring at the time they were anointed, but Saul's humility was superficial and sprang from his obscure relations and his lack of acquaintance with the affairs of state and the responsibilities to which he had been called in connection therewith. As soon as he was exalted to the throne and became acquainted with the affairs in connection therewith, he forgot his lowliness of mind. David's humility was genuine. It sprang from his realization of his dependence upon God, and of his appreciation of his fellow man and his recognition of the value of other people in carrying out his program. (2) Saul was a worldly-minded man, while David was spiritually minded. Saul was courageous as a soldier and inspiring as a leader of an army, but he did his work as a soldier and not as a servant of God. He had little regard for spiritual values. But David recognized that his throne belonged to God, and that he was there by the mercy and the goodness of

God. He realized that he was simply the representative of God. God was the king in David's sight, and David was his servant. (3) Saul was rebellious under correction and reproof, while David was humble and submissive when reproofed. Saul showed no real sense of sin or a desire for forgiveness when Samuel accused him of rebellion against God. He showed no sign of shame or sorrow for his sin, but rather put himself in a defensive attitude, tried to lay the blame on others, and insisted that Samuel go with him to worship so that he might show the people that he was not entirely rejected by God's prophet. But when David was confronted with his sin, he humbly and fully confessed that he had done wrong, and prayed for forgiveness. As long as Samuel was putting the pressure on Saul, there was some show of intention to do better, but as soon as Samuel was gone, Saul was again his old rebellious self-willed and determined character. But David, when he was confronted with his sin, confessed it, prayed for forgiveness, and never repeated the sin. (4) Saul had little respect for God's law. But David loved the law, meditated on it day and night, and was the enemy of those who despised God's law. Saul knew little about the law of God and did not busy himself to learn more of that law. But David studied the law, loved it, respected it, and wept when others violated it. (Psalm 119: 136, 158.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel Goes to Bethlehem (Verses 1-5)

How long wilt thou mourn for Saul? When Samuel told Saul that the kingdom was taken from him, and when he had slain Agag with his own hands, he left Saul never more to re-

turn to him. But the record says that Samuel mourned for Saul, and this mourning continued until God reproved Samuel for it. Since God had rejected Saul for his wickedness, Samuel should have accepted God's action as being final and should have

been agreeable to it. But his mourning indicates that he was not in complete harmony with God on the dismissal of Saul. His human affection for Saul and his intense interest for the welfare of the kingdom led him to mourn beyond the point that was right in the sight of God.

I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite. In the book of Ruth we have the background of this family that now comes into the picture. This Jesse was the son of Obed, who was the son of Boaz, who married Ruth, who was the daughter-in-law of Naomi and Elimelech, who left Bethlehem to go into Moab on account of a famine. Now Jehovah tells Samuel to go to this family, for it was in this home that God had provided himself a king for his people.

If Saul hear it, he will kill me. Being already informed that the kingdom was to be taken from him, Saul would watch Samuel's movements to see whether he would anoint another to take his place. Samuel felt that Saul would resort to murder to keep him from anointing another king.

I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah. Some have thought that God told Samuel to practice deceit in this matter. However, this is not the case. Samuel was simply instructed not to reveal a part of his purpose in going to Bethlehem. "But he did not tell the principal design of his coming; had he done so, it would have produced evil and no good: and though no man, in any circumstances, should ever tell a lie, yet in all circumstances, he is not obliged to tell the whole truth, though in every circumstance he must tell nothing but the truth, and in every case so tell the truth that the hearer shall not believe a lie by it." (Adam Clarke.) "Was there in this any duplicity? In answer we may ask another question: Is it always necessary or even right to tell in all cases the whole truth? If so, quarrels and ill feelings would be multiplied to such an extent that social life would be unendurable. All charitable, well-disposed persons suppress much, and keep a guard over their lips, lest they should stir up strife and hatred." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Call Jesse to the sacrifice. There was not, at this time, a central place of sacrifice such as Jerusalem afforded in later times, and it is thought that Samuel went from place to place

offering sacrifices and teaching the people the law. He could very conveniently go to Bethlehem for one of these periodic sacrifices and periods of instruction of the people. The fact that Saul would permit him to go on such a mission without question is proof of the common occurrence of such sacrifices.

Comest thou peaceably? The elders of the city asked this question of Samuel as he approached the gates of the city. The elders could have meant, by this question, to ask Samuel whether he was fleeing from Saul and expecting them to give him protection, or they could have felt that he might be coming to pronounce judgment upon some one of their number for wickedness. Samuel then informed them that he had come on a peaceful mission to sacrifice unto Jehovah. He requested that they sanctify themselves and come with him to the sacrifice. He invited especially Jesse and his sons to this period of worship.

II. David Chosen and Anointed

(Verses 6-13)

Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him. The sacrifice had already been offered, and while waiting for a feast to follow, the sons of Jesse were brought before Samuel that he might choose and anoint one. Eliab came first because he was the oldest son of Jesse. When Samuel saw the young man stand before him, he looked upon his countenance, his height, and his stature, and judging by human standards, Samuel thought surely this is the one the Lord will select. But he was reminded, as in our golden text, that Jehovah does not see as man seeth, for man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart. This first son of Jesse did not have the character that Jehovah required in a king.

Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. In 1 Chron. 2: 13-15 seven of the sons of Jesse were named. In our text David is said to have seven brothers, so we conclude that one of the brothers must have died in early youth, and was not listed in the book of Chronicles.

There remaineth yet the youngest. When seven of the sons had passed before Samuel, and Jehovah had not indicated that he had chosen either of them, Samuel asked Jesse if there

was yet another, and he was informed that there was one still younger than these keeping the sheep. David's occupation indicates both humility and industry, two things which God is pleased to honor. Man might think that military or political environment would best prepare a man to be king, but God chose one surrounded by pastoral scenes and whose mind and hands were occupied in pastoral duties. God chose the shepherd type rather than the military.

We will not sit down till he come hither. It is on this verse that we base our conclusion that this viewing of the sons took place between the sacrifice and the feast which followed. It is obvious that this anointing was not a public affair. "To have anointed David publicly would have forced Jesse to an open rupture with the king, and he must have sought safety either by fighting for his life, or by breaking up his home, and fleeing into a foreign land. . . . Even when David was being hunted for his life, he made no appeal to Samuel's anointing, but it remained what it was ever intended to be, a secret sign and declaration to him of God's pre-ordained purpose, but of one as to which he was to take no step to bring about its fulfillment. It was a pledge to David, and nothing but misery would have resulted from its being prematurely made known to those who had no right to know it. . . . And so to have anointed David openly, and to have made him understand the meaning of the act, would have been to destroy David and frustrate the divine purpose." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Now he was ruddy. The word ruddy indicates that David had red hair. It is also said that he had a beautiful countenance and that he made a splendid appearance. "These last words give the general idea of the beauty of his face and person, while his bright hair and delicate complexion and the beauty of his eyes are especially noticed in the Hebrew."

Anointed him in the midst of his brethren. While there is no indication that this anointing took place before the public, it is stated that he was anointed before his brethren. They would understand that David was selected in preference to all of them. But for what he was being selected, it seems that none of them knew. There is nothing to indicate that Jesse or David's older brothers, or David himself, knew the purpose for which he was being anointed. Sometime later Eliab speaks to David in such way as to indicate that he had no idea why David was anointed. (1 Sam. 17: 28-30.) It is suggested by some that Jesse and his sons may have thought that Samuel was selecting one of Jesse's sons to be trained in the school of the prophets which Samuel was conducting.

The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David. From that day forward the Spirit of God guided David into such studies and activities as would develop him into the kind of character which God needed in a king. "God qualified him to be governor of his people, by infusing such graces as wisdom, prudence, counsel, courage, liberality, and magnanimity." (Adam Clarke.)

Lessons to Learn

1. Though Samuel was a man of faith and loyalty to God, he was afraid of what Saul might do to him. If a great character like Samuel wavered in the path of duty because he feared man, let us not be too critical of others today when they waver in the path of duty.

2. Saul was taken out of the ordinary activities of life and was made king. He failed to be acceptable to God in that office. David was selected when but a child and was

trained and prepared for the duties and responsibilities of the throne. He made a success. This should teach us that we should begin, while in youth, to prepare for our life's work.

3. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Saul the same as he came upon David. (1 Sam. 10: 10; 11: 6.) Saul did not follow the leading of the Spirit and was a failure as a king. David followed the teaching of the Spirit and was a success. We should profit by their examples.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, place, and persons.
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

Why does Jehovah not see as man sees?
What did this have to do with the selection

of a king to take the place of Saul?
 How does God's view of true greatness differ from man's view?
 Draw a general contrast between the characters of those honored by the world and those honored and rewarded by the Lord.
 Can you show that God and man do not agree on what constitutes success in life?
 In what way do God and man differ on what constitutes true worship?

Introduction

In what way were Saul and David alike?
 Was there a difference in their type of humility?
 How do Saul and David compare in their conception of spiritual values?
 How do the two men compare while under correction and reproof for wrongdoing?
 How do they compare with respect for the law of God?

Samuel Goes to Bethlehem

For what did the Lord reprove Samuel?

What do you know of the family background of David?
 Why did Samuel hesitate to go to Bethlehem to anoint a king?
 Was Samuel told to deceive Saul as to his purpose in going to Bethlehem?
 Why would Saul allow Samuel to go to Bethlehem for sacrifice?
 What did the people of Bethlehem think when they saw Samuel approaching?

David Chosen and Anointed

Why were the first seven sons of Jesse rejected?
 From what environment was the new king to be chosen?
 What proof do we have that the anointing of David was not a public affair?
 Why was the anointing a secret?
 What do you know of the physical appearance of David?
 Did David's family know the full significance of this anointing?
 What assistance did David have in the formation of his character?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XIII—June 27, 1954

SAMUEL'S LAST MEETING WITH SAUL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 28: 8-19

8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, Divine unto me, I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee.

9 And the woman said unto him. Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

10 And Saul sware to her by Je-ho'-vah, saying, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Sam'-u-el.

12 And when the woman saw Sam'-u-el, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what seest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth.

14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived

that it was Sam'-u-el, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

15 And Sam'-u-el said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Phi-lis'-tines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

16 And Sam'-u-el said, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing Je-ho'-vah is departed from thee, and is become thine adversary?

17 And Je-ho'-vah hath done unto thee, as he spake by me: and Je-ho'-vah hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David.

18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of Je-ho'-vah, and didst not execute his fierce wrath upon Am'-a-lek, therefore hath Je-ho'-vah done this thing unto thee this day.

19 Moreover Je-ho'-vah will deliver Is'-ra-el also with thee into the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: Je-ho'-vah will deliver the host of Is'-ra-el also into the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines.

Golden Text.—“*God is departed from me*” (1 Sam. 28: 15b.)
 Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 28: 20-25.

Daily Bible Readings

June 21. M.....	Saul's Opposition to David (1 Sam. 26: 1-12)
June 22. T.....	David Spares Saul's Life (1 Sam. 26: 17-25)
June 23. W.....	David Escapes from Saul (1 Sam. 27: 1-4)
June 24. T.....	David's Raids (1 Sam. 27: 8-12)
June 25. F.....	Saul's Visit to the Witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28: 3-14)
June 26. S.....	Samuel Talks to Saul (1 Sam. 28: 15-19)
June 27. S.....	Saul's Doom Pronounced (1 Sam. 28: 20-25)

Time.—1056 B.C.

Places.—Gilboah and Endor.

Persons.—Samuel, Saul, and the woman with the familiar spirit.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Reasons for God's departure from Saul,** (a) Saul seems never to have had a very high regard for the will of God. He seems never to have known much about the law of Moses, and he seems to have had no disposition to learn that law. And if Samuel told him his duty to God, he seemed to pay little attention to what was said. He followed his own inclinations, fulfilled his own desires, lived his life his own way, and if that was pleasing to God, well, but if displeasing to God, he was little concerned, (b) He finally came to live in open rebellion to the will of God. In two of our former lessons, we have seen his rebellion with reference to offering a sacrifice (1 Sam. 13) and refusing to destroy the Amalekites and their property (1 Sam. 15.) We are not told why Saul destroyed the Gibeonites, but it is hardly possible that he could have been ignorant of the covenant which Joshua made with them, and so their destruction may be attributed to **his** desire to have **his** own way, contrary to the will of God. He certainly knew that he was acting contrary to the will of God when he had Doeg slay the priests. These and other incidents in his life are sufficient to prove that Saul was rebellious at heart and cared not for the **will** of God. (c) Saul attempted to frustrate God's purposes by destroying David. This **seems** to be a step further than simple rebellion. In rebellion he refused to conform, in his own life, to the will of God, but now he goes a step further, and thinks that he can actually keep God from accomplishing **his** purposes.

2. **The condition of a God-forsaken man. Saul's God-forsaken condition**

is described in the fifteenth verse of our lesson text. There was not a prophet who would give him any word. He was unable to get any information through dreams. He had slain the priests and couldn't go to them for information. There was a decisive battle impending, and he dreaded to go into that battle without some word from God. But since he had closed every avenue of information from God, he must face the future alone and ignorant of what it held for him. (a) Forsaken by the Lord, Saul was left to the painful recollection of the past. That past was filled with disregard for the will of God, for open rebellion against God's will, and with attempts to frustrate the accomplishment of God's purposes. As each sin of the past arose in his mind for consideration, he was impressed anew with the idea that God had forsaken him and that he stood alone. Sins of the past have a way of haunting men. They come into their minds in the night. They come to their minds when they are alone. Nor do these sins come to the mind one at a time, but in groups, that they may strike terror to the heart of the man oppressed by them. If it were not for our privileges of laying these sins on the cross of Christ, it would be unbearable. Saul had not that comfort, for God had departed from him. (b) Saul's God-forsaken condition is emphasized by a disturbing consciousness of divine displeasure. Saul owed his office to the goodness of God. The prophet of God had anointed him, had counseled him, and reproved and rebuked him. But in spite of all the manifestations of the goodness of God, Saul had disregarded God, rebelled

against his will, and was even now in defiance of God. As he thought upon these things, he was disturbed and uneasy. There are no rest and peace of mind for those who are conscious of having displeased God. (c) Saul's God-forsaken condition is emphasized by a frightful foreboding of impending disaster. Saul had defeated the Philistines once, and now they have returned to get revenge. David and his army had been with the Philistines and, so far as Saul knew, he might still be a part of that great army marching upon Saul. Samuel had said that Saul was rejected by the Lord as king, and that a better man would be put on the throne. These words rank in Saul's ears through the years and stirred him on to frantic efforts to destroy David. Now David is with the Philistines. Will the Philistines help David defeat and dethrone Saul and install David on that throne? If Saul was rejected for his wickedness here, what will be his standing in the judgment before the bar of God? These and many other frightful thoughts must have crowded into the

mind of the God-forsaken Saul on the eve of the battle.

3. **Extremes to which the God-forsaken Saul resorted,** (a) Saul resorted to spirit mediums for his information. Though the work of spirit mediums was forbidden by the law of Moses (Deut. 18: 10-14), and Saul had tried to exterminate them during his reign (1 Sam. 28: 3), now in his extremity Saul resorts to a woman of this kind for information as to the outcome of the impending battle. He even exposed himself to the danger of capture by the enemy in order to reach the house of this woman of Endor. (b) Saul ended his life in despair and disgrace. In 1 Sam. 31: 1-6 we have the account of the death of Saul and three of his sons. When Saul saw his three sons fall in battle, he knew that the Philistines would soon take him, and if they took him alive, would abuse him shamefully, he told his armor bearer to draw his sword and thrust it through him. The armor bearer refused to do so, and Saul fell upon his sword. He lived in disobedience and died in suicide.

Introduction

Between the time of our last lesson and this one, we are told that Samuel died, and that all the Israelites gathered together, lamented him, and buried him in his own house in Hamah. (1 Sam. 25: 1.) The time of Samuel's death is very uncertain. According to Jewish tradition, he died about four months before Saul died. The chronology we are following in these lessons places the death of Samuel four years prior to the death of Saul. Samuel filled a very important place in Jewish history. He was the last of the judges, and he helped to organize the first kingdom. He anointed the first two kings of Israel. He lived to see the failure of the first king. He also lived to see the second king, whom he anointed, grow in power and influence to the extent that he could be assured of the success of this new king in his government. "He was incorrupt; he received no man's bribe; he had no pension from the state; he enriched none of his relatives from the public purse; he left no private debts to be discharged by his country. He was among the Hebrews what Aristides

is said to have been among the Greeks, so poor at his death, though a minister of state, that he did not leave property enough to bury him. Justice was by him duly and impartially administered, and oppression and wrong had no existence. If there ever was a *heaven-born minister*, it was Samuel; in whose public and private conduct there was no blemish, and whose parallel cannot be found in the ancient or modern history of any country in the universe." (Adam Clarke.)

While Samuel grew in the estimation of the people as long as he lived, Saul took the opposite course and seemed to lose the confidence and the respect of the people the longer he lived. There are several unreasonable and unexplainable incidents in the life of Saul, while on his downward course to ruin and disaster, that are worthy of our attention. 1. His destruction of the Gibeonites. The reader will remember that Joshua was deceived by the Gibeonites and made a covenant with them. (Josh. 9.) God required the Israelites to honor that covenant all their days,

but for some unknown reason Saul sought to destroy the Gibeonites. (2 Sam. 21: 1-6.) After David had become king, the Lord brought a famine upon the land, and when David inquired as to the cause of it, Jehovah said, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he put to death the Gibeonites." So David asked the Gibeonites what he should do to satisfy them. They asked for seven of Saul's sons that they might hang them up before Jehovah. 2. Saul slew all the priests except Abiathar at one time. When Saul learned that Ahimelech, the priest, had given

David food and the sword of Goliath, he was so enraged that he commanded his servant, Doeg, to slay the priests. Eighty-five of them were slain at one time. (1 Sam. 22.) 3. Saul's continued attempts to destroy David. For several years David was compelled to live in the wilderness in caves, in foreign countries bordering Judea, in order to escape death at the hands of Saul. Saul knew it to be the will of God that David was to be his successor. But he clung tenaciously and stubbornly to his throne until death.

Exposition of the Text

I. Saul Goes to Endor (Verses 8-10)

And Saul disguised himself. With only two men for his protection, Saul clothed himself in raiment other than the king's garb and went by night to a woman who lived in Endor that he might inquire as to the outcome of the battle. "The adventurous character of Saul's night journey is very striking when we consider that the Philistines pitched in Shunem on the southern slope of the mountain, and that Saul's army was at Jezreel; thus, to arrive at Endor he had to pass the hostile camp, and would probably creep around the eastern shoulder of the hill, hidden by the undulations of the plain, as an Arab will now advance unseen close by you in a fold of the ground." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Divine unto me ... by the familiar spirit. This is the request that Saul made of the woman to whom he had gone. The term *familiar spirit* is used throughout the Old Testament to mean a spirit of the unseen world, which entered into familiar relations with human beings, to give them information not obtainable through human or ordinary means. Resorting to such people was strictly forbidden by Moses. "Turn ye not unto them that have familiar spirits, nor unto the wizards; seek them not out, to be defiled by them: I am Jehovah your God." (Lev. 19: 31.) Again, "And the soul that turneth unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards, to play the harlot after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people." (Lev. 20: 6.) Not only did these people profess to have the power to

give information not available to human beings, but they professed to be able to bring up from the spirit world those who had departed this life.

Thou knowest what Saul hath done. The woman reminds Saul of the fact that the king had tried to exterminate all those who had familiar spirits. So she accused him of laying a snare or a trap to bring about her death. She supposed that these three men were employed by the government to seek out and get evidence by which these necromancers and wizards could be accused and convicted of carrying on their unholy practices and be put to death. No doubt she knew of some of her associates who had been thus entrapped by government men and convicted and put to death.

As Jehovah liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee. In order to allay her suspicions and to influence her to do his bidding, Saul took an oath by the name of Jehovah that no punishment would come to her for her rendering him this assistance. Here is a man who was trying to put God out of his life but was forced to call upon God for assistance. He could not even get the help of this woman without taking an oath by the name of the God against whom he was rebelling. People today who refuse to obey God are dependent upon God in more ways than they realize.

II. Samuel Comes to Saul (Verses 11-15)

Bring me up Samuel. This was Saul's request of the woman. He wished to see Samuel who had so

often advised, counseled, and even reproved and rebuked him. "But gradually the light yoke of respect for the one who loved him became too heavy for a despotic temperament, which would brook no will but its own. Now that self-will is broken; it had brought the warrior king to a hopeless despair, and in his distress his mind once again returns to its old channels. Intense as was the degradation for one so haughty, in disguise by night, at the risk of his life, to seek help from a sorceress, he bears it all that he may at least for a few minutes see the spirit of the true stern monitor, whose memory once again filled his whole heart." (Pulpit Commentary.)

She cried with a loud voice. We are told that, when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice. Bible scholars are divided on the question as to whether Samuel actually appeared in any form. Regardless of what we think of familiar spirits, or the ability of people to gain information through such channels, we can hardly deny that this woman had more success than ordinarily, and that, in response to her efforts to bring up Samuel, she got more than she expected. We can hardly deny that Samuel did appear. The surprise of the woman and the information given are conclusive proofs of something more than the raving of a wizard or necromancer. We think it was the Lord, rather than the witch, who brought up Samuel.

I see a god coming up out of the earth. When the woman saw Samuel appearing, she immediately recognized Saul as the one who had asked that he be brought up. Her cry of fear may have been partly by the appearance of Samuel and partly from the fear that Saul would put her to death.

Saul perceived that it was Samuel. Saul asked the woman to describe the form which she saw. When she said that she saw an old man coming up and that he was covered with a robe, Saul knew that Samuel had appeared. So it is said that he bowed his face to the ground and did obeisance.

Why hast thou disquieted me? These are the words of Samuel to Saul. Since Saul had refused to pay

any attention to Samuel's teaching or counsel, or reproof, while Samuel was alive, he might justly ask why bring me up from the other world. Since Saul had steadfastly refused to obey the voice of God by Samuel, why call him up at this time and ask his advice? Would Saul be any more likely to follow the instruction of Samuel after he was dead than he was to follow him while he lived?

Make known unto me what I shall do. This is Saul's reason for calling Samuel. He wanted to know what he should do in the face of the impending battle. Saul described the distressing condition in which he was at this time in these words. "For the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams." It was common practice for the Jews to inquire of Jehovah what they should do under such circumstances. Often they asked if they should go into battle at all, and sometimes they asked, if they should go into battle, would they be successful. (1 Kings 22:5-23.)

III. Samuel's Message to Saul (Verses 16-19)

Wherefore then dost thou ask of me? Since Saul knew that Jehovah had departed from him and would not answer him by prophets or by dreams, Samuel wished to know why he thought he could get any information from him. Did Saul expect Samuel to go contrary to the will of the Lord just to give him some information? Self-willed and determined men have a way of thinking and feeling that people should do things for them when they would do them for no one else.

Jehovah hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand. Samuel reminded Saul that Jehovah had done exactly with him as Samuel had predicted in years past. Jehovah was not a man that he should repent, change his mind or course of action with reference to Saul, who continued in disobedience and rebellion against him. Nor was Samuel one to curry the favor of Saul either in life or in death, and give him some comforting words when he had to speak contrary to the will and purpose of God to do so. When Saul was first told that

the kingdom would be taken away from him, it was said that the kingdom would be given to his neighbor who was better than he. But at this time Samuel tells Saul that which Saul already knew—that the kingdom would be given to David.

Because thou obeyedst not the voice of Jehovah. Again, Samuel reminded Saul of the reason why the kingdom was taken away from him. It was because of his disobedience to God's will. Saul presumed on the goodness and long suffering of God. Samuel had said that the kingdom would be taken from Saul, but Saul continued to enjoy the rights and privileges of the throne. He seemed to think that he could continue to enjoy these things in spite of the announced will and purpose of God. Many people today, knowing that God has said that the disobedient shall be punished continue to live in disobedience as if they thought they could gain happiness here and eternal bliss in the world to come in spite of the announced will and purpose of God.

To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons

be with me. Some take this verse as proof that Samuel did not really appear, but that Satan, or one of his evil spirits, appeared to deceive Saul and to drive him to further distraction. They contend that this being told Saul that he and his sons would be with him in death. They contend that Samuel could not say that because Saul, a wicked rebellious person, was not going to the place of rest and peace where Samuel dwelt. But they have to deal with the righteous Jonathan. Are they prepared to say that Jonathan was lost and that he will be in hell? When Samuel said that Saul and his sons would be with him, he meant no more than that they should go into the Hadean world. It was simply his way of saying that they would die in battle and that their spirits would go to the Hadean world.

Jehovah will deliver the host of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines. This is a prediction of the battle that followed, and in 1 Sam. 31: 1-13 we have a record of that and its outcome.

Lessons to Learn

1. Saul did not become a wicked rebel in a day or even in a year. It was a gradual process. This should be a warning to us not to make the slightest departure from the path of righteousness lest we too end up in despair and disgrace as did he.

2. Those who put their trust in God do not need the information that some hope to gain from fortune-tellers and those who claim to be

able to communicate with the departed.

3. Saul was no more penitent and no more inclined to seek the forgiveness of God after talking with Samuel than he was before. This should be proof that if a man will not listen to the word of God, as revealed through his prophets in the scriptures, he will not listen to the message from God though it was brought by one risen from the dead.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Give the time, places, and persons
Repeat the golden text.

Golden Text Explained

What was Saul's attitude toward the law of the Lord?
Can you show briefly the evidence of rebellion in the heart of Saul?
Can you show his attempts to frustrate God's purposes in David?
State and discuss as time will allow three things that emphasize Saul's God-forsaken condition.
To what extremes did the God-forsaken Saul resort?

Introduction

What do you know of the time of Samuel's death?
Can you state briefly the part Samuel had played in the institution of the kingdom in Israel?

State briefly as to what is said of Samuel's character and conduct while in office.
What do you know of Saul's destruction of the Gibeonites?
Why and how did Saul destroy the priests?
What do you know of Saul's efforts to destroy David?

Saul Goes to Endor

To what danger did Saul expose himself to reach Endor?
For what purpose did Saul go to Endor?
What had Saul done to suppress people with familiar spirits?
What did the law of Moses say should be done with such people?
What assurance did Saul give the woman that she would not be prosecuted?

Samuel Comes to Saul

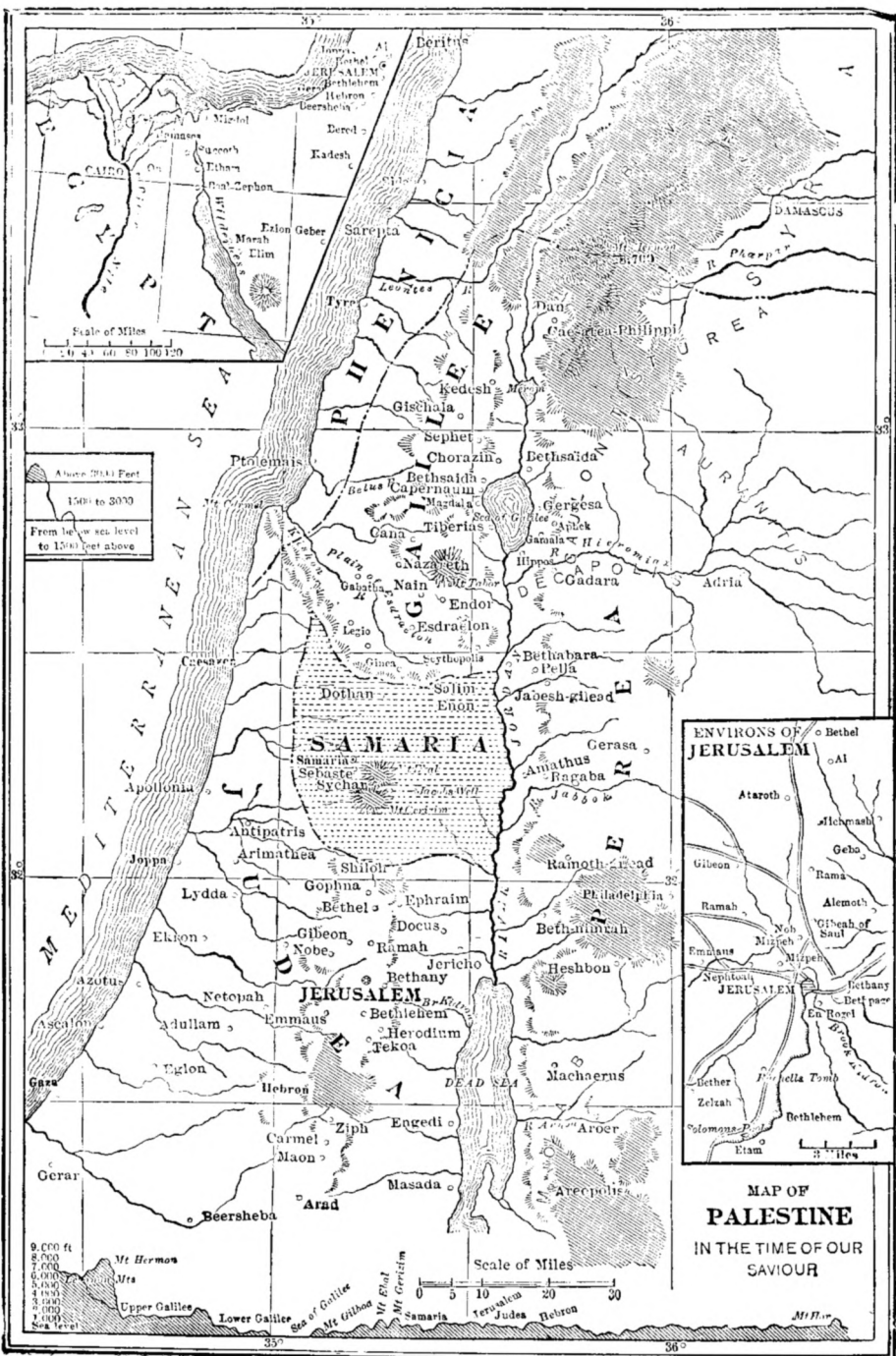
Why did the woman cry out with a loud voice?
What proof do you see in these incidents that Samuel actually appeared to Saul?

What was Saul's real reason for calling Samuel up?
Why could Saul not get this opinion from other sources?

Samuel's Message to Saul

Did Samuel tell Saul anything which Saul did not already know?

What reason did Samuel give Saul for the kingdom being taken from him?
What did Samuel say would happen to Saul on the morrow?
What did Samuel predict with reference to the outcome of the battle?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?



MAP OF PALESTINE
IN THE TIME OF OUR SAVIOUR

9,000 ft
8,000
7,000
6,000
5,000
4,000
3,000
2,000
1,000
Sea level

Mt Hermon
Mra
Upper Galilee
Lower Galilee
Sea of Galilee
Mt Gerizim
Samarita
Tersusalem
Judaea
Hebron

Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30

THIRD QUARTER

HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH—First Half

Aim.—To study the inspired history of the early church that we may learn the details thereof, and the secret of its power in evangelizing the world.

Lesson I—July 4, 1954

THE CHURCH IN GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Lesson Text

Eph. 3: 1-10

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Je'-sus in behalf of you Gen'-tiles,—

2 If so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward;

3 How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ;

5 Which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

6 *To wit*, that the Gen'-tiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of

the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Je'-sus through the gospel,

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gen'-tiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things;

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.

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.—Eph. 1: 16-25.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 28. M.....Divine Design (Prov. 16: 1-4)
- June 29. T.....Time for Every Purpose (Eccles. 3: 1-6)
- June 30. W.Purposes Established (Prov. 20: 16-18)
- July 1. T.....Purpose Announced (Isa. 14: 24-27)
- July 2. F.....Jehovah’s Purpose (Isa. 19: 16-19)
- July 3. S.....Gospel Preached to Abraham (Gal. 3: 1-8)
- July 4. S.....God’s Purpose Regarding Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2: 1-22)

Time.—A.D. 63.

Place.—Ephesus.

Persons.—Paul and the Ephesian church.

Golden Text Explained

1. God is to be glorified. Paul tells us that God is to receive glory in the church. The word *glory* means, “Praise, honor, or distinction . . . honor and praise accorded in worship.” (a) God is eminently worthy of glory. Certainly God is worthy of all the praise, the honor, and the distinction it is possible for us as human beings to ascribe unto him. His creation and preservation of the universe

suggest a power beyond our ability to measure. It also suggests God’s goodness toward us in furnishing us a place to live and the temporal blessings which we enjoy, (b) God is worthy of glory because he has given us life and has preserved our life in good health. Paul beseeches us to give our bodies a living sacrifice to him because of his mercies toward us. (Rom. 12: 1.) We are prone to take

life and good health as blessings to which we are entitled and so forget to be thankful to God and to give him the glory for his goodness, (c) God is to be glorified because of his redeeming love and power. Not only has God given us physical life, but through the death of his Son on Calvary he has given us spiritual life. He has redeemed us from sin and our bondage in sin and has given us freedom and liberty in Christ Jesus. He has cleansed us, sanctified us, and will ultimately glorify us. For all these things he is to be glorified.

2. **God glorified in the church.** Our text tells us that we are to give glory to God in the church. Too many people think that God can be glorified out of the church as well as in the church. God does not accept praise, honor, worship, or service from the children of the devil. The church is composed of the children of God. All of God's children are in his church, which is his family. (1 Tim. 3: 15.) There are but two spiritual families to which men may belong. One is the family of God, which is the church; the other is the family of the devil. If one is not in the church, the family of God, that one is in the family of the devil. So if one is not in the church, he cannot glorify God. He may do good works, such as feeding the hungry and visiting the sick, but such acts from a sinner, a child of the devil, are not glorifying God. (a) We glorify God in worship. When we sing songs of praise and adoration to God for his goodness, mercy, and love, we are glorifying God in the church. Reading, preaching, and meditating upon the word of God honor and glorify God. This may be done either privately or publicly. When the church assembles for worship, one item of worship is reading and meditating upon the word of God. This is done to the glory of God. Taking the Lord's supper and giving of our means as we are prospered are other means of glorifying God in the worship. To engage in any act of worship which is authorized by Jesus Christ is a means of glorifying God. But when people do as acts of worship that which has not been au-

thorized by Jesus Christ, they are not glorifying God. The burning of incense, the playing of instruments of music, the use of holy water, and many other things which human wisdom has suggested are dishonoring to God rather than glorifying God. (b) Serving God is a means of glorifying God. When we visit the sick, when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, we are glorifying God. God expects his servants, members of the church of the Lord, to engage in such good works. God does not expect the children of the devil to do these good works. And when they, stirred by human emotions, do such good works, they either honor themselves or the institutions through which they do them and do not contribute to the glory of God. But when children of God, moved by Christ-like pity and compassion, feed the hungry and care for the destitute, they are glorifying God.

3. **God glorified forever.** Our text says that God is to be glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and forever, (a) This suggests that God is eternal, and that for all eternity he will be worthy of such glory. This reminds us that our God is unchangeable. (Mal. 3: 6; Heb. 13: 8.) (b) This suggests that the church will last forever. If God is to be glorified in the church forever and ever, certainly the church or those who comprise the church will last forever and ever. We do not mean to suggest that the church in its present form will last forever, but those who make up the church will last forever and that they will be eternally under obligations to glorify God. They will have even more reason to glorify God in eternity than they have now. For they will then have experienced their resurrection and glorification, (c) If we are to glorify God forever and ever, we conclude that the reasons why he is to be glorified are eternal reasons. His goodness and mercy are eternal, and his manifestation of his goodness toward us in saving us from our sins, in raising us from the dead and glorifying us in heaven, will be sufficient reasons for us to give him glory unto all generations forever and ever.

Introduction

1. The church was in the purpose of God at the time of the birth of Paul. Paul said that he was separated from birth that God might reveal his Son

in him, that he might preach Christ among the Gentiles. (Gal. 1: 15, 16.) This simply means that at the time of Paul's birth it was in the purpose of

God to use Paul to preach the gospel of Christ. Is it possible that God intended to use Paul for the preaching of the gospel, but did not know that the preaching of this gospel would result in establishment of churches? There are those who say that Jesus came to this world for the purpose of establishing his kingdom, but since the Jews rejected him, he was unable to establish it, and that he established the church to serve until such time as he could return and establish his kingdom. But if God had it in his mind to use Paul for the preaching of the gospel, he certainly must have known that the preaching of the gospel would result in the establishment of churches. Hence, we conclude that at the time of Paul's birth God had in mind that churches should be established through the preaching of the gospel by Paul and others.

2. The church was in the purpose of God in the time of Moses. When Paul preached to Agrippa, he said that he was preaching "nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26: 22, 23.) According to Paul, Moses foretold the sufferings of Christ and his proclaiming light both to the people and to the Gentiles. Is it possible that God in the time of Moses knew that Christ would suffer but did not know that through this suffering the church would be purchased? Proclaiming light to the people and to the Gentiles simply means the preaching of the gospel to Jew and Gentile. Is it possible that God in the time of Moses knew that the gospel would be preached to Jew and Gentile, but did not know that the preaching of the gospel would result in the establish-

ment of churches? We therefore conclude that God in the time of Moses knew that Jesus would suffer and that through this suffering he would redeem or purchase the church unto himself, and God also knew that the gospel would be proclaimed both to Jew and to Gentile and that, through the preaching of the gospel, people would be saved and churches would be established. Hence, the church was in the purpose of God in the time of Moses.

3. The church was in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world. Peter tells that we were not redeemed with silver or gold "but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake." (1 Pet. 1: 19, 20.) This tells us that God knew even before the foundation of the world that Jesus would suffer as a lamb, that through the shedding of his blood we might be redeemed. Therefore, it was in the purpose of God even before the creation of the world that Jesus should suffer to redeem mankind. Is it possible that God knew that Jesus would thus suffer but did not know that his suffering would purchase the church? Is it possible that God knew before the creation of the world that through this suffering Jesus would redeem people from sin, but did not know that these redeemed people would constitute the church? Surely God knew the purpose of the suffering of Christ and surely God knew that those redeemed through his suffering would constitute the church. Therefore, we conclude that the church was in the purpose of God even before the creation or foundation of the world.

Exposition of the Text

I. God's Purpose Revealed to Paul (Verses 1-5)

For this cause. In the preceding paragraph Paul had told of the former condition of the Gentiles when they were not members of the covenant and contrasted that with their present condition in Christ Jesus. Now he begins to tell them how and where he got his information as to the blessings and privileges of the Gentiles. He speaks of himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of the Gentiles. By this Paul means that he is suffer-

ing in prison on account of his teaching with reference to the blessings and privileges of the Gentiles. The Jews sent Paul to prison because he insisted that the Gentiles without circumcision were entitled to all the blessings and privileges that the Jews were entitled to.

How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery. Paul affirms that the gospel which he preached was not "after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me

through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1: 11, 12.) In our text Paul says a mystery was made known to him. The word mystery does not convey the thought of something impossible to be understood, but rather it suggests something which must be revealed before we can know it. This mystery to which Paul refers is the truth that Gentiles have equal rights and privileges in the gospel with the Jews.

I wrote before in few words. Some think that this suggests a former letter which Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, but it is more probable that he refers to some things which he wrote in the first chapter of this epistle. (Chapter 1: 9; 2: 18.) Paul suggests that when we read his writing we can perceive his understanding in the mystery of Christ. Our Catholic friends tell us that common people cannot understand the writings of inspired men without the help and direction of the church. For that reason they have never encouraged general Bible reading. But Paul says that, when people read what he has written, they may perceive his understanding in these matters. For that purpose we encourage general Bible reading and study.

Which in other generations was not made known. Though Moses and the prophets wrote of Christ and of his work on earth, they wrote in most general terms, with no details and with little understanding of many of the things which they wrote. Peter says that they wrote of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, "To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preach the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into." (1 Pet. 1: 11, 12.)

II. God's Purpose Explained (Verses

6, 7)

The Gentiles are fellow-heirs. When Paul speaks of Gentiles, he always has in mind uncircumcised persons. In this verse Paul affirms that it had been in the purpose of God through many generations past to make the uncircumcised Gentiles fellow-heirs with the Jews; and this mystery which Paul was writing to the Ephesians was inspired by the Holy Spirit and preached by apostles

and New Testament prophets. It was therefore the will and teaching of God. To be fellow-heirs simply means that Gentiles were to inherit along with the Jews the blessings and glories which God through Christ has to bestow upon mankind.

Fellow-members of the body. The body to which reference is made here is the church which Jesus established. (Eph. 1: 22; Col. 1: 18.) Since the church is composed of the redeemed children of God; it follows that Gentiles were equally entitled to the rights of redemption in the family of God. To the Jew this was a most repulsive doctrine, and for this teaching Paul was suffering in prison. But notice that Paul says this mystery which contained the idea that Gentiles were fellow-members of the church with the Jews was hidden in God for many generations past. We therefore conclude that for many generations past the church had been included in the purpose of God, and that Gentiles were to be members of that church with equal privileges along with the Jews.

Fellow-partakers of the promise. The promise to which reference is made is the promise which God made to Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed. (Gen. 12: 3; Acts 3: 25, 26; Gal. 3: 8, 16, 29.) This statement is proof that the church was included in the purpose of God as far back as the days of Abraham. God promised Abraham that through his seed all nations, including Gentiles, would be blessed. Paul says (Gal. 3: 16) that this promise did not mean all the posterity of Abraham, but the word *seed* is singular and refers to Christ; so God promised Abraham that in Christ all families of the earth should be blessed. And now Paul tells us in our text that this mystery was not made known in generations past but is now revealed through the apostles and New Testament prophets that the Gentiles are fellow-partakers with the Jews in the blessings of this promise in Christ Jesus. Next, he says that this promise is to be enjoyed through the gospel. It is made known to us through the gospel of Christ. One cannot learn this truth from the Old Testament. It takes the added revelation in the New to make it clear to us. Next, we enjoy this blessing through the gospel because it is in the gospel we find the power of salvation. (Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

III. God's Purpose Accomplished Through the Church (Verses 8-11)

Less than the least of all saints. It is interesting to note Paul's conception of himself. At one time he says, "In nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles." (2 Cor. 12: 11.) In our text he says he was the least of all saints. Again, nearer the close of his life, he said he was the chief of sinners. (1 Tim. 1: 15.) The context will reveal the purpose of these statements and the reason for the difference between them. Paul was called and given the responsibility of preaching this great mystery to the Gentiles to make them understand the unsearchable riches of Christ. He felt humbled that he should be given so great and so responsible a position in the Lord's plan.

To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery. The word dispensation means "the divine arrangement." It was Paul's purpose to make all men see or understand how God had developed his purpose, how he had withheld a full knowledge of the privileges of the Gentiles through many generations, but was now revealing them for his own glory and for the salvation of both Jew and Gentile.

To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places. Paul's purpose in preaching the gospel to make known this mystery was twofold. First, to make all men see what is the dis-

pen-sation of the mystery; second, that the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might know the manifold wisdom of God. Through God's handling of these affairs according to his eternal purpose, the angels, the principalities and powers, were to become acquainted with the wisdom of God. Many brethren take this verse as a proof text that the church is to preach the gospel to the whole world. But this is not the meaning of the writer. Paul simply says that he is preaching the gospel to the whole world in order that the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might know the manifold wisdom of God, and these principalities and powers in the heavenly places are learning this lesson concerning the manifold wisdom of God through God's handling of the church. When God takes a lost, defiled sinner and saves that individual, cleanses, sanctifies and ultimately glorifies that person, the angels in heaven get a new conception of the power and the wisdom and the goodness of God.

According to the eternal purpose. All of this which Paul has mentioned is according to an eternal purpose which the Father purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. God knew the end from the beginning. So before he ever created man, he know that man would sin, fall, and need to be redeemed; and God purposed to redeem man in Christ Jesus, even before he ever created man.

Lessons to Learn

1. The gospel which we believe and by which we are saved is not of human origin. It is the revelation from Jesus Christ.

2. Gentiles have a special reason for glorifying God in Christ Jesus. For many generations they were excluded from the covenants of promise, but now in Christ Jesus they are no more strangers, but fellow citizens

with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

3. We should be impressed anew with the wisdom of God, who could plan all things from the beginning and work his plan in spite of the frailty and unfaithfulness of mankind.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give the time, place, and persons.
What is the aim of the lessons of this quarter?

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word *glow*?
Give and discuss three reasons why God is eminently worthy of glory.

In what relationship is God to be glorified?
Why is it impossible for people out of the church to glorify God?

Name and discuss ways to glorify God in the church.
What attributes of God are suggested in our text?
What does our text suggest with reference to the duration of the church?
What does our text teach with reference to the reasons for glorifying God?

Introduction

Can you prove that the establishment of the church was in the purpose of God at the time of the birth of Paul?

Give proof that the church was in the purpose of God in the time of Moses.
 What is meant by "the foundation of the world"?

Can you prove that it was God's purpose before the creation of the world to purchase the church through the suffering of Jesus on the cross?

Can you relate this teaching to the premillennial doctrine that Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom, but failed because of the opposition of the Jews and established the church instead?

God's Purpose Revealed to Paul

Why was Paul a prisoner at the time he wrote Ephesians?
 What is a mystery?
 What did Paul say about the source of the gospel he preached?
 What did Paul say about the ability of common people to understand what he wrote?
 What does Paul say about the time when his gospel was made known?
 What does Peter say of the knowledge of the prophets concerning the things they wrote?

God's Purpose Explained

What was God's purpose with reference to the right of Gentiles to be heirs of God?

What was God's purpose concerning the right of Gentiles to be members of the church?
 What proof do we have in this text that this purpose of God was an ancient purpose?
 Of what promise were the Gentiles to be fellow partakers?
 Through whom was the blessing to Gentiles made known?
 What connection does the gospel have with these blessings?

God's Purpose Accomplished Through the Church

What three statements reveal Paul's estimate of himself?
 What effect did his connection with God's eternal purpose have upon Paul?
 What is the meaning of the word *dispensation*?
 What was Paul's responsibility with reference to this mystery?
 Who are the principalities and powers mentioned in our text?
 What were these principalities and powers to learn? How were they to learn it?
 Why is this plan called the eternal purpose of God?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson II—July 11, 1954

THE CHURCH IN PROMISE

Lesson Text

Matt. 16: 13-20, 28

13 Now when Je'-sus came into the parts of Caes-a-re'-a Phi-lip'-pi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?

14 And they said, Some say John the Bap'-tist; some, E-li-jah: and others, Jer-e-mi-ah, or one of the prophets.

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

16 And Si'-mon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Je'-sus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Si'-mon Bar-Jo'-nah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I

will build my church; and the gates of Ha'-des shall not prevail against it.

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

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

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28 Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16: 18a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 16: 21-28.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 5. M.....Tabernacle of David to Be Rebuilt (Acts 15: 14-18)
- July 6. T.Jehovah Must Build House (Psalm 127: 1-4)
- July 7. W.....Stone Laid in Zion (Isa. 28: 14-22)
- July 8. T.No Other Foundation Can Be Laid (1 Cor. 3: 1-11)
- July 9. F.....Built on Foundation of Apostles and Prophets (Eph. 2: 11-22)
- July 10. S.....Foundations on Rock and Sand (Matt. 7: 24-29)
- July 11. S. Kingdom Promised (Dan. 2: 1-44)

Time.—A.D. 28.

Place.—Caesarea Philippi.

Persons.—Jesus and his apostles.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Upon this rock,** (a) Some think Peter is the rock mentioned in this text, but Peter could not have been the foundation for three reasons. 1. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock," he used a feminine word, *petra*. The word for Peter is *petros* and is in the masculine gender. If Jesus had meant to say that he was building the church upon Peter, he would have used the masculine form instead of the feminine. 2. Peter could not be the foundation in this figure of speech because he is made the one to hold and to use the keys. Jesus said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom." Peter could not be both the foundation and the one to hold and use the keys in the same illustration. That would be confusion of which our Lord would not be guilty. 3. The church is a divine institution. Peter was a weak, frail, fallible human being. To say that a divine institution has a frail, faulty human foundation is to say that humanity upholds and supports divinity, (b) Others say that Jesus is the foundation. But this cannot be true for at least two reasons. 1. The foundation here is spoken of as something in the feminine gender. If Jesus himself is the foundation, the word would have been in the masculine gender. 2. Jesus in this illustration is the builder of the church, and he cannot in the same illustration or figure be both the builder and the foundation. This would be as confusing as to say that Peter could be both the foundation and the one to hold and use the keys. So in this lesson Jesus is not the foundation, though from other points of view and in teaching other lessons he is spoken of as the foundation. (1 Cor. 3: 10, 11.) The truth which Peter confessed is the foundation on which the church of our Lord was built and upon which it rests. Peter confessed his belief that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. Upon this truth the church stands. If what Peter said is false and Jesus is not the Christ, neither the Son of God, the church cannot stand. Hence, the truth that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God is the foundation stone upon

which the church was built and upon which it rests even today.

2. **I will build.** At the time Jesus spoke these words the church was not in existence. This was about six months after the death of John the Baptist. Hence, at the time of the death of John the Baptist the church was not in existence. We therefore conclude that John was not a member of the church, neither did he baptize people into the church. The building of the church could not have been before the death of Christ, for the foundation had to be laid before the structure was built. But the foundation stone had to be rejected before it could be laid as a foundation. (Psalm 118: 22; 1 Pet. 2: 7, 8.) The foundation stone was rejected when Jesus was crucified. Jesus referred to this when teaching the Jews a lesson on his rejection and the coming of the kingdom. (Matt. 21: 41-46.) If the church could not be built before the foundation was laid and the foundation could not be laid until the stone was rejected, and the stone was rejected in the crucifixion, it follows that the church could not be built until after the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord. But we may also say that the church could not have been in existence before the day of Pentecost after his resurrection, for he was not made head of the church until he was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. (Eph. 1: 18-22.) If the church existed before that day, it was a body without a head. Next, if the church existed before Pentecost, it was a body without a Spirit, for the Spirit did not come until the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2: 1-4.) Since a body without the Spirit is dead, if there was a church before Pentecost, it was a dead church.

3. **Jesus said he would build his church.** The church belongs to Jesus because he purchased it with his own blood. (Acts 20: 28.) Paul says that this church is the house or family of God. (1 Tim. 3: 15.) This church is not a denomination nor is a composite body, composed of many denominations. The church which Jesus built existed before denomina-

tions came into existence. Its existence therefore is not dependent upon the existence of a number of religious bodies. Since the church is God's house or family, it is composed of the children of God. All of the children of God on earth are members of this church. No one outside of this church can possibly be a member of God's family, for the family of God is this church which Jesus built. It is a significant fact that no other church is mentioned in the scriptures. Therefore, the church which Jesus built, and of which he is the head, is the only scriptural religious organization that men know anything about. It is the only scriptural institution of which people have any right to be members. Since it is the

purchased possession of the Lord, those who are members of it are purchased by the Lord. Those who are not members of that church are not purchased by the Lord and so do not belong to the Lord. Those who do not belong to the Lord are not redeemed. Hence, those who are not in the church and not a part of it are not redeemed by the blood of Christ. Jesus is head over his church, therefore, not the head of human religious institutions. The Spirit of God dwells in the church that Jesus built, therefore, does not dwell in religious institutions built by men. Jesus is the Saviour of the body, his church (Eph. 5: 23), therefore, is not the Saviour of any human religious institution.

Introduction

There are several promises concerning the establishment of the church, the kingdom. (a) Isaiah spoke of the establishment of Jehovah's house in the top of the mountains and to be exalted above the hills. (Isa. 2: 2-4.) He said it would be in the last days. Then, in Joel 2: 28, we learn that the Holy Spirit was to be poured out in the last days. Peter quoted that prophecy on the day of Pentecost and said it was then being fulfilled. (Acts 2: 16-21.) So the day of Pentecost was among the last days. Hence, we would expect the church to be established at that time. Next, Isaiah said that all nations should flow into it. On the day of Pentecost, we hear Peter saying that the promise was not only for the Jews but to all them that were afar off, as many as the Lord should call. (Acts 2: 39.) Last, Isaiah said when Jehovah's house should be established the law would go forth from Zion and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. Jesus said that it was written with reference to his work that he should suffer and rise from the dead and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24: 46, 47.)

We read in Dan. 2: 44 that "in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these king-

doms, and it shall stand for ever." By studying the context the student will find that Daniel had interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar and said that in the days of the fourth world-wide power, which was Rome, the God of heaven would set up a kingdom. This tells us that the kingdom or church was to be established in the days of the Roman Empire. That kingdom established during the days of the Roman Empire was not to be left to another people, and it was to stand forever. Hence, it is now in existence.

We notice next the promise of the church made by John the Baptist. He came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and telling the people to repent, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3: 1, 2.) This kingdom which John said was at hand is the kingdom Daniel spoke of and the Lord's house spoken of by Isaiah. When John had been put in prison, Jesus began to preach, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1: 14, 15.) Old Testament prophets spoke of the kingdom as being in the future. Jesus now says the time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand. He simply meant that the time for the kingdom is here. The kingdom is at hand. It is to immediately appear or be established. Proof that this kingdom is the church that Jesus promised to build and did build will be offered in the body of the lesson discussion.

Exposition of the Text

I. The Builder of the Church Revealed (Verses 13-17)

Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi. This city was in the northern part of Palestine near the foot of Mount Hermon. It had formerly been called Panium because the god Pan had a temple there. During the time of Herod the Great, a new temple was built there and named for Augustus Caesar. Later, when Philip became tetrarch of that portion of territory, he enlarged the town and called it Caesarea Philippi. This was partly in his own honor and partly in the honor of the emperor. This was one of the northernmost points in our Lord's journeys.

Who do men say that the Son of man is? The disciples had recently been out on a preaching tour. They had been among the people, and Jesus asked what the people thought about him. Some thought he was John the Baptist come from the dead. This idea was held by Herod. (Matt. 14: 1, 2.) Different people saw in Jesus different characteristics reminding them of various prophets of old. His stern measures in cleansing the temple might remind them of Elijah, while his compassion and weeping over the sorrows and hardships of the people would remind them of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah.

Who say ye that I am? Jesus has always been interested in what his people think about him. What we think about him today is a matter of the utmost importance (a) Some people think that Jesus was a man, and only a man. They view him as a great moral teacher who exerted perhaps the greatest influence any human being ever exerted. But yet they think he was only a man. However, it is impossible for them to account satisfactorily for the miracles he performed, for his death and resurrection, for his influence upon the apostles, and for his continued influence in the world, (b) There have been a few people all along since the days of the apostles who believed that Jesus was not a man: that he was God and that which appeared to be human was merely an appearance and not a reality. These cannot satisfactorily account for the fact that Jesus got hungry, tired, and that he died. Nor can they account for the fact that he was

born of Mary and that the stories of his birth were written and circulated as well as preached publicly during the lifetime of Mary and of many of his friends who knew him all his life. The story of his birth was never denied.

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. This was the belief of the Lord's disciples. Peter was the spokesman. The word *Christ* means the *Messiah* or the *anointed*. The Christ, Messiah was to be the son of David. (Matt. 22: 41-46.) The term *son of David* denoted his humanity, while the term *Son of God* denoted his divinity. So the true conception of Jesus is that he is both human and divine. This is the conception which Jesus wishes everyone to have of him. If he views him as the Christ the son of David he will view him as one of us who is able to sympathize with us, because he knows and feels our infirmities. If he views him as the Son of God, he will view him as God in the flesh and not only able to sympathize with us but to save us from our sins, our sorrows, and our sufferings. Often it is said that Peter was the first to make such a confession concerning Jesus, but Nathanael made such a confession several months before Peter made his. Nathanael said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel." (John 1: 49.)

Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee. Peter had not learned this great truth from human teachers nor from human reasoning. Barnes thinks this may suggest that Peter had not learned this truth from the lowly human appearance of Jesus. Peter had learned this truth from the heavenly Father. Not that God had miraculously put this truth into his heart, but that through the teaching and the miracles of Jesus Peter had learned that Jesus was the Son of God.

II. Jesus Promises to Build the Church (Verses 18-20)

The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. After giving the promise to build the church as outlined in our golden text, Jesus further promised that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it. (a) Some take this statement to mean that the evil power and influence of Satan shall never be able to over-

throw the church, (b) Another view is that Jesus said, he would build his church, and the gates of Hades, that is, his death and entrance into Hades should not prevent his accomplishing this feat. That is, he would build the church in spite of his descent into Hades. In this view, the word *it* would refer not to the church itself, but to the building of the church.

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The word keys simply signifies the power to open or close, the power to bind or to loose. Some have taken the plural form of the word *keys* to mean that there was one key to admit alien sinners to the church, another key to admit the erring child of God back into the fellowship of the church, and some go so far as to say that the third key was used in admitting the Gentiles into the church. However, there is little foundation for such an interpretation.

Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth. "The phrase to bind and to loose was often used by the Jews. It meant to prohibit and to permit. To bind a thing was to forbid it; to loose it, to allow it to be done." (Barnes.) Catholics claim that this power to bind and to loose was given to Peter only. However, sometime later, Jesus said to all the disciples, "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18: 18.) An on one of his appearances to his apostles he said, "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20: 23.)

Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man. There are

two reasons why Jesus did not wish his disciples to tell that he was the Christ at that time. 1. It would have endangered his life and interfered with his plans. 2. The disciples were not yet ready to preach this message. They did not have sufficient understanding of his person and of the nature of his work and of the kingdom he was about to establish.

III. Promise to Be Enjoyed by That Generation (Verses 28)

Some . . . shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. Mark recorded this statement, "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9: 1.) In this statement Jesus simply says that the kingdom of God would come during the lifetime of some who were present with him at that time. Jesus told his disciples that he would build his church and would give Peter the keys of the kingdom. Did Jesus build one building and give Peter the keys to another? If Jesus gave him the keys of that which he promised to build, the church and the kingdom are the same institution. So when Jesus said that some of those present would not taste death until the coming of the kingdom, he simply meant that he would build the church during the lifetime of those present. On the day of Pentecost we find people being added to the church. (Acts 2: 41, 47.) Soon there arose a persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem. (Acts 8: 1-3.) Hence, the church was in actual existence during the lifetime of some of those to whom Jesus made the promise to build his church.

Lessons to Learn

1. Jesus is interested in our having a true conception of his person and his work. He has revealed his identity and has inspired the record of it that we might come to know him and to enjoy salvation through this knowledge.

2. The love of God and the sacrifice of Christ went into the building

of the church. How much are we putting into the spread of the church throughout the world?

3. Flesh and blood have never revealed anything about God or the church. Such knowledge comes only through revelation from God, and that doctrine or principle which is not based upon a revelation from God is to be rejected as of no value.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give the time, place, and persons.

Golden Text Explained
What is the rock on which Jesus promised to build the church?

Why cannot Peter be that rock?
 Give two reasons why Jesus is not intended as the foundation.
 Is Jesus referred to in other places as the foundation?
 What proof do we have that John the Baptist was not in the church?
 Can you prove that the church was not built before the death of Jesus?
 What proof do we have that the church was not built before the day of Pentecost?
 Why does the church belong to Jesus?
 Since the church is composed of the redeemed, what is the condition of those who are not members of the church?
 Is the church which Jesus built a denomination? Why?
 What proof do we have that Jesus is not head over human religious institutions?

Introduction

What did Isaiah say concerning the establishment of the church?
 What did Daniel say with reference to the time of the establishment of the church?
 What proof do we have in Daniel's statement that the kingdom is now in existence?
 What did John the Baptist and Jesus say about the time for the kingdom to come?

The Builder of the Church Revealed

What city was one of the most northern points of our Lord's journeys?
 What do you know of the history of this city?

Why were the disciples in position to tell Jesus what people thought of him?
 What was Herod's idea of Jesus?
 Why would some think him to be Jeremiah? and others Elijah?
 Discuss two views people have today of Jesus and give answers to each.
 Define the following terms: Christ, Messiah; son of David; Son of God.
 Who was first to confess Jesus as the Son of God?
 What did Jesus mean when he said that flesh and blood had not revealed this to Peter?

Jesus Promises to Build the Church

What is meant by the gates of Hades?
 What is meant by the gates of Hades not prevailing against the church?
 To whom were the keys of the kingdom promised?
 What does the word *keys* mean in this passage?
 Did Jesus promise Peter anything which he did not give the other apostles?
 What is meant by binding? and loosing?
 Why did Jesus charge his disciples to tell no man what he had said to them?

Promise to Be Enjoyed by That Generation

Give Mark's statement of this promise.
 Can you prove that the kingdom promised is the church Jesus built?
 If the church and kingdom are the same, what does this prove with reference to the establishment and existence of the kingdom?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—July 18, 1954

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED

Lesson Text

Mark 9: 1; Acts 1: 6-8; 2: 1-4, 41, 47

1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand *by*, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.

6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Is-ra-el?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.

8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jeru'-sa-lem, and in all Ju'-dae'-a and Sa-ma'-ri-a, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1 And when the day of Pen'-te-cost

was now come, they were all together in one place.

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

3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

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

41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *“And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.”* (Acts 2: 47b.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING. — Acts 11: 12-15.

Daily Bible Readings

July 12. M.....	Events of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-21)
July 13. T.....	Origin of the Day of Pentecost (Lev. 23: 9-21)
July 14. W.....	Law to Issue from Zion (Isa. 2: 1-4)
July 15. F.....	Sure Mercies of David (Isa. 55: 1-11)
July 16. F.....	Holy Spirit Promised (John 16: 13-20)
July 17. S.....	Church Founded on Hock (Matt. 16: 13-20)
July 18. S.....	Events of Pentecost Foretold (Joel 2: 28-32)

TIME.—For Mark A.D. 28; for Acts of the Apostles A.D. 30.

Places.—For Mark, Caesarea Philippi; for Acts of the Apostles, Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus and his apostles and the multitudes in Jerusalem.

Golden Text Explained

1. The Lord adds to his church, (a)

The Lord adds to his church by determining the conditions of entrance into his church. No one can become a member of the Lord's church without doing those things which the Lord has determined are necessary for entrance into his church. There are no infidels in the Lord's church. Jesus demands that all who are members of his body, his church, believe in him as the Christ, the Son of the living God and the Saviour of their souls. (John 3: 16; Mark 16: 16; John 8: 24.) Next, there are no impenitent, rebellious souls in the church of our Lord. He demands that we repent of our sins. (Luke 13: 3; Acts 17: 30.) Next, there are none in the church of our Lord who are ashamed of Jesus as their Saviour and Master. He demands that we confess him to be the Christ, the Son of God, before we can enter his church. (Rom. 10: 9, 10; Matt. 10: 32, 33.) For an example of this confession read Acts 8: 37. The church of our Lord is composed of new creatures, those who have been born again, born of water and the Spirit. (John 3: 5.) Baptism in water for the remission of sins is the consummating act of this new birth and brings us into the church which is God's family. (Acts 2: 38; 1 Cor. 12: 13; Tit. 3: 5.) These are the conditions of entrance into the church which Jesus built, and he adds us when we have complied with these conditions, (b) When the Lord adds us to his church our names are written in the book of life. Paul speaks of his fellow workers in Philippi as having their names written in the book of life. (Phil. 4: 3.) Jesus told the church at Sardis, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my

Father, and before his angels." (Rev. 3: 5.) It is good for churches to keep a membership roll and thus to keep a record of those who are members of the congregations, but the roll as we keep it is one thing and the roll as the Lord keeps it is another. There undoubtedly are many names on the roll kept by elders of the congregations which are not on the roll as kept by the Lord. We cannot detect insincerity as to purpose and so may enroll some who come into the church for financial reasons or others not acceptable to the Lord, but the Lord knows our motives and purposes and enrolls only those who are sincere in their obedience to the gospel.

2. **The church is composed of the saved,** (a) The conditions of salvation are the conditions of entrance into the church, hence, the church is composed of the saved. Furthermore, all of the saved people of the earth are in the church. There is no such thing as being saved and remaining outside the church, (b) We, therefore, conclude that salvation is to be enjoyed in the church. Since the conditions of salvation are the terms of entrance into the church, it follows that no one can be saved without being in the church. If no one can be saved without being in the church, it follows that salvation is to be enjoyed only in the church. It also follows that church membership is not a matter of choice or of expediency. If one wishes to be saved, he must be a member of the church, (c) While this is true, it does not follow that the church is our saviour. Some object to the position that to be saved one must be in the church on the ground that this makes the church our saviour. Paul tells us that Jesus is the Saviour of the body, the church. (Eph. 5: 23.) So Jesus is our Saviour, and he chooses to save those who are

in his church. So we say that salvation is to be enjoyed in the church, but the church is not the saviour.

3. Meaning: of the word saved in our text, (a) Those who were added to the church were not saved from persecution, or from sorrow, or from anything of a temporal nature, (b) Those who were added to the church were not guaranteed salvation in heaven. Some have the idea that if one is once saved, he can never be lost; and since the saved were added to the church, they think that the church is composed of those that are

going to heaven without fail, (c) Those who were added to the church were saved from the sins of their past life—those sins which were committed from the day they became accountable to God until the day they were added to the church. The word has the same meaning here that it has in Mark 16: 16, where Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It simply means the forgiveness of all the sins they had committed from the day of accountability until the day they were baptized, for the remission of those sins.

Introduction

1. The church was not built in the days of John the Baptist. John had been dead about six months when Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." (Matt. 16: 18.) But there are statements which some people take to teach that the kingdom, or church, was in existence in the days of John. One such statement is, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force. (Matt. 11: 12.) If the kingdom was not actually in existence in the days of John, how could men of violence take it by force? Again, "The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it." (Luke 16: 16.) John did a work of preparation, getting people ready for the kingdom. When he said the kingdom of heaven was at hand, many people thought the Messiah was soon to come to deliver them from Roman bondage; hence, they pressed into or violently entered his work of preparation for the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven could suffer violence in its preparatory stage as well as it could suffer violence in its actual existence, and when these car-

nally minded Jews accepted John's baptism in the hope only of deliverance from Rome, they were doing violence to the kingdom.

2. Another scripture which people have taken to prove that the church was in existence during the personal ministry of Christ is Matt. 18: 15-17. Here Jesus taught his disciples how an offended brother was to treat the one who had offered the offense. Finally the offended one was to tell the matter to the church and if the one offering the offense refused to hear the church, the offended one was to treat him as a Gentile and a publican. Some contend that if the church was not then in existence, Jesus would not have given such instruction. But in this passage Jesus was simply giving them instruction as to their conduct in the church when it should be established. He continues in the same paragraph to say, "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Did his disciples have that power at the time he was speaking? In Matt. 16: 18, 19 we learn that this power was not to be enjoyed at the time of the speaking, but at the time when Jesus would build his church.

Exposition of the Text

I. Expectation of the Apostles (Mark 9: 1; Acts 1: 6-8)

Some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death. This statement was made to his apostles. Therefore, according to Jesus, the kingdom would come during the lifetime of some of the apostles. Judas died before the establishment of the kingdom; hence, at least one of

the apostles to whom this statement was made failed to live until the fulfillment of the promise. (Acts 1: 15-20.)

Till they see the kingdom of God come with power. Some of the apostles should not die until the kingdom was established. That the kingdom is the church which Jesus built may be seen in the fact that Jesus said

he would build his church and give to Peter the keys of the kingdom. (Matt. 16: 18, 19.) Surely Jesus did not build a church and then give Peter the keys to something other than the church. Hence, the kingdom is the church. Again, Jesus said that he would appoint his apostles a kingdom that they might eat and drink at his table in his kingdom. (Luke 22: 29, 30.) In 1 Cor. 11: 18-20 we learn that the Lord's supper was to be taken in the church. Since Jesus told his apostles that they would eat and drink the Lord's supper in the kingdom, and Paul says it was to be done in the church, we are forced to conclude that the kingdom is the church. Hence, when Jesus said that some of the apostles would not die until the kingdom of God should come, we conclude that they were to live to see the establishment of the church.

When they were come together. This refers to the time when Jesus, after having been with his disciples for forty days and nights after his resurrection, gathered them together on the Mount of Olives and there ascended into heaven.

Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? The word restore here is significant. It suggests that these apostles expected a temporal kingdom. They wished to know if Jesus would restore the old kingdom as it had been in the days of David and Solomon. They believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and they thought he would reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem, so they wished to know if he would restore the kingdom. The truth of the matter is he was about to establish the kingdom. The kingdom which he was about to establish was not the old kingdom presided over by David and Solomon. It was a spiritual kingdom—the church or family of God on earth.

It is not for you to know times or seasons. Men have always been more interested in the time when things will happen than they have been interested in being prepared for the thing to come. It was far more important that the disciples understand the nature of the kingdom than it was for them to understand the time when the kingdom would come. Jesus had repeatedly taught them about the nature of the kingdom, but had not given them much information

as to the time it was to be established. The same is true with reference to his second coming. Many people are much more interested in the time of the second coming than they are in making preparation for that coming.

The Father hath set within his own authority. It was enough for the disciples to know that God had determined a time when the kingdom would be established. They could rest assured that God's purposes would not be thwarted and that the kingdom would be established at the time that God had purposed. So many people today are extremely interested in the time of the second coming of Christ. Paul tells us that the day has been appointed. (Acts 17: 31.) We need not worry about when the day will be. God will bring the thing to pass according to his appointment.

Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you. In verse five Jesus had promised his apostles that they should be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. Now he tells them that when the Holy Spirit comes upon them they shall receive power. In Mark 9: 1 we read that the kingdom of God was to come with power. Here we learn that the power was to come when the Holy Spirit came. If the kingdom was to come with power, and the power was to come with the Holy Spirit, it follows that the kingdom was to come when the Holy Spirit came. In our next division we will learn that the Holy Spirit came on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ. Hence, the kingdom was established on that day when the Spirit came with power.

Ye shall be my witnesses. The apostles had asked for information as to the time of the coming of the kingdom, which could have been of no value whatever to them. But Jesus now promises them something that they can use for his glory and for the salvation of the world. When the Spirit comes, they will receive power to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Witnessing thus for him will bring the knowledge of salvation to the peoples of all the earth.

II. The Coming of the Kingdom (Acts 2: 1-4)

When the day of Pentecost was now come. This was one of the three an-

nual feasts of the Jews. It was called Pentecost because it came fifty days after the sabbath of the pass-over week. The name *Pentecost* does not occur in the Old Testament. It is found only in the New Testament. The time for its observance was determined by counting seven sabbaths from the sabbath of the passover week, and was to be observed on the morrow after the seventh sabbath. (Lev. 23: 15, 16.) This feast is also called "feast of harvest" (Ex. 23: 16); "feast of the first fruits" (Lev. 23: 17; Num. 28: 26); "feast of weeks" (Ex. 34: 22; Deut. 16: 10).

They were all together in one place. The word *they* refers to the apostles. However, there is no necessary reason why we should exclude the one hundred twenty people of Acts 1: 15. The place where they were assembled cannot be positively known, but since verse six says that the multitude came together to hear these men speak, we conclude that they were in a place large enough to accommodate a multitude of people. Very likely some portion of the temple area is the place where they were gathered.

There came from heaven a sound. This sound was like the sound of a rushing mighty wind. Luke does not tell us that there was a mighty wind blowing, but that the coming of the Spirit was like the sound which a rushing mighty wind would cause. We are told that this sound filled all the house where they were sitting. Some misunderstand this to say that the Holy Spirit filled the house. But Luke tells us it was the sound like a mighty wind which filled the house. This sound not only filled the house, but in verse six we learn that the sound filled a great portion of the city, for it was heard by the people of the city who came together to form a great multitude.

There appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire. Again, we should be reminded that these tongues were not tongues of fire, but rather tongues like fire. It should also be noticed that these tongues were not forked or cloven tongues. The "parting asunder" simply suggests that a tongue went to each of the twelve apostles. Furthermore, these tongues like fire, tongues of light, could be seen by the people. Peter said that they had received "the promise of the Holy Spirit, . . . which ye see and hear." (Acts 2:

33.) The only thing about the Holy Spirit which could be seen was the tongue like fire sitting on each of the apostles.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Here is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus that they were to be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. (Acts 1: 5.) The student should also read John, chapters 14, 15, and 16, in this connection and there note the promises of the Holy Spirit and the things which Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would do for the apostles when he should come. In this passage we have some light thrown on the meaning of the word baptize in the promise connected with the Holy Spirit. The apostles were to be baptized in the Spirit. Here, in fulfilling that promise, we are told that they were filled with the Spirit. Hence, we conclude that the word baptize in the promise is to be taken not in its literal sense but in its figurative sense. By this we do not mean to imply that the Holy Spirit did not actually come to the apostles, but rather that the word baptize is used in a figurative sense. The thing that actually happened was that they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Began to speak with other tongues. The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak with tongues which they had not learned. The word *tongue* here is used in the sense of a language. They spoke languages which they had not studied. Verses six, eight, and eleven prove that the apostles were speaking in the languages represented by the various nationalities in Jerusalem on that day. Notice four miracles on that day. (1) The sound as of a rushing mighty wind; (2) tongues of light sitting on each of the apostles; (3) the apostles filled with the Holy Spirit; (4) the apostles speaking languages which they had not learned. The coming of the Spirit on this occasion gave life to the body of people whom John had prepared and Jesus collected to be his kingdom. As Adam's body was formed and then the spirit was put into it to make it alive and active, so the body, the church of Jesus, was collected and left in Jerusalem until the Spirit should be given to make it alive. Here we have the establishment **the church.**

III. The Growth of the Church (Verses 41, 47)

They then that received his word were baptized. When Peter preached his sermon concerning the trial, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus Christ to the throne of God, the people were pricked in their hearts and asked what to do to be saved. Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. The record tells us then that they that received his word were baptized, (a) We notice that no one was baptized but those who received the word of God. Infants cannot receive the word of God, hence, are not subjects of baptism. Infidels and atheists do not receive the word of God, hence are not subjects of baptism, (b) All that received his word were baptized. There is no such thing as receiving the word of God and refusing to be baptized, (c) They received his word before they were baptized. In verse thirty-eight we learn that people who are baptized receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence, we have this order: 1. Receive the word; 2. Be baptized; 3. Receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit. Hence, the gift of the Holy Spirit cannot be receiving the word of God, for we receive God's word before baptism, and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after baptism.

There were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. The apostles and the hundred and twenty constituted the church when the Spirit came. The Spirit came to that body composed of the apostles and the hundred and twenty. Three thousand people were added to that group the first day.

The Lord added to them day by day those that were saved. The Lord added the saved day by day; hence, there were no saved people out of the church. In verses thirty-eight to forty-one we learn that the Lord added to the church those that believed the gospel and repented and were baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins. In this verse we are told that he added the saved to the church; hence, we conclude that the saved were those who believed the gospel, repented, and were baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins.

Lessons to Learn

1. The apostles had great interest in the time of the coming of the kingdom. We should be much interested in the second coming of our Lord and be looking anxiously for it.

2. Until the day of Pentecost the church is spoken of as being in the future, but ever after that day the apostles spoke of it as having al-

ready been established and people coming into the church and enjoying the blessings and privileges of the church. Hence, the church was established on that day.

3. Since membership in the church depends upon God's adding us to it, we should consider membership in that church a great privilege and one to be devoutly sought.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

How does the Lord add people to his church?

What are the conditions which the Lord has determined necessary for entrance into his church?

Can you quote from memory the passages which prove this?

What is said about our names being written in the book of life?

How does our membership rolls compare with the roll the Lord keeps?

Can you prove that the church is composed only of saved people?

Can you give proof that salvation is enjoyed only in the church?

Does this make the church our saviour? Why?

Discuss the meaning of the word *saved* in our text.

Can one thus saved ever be lost?

Introduction

How long had John been dead when Jesus promised to build his church?

If the kingdom did not exist in the days of John, how could it suffer violence?

If the church was not in existence, why did Jesus tell the offended how to treat the offender?

Expectation of the Apostles

What assurance did Jesus give his apostles that the kingdom would be established in their lifetime?

Who among the apostles died before the kingdom was established?

Can you prove that the church is that kingdom which Jesus said would come during the lifetime of the apostles?

From what point near Jerusalem did Jesus ascend into heaven?

What question did the apostles ask Jesus just before he ascended? and what does this reveal with reference to their conception of the nature of the kingdom?

Compare the interest of the apostles in the

time of the coming of the kingdom with their interest in the nature of the kingdom and their duties in it.
 How does man's interest in the second coming of Christ compare with this?
 Can you give the proof that the kingdom was to come when the Holy Spirit came?
 What is a witness? and where were the apostles to be witnesses for Christ?

The Coming of the Kingdom

What do you know about the feast of Pentecost?
 Who were said to be gathered together? and in what place?
 How does Luke describe the coming of the Holy Spirit?
 How does Luke describe the appearance of the Holy Spirit on that day?
 How was the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit actually fulfilled?
 What is the meaning of the word *tongues* in our text?

Can you name four separate miracles connected with Pentecost?
 Can you illustrate how the Holy Spirit gave life to the church that day?

The Growth of the Church

Can you give a summary of Peter's sermon on Pentecost?
 Can you prove that no infants or infidels were baptized on Pentecost?
 Why is the "gift of the Holy Spirit" not the word which the people received?
 How many were added the first day? and to whom were these added?
 How does this lesson teach us that there were no saved people outside the church?
 According to this lesson, who were the saved people who were added to the church?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—July 25, 1954

THE EARLY CHURCH AT WORK

Lesson Text

Acts 2: 37-47; 5: 42

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Je'-sus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellow-

ship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need.

46 And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

42 And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Je'-sus *as* the Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers"* (Acts 2: 42.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 2: 22-36.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 19. M..... Worship (John 4: 1-26)
- July 20. T..... Faithfulness in Worship (Heb. 10: 24-29)
- July 21. W..... Liberality in Giving (2 Cor. 8: 1-9)
- July 22. T..... Collection for Saints (1 Cor. 16: 1-9)
- July 23. F..... Church in Philippi (Phil. 4: 10-20)
- July 24. S..... Sending Relief (Acts 11: 27-30)
- July 25. S..... Working Out Our Salvation (Phil. 2: 1-12)

TIME.— A.D. 30.

PLACE.— Jerusalem.

PERSONS.— The apostles and early disciples.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Teaching of the apostles.** The word teaching here does not refer to the act of instruction, but rather the content, the doctrine which the apostles taught. (a) The apostles could speak of the gospel as "our gospel" (1 Thess. 1: 5); "my gospel" (Rom. 16: 25). It was theirs in the sense that it had been delivered unto them. They had been entrusted with it, and they were proclaiming the gospel, (b) It is referred to as the gospel of Christ. (2 Cor. 2: 12; Phil. 1: 27.) It is called the gospel of Christ because it is the gospel of good news concerning Jesus Christ, and because it was through him that the gospel was given unto the world, (c) It is referred to as the gospel of God. (Rom. 1: 1; Mark 1: 14.) It is called the gospel of God because God is the source of the gospel. He gave it to the Son, and the Son gave it to the apostles, and they revealed it to us. In his memorable prayer to the Father, Jesus said, "The words which thou gavest me I have given unto them." (John 17: 8.) Again, Jesus said, "But the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . . The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 49, 50.) But Jesus was not willing simply to give these words to the apostles and leave them unaided in the preaching of this word; so he said to them, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." (John 16: 13.) So the teaching of the apostles in which the early church continued steadfastly was from God through Jesus Christ, and its accuracy was guaranteed by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

2. **Fellowship of the apostles.** The early church not only continued in the teaching of the apostles, but they continued in the fellowship of the apostles. The words teaching and fellowship both modify the word apostles. The general definition for the word fellowship as given by

Thayer is "association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." Some have limited the meaning of the word here to the Lord's day contribution. However, it should be given a broader meaning here. "Fellowship here means that common interest and mutual participation in those things which concern the welfare of each other." (H. Leo Boles.) Again, "Used of the intimate bond of fellowship which unites Christians" is the meaning which Thayer gives of its use in our text. Joint participation by the apostles in the use of their money is certainly included in this use of the term. But the moral support and encouragement of the community of Christians is also included in this use of the term. Those who make this verse a ritual for the order of worship and limit the word fellowship to the Lord's day contribution make a use of the verse which neither Luke nor the Holy Spirit intended should be made of it. But certainly the verse may be used as authority for having financial fellowship with the teachers of the gospel.

3. **Breaking of bread.** The breaking of bread here undoubtedly refers to taking the Lord's supper. In Acts 20: 7 and 1 Cor. 10: 16 we have the same expression when there can be no doubt that it refers to the Lord's supper. This shows that the Lord's supper was introduced into the worship of the church in its very beginning, and the other passages referred to prove that the observance of the Lord's supper was continued throughout the days of the apostles. Verse forty-six of our text has been understood by some to teach that in the first months or early years of the life of the church they took the Lord's supper daily. However, there is no good ground for this conclusion. Since the apostles were inspired and led by the Holy Spirit in directing the worship of the church as well as in preaching the gospel, we would expect them to lead the church into the proper order of worship. We are told that the church at Troas met upon the first day of the week to break bread.

(Acts 20:7.) If one church under the guidance of apostles met on that day to break bread, surely every other church under the guidance of the same apostles met on that day and for that purpose.

4. Prayers. Prayer was a prominent part of the worship of the early church, and it should have a prominent place in our worship today. We are taught to pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5: 17.) Paul names

supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings as various forms of prayer. (1 Tim. 2: 1.) We are taught that we should be clean in heart and in life in order that our prayers may be heard. (1 Tim. 2: 8.) And we must pray in faith. We are to pray in keeping with the will of God and we are to be obedient to the commandments of God if we expect him to hear our prayers. (James 1: 6; 1 John 3: 22.)

Introduction

All the work any church of Christ is authorized to do may be listed under three heads, 1. evangelization, 2. edification, 3. ministration, (a) By evangelization we mean the preaching of the gospel to the lost. It matters not whether the lost be in your own home, community, state, nation, or in some foreign nation. The preaching of the gospel to the lost is the work of evangelization. Jesus gave his church the marching orders to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to make disciples of all the nations. (Mark 16: 15, 16; Matt 28: 18-20.) And when the church was scattered from Jerusalem they went everywhere preaching the word. (Acts 8: 4.) And the church at Antioch sent out various teams of missionaries to preach the gospel in parts beyond. (Acts 13: 1; 15: 39-41.) The church that does not have a good far-reaching program of evangelization has no right to wear the name of Christ,

(b) Edification. By edification we mean the building up of the church. This is the teaching program of the church which should reach every individual member of the church to develop that individual into a Christ-like character. This is the perfecting or maturing of the members of the church, so that the church "maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." (Eph. 4: 11-16.) The continuance of this program in the church is indicated in Paul's language to Timothy, "And

the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2: 2.) Again we say that the church which has not a program of edification which will develop each member of the church into the likeness of Christ has no right to wear the name of Christ, (c) Ministration. This is that program of caring for the poor and the needy as our opportunities and ability will permit. It is the duty of the church to take care of the needy of its own membership. (Gal. 6: 10.) If, after caring for its own, the church is able to care for others, it is obligated to do so. The church which has a program for caring for the needy in the community will open doors for the preaching of the gospel, which would otherwise remain forever closed. This part of the work of the church has been sadly neglected among us. The maintenance of orphan homes is not the complete answer to the problem. Churches which think a small contribution to an orphan home each month will satisfy the requirements of the gospel will be disappointed. It is scriptural and good to maintain homes for orphan children, but the local congregation gets very little good from such activity. Caring for the needy in their own community is a necessary part of their program if the church would be effective in its preaching.

Exposition of the Text

I. **Saving** the Lost (Verses 37-41)

Now when they heard this. The apostles preached the gospel on Pentecost. Peter's sermon is recorded. They preached that Jesus, known among the people for his teaching and his good works, had been crucified and buried, but that God had

raised him from the dead, that he had ascended into heaven, and had been crowned both Lord and King.

They were pricked in their heart. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the apostles that the world might be convicted of sin. (John 16: 7-13.) The Spirit had come on Pen-

tecost. (Acts 2: 1-4.) The apostles had preached as the Spirit gave them utterance, and when the people heard that preaching, they were pricked in their hearts. By this it is meant they were convicted of their sins. So the Holy Spirit convicted people of their sins by speaking through the apostles words which brought them to a realization of their sins and their lost condition in rejecting Jesus Christ.

Brethren, what shall we do? (a) It should be remembered that the people who asked this question were believers. If they had not been believers they would not have been pricked in their hearts, nor would they have been concerned enough to ask what to do to be saved, (b) It should be remembered that these people who ask what to do to be saved were convicted believers; they had been convicted of their sins, (c) They asked what to do to be saved. If they did not ask what to do to be saved, Peter missed the point of their question, for he told them something to do in order to be saved. From this we conclude that people are not saved the moment they believe, but that believers, convicted believers, are required to do something in order to be saved.

Repent ye, and be baptized . . . unto the remission of your sins, (a) From this we learn that believers are to repent and be baptized unto remission of their sins, (b) From this we learn the order of faith and repentance. Believers were told to repent. Some religious teachers claim that people are first to repent and then believe, but these believers were told to repent, (c) We learn from this the purpose of both repentance and baptism. They were told to repent and be baptized unto, in order to obtain, the remission of their sins. Jesus shed his blood "unto remission of sins." (Matt. 26: 28.) Here we are told to repent and be baptized "unto the remission of your sins." In these passages we have exactly the same phrase, letter for letter and word for word, and consequently the one helps to determine the meaning of the other. If Jesus shed his blood in order that our sins might be forgiven, we are to be baptized in order that our sins might be forgiven; but if it is argued that we are baptized because our sins have been forgiven, then we should interpret this statement in Matt.

26: 28 to mean that Jesus shed his blood because our sins have been forgiven. Again, since we are told both to repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins, it follows that whatever the purpose of repentance is the purpose of baptism must be. We repent *unto* the remission of sins, and we are baptized *unto* the remission of sins. The conjunction *and* connects the two verbs, and the compound phrase, "unto the remission of your sins," modifies the double predicate so that the purpose of repentance is the same as the purpose of baptism. We repent to be forgiven of sins, so it follows that we are baptized to be forgiven of our sins.

Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this Peter meant that they would receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. God gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey. (Acts 5: 32.) Here the Holy Spirit is promised to the believer that repents and is baptized for the remission of sins. So God gives the Spirit to that person who believes the gospel, who repents and is baptized for the remission of sins.

For to you is the promise. The promise here refers not only to the Holy Spirit, but to salvation in Christ, which is an essential prerequisite to receiving the promise of the Spirit.

Save yourselves from this crooked generation. This suggests that man has something to do with his own salvation. Certainly, he is not to perform works of merit, but he is to obey the commandments of the gospel in spite of the discouragement and the persecution of those about him.

II. Edifying the Saved (Acts 2: 42; 5: 42)

They continued steadfastly. It is not enough merely to be a member of the church. Each one must take a part in the work of the church. It is not enough to take a part in the work of the church occasionally. Each one must continue steadfastly in doing the work of the church.

Apostles' teaching. To continue in the teaching or doctrine of the apostles one must study that doctrine. We do not by nature, nor by accident, do the things which the apostles taught. We do those things only because they have been revealed to us and because we have studied or been taught those things. The teaching of the apostles could be contrasted

here with human traditions. Continuing in the traditions of men is something very different from continuing in the teaching of the apostles.

And fellowship. These early Christians continued in the fellowship of the apostles as well as in the teaching of the apostles. This means that they supported the apostles both with their money, and with their presence and encouragement.

Breaking of bread and the prayers. These early Christians were steadfast in their worship. They did not allow the coming of company on Sunday or bad weather or a little physical disinclination to keep them from the place of worship.

And every day. This statement throws some light on the word *continued* in our former verse. It was a daily affair with them. Many congregations build big expensive meeting houses and use them only one or two days in the week. This is not only a foolish but a sinful waste of money. Church buildings should be used every day in the work and worship of the Lord. If we make our religion an everyday affair as they did, we will use our church buildings more.

They ceased not to teach and to preach. The Greek words which are translated by our English word *preach* carry with them the idea of an authoritative proclamation of salvation upon its terms and conditions. The words translated *teach* carry the idea of detailed instruction, illustration, argument, and proof. Jesus and his apostles both preached and taught people the gospel. The idea that one man could not be both an evangelist and teacher is both false and foolish. We preach or announce salvation to be had in Christ and then we teach people how to obtain that salvation.

III. Fellowship with Each Other

(Acts 2: 43-47)

All that believed were together, and had all things common. (a) The word *believe* here is used with reference to baptized believers. One could not think of an unbaptized believer having things common with the baptized believer, (b) Here we

learn that the early disciples had unity of purpose and desire and work. The statement that they were *together* does not mean that they lived together in one place, but that they were a unit in their purposes and work.

They sold their possessions and goods. This was not a socialistic or communistic community. They did not equally distribute the wealth of the church, but their funds were held in common and each one got the things he needed. Next, it should be noticed that this holding of property in common was not compulsory. Peter said to Ananias "While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?" (Acts 5: 4.) Furthermore, this was not intended to be the perpetual method for financing the church, (a) If it had been intended as the perpetual method of financing the church, all would have been required to take part in it. (b) If this had been intended as the perpetual method of financing the church, Paul would not have taught the church at Corinth to use another method. (2 Cor. 8, 9; 1 Cor. 16: 1-2.)

Praising God, and having favor with all the people. Verses forty-six and forty-seven describe the daily activities of the people of the early church. They went to the temple for their public work of preaching and teaching and for their worship and they then had private worship in their homes. In these first weeks and months of their experience with Christianity they devoted all their time to worshipping God and teaching others about Jesus. The fact that at this time they had favor with all the people suggests that these verses describe their activities before the persecution of the Jews began. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for a church to preach the truth and condemn error in the community as it should and enjoy the favor of all the people in that community. And this early church did not continue long to enjoy the favor of all the people in Jerusalem, for they were persecuted, and most of them driven from the city.

Lessons to Learn

1. Evangelization is that work of the church which builds it up in numbers. The church that ceases to

preach the gospel to the lost will cease to grow in numbers.

2. Edification is that work of the

church which builds the church up in knowledge and love, in unity and in every characteristic which the church must possess. A church which does not have a program of edification will find itself too weak to carry on a program of evangelization.

3. While caring for the poor *is* not

the primary work of the church, yet the caring for the poor and needy will make the work of evangelization much easier than it would be without that work. Each church should strive to have a well-balanced program of these three activities.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

In what sense was the gospel the doctrine of the apostles?

Why is it called the gospel of Christ? the gospel of God?

What assistance were the apostles given to make sure their teaching was true?

What is the meaning of the word *fellowship*?

What is meant by the breaking of bread?

Did the early church in Jerusalem take the Lord's supper every day?

What part did prayer have in the program of worship in the early church?

Name and define the several forms of prayer.

Name some of the conditions of acceptable prayer.

Introduction

Under what three headings may all the work of the church be listed?

What is evangelization and whose responsibility is this work?

What is meant by edification? and how important is this work?

What is the primary purpose of this work of edification?

What is included in the work of ministration?

How will a good program of ministration help the program of evangelization?

Saving the Lost

What are the leading thoughts in Peter's sermon on Pentecost?

How did the Holy Spirit convict people of sin on Pentecost?

What evidence do we have in this lesson that people are not saved by faith only?

What do we learn from this lesson about the order of faith and repentance?

Can you prove that remission of sins is the stated purpose of baptism?

What gift was promised to those who would be baptized?

How can people save themselves?

Edifying the Saved

How important is the matter of continuing steadfastly in the work of the Lord?

How is the matter of study emphasized in our lesson?

How is the giving of money for the Lord's work emphasized in our lesson?

What is taught in our lesson about continued faithfulness in worship?

What is suggested about more profitable use of church buildings?

What is the meaning of the words *preach* and *teach*?

Fellowship with Each Other

What believers are under consideration in our text?

What is said of the unity of these believers?

Was the wealth of the early church distributed equally among its members?

Was the holding of property in common made compulsory?

Was the first method of finance intended to continue in the church?

Did the church at Jerusalem always have the favor of all the people?

What commonly causes churches to lose the favor of the world?

What is there of interest in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—August 1, 1954

THE CHURCH ENCOUNTERS OPPOSITION

Lesson Text

Acts 4: 1-12

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sad'-du-ees came upon them,

2 Being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Je'-sus the resurrection from the dead.

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

4 But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Je-ru'-sa-lem;

6 And An'-nas the high priest *was there*, and Ca'-ia-phas, and John, and Al-ex-an'-der, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders,

9 If we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Is'ra-el, that in the name of Je'-sus Christ of Naz'-a-reth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in him doth this

man stand here before you whole.

11 He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner.

12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

Golden Text.—*"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3: 12.)

Devotional Heading.—Acts 4: 13-23.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 26. M..... Boldness of Peter and John (Acts 4: 13-22)
- July 27. T..... Persecuted Blessed (Matt. 5: 1-12)
- July 28. W..... First Death Connected with Religion (Gen. 4: 1-8)
- July 29. T..... Paul and Others Persecuted (1 Cor. 4: 6-13)
- July 30. F..... Jesus Persecuted (John 15: 14-21)
- July 31. S..... Prophets Persecuted (2 Chron. 36: 11-16)
- Aug. 1. S..... Jerusalem Church Persecuted (Acts 8: 1-8)

Time.—A.D. 30.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—The apostles and the rulers of the Jews.

Golden Text Explained

1. All who would live godly, (a)

Notice the word all. There are no exceptions to this rule. Financial, political, and social standing does not exempt one from this rule. Paul did not say if you live godly you will suffer persecution provided you are not a rich man. Nor does ignorance and social obscurity free one from the persecution suffered by those who live godly, (b) Godliness does not consist wholly of negative qualities. There are many who think that they are living godly lives simply because they do not lie, steal, curse, commit murder or adultery. It is possible for one to live such a negative life and never suffer persecution by the world. The world does not object to a man telling the truth. The world does not object to a man refraining from lying, stealing, murder, or adultery. So one may be good or godly in a negative sort of way and evade the persecution of the world. (c) Godliness consists not only of refraining from evil, but of doing good and teaching good to others. It is this quality of godliness that stirs up the enmity of the world. Jesus said the world hated him because he testified that its works were evil. (John 7: 7.) Jesus could have lived his perfect moral life and observed all the outward ordinances of religion in his day without ever causing the world to persecute him.

But, when he began to point out the failures of the religious leaders of his day, he soon stirred up opposition. He not only pointed out their failures in their own lives, but the unscriptural teachings which they were binding upon the consciences of other men. Paul tells us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them. (Eph. 5: 11.) Hence, one cannot live a godly life patterned after the life of Jesus Christ and in harmony with the teaching of the apostles without reprovng and rebuking those who are in sin.

2. **In Christ Jesus,** (a) This phrase, *in Christ Jesus*, denotes a relationship which we establish and maintain with Christ. To be in Christ simply means to be in such relation with him that he is our Master, we his servant. He is our Redeemer and Saviour, we the redeemed and saved. Our text says that living godly lives is done in Christ Jesus. There is no such thing as living a godly life out of this relationship. A person may live a good clean moral, honest, and upright life out of Christ Jesus, but godliness is more than morality. Godliness is being like God, and one cannot be like God, that is, live like God, without being in Christ Jesus. Those who are not in Christ have rejected Christ. Those who reject Christ are ungodly. Therefore, only those who receive

Christ and are in Christ can live godly lives, (b) We find our directions for godly living in Christ Jesus. Directions for this kind of life are found both in his teaching and his example. One might learn all that can be learned from the fields of the arts and the sciences and yet not know how to live a godly life. This information is found only in the teachings of Christ and the prophets,

(c) We find the strength and courage to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. Paul teaches that we are strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man (Eph. 3: 16); he prayed for boldness that he might preach the gospel (Eph. 6: 19); and he taught that we receive strength that we may be patient and long-suffering in joyfulness (Col. 1: 10, 11). Paul said he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him. (Phil. 4: 13.) And Peter said that after you have suffered a little while, God shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. (1 Pet. 5: 10.)

3. **Shall suffer persecution,** (a) This persecution was foretold by Jesus. "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept

my word, they will keep yours also." (John 15: 20.) (b) The reason for this persecution is also given. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you." (John 15: 19.) See Matt. 10: 24-26 and 24: 9-13 for further teaching along this line. As long as we are at war with the world and with the devil, we can expect to be persecuted. We can expect to bear hardships. (2 Tim. 2: 3-5.) If we wish to make an armistice with the world and with the devil and cease to invade his territory, and take people from his captivity, we can evade persecution. However, we should remember that this is a frightful price to pay, both in our own life and the lives of others, for freedom from persecution. (c) Our attitude toward persecution on account of godliness is to be that of rejoicing. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. (Acts 5: 41.) Peter said that we should rejoice in all such sufferings because we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. (1 Pet. 4: 12-14.)

Introduction

The reasons for the opposition encountered by the church as mentioned in our text may be seen in the activities of the church. (a) The apostles were continually preaching that Jesus whom they rejected, condemned, crucified and buried had been raised up from the dead and had ascended into heaven. This preaching proved the leaders of the Jews to be guilty of rejecting the Messiah and of murdering the Son of God. They could not well afford to allow such incriminating accusations to be made continually without losing their prestige and their influence with the people. Hence, they sought to stop such preaching by force of threats and intimidation. The preaching of the apostles was not that soft insipid kind of preaching which never accuses or convinces anybody of sin. Their preaching cut to the hearts of sinners and caused them either to repent or to persecute the preacher, (b) The popularity of the apostles and of the church generally had something to do with stirring up this opposition. We are told that the church had favor with

all the people. (Acts 2: 47.) And when Peter healed the lame man, this increased the popularity of the apostles with the people. (Acts 3: 12.) (c) The service which the apostles and the church rendered to the poor and the sick and lame helped to stir up the opposition of the Jewish leaders. When the church puts on a program of doing good in the community and insists in doing that good through the church and in the name of Jesus Christ, they can expect opposition from the religious leaders of that community. Every community has its community organizations for doing such type of work, and if one insists on doing such work through the church of the Lord instead of the established community agencies for such work, opposition usually results. So a church that insists on preaching a convincing and convicting gospel and that insists on helping the poor and the needy in the name of the Lord and through the institution the Lord established may expect to stir up opposition and suffer persecution. The churches which

have a soft, insipid message which never accuses or convinces anybody of sin either in life or doctrine and a church which has no program of service for the community to be done in the name of Christ and for the glory of his church will not likely

stir up any opposition or suffer any persecution. But such peace as this with the community is gained at the frightful expense of failing to honor God and to serve the Lord in this life and failing to live with the Lord in the life to come.

Exposition of the Text

I. Gospel Preachers Arrested (Verses 1-4)

As they spake unto the people. From this statement we conclude that the things the apostles were preaching were the cause of this opposition.

Priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, (a) These priests were the men who were officiating in the temple at the time of this disturbance. Priests were divided into twenty-four courses or classes, each class serving a week at a time. (1 Chron. 24: 3ff.: 2 Chron. 8:14.) (b) The captain of the temple has by some been supposed to be a Roman soldier, but in Luke 22: 3 we find Judas communing with the priests and the captains how he might deliver Jesus unto them. Surely the Roman captains were not involved in the betrayal of Jesus. Josephus makes mention of a Jewish officer about the temple whose duty it was to keep order in the temple area. "The commander of the temple was an officer having a body of Levites under his command, who preserved order about the temple, and in that respect performed a sort of military service." (Hackett.) (c) The Sadducees were a religious sect of the Jews who denied the resurrection. They would, therefore, be the first to oppose the preaching of the apostles, because the apostles were preaching that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Being sore troubled because they taught the people, (a) These Jews were troubled because the people were being led away from their parties into the church. The apostles gave ample evidence of the resurrection of Jesus and many who had been Sadducees were now convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead and that this was evidence of a general resurrection. Hence, the Sadducees were losing numbers to the church, (b) They were not only troubled because they were losing numbers from their religious parties, but they were troubled because of the unimpeachable evidence which the

apostles gave of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (c) Another source of their sore trouble was that they were being proved to be the betrayers and murderers of the Son of God. If Jesus was raised from the dead, that was ample proof that he was the Son of God. (Rom. 1: 4.) There was no denying the fact that they betrayed and crucified him; hence, if Jesus was raised from the dead, as the apostles preached, they were proven to be murderers.

Many of them that heard the word believed. Faith comes by hearing the word. (Rom. 10:17.) John said these things are written that ye might believe. (John 20:30,31.) Peter said that it was God's choice that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. (Acts 15:7.) Hearing the word preached and examining the scriptures to see if it be true will lead people to believe. (Acts 17: 11,12.)

II. Rulers Question the Preachers (Verses 5-7)

Rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together. The supreme court of the Jews was called the Sanhedrin. It was composed of three classes of people among the Jews, and those three are here named, (a) These rulers are elsewhere referred to as chief priests. The priests were divided into twenty-four classes, and there was a leader or ruler of each of the twenty-four groups. These leaders or rulers of these twenty-four groups composed one-third of the Sanhedrin. (b) The elders were the men of learning and influence among the Jews, and there were twenty-four of them in the Sanhedrin. (c) The scribes were the writers and teachers of the law, and there were twenty-four of them in the Sanhedrin. The duties of the Sanhedrin were, "1. To watch over the purity and legality of the priests; 2. to try cases of unchastity in priests' daughters and married women who were accused by their husbands; 3. to try false prophets who taught doc-

trines contrary to doctrines held by the scribes and the Sanhedrin; 4. to see that neither king nor high priest acted contrary to the law; and 5. to grant or deny kings the right to declare war." (Outlines of Bible History, Lanier.)

Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas. Both Annas and Caiaphas are spoken of in the gospels as being high priests. (Luke 3: 2.) For some unknown reason Annas had incurred the displeasure of the Romans and could not serve as high priest, and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was put in the office either with him or instead of him. It is thought by some that the Jews continued to recognize Annas as high priest but allowed Caiaphas to be in the office with him to satisfy the demands of the Romans. (John 18: 13,14.) Of the other men mentioned here we have no information.

By what power, or in what name? These Jews were determined to deny that Jesus still lived or that he exercised any power whatsoever. Hence, they inquire of the apostles by what power or in whose name, that is, by whose authority they had worked cures and had preached to the people.

III. Peter Preaches to the Court (Verses 8-12)

If we this day are examined concerning a good deed. After addressing himself in a respectful manner to the court, Peter proceeded to establish the reason for their appearance in court. It was on account of a good deed done to an impotent man. Peter understood the point of inquiry to be by what means the man had been made whole.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified. The rulers had asked, by what power; Peter answered, in the name of Jesus. The rulers asked, by whose authority; Peter answered, by the authority of Jesus Christ.

Whom God raised from the dead. Notice the contrast. Peter said that in the name of Jesus *whom ye crucified*

and then added by way of contrast, *whom God raised from the dead.* This was not weak, uncertain, insipid preaching. This was straightforward, courageous, conscience-smiting preaching.

He is the stone. This statement is taken from Psalm 118: 22 and was a sort of proverb among the Jews. It pictures the builders of a house rejecting a stone for a time and then being forced to go back and use that stone as the head of the corner. Some people think that this statement originated in an incident during the building of the Temple of Solomon, but David wrote the statement a generation before the temple was built by Solomon. It pictures the Jews rejecting Jesus Christ, and after his rejection he was by the Lord selected to be the foundation of the church. This puts the building of the church after the death of Christ, for it was in his death that he was rejected by them; but it could not be laid as the foundation stone until after his rejection, hence, the church could not be built until after the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus.

And in none other is there salvation. Some take this passage to mean that in the name of Jesus we today have the power of healing those who are sick and lame, but the last statement in the verse proves that Peter is not talking about being healed from physical maladies, but being saved from our sins, (a) To the Jewish leaders this simply meant that they must cease their opposition and accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, for there would never come another Messiah in whom they could be saved,

(b) This means to us that we may not expect salvation from any other source than from Jesus Christ. Science, philosophy, and all systems of morality fall short of saving the soul from sin. Those who expect salvation without depending upon the atoning death of Christ, his intercession on our behalf, and the mercy of God, will surely fail and will come to utter disappointment in the day of judgment.

Lessons to Learn

1. If we are stirring up no opposition and enduring no persecution, it would be well for us to examine our teaching and our lives to see whether or not we are living and teaching as the Lord demands.

2. Straightforward, courageous preaching of the gospel brought opposition from the religious leaders of the day when the apostles were preaching. We should expect no less today when we preach the gospel

with the same point and power.

3. Salvation is to be obtained and enjoyed in the name of Jesus Christ. We are to be baptized into the name

of Christ. It therefore follows that none can enjoy that salvation which is in the name of Christ without being baptized into the name of Christ.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Are there any exceptions to the rule stated in our text?

Of what two things does godliness consist?

What part of godliness stirs opposition from the world?

Illustrate this type of godliness in Jesus and Paul.

What is meant by the phrase "in Christ Jesus"?

Why can there be no such thing as godliness outside of Christ?

What do we find in Christ which enables us to live godly?

What reason did Jesus give for the suffering of persecution?

How can people in the church escape persecution? and at what price?

What should be our attitude toward persecution?

Introduction

Name and discuss three reasons why the early church suffered persecution.

What church program today usually causes opposition and persecution?

How many churches evade persecution and enjoy the favor of the world?

Gospel Preachers Arrested

What caused this first persecution of the apostles?

How were the priests organized for their work in the temple?

What do you know of the captain of the temple?

Why would the Sadducees be the first to persecute the apostles?

Why did the teaching of the apostles trouble the Jews?

Why did the teaching of the apostles convict the Jews as murderers?

What effect did the preaching of the apostles have on the people?

What evidence can you give that preaching and teaching are essential to faith?

Rulers Question the Preachers

What was the highest court of the Jews?

Of what three classes of the Jews was this court composed?

What were the duties of this court?

Why are both Annas and Caiaphas spoken of as being high priests at the same time?

Did the Jews have any success denying the continued influence and power of Jesus?

Peter Preaches to the Court

What reason did Peter establish for being brought into the court?

What did Peter say which kept the name of Jesus before the Jews?

How did Peter contrast the attitude of God and the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus?

What use did Peter make of the figure of a rejected stone?

Did this figure of the rejected stone arise in connection with the building of the temple?

Where did Peter say salvation is to be found?

Can you name some classes of people today who expect to find salvation elsewhere?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VI—August 8, 1954

SIN IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 5: 1-11

1 But a certain man named An-a-ni'-as, with Sap-phi-ra his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, An-a-ni'-as, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And An-a-ni-as hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it.

6 And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 But Peter *said* unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try

the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out.

10 And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost:

and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”* (Acts 5: 4b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 4: 31-37.

Daily Bible Readings

August 2. M.....	Liberality of Early Church (Acts 4: 32-35)
August 3. T.....	Example of Barnabas (Acts 4: 36, 37)
August 4. W.....	Sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11)
August 5. T.....	Effect of Ananias and Sapphira's Sin (Acts 5: 12-16)
August 6. F.....	A Lying Tongue (Prov. 6: 16-19)
August 7. S.....	Deceitful Tongue (Psalm 120)
August 8. S.....	End of All Liars (1 John 2: 1-6)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Ananias and Sapphira.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The origin of sin.** (a) Sin is born of desire. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.” (James 1: 13-15.) God cannot be tempted with sin because God has no evil desires. If man could rid his heart of all evil desires, he would not be tempted to sin. Hence, the command of God and our continued efforts toward the purifying of the heart. Paul would solve the problem in this way: “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” (Rom. 12: 9.) There is no excuse for doing that which one abhors, so if we learn to abhor everything that is evil, we will have no reason or excuse for doing evil. There is every reason to do that which we love to do. If we love to do only the things which are good and hate only the things which are evil, we will have the problem of right living solved, (b) The heart is the home and source of all desires. It matters not whether these desires be good or evil, holy or unholy, they proceed from the heart. An evil heart cannot send forth a holy disposition or life. Continual evil, wicked deeds in the life are proof of impurity in the heart. “For from within, out of the heart of men, evil

thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:21-23.)

2. **All moral offense committed against God.** Our text says that Ananias had not lied unto men, but unto God. Is it strictly true that Ananias had not lied at all unto men? Ananias had sold his property for one figure, and he had told the apostles that he had sold it for another amount. Whether we speak the truth or a lie is a matter of morals, and our primary obligation in the realm of morals is to God; and the fact that another man is involved in the affair is of little consequence as compared to the fact that God is involved in the affair. It matters not whether we are engaged in a church transaction or a straight business transaction, if we deal in falsehood, we are lying to God. One cannot divorce his business transactions from the moral realm. Whether we misrepresent an article in trade or misrepresent our income when filing our income for taxes, if we misrepresent the matter, we are lying to God. God is the one who determines our standard of morals, and if we violate that standard, we have sinned against God.

3. **When was the lie formed in the heart?** There are two possible answers to this question, (a) Ananias and Sapphira may have noticed that

Barnabas and others were selling their property and giving the money to the apostles that the needs of the poor might be supplied and, seeing this, they thought it was a wonderful thing, a Christlike thing to do; so they decided that they would sell their property and give all their money. But when they sold the property and got the money in their hands, it looked bigger than they thought it would. Perhaps it was the greatest sum of money they had had in their possession at any one time. Possibly they got to thinking of what that money would do for them, of the happiness it would bring them, of the security in old age that it would bring them; and as they thought on these things, it occurred to them also that this arrangement of the church would not last always, and when the people ceased to live out of a common fund, they would need some money to fall back on in their old age. At this point Satan stepped in and suggested to them

that they should keep back a part of the money and misrepresent the matter of how much they received for their property. In the hour of temptation they did not use the way of escape provided, and hence they sinned. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) On the other hand it is entirely possible that they wished to enjoy the commendation of the apostles and the applause of the people and were not willing to pay the price. So from the very beginning they set out with the purpose of deceiving the apostles and the church generally. In this view of the matter they deliberately planned the whole thing from the beginning—to sell their property, give a part of it, lie to the apostles about the amount they got for the property, and keep a part of it back for emergencies. If this is the case, they deserved neither mercy nor pity. And since the punishment was so swift and terrible, we may safely conclude that they did deliberately plan to deceive the apostles and the church.

Introduction

While studying about sin in the early church, it would be profitable for us to classify sins generally, (a) There is the sin of ignorance. When the word of God demands certain things of us and we do not do them because we have no knowledge of the teaching, we have committed a sin of ignorance. When the word of God forbids certain things and we do these things not knowing that the word of God forbids them, we have committed a sin of ignorance. Again, when we teach a false doctrine because we do not know the truth on a subject, we have committed the sin of ignorance. Are we excused on the ground of ignorance? If ignorance will excuse us, it follows that the more densely ignorant we are the surer we are to go to heaven. That would populate heaven with the most densely ignorant people of the world. The Jews crucified Jesus in ignorance. (Acts 3: 18.) Paul persecuted the church in ignorance. (1 Tim. 1: 13.) Were they not responsible for their sins simply because they were ignorant? The Jews were accused of murder by the apostles, and Paul says that he was the chief of sinners while he was doing such things in ignorance. (1 Tim. 1: 15.) Even the law of Moses did not excuse people on the ground of ignorance. (Lev. 5: 17-

19.) (b) There is the sin of weakness. When one is tempted to do something he knows to be contrary to the will of God, he is led on and encouraged by his friends or by the intense desire of his heart and finally gives way to doing that, he is guilty of the sin of weakness. When one realizes that he should do something but is afraid of criticism or afraid of failure or afraid he may do more harm than good and he gives way and fails to do that which he knows he should do, he is guilty of the sin of weakness. Young people are often led by their associates into doing things which they realize are wrong. Business men many times do things which they know are not on the level because of the force of competition or the desire to make money easily and quickly. Practically all our sins may be classified as sins of ignorance or sins of weakness, and perhaps the majority of these are sins of weakness. (c) Sins of rebellion. The rebellious character is one who sins and does not care what God thinks about it. Sins of weakness are followed by periods of shame, remorse, regret, and repentance, but rebellion is followed neither by shame nor remorse. It is the sin committed by those whose hearts are hardened to

the extent that they are past feeling. (Eph. 4: 17-19.) In this connection the student should study Heb. 6: 4-

8; 10: 26-31. Saul, the first king of Israel, was guilty of this sin. (1 Sam. 15.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Hypocrites in the Church (Verses

1, 2)

But a certain man named Ananias. The word *but* suggests that the following will be in contrast to that which goes before. In Acts 4: 32-35 we learn that the believers were of one heart and soul, and that many of them who possessed property sold that property and laid the money at the apostles' feet so that distribution might be made to each one according as anyone had need. Then in verses thirty-six and thirty-seven we are told of one particular person, Joseph surnamed Barnabas, a Levite who lived in Cyprus, who had a field and sold it and brought the money to the apostles.

Kept back part of the price. This introduces that which was in contrast to what Barnabas and others had done. Others had sold their property and had given all the money, dealing honestly and fairly with the apostles, but Ananias sold his property, kept part of the money, and affirmed that he was giving it all. The others had dealt honestly—Ananias dealt dishonestly. The others had been sincere—Ananias was a hypocrite. "The root of his sin lay in his vanity, his ostentation. He coveted the reputation of appearing to be as disinterested as the others, while at heart he was still the slave of mammon, and so must seek to gain by hypocrisy what he could not deserve by his benevolence." (Olshausen.)

His wife also being privy to it. The Greek word here translated being *privy to it* suggests that Sapphira had a part in the formation of this wicked deal, and in verse nine Peter says that they agreed together to do this thing. A Christian wife can be an effective check on the husband to keep him from evil unless she herself is inclined to do evil. Also the husband may exert a wonderful influence on his wife for good unless he himself is inclined to do evil. But where both are inclined to evil, as were Ananias and Sapphira, they lack that restraining influence which a righteous spouse might exert.

II. Ananias Punished for Sin (Verses

3-6)

Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie. The devil has the power to put ideas, desires, motives, and purposes into the hearts of people. "And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." (John 13: 2.) We may not be able to keep Satan from putting evil ideas and desires into our hearts, but we can keep from entertaining them there, allowing them to take root and grow and influence us.

To lie to the Holy Spirit Since the apostles were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a lie told to an apostle would be an attempt to deceive the Spirit by which the apostle was inspired. Keeping back a part of the money gained in sale of the property while pretending to give it all was an act of deception. Sapphira was asked a direct question and in answer to it lied. But if Ananias actually made a false affirmation, there is nothing in the record which proves it. The deceitful act seems to be taken for false affirmation.

While it remained, did it not remain thine own? In this we have evidence that not every member of the church was expected to sell his property and bring the money to the apostles. In Acts 4: 34 we are told that *many* who possessed property sold it. We are nowhere led to believe that all property holders sold their property, and much less are we told that all property owners were required to sell their property. From this we conclude that the Lord did not intend this sort of arrangement to be permanent in the church as the permanent method of financing the church work. If it had been intended to be the permanent method of financing the church, every member would have been required to take part in it.

How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? In verse three we are told that Satan filled the heart of Ananias. In this verse we are told that Ananias conceived this thing in his heart. From this we conclude that we are responsible for al-

lowing Satan to put ideas and desires and purposes in our hearts. Or if we cannot prevent Satan putting such desires in our heart, we are responsible for allowing these desires to remain in our hearts until they grow to such proportions as to be able to control us and cause us to sin.

Ananias . . . fell down and gave up the ghost. This is a case of swift and terrible punishment. It was punishment without the opportunity for repentance. The Lord gave several such instances of sure and swift punishment under the law to teach people that sin will be punished. (Num. 15: 32-36; Num. 16: 1-3, 29-35.) No doubt God intended that we should learn from this incident that sin will be punished even though the sentence may be deferred to the next life. (Eccles. 8: 11.)

The young men arose and . . . buried him. It was customary among the Jews to bury the dead the same day they died. The use of caskets was not common among them. Ordinarily dead bodies were wrapped in spices, but in this case they seem not to have been used. The lack of formality in notifying the near kinsmen was undoubtedly due to the circumstances under which Ananias died.

III. Sapphira Punished for Her Sin (Verses 7-11)

It was about the space of three hours after. The fact that Sapphira his wife was not notified of the death of Ananias is proof that the manner of burial was determined by the judgment of God on account of their sin. The fact that Sapphira did not come with Ananias to deliver the money may suggest that Ananias thought he could do a better work of deception by himself than if Sapphira accompanied him. They planned her appearance so that she would not be involved in the act of deception upon the deliverance of the money.

Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. Peter put the pointed question to her to learn whether she would join her husband in the deception. She was willing to carry out her part of the evil bargain so she said, "yea, for so much."

Ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord. There are three expressions in this lesson worthy of our study. (a) They lied to the Holy Spirit; (b) they lied unto God;

(c) they tried the Spirit of the Lord. There are three lessons we should learn from this incident, (a) That the Holy Spirit is God. In verse three we are told that they lied to the Holy Spirit, while in verse four we are told they lied unto God. They did not tell two lies; they told one lie and that lie was to the Holy Spirit as God. This simply means that the Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead, (b) There is a distinction to be made between the Holy Spirit and the Lord, for the Spirit here under trial by Ananias was the "Spirit of the Lord." (c) We learn also the danger of trying God or tempting God. God must not be put on trial. (Matt. 4: 7.) Since Peter accused them of agreeing together to try the Spirit of the Lord, we conclude that they discussed the matter and decided they could deceive the apostles in spite of the fact that they claimed inspiration. They agreed to put the Spirit of the Lord on trial to see whether he could detect their hypocrisy.

She fell down immediately at his feet. Her death was as immediate as was that of her husband. Her guilt was as great since she had agreed with him to the deception.

Great fear came upon the whole church. Sometimes elders are slow to exercise discipline in the church for fear the public will learn that sin has been in the church and that it will cause the public to look down upon the church. This case of discipline not only caused the members of the church to have greater respect for the church, but even those who were not members of the church were made to fear God. The public in general does not blame the church for the fact that hypocrites get into its membership, but they do blame the church for allowing hypocrites to remain in the membership. So discipline will cause the church to be honored, while the lack of discipline where it is needed will bring reproach upon the church.

Lessons to Learn

1. The first recorded sin in the church was in connection with the handling of money. This should cause

us to be very careful with reference to the use of our material possessions.

2. Punishment for sin does not

come upon us now as swiftly as the punishment came upon Ananias and Sapphira, but the deferment of punishment is no indication that the punishment will not surely be meted out at the proper time.

Questions for the Class

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

Golden Text Explained

What is the parent of sin?
What do we learn from James about the inception, growth, and consequence of sin?
Why cannot God be tempted to sin?
How does Paul solve the problem of right living?
What part of man's nature is the source of all evil?
According to Jesus, what defiles a man?
Did Ananias lie to men?
How could Peter tell the truth and say Ananias had not lied unto men?
When do you think Ananias and Sapphira agreed to lie, before or after the sale of their property?
Was it possible for Ananias and Sapphira to resist this temptation to sin?

Introduction

What is the sin of ignorance?
Give some examples of the sin of ignorance.
What is the sin of weakness?
Give both Biblical illustrations and some from everyday life of this sin.
What is the sin of rebellion?
Can you name a famous Old Testament character guilty of this sin?

Hypocrites in the Church

Tell the story of Barnabas in contrast with this story of Ananias and Sapphira.
What is said in our lesson to be the root of the sin of Ananias?
Do you think the desire for praise and commendation is sufficient motive for this sin?
Was Sapphira as guilty of hypocrisy as Ananias?

3. Honesty is the best policy all the time with reference to everything. From this lesson we learn that honesty in the handling of money is important both in the sight of men and in the sight of God.

How may a wife or husband assist a spouse in such times of temptation?

Ananias Punished for Sin

What part did Satan have in this sin?
How does Satan fill the heart? Are we capable of resisting him?
In what sense did Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit?
Using verses three and four, can you prove the deity of the Holy Spirit?
What evidence do we have that selling property and giving the money was a voluntary act on the part of the people?
What proof do we have this method of financing the poor was not a permanent method?
What statement teaches that we are responsible before God for allowing Satan to lead us to sin?
How did God teach the Jews under the law that sin would surely be punished?
Why do you think this case of punishment for sin is recorded?
Did the speedy informal burial of Ananias have any connection with his sin?

Sapphira Punished for Her Sin

What evidence do we have that Sapphira knew nothing of the burial of Ananias?
If verses three and four prove that the Holy Spirit is God, can you use verse nine and show a distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Lord, or God?
What is meant by *trying* the Spirit of the Lord?
What effect did this incident have upon the church?
What effect will the discipline of ungodly church members have on the world?
What effect will the lack of discipline of the ungodly have upon the world?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—August 15, 1954

THE APOSTLES PERSECUTED

Lesson Text

Acts 5: 17-21, 25-29, 41, 42

17 But the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sad'-du-ceeds), and they were filled with jealousy,

18 And laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward.

19 But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said,

20 Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life.

21 And when they heard *this*, they entered into the temple about day-

break, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Is'-ra-el, and sent to the prison-house to have them brought.

25 And there came one and told them, Behold, the men whom ye put in the prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them, but with-

out violence; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Je-ru'-sa-lem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 But Peter and the apostles answered

and said, We must obey God rather than men.

41 They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.

42 And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Je'-sus as the Christ.

Golden Text.—*“But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5: 29.)

Devotional Heading.—Acts 5: 33-39.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 9. M.....Suffering as Christians (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)
- August 10. T.....Persecution Predicted (Matt. 10: 16-23)
- August 11. W.....All to Suffer Persecution (2 Tim. 3: 9-12)
- August 12.....Other Sufferers for God (Heb. 11: 32-40)
- August 13. F.....Reward of Suffering (Rev. 2: 8-11)
- August 14. S.....Paul's Suffering (2 Cor. 11: 21-28)
- August 15. S.....Extent of Persecution (Matt. 23: 29-39)

Time.—A.D. 30.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—The apostles and Sanhedrin.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Conflicting demands,** (a) Sometimes the government demands things contrary to that which God allows. In our lesson today we will find the Jewish authorities demanding something of the apostles, which under God they could not afford to do. The Roman government required many Christians to burn incense to the Emperor. The true Christian could not afford to do so. The government of Italy is requiring our brethren there to do things which they cannot with good conscience do. In all such cases we must obey God rather than men. We should be thankful that our government recognizes this principle and does not require us to do that which violates our conscience, (b) When the demands of one's spouse conflict with the demands of God. Husbands sometimes make demands of their wives which are in conflict with the teaching of God. Occasionally men try to keep their wives from obeying the gospel, or attempt to prevent their attendance at church. Though wives are told to be obedient to their husbands in all things, yet, a husband is not to invade the realm of the conscience and demand that the woman do something contrary to the commandments of God. When such unreasonable demands are made, the woman has no course but to obey

God rather than man. (c) Parents sometimes demand of their children things which are wrong. When parents interfere with a child's right to obey the gospel or to worship God as taught in the Bible, the parent is invading the realm of the conscience, and the child has no choice but to obey God rather than man. (d) Sometimes an employer will demand things of the employee that are wrong. If the employer demands dishonesty and deceit on the part of the employee, the Christian employee has no course open but to obey God rather than man.

2. **The ground of our obligation to obey God.** (a) The first ground of obligation to obey God is found in the character of God. **We** must obey God because he is God. It is right and proper that the creature should obey the Creator, that the one who is dependent on another for preservation should render obedience to the preserver. It is completely out of harmony with reason and common sense that the all-wise Creator should obey the ignorant and foolish creature but it is eminently fitting that the ignorant and foolish creature should obey the all-wise Creator. Likewise, it is not in harmony with common sense that the weak and sinful creature should make demands

of the infinitely holy God, but it is eminently fitting and reasonable that an infinitely holy God should make demands and set standards for the weak and sinful creature, (b) The next ground of our obligation to obey God is found in what God has done for us. He has given us a being in the world and has preserved that being. In the majority of cases he has preserved our being in good health of mind and body and has surrounded us with the things that we need in life. On account of this we are obligated to show our gratitude by complying with his wishes expressed in his written will. And since God has done for us things which man cannot do and has done more for us than it is possible for man to do, we are more obligated to obey God than man. Our first obligation is to God rather than to man, but the temporal blessings which God has given and is continually giving us are but little when compared to the spiritual blessing. He not only has created and preserved us, but he has redeemed us from sin and promises to save us eternally in heaven. Since man cannot do any of this for us, we should obey God rather than man. (c) Another ground of our obligation to obey God is found in our relationship to God. All men, both the good and the evil, are in one sense the offspring of God. (Acts 17: 28, 29.) Since it is the duty of the offspring to obey the parent, we, being the offspring of God, are obligated to obey God. But in a peculiar sense, Christians are the children of God, having been born again. Born of water and the Spirit, we are in a peculiar sense the children of God.

Therefore, with the apostles we can say in a peculiar sense we must obey God rather than men.

3) Such obedience is a revelation of character, (a) Such obedience is a demonstration of one's inclination to put God first in all things. We are taught to love God supremely. (Matt. 22: 37.) If we love God as we should we will keep his commandments. (John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3.) When one refuses to obey man, knowing that his disobedience will bring suffering, he has demonstrated that his love for God is the biggest thing in his life, (b) Obeying God in preference to man is usually a demonstration of considerable courage. God has always required his people to be courageous, and there has never been a dispensation yet in which it did not require courage to live in such way as to please God. It requires courage for a child to obey God when that obedience brings the displeasure of a parent upon the child. A wife shows a commendable brand of courage when she disobeys her husband in order that she may obey God. (c) Such obedience on man's part is proof of his divorcement from the world and the love of the world. It is our duty to develop such an appreciation of things heavenly that we will prize them more highly than we do the things of the world, and when a man has learned the lesson of obeying God in spite of the persecution of men, he has developed an appreciation for things heavenly. Hence, this obedience is a manifestation of a character that is heavenly minded.

Introduction

Since all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3: 12), we may expect the church to suffer persecution as long as it is in the world. The world and the church can never be in agreement, and the world will never cease to bring pressure upon the church to conform to its standards; hence, we may always expect persecution in one form or another. But it is possible for the church or an individual to bring persecution upon himself without good cause. Unwise methods of approach, both to individuals and to audiences, may cause people to shun or even to persecute people who are trying to teach them the truth.

Preachers sometimes use abusive language in their sermons and have been known to stir up opposition which amounted to actual persecution. Preachers have been known to suffer actual physical violence as a result of unwise and abusive remarks in the pulpit. Preaching the truth in love will stir up enough opposition and bring enough persecution upon us without adding to it by the use of abusive and unwise methods of dealing with people. However, in our efforts to avoid persecution, we sometimes go entirely too far. (a) Some resort to preaching false doctrines in order to avoid persecution. (b) Others refuse to preach

false doctrines to avoid persecution, but they are willing to refrain from preaching truths which are offensive to people. Paul could have avoided persecution if he had ceased to preach about circumcision. (Gal. 5: 11.) If churches of Christ today would cease to oppose the use of mechanical instruments in worship and cease to insist in the necessity of baptism as a condition of salvation, they would escape a lot of ill-will and some persecution, (c) Some preachers avoid persecution by preaching about sins of which their audiences are not guilty. They never seem to find time nor the occasion to preach about the sins which are

prominent in the congregations where they labor. While persecution may be avoided in these ways, this writer certainly does not recommend such a course in life. Men who have a sense of honor and of loyalty to God would not resort to such practices. It is our duty to preach the gospel as revealed by the Holy Spirit and to practice in our work and worship such things as are taught by the Lord regardless of the consequences. If faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord bring persecution upon us, we should gladly accept the consequences and rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for our Lord.

Exposition of the Text

I. Cause of Persecution (Verses 17-21)

But the high priest rose up. Annas is the last one mentioned as being high priest. (Acts 4: 6.) However, both Annas and Caiaphas are mentioned as being high priests together. (Luke 3: 2.)

All they that were with him. By way of explanation we are told that he was accompanied by the sect of the Sadducees. This leads us to believe that the high priest at this time was a Sadducee. It is understandable why the Sadducees were the first to persecute the church. The apostles preached much about the resurrection of Jesus. The Pharisees would be glad to hear this preaching since it contradicted the main points of the Sadducees. They were glad to see their old enemies, the Sadducees, losing so much ground in this dispute with the apostles.

They were filled with jealousy. Thayer defines the Greek word here translated jealousy to mean "envious and contentious rivalry." Other authorities think the word means *indignation*. If that is its meaning, we are to understand that the high priest and those associated with him were indignant because the apostles had not obeyed their orders to refrain from preaching; but if jealousy is the correct translation, we are to understand that these Sadducees were jealous of the success which the apostles were having in their preaching. They were turning literally thousands from the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees to Christ, and since the resurrection was a cardinal point in the faith of these people, it meant

that the Sadducees were losing ground rapidly.

And laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward. Since the Sadducees could not explain the empty tomb nor the appearance of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, nor could they answer the arguments of the apostles, there was but one thing to do, and that was to use force. Hence, they laid hands on the apostles and put them in prison, thinking this would stop their preaching.

An angel of the Lord . . . opened the prison doors. Barnes suggests four probable reasons why the Lord intervened. (1) To reprove the Jewish rulers; (2) to convince the apostles of the protection and approval of God; (3) to encourage them in their preaching of the gospel; (4) to give the people a new and impressive proof of the truth of the message which the apostles preached.

They entered into the temple about daybreak and taught Persecution did not stop the early preachers of the gospel. Only death could effectively stop them from preaching. It is very probable that in our generation we will see again preachers of the gospel put to this test. Our brethren in Italy give every evidence of possessing the courage to preach the gospel in the face of the threat of death. If political freedom is worth sacrificing thousands of men in Korea, why is not religious freedom worth even more. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." (Rev. 14: 13.) Notice also that the apostles lost no time in getting to the people to teach them. It is said that they entered the temple about day-

break. They were not a set of lazy indolent men who could not get on the job before the middle of the day. From verse twenty, we learn that these apostles taught "the words of this life." The word *life* in this text may refer to life in Christ or to eternal life. Both meanings are dependent upon a living Christ, and a living Christ is dependent upon his resurrection. Hence, to preach the words of this life was to declare the resurrection of Christ and his ability to give life to people.

II. Courage in the Face of Persecution (Verses 25-29)

Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are in the temple. In the intervening verses we learn that the authorities sent a messenger to the prison to get the apostles, to bring them to the court. When the officers reached the prison, they found that the doors were all properly locked, and that the guards were standing before the doors, but there was no man to be found inside. The members of the Sanhedrin were very much perplexed about this and wondering just what would happen next, when there came one and made the report that the men who had been in prison were now standing in the temple.

Standing and teaching the people. It should be noticed that the angel who told them to go and stand and speak in the temple did not promise that there would be no further persecution. While the presence of the angel and their release by the angel did prove that they had the approval of God, yet it did not promise them exemption from hardships. We should remember that the approval of God on our labors today does not exempt us from hardships or from possible persecution. In this incident we have an example of two or more men teaching in the same building, the temple, at the same time. Certainly they were not speaking to the same group at the same time, but we do have two or more men speaking to different groups in the same building at the same time.

Brought them, but without violence. It is said that the captain and the officers who were in charge of the apostles treated them kindly because they feared the people would stone them. Whether the word *people* in-

cludes any of the Christians, we have no way of knowing. Christians who understood the teachings of Christ would certainly not stone the officers even though they handled the apostles roughly. Since the apostles were held in favor by the people (Acts 2: 47), we may conclude that the word *people* here refers to the populace generally.

We strictly charged you not to teach in this name. This was no new information to the apostles. They understood the charge of the Sanhedrin when it was first given, but they had a commission and a charge from a higher source than the Sanhedrin to which they preferred to be obedient. The Sanhedrin prefers not to mention the name of Jesus. They simply say *this name*.

Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. This was not intended as a compliment, but in reality it was about as great a compliment as the apostles could have been given. A church which does not fill its community and its county with its teaching in a reasonable length of time is an inactive, dead church and unworthy to wear the name Jesus. The greatest need of the church today is that self-sacrificing zeal which makes it possible to fill our communities with our teaching in a short while.

Intend to bring this man's blood upon us. When Pilate washed his hands before the multitude and said he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, the rulers of the Jews and the people said, "His blood be on us, and on our children." (Matt. 27: 25.) At that time they were willing to accept the responsibility for crucifying Jesus, but now that his tomb is empty and the Spirit has come upon the apostles, leading them in their teaching and service, these men complain that they are being charged with the death of Christ.

We must obey God rather than men. The Lord had charged his people to preach the gospel. The Sanhedrin charged them to keep silence. There can be no compromise. They must either obey God and accept whatever consequences the Sanhedrin wishes to put upon them, or they must obey the Sanhedrin and accept whatever consequences God would bring upon them. They could not halfway obey the Lord and halfway appease the Sanhedrin.

III. Rejoicing in Persecution (Verses 41, 42)

Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.. Verses thirty to thirty-two tell us that the apostles accused the Jews of slaying him whom God raised up to be a Prince and a Saviour. The rulers were cut to the heart by this language and were minded to slay the apostles, but Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people asked that the apostles be put out of the court while he counseled the authorities to be careful what they did with the men. The gist of his counsel was that if their work is of men it will come to naught of itself, but if it is of God the court would not be able to overthrow them.

And furthermore, it would be folly to be found fighting against God. The council was sobered by such advice, and so they were willing to allow the apostles to go free with this one last charge that they were not to preach in the name of Jesus. Realizing that any suffering the court might mete out to them would not be worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to them in eternity, they were glad to suffer for the name of Christ.

They ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ. It is said that they preached everyday in the temple and at home. They preached and taught that this Jesus whom they served was the Christ for whom the Jews had been looking for many hundreds of years.

Lessons to Learn

1. Jealousy is a powerful and dangerous influence in the heart. It caused the rulers to persecute the apostles. It will cause us to be guilty of every evil work. (James 3: 16.)

2. The apostles filled Jerusalem with their teaching in spite of persecution. We often fail to fill our cities and communities with the gos-

pel when we are guaranteed absolute religious freedom.

3. The apostles filled Jerusalem with their teaching, because they were busy every day publicly and in private. We fail because we use only one or two days at best in our work and think it unnecessary, and some think it unreasonable, to hold more than one or two gospel meetings per year.

Questions for the Class

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

Golden Text Explained

When are we required to disobey our government?
Describe conditions under which one spouse may act contrary to the demands of the other.
Under what conditions may children disobey their parents?
Describe conditions under which an employee must obey God rather than man.
Show why the character of God demands that we obey God.
Show why we are obligated to obey God because of what he has done for us.
What relationship do we have with God which obligates us to obey him?
What traits of character are revealed when one obeys God rather than man?

Introduction

Why may the godly always expect to suffer some form of persecution?
How may people unnecessarily provoke persecution?
Name and discuss several ways people may consciously avoid persecution?
What is the scriptural and honorable course to follow in such matters?

Cause of Persecution

Who was the high priest at this time?
What sect of the Jews was conducting this persecution? Why?

What filled the hearts of these Jews to cause them to persecute the apostles?
When arguments fail, to what do men usually resort to gain their objectives?
Discuss four suggested reasons why the Lord intervened at this time.
What indicates that the apostles were zealous and energetic in their work?
What lessons are implied in preaching "the word of this life"?

Courage in the Face of Persecution

What happened to the apostles that perplexed the Sanhedrin?
What evidence did the apostles have of the approval of God in their work?
Why did the officers handle the apostles without violence?
Were Christians included in the group whom the officers feared?
What statement of the Sanhedrin shows that they avoided the use of the name of Jesus?
How did the Sanhedrin unwittingly compliment the apostles?
Has your congregation "filled" your community with the teaching of Christ? Why?
In what respect had the Jews changed with reference to the blood of Jesus?
What was the attitude of the apostles toward a surrender or compromise with the rulers?

Rejoicing in Persecution

Can you give the gist of the reply made to the Sanhedrin by the apostles?

What effect did this speech have on the Sanhedrin?
 What unexpected assistance came to the apostles at this meeting?
 What effect did Gamaliel's counsel have

upon the Sanhedrin?
 What effect did the persecution have on the progress of the gospel?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—August 22, 1954

THE EARLY CHURCH MEETING MEETING HUMAN NEEDS

Lesson Text

Acts 4: 32-35; 6: 1-7

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

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

34 For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

1 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2 And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and

said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Ste'phen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Proch'o-rus, and Ni-ca'nor, and Ti'mon, and Par'me-nas, and Nic-o-la'us a proselyte of An'ti-och;

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Je'ru-sa-lem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Golden Text.—*“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common ”* (Acts 4: 32.)

Devotional Reading.—1 John 3: 13-18.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 16. M..... Jesus' Example (Matt. 20: 20-28)
- August 17. T..... The Churches of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8: 8-15)
- August 18. W..... Manner in Which Handled (2 Cor. 8: 16-24)
- August 19. T..... Paul's Glorifying (2 Cor. 9: 1-15)
- August 20. F..... Pure Religion (James 1: 1-12)
- August 21. S..... Practical Religion (James 2: 14-26)
- August 22. S..... True Love for Brethren (1 John 3: 13-24)

Time.—A.D. 30, 31.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—The apostles and early Christians.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Christian unity**, (a) Notice that this unity is described as “one heart and soul.” It is difficult to make a distinction between the heart and the soul here, and probably the writer did not intend that we should make

a distinction. It is simply an expression denoting the complete harmony of the inner life of this band of people. It describes their thinking, willing, feeling, all of which have their seat in the inner man. They had

such unity as Paul desired the Corinthians to have when he said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1: 10.) These people had all been taught the same doctrine, they all believed the same teaching, and they were continuing in that same teaching. If the teaching was not self-contradictory, we would expect those who follow the teaching to live harmonious lives. And so today in churches where there are strife and division we may be sure that there has been different teaching or people have been responding in a different fashion to the teaching. (b) Notice that it is said all who *believed* were of one heart and soul. Here the word *believed* includes only those baptized believers. We have the same use of the word in Acts 2: 44. A believer who refused to be baptized could certainly not be said to be of one heart and soul with those who had been baptized. Furthermore, a believer who refused to be baptized would not have been among this company who sold possessions and lived out of a common fund. (c) We notice also that there was a great number, a multitude of people, who were practicing this Christian unity. On the first day about three thousand souls were added to the church. (Acts 2: 41.) A few days later we learn that the number of the men, not counting women, came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4: 4.) It would be safe to conclude that there were between five and ten thousand members of the church at this time who were said to be of one heart and one soul. Denominational preachers often excuse division on the ground that so many people are not to be expected to see and understand things alike; but if this multitude of people in Jerusalem could practice that unity for which our Saviour prayed (John 17), there is no reason why smaller groups today should not be expected to practice that same unity. (d) There is every reason to believe that all social and tribal distinctions were obliterated in this Christian unity. The rich did not consider themselves any better than the poor. Members of one tribe did not hold themselves aloof from and refuse to associate

with members of other tribes. There was a common feeling in that day that the Jews who lived on the fringe of Palestine and those who lived in the heathen nations of the world were less orthodox than the Jews of central Palestine around Jerusalem. This accounts for the expression further on in our lesson distinguishing between Grecian Jews and the Hebrews. But if there was any feeling of superiority among the Hebrews over the Grecian Jews in the church we have no indication of it.

2. Christian unity expressing itself,

(a) We find this Christian unity expressing itself in brotherly love and kindness. We are told that no one considered his property to belong to himself solely, but all were willing to sell their property and share it with those who were less fortunate. People usually find it easier to practice Christian unity with reference to what they believe than they do with reference to what they possess. Whenever people are so closely united that they will share their last dollar with each other, you can say they are enjoying the greatest degree of unity. (b) This Christian unity also expressed itself in their social activities. We are told that "day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." (Acts 2: 46, 47.) Fellowship in social activities is a very valuable practice. Only through Christian fellowship can we come to know each other well enough to love each other as we are commanded. In large city congregations people often worship in the same building who have never even formally met, much less ever associated with each other sufficiently to become interested in one another's affairs. Misunderstandings and social offenses may easily arise where there is such little knowledge and understanding of each other. (c) This Christian unity expressed itself also in their continued worship of God. In the passage last quoted we are told that they not only had social contact with one another daily, but they continued with one accord in the temple praising God; hence, they were together both socially and spiritually. (d) This Christian unity expressed itself in their cooperation with their preachers. They continued steadfastly in the

apostles' doctrine (Acts 2: 42), and in our text we are told that on account of this unity the apostles gave witness of the resurrection with great power. We need such unity today in order that the preachers may be en-

couraged and strengthened in the deliverance of the messages to the lost, and such cooperation coming from such Christian unity will lend power to the message in the minds of the hearers.

Introduction

This early church was called upon to meet some human needs which were of very unusual occurrence. The Jews had gathered in Jerusalem from all over the then known world (Acts 2: 9-11), in order that they might worship God at the feast of Pentecost. Thousands of these people, who were hundreds of miles away from home, were converted to Christ while in Jerusalem. Whether they stayed of their own accord or whether they were influenced by the Lord to stay, in order that they might receive teaching and be prepared to plant the church in their home communities when they returned, we have no way of knowing, but the truth of the matter is they did stay in Jerusalem, and their money and supplies soon were exhausted, and they were dependent upon the charity of their brethren. Next, we should notice that the relief which this early church gave was of a temporary nature. By this we mean that the methods which the church used to relieve the needs of the people were not intended to be the permanent method of financing the work of the church. God does not now expect us to sell our property and share it with those who have none. Certainly he expects us to

give liberally of our money for the care of the poor and unfortunate. As proof of this we find Paul surprised that the Macedonian brethren would give as liberally as they did to help care for the poor in Judea. (2 Cor. 8: 1-3.) If God demands that we sell our property and give all, Paul would not have been surprised at their liberality, for none can go beyond giving all. But since these people went beyond what Paul expected of them, we know he did not expect them to sell their property and give all. Again, we find Paul telling the church at Corinth to lay by in store on the first day of the week in order that their afore promised bounty might be ready when he arrived so that he would not have to take out time for a collection. If it was the Lord's will for them to give all for the care of the poor, their first contribution would have been the end of it. But since he expects them to contribute week after week, we know that they were not expected to give all for the care of the poor. Hence, the method of caring for the poor and relieving their necessities used by the Jerusalem church as set forth in our lesson was not intended to be the permanent method of finance in the church.

Exposition of the Text

I. The Disposition That Meets Human Needs (Verses 32-35)

The multitude . . . were of one heart and soul. When asked what a friend is, Aristotle is said to have replied, "One soul dwelling in two bodies." Christian friendship found expression in this early church in sharing property. No one looked upon his property as belonging to himself solely. Each considered that his property belonged to the Lord and the Lord's people. They recognized themselves as belonging to the Lord, and since they belonged to the Lord, all that they possessed belonged to the Lord, and that which belongs to the Lord belongs to the Lord's people equally. The early church seems to have reached perfection in this respect.

With great power gave the apostles

their witness of the resurrection. This statement, occupying the place that it does, indicates that the power with which the apostles testified of the resurrection was due to the unity of the disciples. Jesus prayed that all believers might be one as he and the Father are one, that the world might believe that the Father sent him. (John 17: 21.) This unity for which Jesus prayed is the unity which existed in the early church. The word power in this statement does not refer to miraculous powers manifested in the signs and wonders wrought by the apostles, but it refers to the ability and efficacy with which they preached the word of God. And the word witness means their testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus

said these apostles were to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and to the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1: 8.) This verse simply says that, on account of the unity which existed among the believers, the apostles were giving powerful witness to the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ was a most important point in the preaching of the apostles at this time. The Jews had denied him, condemned him, and crucified him for blasphemy because he said he was the Son of God. The apostles maintained that God reversed the decision of the Jews and raised Jesus from the dead as a declaration that Jesus was the Son of God. (Rom. 1: 4.) So when the apostles proved that Jesus was raised from the dead, they had virtually proved all that Jesus taught with reference to himself and the duty of men toward him and toward his Father.

Great grace was upon them. This has no reference to the saving grace of God manifested through the person and the gospel of Christ. It rather refers to the favor in which the apostles were held among the people of Jerusalem. (Acts 2: 47.)

Neither was there among them any that lacked, (a) We should notice that this passage does not teach an equal distribution of wealth, (b) We should notice too that the title of property was not vested either in the state or in the church. There are certain communistic plans advocated which would give title of all property to the state and all be administered by the state, (c) It should be noticed that not all members of the church sold their property. From the lesson concerning Ananias and Sapphira, we learned that while a person held property, he was not obligated to sell that property, and after he sold the property he was not obligated to give all the money to the apostles to be distributed among the poor. Neither can it be proved that if a man had two pieces of property he should sell them both. It is possible that he would sell one and give the money to the apostles to care for the poor, and keep the other for his own use. But if the man wished to sell all of his property and give all of his money into this fund and live with the poor out of this fund, he might do that. It is possible, perhaps implied, that many of the people did that very thing.

II. Organizing to Meet Human Needs

(Acts 6: 1-6)

There arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews. By "Grecian Jews" is meant those Jews who lived in Grecian territory and who had taken on Greek customs and spoke the Greek language. By "Hebrews" is meant those Jews who lived in Palestine and who spoke the Jewish language and observed Jewish customs.

Their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. By daily ministration is meant the daily distribution of necessary supplies out of the common fund. It seems that the apostles themselves were distributing the daily necessities, and the work had grown so big that they were unable to take care of that and do their preaching. The Grecian widows would not feel as much at home as the Hebrews and would be more retiring and less demanding than the Hebrews so would naturally not get their share of the supplies. The slightest lack of attention on the part of the Grecians would attribute to partiality of the apostles.

It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. The work of serving tables and preaching the word was too much for the apostles. One part of the work had to be shifted to someone else. It was not wise for the apostles to use time in serving tables that should be spent preaching the gospel. Preachers today are often called upon to do work which others might as well do and leave the preacher free to preach publicly and from house to house.

Look ye out . . . seven men . . . whom we may appoint, (a) Notice that the apostles did not select the men to be used in this service. They required the people themselves to select the men. (b) After the people had made the selection, the apostles made the appointment. We conclude, therefore, that selection of men who serve the church is one thing, and the appointment of those men to the office is another thing. Preachers may appoint men to an office, but it is never wise for the preacher to take a hand in selecting men for an office in the church where they preach, (c) The apostles determined the qualifications of the men who would serve. It is said they should be men full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. The apostles still determine the qualifica-

tions of men who will serve the church, but from that number of men who are qualified, the church has the right to make its own selection.

We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word. From this we learn that men who preach the word should spend much time in prayer. Paul prayed in his own behalf and asked other people to pray for him that he might have the courage to speak the word boldly as he should. (Eph. 6: 18-20.) We learn also that men who have the ability to preach should spend their time preaching and let other people, who have not the ability to preach, take care of the secular affairs of the church.

The saying pleased the whole multitude. The apostles had demonstrated their willingness to be fair in these matters so the church was pleased. Furthermore, they proved that they were willing to share responsibilities with other people. Many times leaders of churches are unwilling to share their positions and their prominence as leaders of the congregation with other men. The apostles were not coveting the limelight. The names of the men chosen are Grecian names. Hence, Grecian Jews were chosen to take care of the Grecian widows. This also demonstrated the fairness of the apostles. It also proves that they were not dealing partially with the Hebrews. If all Hebrews had been chosen, the Grecians would have been justified in thinking that the apostles wished to keep the power in the hands of the Hebrews.

They laid their hands upon them. The purpose of the laying on of hands in this instance is not stated. It may be that the apostles imparted certain gifts to these men, enabling them to do their work efficiently. Or it may be that the laying on of hands is simply a part of a ceremony of appointment. It was simply a means of designating those who were being appointed. Any means of designating

the appointee would fill their requirements.

III. Consequent Growth of the Church (Verse 7)

The word of God increased. This simply means that the word of God continued to exercise its power and influence in the hearts and lives of people. The apostles, being freed from their material duties, could give more time to preaching and, hence, the word would have even greater influence.

The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly. Since more preaching was done, more people became disciples of Christ. This should suggest to us today that the more we preach the gospel, the more will people be saved from sin. Churches which have little or no program of preaching the gospel do not grow in numbers. Some churches are making the mistake of thinking that if they have preaching every Sunday, their preaching program is complete. Hence, they do not hold gospel meetings either in their church building or in other sections of the town. Preaching for those who attend regularly on Sunday is good, but it is not enough. Churches which have two gospel meetings a year or more are growing much more rapidly than those who have one or none at all.

Priests were obedient to the faith. On account of the unity which existed among the church members, the relief of the needy, and the increased preaching of the apostles, a great company of the priests obeyed the gospel. These men depended on the tithes of the Jewish religion for their living, and when they gave up their income from this source and obeyed the gospel, it was an indication of the great influence which the gospel was having. Denominational preachers convinced of their errors find it most difficult to leave a comfortable income and take the risk of either being unemployed or of going into secular work.

Lessons to Learn

1. Christian unity is much to be desired. We should preach on it often and hold before the religious world our desire and our willingness to unite upon the apostles' doctrine.

2. The Jerusalem church serves as a model. 1. It had a wise leadership.

2. It had a good evangelistic program.

3. It had an adequate teaching pro-

gram to reach all its membership. 4. It maintained a program of serving the poor. 5. It was an agreeable church. The membership was pleased with the work of the leadership.

3. The Jerusalem church was a growing church, and any church today that maintains such a program will be a growing 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.

Golden Text Explained

How is the unity of the early church described?
 How did Paul describe the unity he desired the churches to have?
 How can people have and enjoy such unity?
 What kind of believers can practice Christian unity?
 Does Christian unity depend upon the number of people involved?
 What does Christian unity do for social, tribal, and national distinctions?
 How did Christian unity express itself in attitudes?
 How did Christian unity express itself in social activities?
 How did it express itself in worship?
 How did this unity express itself in the relationship of people to preachers?

Introduction

What peculiar circumstance demanded this unusual program of relief?
 What proof do we have in the Macedonian contribution that people are not expected to sell their property and give all to the poor?
 What evidence do we have in the Corinthian contribution that God does not demand that we give all and live out of a common fund?
 What does this evidence lead us to believe with reference to the Jerusalem method of relieving the poor?

The Disposition That Meets Human Needs

How did Christian friendship find expression in the Jerusalem church?
 What effect did this unity of heart and soul have on the preaching of the apostles?
 Why did the apostles stress the resurrection of Christ in their preaching?

Can you show why this lesson on relief of the poor does not demand equal distribution of wealth among us today?

In whom was title to property vested—church, state, or individual?

Can you show that not all members of the Jerusalem church sold all their property?

Organizing to Meet Human Needs

Who were the Grecian Jews? the Hebrews of our lesson?

What is meant by "the daily ministrations"?

What division did the apostles make of the work to be done in the church?

Is it possible that preachers today are overloaded with "serving tables"?

Who should select church officers? Why?

Who determines the qualifications of church officers?

Who determines whether certain men have these qualifications?

To what did the apostles prefer to give themselves?

What does this suggest with reference to the way preachers should spend their time?

How did this suggestion appeal to the church?

Who appointed the men? What do you know of the ceremony of appointment?

Consequent Growth of the Church

What is meant by increase in the word of God?

What effect did the increase of the word of God have on the growth of the church?

What lesson should we learn from this experience of the Jerusalem church?

In the statement, "priests were obedient to the faith," what is the meaning of the word *faith*?

What does their obedience suggest with reference to the power of the gospel?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—August 29, 1954

THE FIRST MARTYR OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 7: 54-60; 8: 1-4

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Je'-sus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord;

58 And they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the wit-

nesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Ste'-phen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord Je'-sus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Je-ru-sa-lem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Ju-dae'-a and Sa-ma'-ri-a, except the apostles.

2 And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him.

3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and drag-

ging men and women committed them to prison.

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word.

Golden Text.—“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7: 60.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 6: 5-8.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 23. M.....Tribulations Certain (John 16: 33)
- August 24. T.....Take Up Cross (Matt. 16: 24-26)
- August 25. W.....Fellowship in Suffering (Phil. 3: 12-18)
- August 26. T.....Confident in Suffering (2 Tim. 1: 8-12)
- August 27. F.....Suffering with Christ (Rom. 8: 12-18)
- August 28. S.....Saul, the Persecutor (Acts 7: 58-8: 3)
- August 29. S.....Paul’s Later Reference to Stephen (Acts 22: 3-21)

TIME.—A.D. 31.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Stephen, Saul, and the Jews.

Golden Text Explained

1. Lay not this sin to their charge.

(a) In this prayer, Stephen followed the example of his Master. While hanging on the cross, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23: 34.) Stephen had followed the example of his Master in his teaching, which had brought this persecution upon him, and so he follows through even to the end and imitates his Master in the spirit of forgiveness toward his persecutors. (b) In this prayer Stephen gave final testimony to the Lordship of Jesus. The Jews were stoning Stephen because he recognized Jesus as Lord and continued to preach Jesus as Lord and Savior. Instead of becoming weak and cowardly and recanting in the hour of his death, Stephen boldly addressed Jesus as Lord. He knew this would be his last opportunity to offer his testimony in favor of the Lordship of Jesus, so he made use of it in the presence of his enemies for his own sake and for their good. (c) Stephen gave testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. The Jews maintained that Jesus was still dead, but Stephen, looking into heaven, addressed Jesus as Lord, the living One. The fact that Stephen addressed a prayer to Jesus was proof that Jesus was not dead, but alive. (d) Stephen recognized Jesus as judge. Since he prayed that Jesus would not lay this sin to the charge of his enemies, he recognized Jesus as the judge who could either hold them guilty or hold them unaccountable for their sin.

Only God the supreme judge has the power to forgive or to hold one guilty of a sin. The fact that Stephen made this request of Jesus shows that Stephen regarded Jesus as the judge who could forgive if he chose to do so. (e) We should not overlook the fact that Stephen gave his testimony of the Lordship and of the resurrection of Jesus and recognized him as judge in the very hour of his death. This is a proof of the sincerity of Stephen. Some men will make false statements for money, for social and political power when they are not faced with eminent death, but when a man is faced with sudden, certain death, there is no reason to suspect that he is influenced by the prospect of wealth or position and power.

2. Things for which Stephen did not pray,

(a) Stephen did not pray for vengeance on his enemies. It is common for men in times of great suffering to wish the same or worse suffering on their tormentors. But Stephen was able to rise to the height of his Master before him and pray for a blessing instead of a curse upon his enemies. (b) Stephen did not pray for deliverance from death. It is natural for people to love life and wish to continue it as long as possible. And that wish leads us to pray that we may live long lives. It leads us to pray that we may be raised up from beds of illness and spared from death in times of danger, but Stephen was not afraid to die, nor was his desire to live so impelling as to be a

subject of his prayers at this time, (c) Stephen did not pray to be excused from pain and suffering. He was not afraid to suffer. He did not fear that his suffering would lead him to doubt the goodness and mercy of God, nor was Stephen afraid that suffering might cause him to deny his Lord and Master.

3. **He fell asleep**, (a) The meaning of the word sleep in Christian language is beautiful. "In that mystery of death, in which the pagan saw only nothingness, Jesus saw continued life, rest, waking—the elements which enter into sleep. And thus, in Christian speech and thought, as the doctrine of the resurrection struck its roots deeper, the word dead, with its hopeless finality, gave place to the more gracious and hopeful word *sleep*. The pagan burying place carried in its name no suggestion of hope or comfort. It was a *burying place*, a *hiding place*, a *monumental*, a mere memorial of something gone . . . ; but the Christian thought of death as sleep brought with it into Christian speech the kindred thought of a

chamber of rest, and embodied it in the word *cemetery—the place to lie down to sleep*" (Vincent.) (b) There is the thought of rest from labor in the sleep of death. As man lies down at night to sleep and rest from his labors, so the Christian lies down to rest in the sleep of death, (c) There is the continuance of personality. The man who lies down to sleep at night expects to arise in the morning the same personality that went to sleep at night. And so, in death we do not lose our personality, (d) There is the expectation of rising again. When man lies down to sleep at night, he expects to arise in the morning, and so when we lie down in death, it is with the expectation of rising again. For these and perhaps other reasons, Jesus and his apostles gave us the beautiful word *sleep* in the place of death. This should take some of the fear out of that experience for us, and certainly the Christian is expected to approach that experience with less fear and with more serenity than one who does not know Christ.

Introduction

The Sadducees were the first to persecute the church. (Acts 4: 1; 5: 17, 18.) In our lesson today we will find that the Pharisees under the leadership of Saul, who later became Paul the apostle, joined in the persecution of the church. This growing opposition may be attributed to a number of things. First, great multitudes were being convinced that Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, was raised from the dead, and that he had sent the Holy Spirit, who enabled the apostles to preach and to work miracles. Thousands of people were becoming members of the church. This meant that they were quitting Judaism, that they were no longer submissive to the leadership of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They no longer took part in the regular synagogue worship, or in the temple worship as conducted by the Jewish leaders. Next, we learn that a great company of the priests obeyed the gospel. The matter was not so serious as long as only the common people were being affected by this new religion, but when the priests began to obey the gospel, the matter grew more serious. The first efforts of the Jewish rulers were to imprison the apostles and threaten them with more severe punishment, but the church

grew in spite of this persecution. Next, we see the Jews trying to answer the arguments of these preachers of the gospel, but the record tells us, "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." (Acts 6: 10.) They could not stop the apostles from working miracles, nor could they answer the arguments which these apostles and other preachers made. Failing to answer their arguments, the record says the Jews suborned men to bring false charges against the preachers. (Acts 6: 11, 12.) And when the preachers of the gospel would not be intimidated or hindered in their preaching of the gospel by these unholy tactics, the Jews resorted to blind fanatic force as a last resort to stop the preaching. This is the inevitable end of all prejudice and jealousy, where there is no restraining force of the government. Some of us can remember when preachers of the gospel were locked out of public buildings, subjected to ridicule and mild violence in spite of our freedom of speech and the protection of officers of the law. We should keep ourselves as free as possible from any disposition of mind which would lead us to rob people of the right of free speech and to worship God as they please.

Exposition of the Text

I. The Stoning of Stephen (Verses 54-58)

Now when they heard these things. The student should now read Acts 7: 1-53. This is a resume of Stephen's speech before the Jewish enemies. In this sermon Stephen reminded the people of God's dealings with Jews in the past and how the people had been unfaithful to the Lord, rejecting God's representatives from time to time. He ended the sermon with the piercing accusation that his hearers were as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears as were the fathers who rejected God's prophets. The Jews gave him audience until he directly accused them of being the betrayers and murderers of the righteous One whom God sent to be the Messiah and Saviour of the world. This accusation cut them to their hearts, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. This expression suggests the action of dogs in fighting. They had descended to the level of animals in their treatment of Stephen.

But he, being full of the Holy Spirit. This expression means that Stephen was under the control of the Holy Spirit. His words and his deeds were determined by the Holy Spirit, and surely his disposition and his deeds can be regarded as nothing less than the fruit of the Spirit on this occasion.

Saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing. It should be noticed that Stephen did not say he saw God. He saw the glory of God. No man has seen God at any time, and no man can look upon the face of God and live. (John 1: 18.) A manifestation of God's glory was given Stephen at this time to encourage and strengthen him, but he says he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Usually Jesus is represented as sitting at the right hand of God. (Acts 2: 34, 35.) It has been suggested that intense interest in the outcome of the persecution of Stephen caused Jesus to stand at this time.

The Son of man standing on the right hand of God. The term Son of God denotes the divinity of Jesus, while the term son of man denotes his humanity. It should be noticed that Jesus is spoken of as the son of man after his ascension to glory. Paul also says that our mediator between us and God is himself man, Christ

Jesus. (1 Tim. 2: 5.) We, therefore, conclude that Jesus did not discard his humanity, but that he is still identified with humanity. And Paul tells us that we shall be judged by the *man* whom God hath appointed. (Acts 17: 31.) We should also notice that this passage distinguishes between the Father and the Son. Jesus the Son of God is pictured as standing on the right hand of God the Father.

They cried out with a loud voice. This is the effect which the sermon had upon them. First they cried out with a loud voice; next, they stopped their ears so they could hear no more; and last, they rushed upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city.

The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. There is some evidence that these people in their frenzy tried to observe certain matters of the law. (a) They took him outside the city to stone him. This was in keeping with the law of Moses that one was to be taken outside of the camp to be stoned. (Num. 15: 34-36.) (b) They had witnesses. The law also required that there should be witnesses to the guilt of a man. (Deut. 17: 6, 7.) According to the law, the witnesses were to throw the first stone. Whether this was observed we have no way of knowing. However, we cannot keep from noticing inconsistency here. They could murder a man because they could not answer his argument, but they would observe the law as to the place where they would murder him, and they would hire witnesses to testify against him that they might observe the law concerning witnesses. This is simply more fruit of prejudice and jealousy, and another reason why we should avoid these terrible dispositions.

II. The Prayers of Stephen (Verses 59, 60)

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (a) Notice that this prayer is addressed to Jesus. Ordinarily we pray to the Father through Jesus Christ. It is wrong to pray to any being other than God, but this prayer shows that Stephen regarded Jesus as God and worthy of worship. Furthermore, Luke, the inspired historian, did not regard Stephen as making a mistake, so recorded the fact that Stephen

prayed to Jesus, (b) Stephen regarded Jesus as receiving his spirit at death. Solomon said the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Eccles. 12: 7.) Evidently Stephen regarded Jesus as God, who receives our spirit at death, (c) Stephen followed the example of his Master in death. Jesus commended his spirit unto the Father. (Luke 23: 46.) As Jesus commended his spirit to the Father, so Stephen in this hour commended his spirit unto Jesus.

Cried with a loud voice. After asking the Lord to receive his spirit, Stephen then prayed with reference to his enemies. Stephen ended his life as he had lived it, faithfully and loyally to his Master. If Stephen had not lived in a continual preparation for death, he would have found little time or occasion to prepare for death in this time of suffering. "While we are in health, we should prepare to die. What an unfit place for preparation for death would have been the situation of Stephen! How impossible then would it have been to have made preparation! Yet the dying bed is often a place as unfit to prepare as were the circumstances of Stephen. When racked with pain; when faint and feeble; when the mind is indisposed to thought, or when it raves in the wildness of delirium, what an unfit place is this to prepare to die! I have seen many dying beds; I have seen many persons in all stages of their last sickness; but never have I yet seen a dying bed which seemed to me to be a proper place to make preparation for eternity." (Albert Barnes.)

III. Saul Leads a Persecution (Acts 8:

1-4)

Saul was consenting unto his death.

In connection with the stoning of Stephen, we have the first mention of Saul of Tarsus, who later became the fearless apostle to the Gentiles. Since the men that did the actual stoning laid their coats at the feet of Saul, we conclude that Saul was supervising the stoning of Stephen. Others think they see in this evidence that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. There seems, however, to be no ground for such a conclusion. The fact that Paul was consenting to his death does not necessarily imply that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin.

There arose on that day a great persecution against the church. The death of Stephen was the spark which

ignited the conflagration that swept through the entire city. The taste of blood called for deeper draughts to satisfy their thirst for blood.

They were all scattered abroad . . . except the apostles. Since the apostles were the leaders of the church and were known to the Jewish rulers because they had been imprisoned a number of times, it is not easy to account for their ability to remain in Jerusalem. However, the experience of Philip in Samaria throws some light on the subject. When Philip had preached the gospel and baptized a number, they sent to Jerusalem for apostles to come down to Samaria, lay their hands on people, and give them the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. (Acts 8: 14-17.) Thus it seems, in the providence of God, that the apostles were providentially protected in Jerusalem that people might know where to send for them to endow the infant churches with the gifts which would enable them to carry on the work.

Devout men buried Stephen. Since the word *devout* is used instead of brethren or disciples, we conclude that Christians were afraid to expose themselves during the heat of the persecution to bury Stephen. But not all the Jews were of the rabid character of these persecutors, so devout Jews, who did not endorse such extreme measures, took Stephen's body and buried it.

But Saul laid waste the church. Saul at once distinguished himself as a leader of the persecution. He went from house to house and made no distinction between men and women, giving them all the same treatment. Paul says that he strove to make people blaspheme. Death was the penalty for blasphemy, so when he could treat Christians in such way that they would make a statement he could construe as blasphemy, he put them to death. (Acts 26: 11.)

Went about preaching the word.

We have no evidence to believe that God brought persecution upon the church in order to scatter them from Jerusalem, that the word of God might be preached in other places, but obviously the Lord used this persecution for the accomplishment of his purposes. The people had stayed in Jerusalem under the teaching of the apostles long enough to be equipped to do effective work in

mission fields, so when they were scattered by persecution, they went preaching the gospel. If a ripe head of wheat is struck, the seeds are scattered in every direction. Seemingly the head is destroyed. But soon there will spring up many heads all around. So the church was ripe and ready for being scattered. Persecution scattered the church; it did not destroy it. Soon after it was scattered, churches began to spring up in every direction. Wars are not brought upon us today that Christians may be scattered into

various nations of the earth. But this comes as a result of war. Christians are conscripted and carried into many nations. They take the word with them, and there are many churches in the world today which would not have been planted had it not been for the wars which carried our men into those nations. As these early Christians carried the word and preached the word everywhere they went, so Christians today must carry the word with them and preach it wherever they go.

Lessons to Learn

1. The truth of God is sharper than a two-edged sword and is able to pierce the heart. If the heart is rebellious, that soul will be lost and will persecute others who are preaching the word. If that soul is submissive when it is pierced with the truth, it will be saved.

2. There were two things Stephen could do while he was being stoned. He could throw stones at or revile and threaten those who were stoning

him. Second, he could pray for them. He chose the latter. In this he followed the example of his Master and set a wonderful example for us.

3. That which seemed to be the destruction of the church was but the scattering of the seed that caused the church to multiply many times. The church is being persecuted in foreign lands today. We need have no fear of persecution. Doctrinal compromises and worldliness can ruin the church, but persecution, never.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Whose example did Stephen follow in his prayer for his enemies?

How did Stephen give final testimony to the Lordship of Jesus?

Show how Stephen gave testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

How did Stephen testify to the fact that Jesus is to be the judge of all?

How did Stephen give proof of his sincerity?

Name and discuss three things for which Stephen did not pray.

What do you know of the meaning of the word *asleep* as used in our text?

Name and discuss three lessons taught us about death in the use of this word *sleep*.

How should the use of the word *sleep* instead of *death* help us?

Introduction

What group among the Jews was the first to persecute the church?

Name and discuss three reasons why Jewish opposition to the church grew.

To what methods did the Jews resort to get incriminating evidence against the church?

Do you think there would be violent persecution today if the law of the land did not forbid?

The Stoning of Stephen

Of what did Stephen accuse the Jews of his day?

What accusation caused the Jews to attack Stephen?

How did the Jews conduct themselves during the attack?

How did Stephen conduct himself during this trouble?

What did Stephen see while being stoned?

What evidence do we have that Jesus did not discard his humanity when he ascended?

What evidence can you give that these Jews tried to observe some of their law while they were stoning Stephen?

Can you point out some inconsistencies in their efforts to observe the law?

The Prayers of Stephen

To whom was Stephen's prayer addressed?

Whom did Stephen ask to receive his spirit?

What does this prayer teach us about Stephen's conception of Jesus?

What example of Jesus did Stephen follow in his death?

When is the proper time to prepare for death?

In his prayer for his enemies, what example did Stephen set for us?

Saul Leads a Persecution

What famous man is first mentioned in connection with the death of Stephen?

How was Saul of Tarsus connected with the stoning of Stephen?

What great movement had its birth in the stoning of Stephen?

Why and how did the apostles stay in Jerusalem during the persecution?

Who buried Stephen?

How did Saul conduct this persecution against the church?

Taking an over-all view of the persecution, did it hinder or help the church?

Have wars hindered or helped the growth of the church in our generation?

What did the early Christians do as they fled from persecution?

Should the church wait for wars or perse-

cution to drive them into mission fields?
What is there to hinder *you* from going
into a community where there is no
church, or where the church is weak, to

give the balance of your life to building
up the church?
What is there of interest to you in lessons
to learn?

Lesson X—September 5, 1954

PHILIP PREACHES IN SAMARIA

Lesson Text

Acts 8: 5-17

5 And Philip went down to the city of Sa-ma'-ri-a, and proclaimed unto them the Christ.

6 And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did.

7 For *from* many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was much joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, Si'-mon by name, who beforetime in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Sa-ma'-ri-a, giving out that himself was some great one:

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great.

11 And they gave heed to him, be-

cause that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Je'-sus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 And Si'-mon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.

14 Now when the apostles that were at Je-ru'-sa-lem heard that Sa-ma'-ri-a had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit:

16 For as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Je'-sus.

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And there was much joy in that city*” (Acts 8: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 8: 18-25.

Daily, Bible Readings

August 30.	M.....	Samaria Built (1 Kings 16: 21-28)
August 31.	T.....	Samaria Condemned (Isa. 7: 3-9)
Sept. 1.	W.....	Jesus in Samaria (Luke 17: 11-19)
Sept. 2.	T.....	Samaritans Believed (John 4: 39-42)
Sept. 3.	F.....	The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-38)
Sept. 4.	S.....	The Samaritan Woman (John 4: 1-34)
Sept. 5.	S.....	Unfriendly Samaritans (Luke 9: 51-56)

TIME.—A.D. 32.

PLACE.—Samaria.

PERSONS.—Philip, Simon, Peter, John, and the Samaritans.

Golden Text Explained

1. Religious conditions in Samaria.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was unwise in his dealings with the northern tribes, so they rebelled, and under the leadership of Jeroboam established what was known as the kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 12.) This left Rehoboam the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and the most of the

Levites to form what was known as the kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as the capital. Jeroboam established places of worship in Bethel and Dan. In these cities he established a form of idolatrous worship. He made calves as objects of worship. He allowed anybody who wished to serve as priest, and he changed the

time of worship to suit his own conveniences. (1 Kings 12: 29-33.) This idolatry continued until they were taken into Assyrian captivity. When they were carried into Assyrian captivity, the Assyrians brought some of their own people into the country of Israel and settled them there. These Assyrians intermarried with the few Jews who were left, thus producing a mixed race of people. (2 Kings 17: 24-33.) One hundred and thirty-five years rolled by, and the kingdom of Judah was captured and taken into Babylonian captivity. Another seventy years rolled by, and the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. When the Jews began to rebuild the city, the Samaritans asked to be allowed to cooperate with them, but the Jews refused them this privilege, and the Samaritans offered resistance and opposition in every way possible. This spirit of enmity and animosity continued until in the days of our Lord. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans and looked upon them as being even worse than ordinary Gentiles. The Samaritans gradually gave up their idolatry and came to adopt a sort of worship of Jehovah as outlined in the Pentateuch. They accepted the writings of Moses but rejected all the rest of the Old Testament. According to the woman at the well, Jacob was the father of the Samaritans as well as of the Jews (John 4: 12) and, according to this woman, she expected the Messiah to come and serve the Samaritans as well as the Jews (John 4: 25). There was so little Jewish blood in the Samaritans that they had little right to claim Jacob as their father, and they made such claims only when it was to their advantage to do so. Jesus would not allow his apostles and disciples to preach to the Samaritans during his lifetime. (Matt. 10: 5.)

2. The ground for the joy of the Samaritans, (a) The Samaritans had a right to rejoice greatly because salvation through Christ, the promised Messiah, was offered to them. When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, they said, "I bring you good tidings of great

joy which shall be to all the people." (Luke 2: 10.) The word gospel means good news, and wherever the gospel goes the good news of salvation in Christ goes. It is salvation from the power of sin, from the pollution of sin, from the state of sin, and from the guilt of sin. When we can enjoy this wonderful salvation, we have every right to indulge in great expressions of joy. (b) The Samaritans had ground for their joy because the work of Philip was superior to the work of Simon the sorcerer. Simon had been their spiritual leader and had bewitched them with his sorcery, but Philip brought them good news of salvation from sin. This was so superior to the works of sorcery that they had every right to rejoice, (c) Another ground for the great joy of these Samaritans is found in the fact that many people obeyed the gospel. We are told that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15: 7, 10.) Since a great multitude of people obeyed the gospel, there was ground for exceeding great joy.

3. The nature of the joy of these Samaritans, (a) It was a spiritual joy rather than a carnal joy. They no doubt got some entertainment out of the work of Simon as he bewitched them with his sorcery, but it was not a spiritual joy. They knew only the emotions of fear and superstition as they beheld the work of Simon, but their hearts were filled with peace and satisfaction and joy as they heard the message of Philip, (b) The joy of these Samaritans had prospect of being a lasting joy. That which is physical and carnal has little prospect of enduring long, while that which is spiritual in its nature is eternal in its duration, (c) Their joy was a foretaste of that which we shall know in heaven. The peace, joy, and satisfaction which pass understanding must be the first fruits and the earnest of that peace and joy which we shall know when our understanding has been enlarged by our association and fellowship with the Lord and his angels.

Introduction

It is interesting to study the various words used by the apostles and early preachers of the gospel to describe the

work they did when they preached the gospel. Two different words were used in our text with reference to

the preaching of Philip. The first is found in verse five, where we have the English word *proclaimed*. This word comes from the Greek word *keerusso* and means "to proclaim after the manner of a herald; always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and authority which must be listened to and obeyed; used of the public proclamation of the gospel in matters pertaining to it, made by John, Jesus, and his apostles." (Thayer.) Again, "the standing expression in the New Testament for the proclamation of the gospel, but confined to the primary announcement of the message and facts of salvation, and not including continuous instruction in the contents and connections of the message, which is expressed by *didaskain*, to teach." (Vincent.) The next word is *preaching good tidings*, and these three words are the translation of one Greek word *euaggelizo*, which means "to proclaim glad tidings; to instruct (men) concerning the things that pertain to Christian salvation ... in the New Testament used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through

Christ, and of what relates to this salvation." (Thayer.) This work of announcing salvation in Christ on the terms of the gospel is the work of evangelism, while further instruction and development is the work of teaching. This work of teaching is expressed by the word *didasko*, which means "to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses: used of Jesus and the apostles uttering in public what they wished their hearers to know and remember; used of those who enjoin upon others to observe some ordinance, to embrace some opinion, or to obey some precept; to impart instruction, instill doctrine into one." (Thayer.) There is a false theory circulating among us to the effect that an evangelist cannot stay at one place and labor with one church after the need of evangelism ceases and the work of instruction begins. This in effect says that one man cannot do both the work of evangelism and instruction. This is a false and foolish position to take. Jesus did both (Matt. 4: 23); the apostles did both in Jerusalem (Acts 4: 2); and Paul did both in Home (Acts 28: 31).

Exposition of the Text

I. The Gospel of Christ Brings Joy to Samaria (Verses 5-8)

Philip went down to the city of Samaria. This Philip is one of the seven chosen to take care of the Grecian widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6: 5, 6), and called the evangelist in Acts 21: 8. From the form of the statement in our text we may rightly expect the word Samaria to refer to a city, but such is not the case. There was a city by that name built by King Omri and made the capital of the kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 16: 24.) Samaria was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 109 B.C. Herod the Great built a city in the same vicinity but changed its name to Sebaste. There is no definite article before the word city, so Luke may have meant to say that Philip went to "a city of Samaria."

Proclaimed unto them the Christ. To proclaim Christ is simply to preach the gospel, the good news concerning Jesus Christ. He told them that the Christ had come, that he had died for their sins, that he now reigns in heaven, and is able to intercede for them, and that he expects

them to be submissive to the Father's will revealed through him. This is preaching Christ.

Multitudes gave heed with one accord. This denotes the success which Philip had in Samaria. Great numbers gave heed to the things which Philip taught, and they did so with one accord. This denotes the unity of their reception of and their response to the gospel as preached by Philip.

And saw the signs which he did. Philip was able to perform miracles to confirm the word which he preached. The purpose of such miracles was the confirmation of the word. (Mark 16: 20; Heb. 2: 1-4.)

Unclean spirits, . . . crying with a loud voice. There are some who deny the existence of evil spirits. They say that the people had diseases of various kinds or were insane. But these spirits cried with a loud voice, and spirits which Jesus cast out confessed him to be the Son of God and revealed the fact that they knew that Jesus was the one who would finally torment them. (Mark 5: 7.) Diseased or insane people could not

have that knowledge of Jesus on first sight.

Many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. We never read of Jesus and his apostles curing headaches and stomach troubles. They raised the dead, they gave sight to the blind, they cured the lame, those who were crippled from birth, and stopped issues of blood. Miracles workers (?) do not specialize in healing total blindness or raising the dead, but rather in the curing of such ailments as cannot be observed with the natural eye.

II. Many Samaritans Obeyed the

Gospel. (Verses 9-13)

There was a certain man, Simon by name. We are told that "he was born at Gitton, a village of Samaria, identified with the modern Kuryet. He was probably educated at Alexandria, and there became acquainted with the eclectic tenets of the gnostic school. Either then or subsequently he was a pupil of Dositheus, who preceded him as a teacher of gnosticism in Samaria, and whom he supplanted with the aid of Cleobius." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.) His history following this experience related in our lesson is uncertain and unworthy of study.

This man is that power which is called Great. "Tradition has it that Simon went about accompanied by a woman named Helena, who was also a power of God. He taught a great first principle, hidden but omnipresent; this principle manifested itself in *two different ways*—as an active and spiritual principle and as a passive and receptive principle. The first is the good, the latter the evil; the first is the great power of God manifesting itself for the recovery of the other or passive receptive principle. Simon himself was the incarnation of the active principle, which made for salvation; Helena was the incarnation of the passive reception principle. Her life of degradation was a type of the deterioration of the visible universe, and her recovery by Simon was the process of salvation by the great power of God made visible. This dualism, with its simple, almost childish, symbolism, its male and female principles, its composition of good and evil, was the source out of which Simon constructed his system. Simon had so amazed the people by his pretended supernatural powers that they gave heed to him in what-

soever he did or claimed." (Boles.)

When they believed Philip preaching good tidings. Philip's preaching was (a) concerning the kingdom of God. Since Philip continued in the apostles' doctrine, he preached that people were now delivered out of the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God. (Col. 1: 12, 13.) And he preached that entrance into this kingdom and enjoyment of citizenship in this kingdom depended upon the new birth, the birth of the water and the Spirit. (John 3: 3, 5.) (b) Philip's preaching concerned the name of Jesus Christ. Since Philip continued in the apostles' doctrine, he preached that there is none other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved. (Acts 4: 12.) He also preached that we are baptized into that name. (Matt. 28: 19; Acts 19: 5.) Since Philip preached such, we are not surprised to find that many of the Samaritans were baptized, both men and women. (Verse 12.) Here we are told that both men and women were baptized. No mention is made of infants being baptized, neither is there any mention of them anywhere else in the New Testament being baptized into Christ. Only believers were baptized.

Simon also himself believed. We are told that Simon beheld the signs and great miracles which were worked by Philip, and he was amazed at their superiority over the things he was able to do. Since they were far superior to his works, he believed in Christ as preached by Philip. Many teachers of the religious world deny that Simon's faith was genuine or sincere. But since the record says that Simon *also* believed, we conclude that his belief was of the same nature as that of the rest of the Samaritans. If his faith was genuine, his baptism was sincere, and hence, he was saved, for Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16: 16.) Another reason why we believe his faith was genuine and that he was baptized into Christ is the fact that when sometime later he committed a grievous sin, he was told to repent and pray for forgiveness. (Acts 8: 22.) If his faith had not been genuine and he was still an alien sinner, he would have been told to repent and be baptized for the remission of his sins. (Acts 2: 38.) Since he was told to repent and pray for **for-**

giveness, which is the law of pardon for an erring child of God, we conclude that he was a child of God.

III. The Church Enabled to Carry on Its Work (Verses 14-17)

Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word. In the persecution which followed the stoning of Stephen the church was scattered; only the apostles remained in Jerusalem. (Acts 8: 1.) It was not accidental that they heard of Philip's work in Samaria. These apostles remained in Jerusalem that they might be available for just such work as they did on this occasion.

That they might receive the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we learn that the apostles could do something which Philip could not do. They could impart the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manifestation to other people. Philip could not do so. Philip could work miracles because some apostle had laid hands upon him and given him that power, but he did not have the power to impart that ability to others. Some say that the baptism of the Holy Spirit which the apostles enjoyed gave them this power to impart the Spirit to others, but if so, should we not conclude that Cornelius had this same power since he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit like the apostles received it? (Acts 11: 17; 15: 8.) It seems more logical to say that Peter and John had this power which Philip did not have because they were apostles. This was a part of their apostolic work and authority.

Only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. We are told that the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon any of these Samaritans at the time Peter and John came down, only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Why this statement? It is made in order to correct a probable misunder-

standing. Peter told people to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2: 38.) Since these had repented and been baptized, they should have received the Holy Spirit. The writer intends that we should understand that they had received that gift which follows baptism in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, but he also means to tell us that the Holy Spirit had not fallen on them in the miraculous manifestation.

Then laid they their hands on them. Two things were done by the apostles that people might receive the miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit, (a) They laid their hands on them. There is no value in the laying on their hands. This expression is used with reference to people who had no power to impart. (Acts 13: 3.) It was simply a means of designating who was to receive the blessing intended. (b) They prayed for those who were to receive the Spirit. (Verse 15.) It was not the laying on of hands merely which was the means of imparting the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, the laying on of hands simply designated the one for whom the prayer was offered.

They received the Holy Spirit. There are those who think that since the Holy Spirit is a person, he cannot dwell in two or more at the same time. This obviously is false, for a number of these people of Samaria received the Holy Spirit. One received the Spirit as much as the other. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would abide with the apostles, and that he should be in them. (John 14: 17.) It was not simply an influence that should abide with the apostles, but he was a person who should be with them and dwell in them. If he could dwell in each of twelve men scattered over the then known world, he can dwell in every Christian today.

Lessons to Learn

1. The early disciples left their homes to go preach Christ. Is it unreasonable that the Lord should expect us to deny ourselves of some comforts and conveniences to carry the message of salvation to the lost?

2. If Philip had never gone to Samaria, the people would never have known the superiority of Christianity over the work and teaching of Simon.

It may be that there are people today who will die without the knowledge of the superiority of Christianity if you and I do not take it to them.

3. The fact that we cannot work miracles is no proof that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in us. Philip could not do something the apostles could do, but that was no proof that the Holy Spirit was not in Philip.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?
 Repeat the golden text.
 Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.
 Golden Text Explained
 What do you know of the beginning of the Samaritans?
 How did these early Samaritans worship?
 How did the Jews of Jerusalem offend the Samaritans?
 What part of the Old Testament did the Samaritans accept?
 Did the Samaritans expect to enjoy the blessings of Messiah?
 Describe the salvation which brought great joy to the Samaritans.
 In what way was the work of Philip superior to that of Simon?
 What is said of the number of people in Samaria who obeyed the gospel?
 What can you say of the nature of the joy of these Samaritans?

Introduction

What does one do when he proclaims the gospel?
 What is meant by preaching good tidings?
 Can you show a difference between the work suggested by these words and the work suggested by teaching?
 May one man both preach and teach the same audience? Give examples.

The Gospel of Christ Brings Joy to Samaria

Who was the preacher in Samaria? What do you know of him?
 What do you know of Samaria—country or city?
 What was the content of Philip's preaching in Samaria?

What is said of Philip's success in Samaria?
 What use did Philip make of miracles and signs?
 What evidence do we have that demons actually dwell in people?
 What type of diseases did Philip cure?

Many Samaritans Obeyed the Gospel

What do you know of Simon the sorcerer and his system of teaching?
 What did Philip preach about the kingdom?
 What did he preach about the name of Christ?
 What evidence do we have that no infants were baptized by Philip?
 What caused Simon the sorcerer to believe?
 What evidence do we have that Simon became a Christian?

The Church Enabled to Carry on Its Work

Why did the apostles remain in Jerusalem in spite of the persecution?
 Why did Philip have the power to work miracles?
 Why did Philip not have the power to give others the power to work miracles?
 Why were the apostles able to give this power to others?
 Had the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit in any measure before the apostles came?
 What was the purpose of laying hands upon others?
 What part did prayer have in giving this measure of the Holy Spirit?
 What evidence do we have in this lesson of the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—September 12, 1954

THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN

Lesson Text

Acts 8: 26-40

26 But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Je-ru'-sa-lem unto Ga'-za: the same is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and behold, a man of E-thi-o'-pi-a, a eunuch of great authority under Can-da'-ce, queen of the E-thi-o'-pi-ans, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Je-ru'-sa-lem to worship;

28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet I-sa'-iah.

29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading I-sa'-iah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except

some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, So he openeth not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: His generation who shall declare? For his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?

35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Je'-sus.

36 And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and

the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

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

39 And when they came up out of

the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at A-zo'tus: and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caes-a-re'-a.

Golden Text. — "*Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*" (Acts 8: 36b.)

Devotional Heading. — Acts 6: 5-8.

Daily Bible Readings

September 6. M.....	The Great Commission (Matt. 28: 16-20)
September 7. T.....	Message of the Preacher (Luke 24: 44-49)
September 8. W.....	Obligation of the Hearer (Mark 16: 14-20)
September 9. T.....	First Preaching of Commission (Acts 2: 22-41)
September 10. F.....	God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 13-17)
September 11. S.....	Gospel to Be Obeyed (2 Thess. 1: 7-9)
September 12. S.	Philip in Samaria (Acts 8: 5-17)

Time. — A.D. 32.

Place. — On the highway to Gaza.

Persons. — Philip and the Ethiopian.

Golden Text Explained

1. The use of water in Christianity.

In contrast to Judaism, Christianity is a spiritual religion and makes a minimum use of material things. Yet, Christianity does have use for material things, such as the loaf and the fruit of the vine in the Lord's supper and water in baptism. Jesus made mention of water when he said, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3: 5.) That the water of this passage refers to Christian baptism the writers of antiquity all agree. Water is sometimes used figuratively of the Spirit (John 7: 37-39), but in this passage it cannot refer to the Spirit, since the Spirit is mentioned in connection with the water. Again, Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16: 16.) In this verse baptism and salvation are mentioned together, baptism being one of the conditions of salvation. (b) Paul mentioned water in connection with our cleansing when he spoke of Jesus loving the church and giving himself up for it, "that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word." (Eph. 5: 25, 26.) And again Paul tells us that God saved us "through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Tit. 3: 5.) Then if anyone should doubt how the water is used, his mind should be put to rest when we read, "Having our body

washed with pure water." (Heb. 10: 22.) The Greeks had three words to express the idea of washing. One word was *plunoo*, which was used with few exceptions with reference to the washing of inanimate objects. Another word was *niptoo*, which was used with reference to the washing of living persons, but to only a part of the person such as the hands in Mark 7: 3, the feet in John 13: 5, and the face in Matt. 6: 17. The third word was *louoo* and was used with reference to the washing of the whole body of persons. This is the word used in Heb. 10: 22 and also in Acts 22: 16. This certainly throws some very clear light on the use of water in connection with the Christian religion.

2. Why was the question asked?

(a) Notice that Philip preached Jesus unto this Ethiopian. (Verse 25.) Since Philip preached Jesus to him, why would the man ask the question contained in our text? Some men boast that they have preached Jesus for many years and yet have never mentioned baptism. But one cannot preach all that should be preached about Jesus without mentioning baptism. First, one must say something of Jesus going to John and demanding baptism. Next, one must mention the great commission which Jesus gave his apostles, telling them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved. (Mark 16: 15, 16.) And since the Ethiopian asked the question contained in our text, we are forced to conclude that Philip said something to him about being baptized when he preached Jesus to him. (b) Philip was not surprised at the question which this Ethiopian raised, but if Philip had said absolutely nothing about baptism in his sermon, he would certainly have been surprised that the man would ask this question, (c) The fact that Philip proceeded immediately to baptize the man is proof that he was not surprised at the question asked by the Ethiopian, and is further proof that Philip was in the habit of baptizing people to whom he preached Jesus. Philip proceeded in such a casual, normal way as to prove that there was not anything unusual or extraordinary about this procedure. Hence, we may conclude that it was customary for people to ask this question which the Ethiopian asked and for them to submit to baptism in response to the preaching of Jesus.

3. **Things preceding baptism.** Baptism alone will do no one any good. Baptism has no virtue in itself to do anyone any good spiritually. (a) Belief of the gospel must precede baptism. When this man asked what hindered him from being baptized, Philip replied that if he believed with all of his heart he might be baptized. Hence, we know that faith precedes

baptism. Jesus taught this when he said he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16: 16.) Only the believer has a right to be baptized, (b) Repentance must precede baptism. Surely the impenitent person would not desire to be baptized. And if the impenitent person should submit to baptism, his action would not be acceptable to God, for Jesus tells us that except we repent we shall perish. (Luke 13: 3, 5.) (c) Confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, must precede baptism. This fact is positively taught in our lesson text. But notice what this confession is. Many believe that people are required to confess their sins before they are baptized, but Paul teaches that we are to do otherwise. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10: 9.) Here we learn that instead of confessing our sins we must confess with the mouth that Jesus is Lord. Again, some people contend that in the act of baptism we make a confession of our faith in Christ. But it will be noticed that Paul said, "With the mouth confession is made." This confession is one which is made with the mouth and not in the act of baptism; and Philip required this Ethiopian to make a confession with the mouth, and that confession was that he believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.

Introduction

In the study of conversion we need to notice some things common in the religious world that did not happen in New Testament conversions, (a) An angel did not get this Ethiopian down and handle him roughly until he promised to be good. An angel had something to do with the conversion of this Ethiopian, but he did not appear to the man to be converted, (b) The Holy Spirit did not make a personal appearance to the man to be converted. Some people, in relating their experiences of grace, relate how the Holy Spirit came to them in some mysterious, miraculous way better felt than told and brought about their conversion in a direct immediate manner. This did not happen in the conversion of the Ethiopian. The Spirit had a part in his conversion, but did not appear to the man to be converted, (c) This Ethiopian was not required to relate an experience

of grace before an assembled congregation before he could become a candidate for baptism and after that into the full rights and fellowship of the church. Many people are required to say that they believe that God for Christ's sake has forgiven their sins before they will be admitted as a candidate for baptism. But this did not happen in this case of conversion, (d) No congregation was given the right to vote whether this man should be admitted as a candidate for baptism. Some religious denominations today require a person to relate an experience of grace; the congregation listens, compares his experience with their own, and then votes whether the individual may or may not be baptized. No such voting took place on this occasion, (e) The man was not told to be baptized into any religious denomination. Modern denominational conversions

take place before baptism. And baptism is only a means of entrance into the denomination of one's choice. But this Ethiopian was not baptized into any denomination. Like the people on the day of Pentecost, when this Ethiopian was baptized, he was added by the Lord unto the Lord's church. He was then and ever afterwards, if

he remained faithful, a member of the Lord's church. In order to become a member of the Lord's church, we do what the apostles taught. If one wishes to become a member of some modern denomination, he must do something different from or in addition to that which the apostles taught.

Exposition of the Text

I. The Preacher and the Hearer Brought Together (Verses 26-31)

But an angel of the Lord. Angels do service to them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1: 14.) On this occasion the angel appeared to the preacher. In the case of Cornelius, the angel appeared to the one to be converted. (Acts 10: 3-7.) But in both cases the angels served only to get the preacher and the hearer together. If an angel should preach anything other than that which the apostles preached, he would be accursed. (Gal. 1: 8, 9.)

Arise, and go toward the south. Philip was in Samaria when the angel appeared to him. He was commanded to take the road southward out of Samaria that intersects the highway from Jerusalem to Gaza. Gaza was about sixty miles southwest of Jerusalem. There were two, perhaps three, roads one might travel from Jerusalem to Gaza. One went by Hebron and through a rough hill section of southern Judea. Whether Luke meant to say that the road was through a desert section or that the city of Gaza was a desert place is difficult to determine. There was an old Gaza which was in ruins, uninhabited, deserted. It is likely that Philip was instructed to take the road which went by this Gaza.

A man of Ethiopia. It is impossible to determine whether this man was a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish religion. It was certainly not impossible for a Jew to be in the place of authority held by this man. Joseph had such a place in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon.

Was reading the prophet Isaiah.

(a) The fact that the man was reading his Bible indicates that he was devoutly religious, (b) The fact that he was reading his Bible also indicates that he used well his time. Many people say they do not have time to study their Bibles, and yet they waste more time than would be necessary for them to use in studying their Bibles.

Join thyself to this chariot. This is the instruction given by the Holy Spirit to Philip. The Holy Spirit played a part in this man's conversion, (a) He inspired the preacher with the message to convert the man. (b) He served to bring the preacher and the hearer together. But in all this, there is no indication that the Holy Spirit did any direct or immediate work upon the man to be converted.

Understandest thou what thou readest? Philip asked this question that he might determine whether the man was a believer in Christ. Any Jew who could understand the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was a believer in Jesus Christ. Believers can see Jesus in that fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, but those who reject Christ have insurmountable difficulties in explaining the chapter. The man admitted his difficulties and requested that Philip sit with him in the chariot and guide him into the understanding of that difficult prophecy.

II. The Preacher's Text and Message (Verses 32-35)

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. Isaiah 53 presents the Messiah as a suffering Saviour. Other prophecies present him as a glorious and victorious Messiah. The Jews preferred to believe the Messiah to be victorious and could not harmonize that view with the suffering pictured by Isaiah.

His judgement was taken away. This does not mean that the Lord's power to judge was taken from him, but rather that he was not given fair treatment in his trial. But in spite of this unfair treatment, he did not open his mouth to murmur or to threaten those who mistreated him.

Of whom speaketh the prophet this? This question may suggest that the Ethiopian was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, for practically all Jews considered this passage to speak of the coming Messiah. However, since the time of Christ, orthodox Jews have adopted another interpre-

tation which says that the Jewish nation is pictured in Isaiah 53.

Preached unto him Jesus. The question which the Ethiopian asked gave Philip the opportunity for which he was looking to present Jesus as the Messiah to this man. "Philip showed that the language of Isaiah had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and particularly the manner of his death, and then his resurrection and the ascension. To 'preach' Jesus is to preach his commands. Philip in preaching Jesus not only preached his death, burial, resurrection, but the commission that he gave to his apostles just before his ascension. Philip preached the terms of remission of sins." (Boles.)

III. The Hearer becomes a Christian

(Verses 36-40)

They came unto a certain water.

Some have found it difficult to believe that there could be enough water along the way to baptize a man; but since inspiration tells us that there was sufficient water for the man to be baptized, it is foolish for us to doubt it. Of the traditional spot where this baptism occurred, we read, "The site has been identified, bearing still the ancient name. The water there as present issues from a perennial source, a part of which runs to waste in the neighboring fields, and a part is collected into a drinking trough on one side of the road, and into two small tanks on the other side." (Hackett.)

If thou believest with all thy heart.

By many scholars this verse has been rejected and has been considered an interpolation. It is not in the body of our text, but is preserved in the footnotes. The manuscripts from which our text was translated date about A.D. 350 to A.D. 450. But Irenaeus, who lived A.D. 170 to A.D. 210, quoted this verse thirty-seven as scripture; and Cyprian, who was made Bishop of Carthage A.D. 248, also quoted this verse as scripture. Furthermore, we can hardly suppose that the Ethiopian asked Philip such an important question and got absolutely no answer at all.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This confession serves two purposes, (a) Since the unbeliever has no right to be baptized into Christ, and since no one has authority to baptize an unbeliever into Christ, this confession serves to identify the man as a scriptural sub-

ject of baptism, (b) Requiring such a statement from the candidate for baptism gives the candidate the opportunity to do that which is required as a condition of salvation. Paul makes confession with the mouth a condition of salvation. (Rom. 10: 9, 10.) (c) This confession was made with the mouth, and it is a confession of Jesus as Lord. Therefore, it is the confession which Paul makes a condition of salvation, (d) Since Paul taught that confession with the mouth is a condition of salvation, and this Ethiopian wanted to be saved, who can doubt that Philip required him to make this confession?

They both went down into the water. Going down into the water does not positively prove that the man was immersed. We read that the **both** went down into the water. If going down into the water is proof of immersion, then we would have proof that **both** the preacher and the Ethiopian were immersed. However, the fact that they went **down into** the water certainly implies an immersion, since it would be perfectly foolish for them to go **down into** the water in order to sprinkle water on the man.

He baptized him. It is in the word baptize that we have proof of the immersion of the candidate. No Greek lexicon defines the word for baptize to mean anything less than an immersion. Since a verb of action cannot picture three different actions in one occurrence, what action is pictured here in this word? What action is pictured in the word when Jesus spoke of baptism? We have not done the will of the Lord until we re-enact in our life that picture which Jesus had in mind when he used the verb of action to deliver the commandment. Since all admit that the word originally meant an immersion, it follows that we have not done the will of the Lord until and unless we have been immersed.

They came up out of the water. Here again we have an action which is not necessary to sprinkling. If Philip only sprinkled water on the Ethiopian, there was no necessity to go down into the water and no necessity to come up out of the water. However, in order to immerse the man, they would be required both to go down into the water and, following the immersion, to come up out of the water.

He went on his way rejoicing. Be-

fore the Ethiopian came in contact

with Philip, he knew nothing of Jesus and of the salvation which is to be had and enjoyed in Christ; but having heard the gospel preached by Philip and having obeyed the commandments of that gospel, this man is now in Christ, in possession of the salvation to be enjoyed in Christ, and therefore has every right to rejoice. Baptism and rejoicing over salvation in Christ are mentioned in close connection in several passages, but in every such occurrence the rejoicing follows baptism.

It never precedes baptism. (Acts 9: 19; 16: 33, 34.)

But Philip was found at Azotus. The Greek word translated *caught away* sometimes means a sudden and miraculous departure, so it is possible that the Holy Spirit caught away Philip in somewhat the same manner as Elijah of old. Azotus was about thirty miles from Gaza and on the road toward Caesarea, where Philip finally made his home. We are told that Paul visited in this home on his way toward Jerusalem. (Acts 21: 8.)

Lessons to Learn

1. Those who hunger and thirst after a knowledge of God that they may obey his will have the promise that they shall learn the way of the Lord.

2. Philip preached Jesus. He did not waste his time on politics, international problems, and such like things. Preachers of the gospel should

use their time preaching the gospel.

3. The way this Ethiopian became a Christian is right. Anything which differs from right is wrong. Therefore, any method of becoming a Christian which differs from this in our lesson is a wrong method. Wrong methods should not be depended up-

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What material things can you name which are used in Christianity?

What did Jesus have to say about water in connection with his system?

What mention does the apostles make of water?

What lesson have you learned from the use of three Greek words concerning the washing done in baptism?

On what subject did Philip preach to the Ethiopian?

What occasion would this subject afford to mention baptism?

What leads us to think Philip was accustomed to baptizing people to whom he preached Jesus?

Name and discuss three things which must precede scriptural baptism.

What have you learned about the confession which must precede baptism?

Introduction

How did this conversion compare with some modern conversions with reference to angels?

How did the eunuch's experience differ from some modern experiences on the work of the Holy Spirit?

Was this man required to relate an experience of grace before baptism?

What church voted whether this man would be accepted as a candidate for baptism?

Into what denomination was the man baptized?

Contrast the way one becomes a member of the Lord's church and the way one becomes a member of a denomination.

The Preacher and the Hearer Brought Together

What part did the angel play in this conversion?

Do angels have the right to determine the

conditions of salvation, varying the terms for the conversion of different individuals?

What do you know of the country where the preacher and convert met?

Was this man of Ethiopia a Jew or Gentile?

What evidence do we have that this man was devoutly religious?

What part did the Holy Spirit play in this conversion?

How did Philip determine whether the eunuch was a believer or unbeliever?

The Preacher's Text and Message

In what two ways does the Old Testament prophecies picture the Messiah?

Can you give the picture of the Messiah presented by Isaiah?

What suggests that this Ethiopian was a proselyte to the Jewish religion?

Taking a general view of this conversion, what do you think may have been the contents of Philip's sermon on Jesus?

The Hearer Becomes a Christian

What evidence do we have that there was sufficient water on this road to immerse this man?

What evidence do we have that verse thirty-seven should be a part of the scripture text?

What two purposes does this verbal confession serve?

What does Paul teach about confession with the mouth?

How does this confession differ with the confession the average denomination requires?

Does the fact that they went down into the water prove the man was immersed?

What proof do we have that the man was immersed?

How are baptism and rejoicing related in every instance where they are connected?

What do we know of Philip following the conversion of the Ethiopian?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—September 19, 1954

AENEAS AND DORCAS

Lesson Text

Acts 9: 32-43

32 And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all parts, he came down also to the saints that dwelt at Lyd'-da.

33 And there he found a certain man named Æ'-ne-as, who had kept his bed eight years; for he was palsied.

34 And Peter said unto him, Æ'-ne-as, Je'-sus Christ healeth thee: arise, and make thy bed. And straightway he arose.

35 And all that dwelt at Lyd'-da and in Shar'-on saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Jop'-pa a certain disciple named Tab'-i-tha, which by interpretation is called Dor'-cas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And as Lyd'-da was nigh unto Jop'-pa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, entreating him, Delay not to come on unto us.

39 And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dor'-cas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tab'-i-tha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it became known throughout all Jop'-pa: and many believed on the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he abode many days in Jop'-pa with one Si'-mon a tanner.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did"* (Acts 9: 36b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—James 2: 15-17.

Daily Bible Readings

September 13. M.....	Faithful Women (Phil. 4: 1-3)
September 14. T.....	Memorial to a Woman (Matt. 26: 6-13)
September 15. W.....	Women Serving Jesus (Matt. 27: 49-56)
September 16. T.....	Hospitality of Lydia (Acts 16: 11-15)
September 17. F.....	Priscilla Helping Others (Acts 18: 24-26)
September 18. S.....	Ministry of Jesus (Matt. 20: 20-28)
September 19. S.....	Caring for Widows (1 Tim. 5: 1-16)

TIME.—A.D. 37.

PLACES.—Lydda and Joppa.

PERSONS.—Peter, Aeneas, and Dorcas.

Golden Text Explained

1. Dorcas was a worthy woman.

Solomon describes in detail the character of the worthy woman. (Prov. 31: 10-31.) We do not have sufficient information on Dorcas to prove that she had all the characteristics set forth by Solomon, but we do have sufficient information to show that she was that type of woman, (a) Dorcas was a willing worker with her hands. "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. . . . She layeth her hands to the

distaff, and her hands hold the spindle." (Verses 13 and 19.) Our text says that Dorcas was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did, and we learn that the widows gave evidence of her handiwork as they stood about her weeping over her departure. While no one wishes to rob women of the recreation and pleasure to which they are entitled, yet it can be said truthfully that many women would do better to spend more time working in their home and among the

poor than to spend it as they do in various clubs and in attending several picture shows each week. There is every evidence in our text that Dorcas was not a lazy woman, that she was willing to work with her hands, not only to care for her own home, but to meet the needs of those who were less fortunate than she. (b) Solomon said that the worthy woman was a charitable woman. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she Teacheth forth her hands to the needy." (Verse 20.) It was in this particular that Dorcas especially distinguished herself, for it is said that all the widows stood by weeping and showing garments and coats which Dorcas had made for them, (c) Dorcas made good use of her time. Solomon said of the worthy woman, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." (Verse 27.) Idleness is a curse rather than a blessing to anyone. Surely all of us have heard it said that an idle brain is the devil's workshop. We may also say that idle hands are the devil's tools with which he works. Many young married women who have no children and only a small apartment to keep find it difficult to use all their time profitably. On account of this, some turn to clubs of various kinds, others to the movies, while others who have less energy spend much of the day in bed. Dorcas, the worthy woman, did neither of these. She used her time helping the widows who lived about her and who were in need of assistance.

2. Dorcas was a woman professing godliness. (1 Tim. 2: 9, 10.) In these verses Paul teaches that women who profess godliness adorn themselves through good works. Certainly Dorcas adorned herself through good works, therefore, we conclude that she was a woman professing godliness. Solomon said of the worthy woman, "Strength and dignity are her clothing; and she laugheth at the time to come." (Verse 25.) According to Solomon, the worthy woman was more interested in being a strong character for God than she was in adorning her body with beautiful clothing. Also, she was more interested in being a dignified lady than she was in being well dressed and her face well painted. Next, Paul tells us that women professing godliness adorned themselves with

"shamefastness and sobriety." The word shamefastness carries with it the idea of the feeling of a suppliant or an unfortunate in the presence of those from whom he seeks aid. It is used to describe the attitude of a younger person toward that of an older and wiser person. Sometimes it expresses the feeling that is based upon the sense of deficiency, inferiority, or unworthiness. At other times it is used to describe the feeling of a superior in position or fortune which goes out to an unfortunate. (Vincent.) While we do not have evidence in our lesson text that Dorcas had these qualities, we can hardly conceive of a woman who was as faithful in the church as she being devoid of these feminine characteristics.

3. Dorcas hoped in God. (1 Pet. 3: 3-6.) Peter tells us that women who hope in God are more interested in cultivating the inward man than they are in adorning their body. Solomon said, "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised." (Prov. 31: 30.) How many things women do to gain grace and beauty! This is not mentioned because it is sinful to care for one's person and make a nice, neat appearance. It is the duty of all women to give proper attention to their persons. But the lengths to which women sometimes go to gain poise, grace, attractiveness is sinful. The same women do not give five minutes per day to the beautifying of the soul. They will exercise they will half starve themselves to reduce; they will paint themselves to the extent that they will look unnatural, all to gain grace, charm, attractive appearance. And when they have spent a lifetime gaining this, failing health, disease, and death write complete failure across the ledger. What a pity they do not realize that a clean body modestly appareled, indwelt by a meek and quiet spirit, is worthy of far more effort and attention, and in the reach of every woman. If God has given you a beautiful face and a lovely figure, just remember they will likely not last until you get to the grave, and will not do you any good if they do. You will need a soul cultured by gospel forces if you expect to pass inspection in the day when God looks past the face and into the heart to judge us. If

God has not given you a pretty face or a lovely figure, just remember you have not been cheated of any-

thing eternal, and that a Christian disposition can shine through a homely face and make it attractive.

Introduction

Since our lesson deals with a woman who was full of good works and alms deeds, it would be well for us to give some time to studying woman's work in the church. Sometimes there is a shortage of manpower in our national economy. In the church it is more often a question of woman power. This shortage is not because there are not enough women in the church, nor is it because there are not plenty of women who can be trained and used in the church. Rather the shortage of woman power in the church because the overseers of the church are not making the proper use of its woman power, (a) The prophet Joel said that in this last age the women would have a part in the teaching program of the church. (Joel. 2: 28; Acts 2: 17, 18.) Paul said that women are to be teachers of good things that they may train the young women. (Tit. 2: 3-5.) And Paul had some women as fellow laborers with him in the work which he did in Philippi. (Phil. 4: 1-3.) Prisca is also called Paul's fellow worker in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 16: 3.) Women should be willing to spend the time to study and prepare themselves for greater usefulness in the church, and churches should have a program of teaching and training that they may prepare women to be teachers in the church, (b) Women should be full of good works and alms deeds. Jesus says we have the poor with us always, and we may do them good whenever we will. There is surely not a church anywhere but has some poor

and unfortunate people in its membership. And surely there is not a church but that within the community in which it works and worships there is a number of poor people who might be reached with the gospel if their hearts could be opened by kindness and helpfulness on the part of the church. If every woman in the church would spend one or two hours per week working at the job of helping these poor unfortunate people, these women who do the work would be benefited beyond their expectation, the people receiving the help would be blessed, and the church would be honored and glorified. Besides this, the church would be advertised more effectively than it can be advertised in any other way. (c) The early church used widows of mature age and who had other specified qualifications and who were themselves in need to do church work. (1 Tim. 5: 9-16.) These women were used by the church to represent the church publicly in the community teaching and doing good works. This gave the widows the support which they needed, and it gave the church efficient and effective workers to carry on its program of teaching and service in the community. There is no lack of authority for the use of the woman power of the church. Our only trouble is that we simply do not use the woman power as we are authorized to do, and in such way as to cause the church to be the power and influence in the community that it is capable of being.

Exposition of the Text

I. Aeneas Healed of Palsy (Verses 32-35)

Peter went throughout all parts. Peter is the leading character in the first twelve chapters of Acts, and Jerusalem is the central city. Other preachers of the gospel, such as John the apostle and Philip the evangelist, are mentioned as helping in the work; but Peter holds the center of attention throughout the first half of the book. The last mention we have of Peter is in Acts 8: 14-24. Following that, Luke tells us of

Philip's work with the Ethiopian, and he tells us of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Now he comes back to pick up the thread of the activities of Peter.

He came down also to the saints that dwelt at Lydda. The word Lydda is the Greek form of the Hebrew Lod. This town was in the territory of Benjamin and in the plain of Sharon. "Lod has retained its name almost unaltered to the present day. It is now called Ludd; but it is most familiar to us from its occurrence

in its Greek garb as Lydda, in the Acts of the Apostles." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

He found a certain man named Aeneas. Since this is the only mention of this man in the New Testament, we are confined to this text for our information concerning him. However, the name suggests that he was a Grecian Jew or that he was a Greek convert.

Who had kept his bed eight years. The cases of healing recorded by the Holy Spirit were cases of long standing and of wide knowledge. People who were not well known in the community or people who had not been suffering from some malady for a number of years would not be worth much as evidence of the power of the apostles to heal. Modern day wonder workers prefer not to deal with people of this kind.

For he was palsied. Palsy is the same thing as paralysis, and the Greek word would include such things as severe cases of cramps and lockjaw. How nearly total was this case of paralysis we have no way of knowing, except that he had kept his bed for eight years. Modern healers prefer to cure headaches and stomach troubles rather than relieve bedridden paralytics or cripples.

Jesus Christ healeth thee. Peter did not care to take any of the credit for himself. Hence, he mentions the name of Jesus in the command for the man to arise from his bed. The power was not in Peter nor in any words that he could say or deeds that he could do. The power resided in Christ.

They turned to the Lord. Beholding this miracle or seeing the man after the miracle had been performed, the people were impressed with the power of Christ and caused to have faith in him. One who had the power to heal a man who had been paralyzed and bedfast for eight years would have the power to forgive sins. Jesus healed a man sick of palsy in order to prove that he had the power to forgive sins. (Mark 2: 1-12.)

II. Dorcas, the Friend of the Poor,

Dies (Verses 36-39)

There was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha. Joppa was a town on the Mediterranean seacoast and is now called Jaffa. The word Tabitha is Aramaic and means the same thing as the Greek word Dor-

cas, a gazelle. This woman was not known for her social connections and prestige. Her claim to remembrance is not based upon the number of women's clubs she had founded or of which she had been president. Her claim to the remembrance of posterity is the fact that she was full of good works and alms deeds. If all women could be content to be remembered for such humble activities, there would be more good accomplished in the world, more suffering would be relieved, and the Lord would be highly honored and glorified.

She fell sick, and died. We are not told the cause of her death, nor is it important. The important thing is the fact that she was actually dead. We should notice the contrast between the treatment of Dorcas and that of Sapphira. Sapphira was carried out, as was her husband, immediately and buried without ceremony. But Dorcas is washed and laid out in an upper chamber. How different is the death of the wicked from that of the righteous, as described in the New Testament. But how similar is the death of the wicked and that of the righteous in our times. Often the same scriptures are read and the same assurance given at the funeral of the wicked as are given at the funeral of the righteous.

Delay not to come on unto us. This is the message which the disciples at Lydda sent by two of their brethren to Peter in Joppa. Peter was sympathetic, willing to bring joy and happiness to everybody he could. He was also anxious to use every opportunity possible for the good of the cause of Christ, so he went immediately with these two disciples from Joppa back to Lydda.

Showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made. This is a description of the scene in the upper chamber. Many widows stood about Peter, weeping for the departure of Dorcas, who had rendered them such valuable assistance during her lifetime. As evidence of the goodness and the kindness of this woman, they displayed coats and garments which Dorcas had made for them while she was alive. No one stood about the grave of Sapphira and lamented her passing. No one showed evidence of her goodness and kindness to them while she was alive. The selfish,

covetous, self-centered person leaves nothing behind to cause grateful remembrance. We should so live that when we pass from this earthly scene there will be many who will be able to display evidences of our kindness and our thoughtfulness and generosity while we were alive.

III. Dorcas Restored to Life (Verses 40-43)

But Peter put them all forth. On one occasion, Jesus was laughed to scorn because he said a certain child was sleeping instead of being dead. Jesus simply meant that her death was temporary and that she would rise again as from sleep. But, because of the scorn and disbelief of the crowd, he put them all out of the room before he raised the child. (Mark 5: 35-41.) Though Peter's audience was a sympathetic crowd, he put them forth out of the room, and kneeled down and prayed. Peter may have remembered that Jesus prayed before he raised Lazarus from the dead. (John 11: 41-44.)

Tabitha, arise. Peter did not make a big show or display in the raising of Dorcas from the dead. It was a very simple affair. He simply commanded her to arise. And even the dead may hear the commands given by the authority of Christ. The Greek word translated arise is from a common medical term, but it is used only by Luke. It occurs here and in Luke 7: 15, only twice in the New Testament. This is another evidence that the writer of Acts of the Apostles was a physician.

Calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. The widows whom Dorcas had served before her death were not the only people interested in Dorcas. Many of the saints were there. The word saints simply means the sanctified ones. They were the people who had been set aside to the service of God. Since those who do his service must be holy, the word carries the idea of

holiness. The widows are distinguished from the saints in this statement not because the widows themselves were not saints, but because special mention had been made of the widows in the preceding verses.

Many believed on the Lord. The performing of miracles was for the purpose of confirming the word. (Mark 16: 20; Heb. 2: 1-4.) The raising of this woman from the dead was an unusual display of divine power and would mightily confirm the word preached by the apostles. Since the miracle was performed by Peter, who associated himself with the group of disciples at Joppa, it follows that the people of Joppa would have more respect for the church. They not only would respect the word as preached by the public proclaimers of the gospel, but they would have a greater respect for the group associated with those doing the preaching. So our good work today will have its effect on the people of the community to cause them to respect the church with which we are associated; or our mistakes and loose living will cause the community to have less respect for the group with which we are associated.

He abode many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. How long Peter stayed in Joppa we have no way of knowing, but we may be sure that Peter was using his time to the best advantage possible. He was preaching whenever and wherever opportunity permitted. The fact that Peter lived in the house of Simon a tanner is evidence that he was breaking away from his Jewish prejudices. Since a tanner would have to handle dead animals, he would, according to Jewish law, be unclean all of the time. Hence, orthodox Jews looked with the greatest disfavor upon that occupation. Since Peter lived in Simon's house, we may sure he had come to have different views with reference to this occupation.

Lessons to Learn

1. As Aeneas looked to Jesus for the healing of his body, so we must look to Jesus for the healing of our souls. For healing can be had only through Jesus Christ.

2. When we depart from this life, we should leave enough good works and alms deeds to be gratefully re-

membered. Friends cannot buy enough flowers to cover the nakedness of an unfruitful life.

3. Through Peter's work at Joppa many were led to believe on the Lord. Unless we so live and teach that many will be led to believe on the Lord, our lives will be unfruitful and unrewarded.

Questions for the Class

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

Golden Text Explained

What evidence do we have that Dorcas was a willing worker?

Name some ways in which women may spend their time to less profit than Dorcas spent hers.

In what characteristic of the worthy woman did Dorcas especially distinguish herself?

What lesson does Dorcas teach us with reference to idleness?

In what way do women professing godliness distinguish themselves?

With what are women professing godliness adorned?

Discuss the meaning of "shamefastness and sobriety."

In what are women who hope in God most interested?

What did Solomon say about grace and beauty?

What is said in our lesson about the value of a pretty face and a lovely figure?

Introduction

What is said in our lesson about the shortage of woman power?

What did the prophet Joel say about women in the last days?

What use did Paul make of women in the work of the church?

What three blessings would follow if every woman in the church would spend some time each day working for the church?

What does Paul teach about the support and use of widows qualified to work for the church?

Aeneas Healed of Palsy

Who is the leading character in the first half of Acts?

By what name was Lydda formerly called?
Why did Aeneas afford Peter a good opportunity for healing?

What did Peter do to avoid the appearance of taking credit to himself?

Do those who profess to have healing power today select such men as Aeneas on whom to demonstrate their power?

What effect did this miracle have on the people?

Dorcas, the Friend of the Poor, Dies

Where did Tabitha live? What do you know of the place?

By what other name was she called? What is the meaning of the name?

For what is Dorcas so well remembered?

Contrast the treatment of the bodies of Dorcas and Sapphira.

For what preacher of the gospel did friends send when Dorcas died?

What evidence was Peter given of the good life Dorcas lived?

What should we strive to leave behind us when we die?

Dorcas Restored to Life

What example of Jesus did Peter follow with reference to the crowd?

What evidence do we have in this lesson that Luke was a physician?

Who are the saints mentioned in our text?

What effect did this miracle have on the people of the city?

Why would the life of Dorcas and the miracle of Peter make gospel preaching more effective?

What evidence do we have that Peter had given up some of his Jewish prejudices?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XIII—September 26, 1954

PETER IN CAESAREA

Lesson Text

Acts 10: 1-5, 25-27, 44-48

1 Now *there was* a certain man in Caes-a-re'-a, Cor-ne'-li-us by name, a centurion of the band called the I-tal'-ian *band*,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

3 He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cor-ne'-li-us.

4 And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Jop'-pa, and fetch one Si'-mon, who is surnamed Peter:

25 And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cor-ne'-li-us met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and findeth many come together.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gen'-tiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

.

47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Je'-sus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Golden Text.—*"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons "* (Acts 10: 34b.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 10: 9-18.

Daily Bible Readings

September 20. M.....Gentiles Included in Commission (Matt. 28: 14-20)
 September 21. T.....Gentiles Grafted in (Rom. 11: 11-32)
 September 22. W.....Gentiles Free of Jewish Rites (Acts 15: 1-21)
 September 23. T.....Cornelius' Messengers (Acts 10: 9-23)
 September 24. F.....Peter Defends His Action (Acts 11: 1-10)
 September 25. S.....Peter Divinely Chosen (Acts 15: 7-11)
 September 26. S.....Jew and Gentile One in Christ (Gal. 5: 23-29)

TIME.—A.D. 41.

PLACES.—Joppa and Caesarea.

PERSONS.—Peter and Cornelius.

Golden Text Explained

1. God is no respecter of persons.

(a) Race and nationality. When God would build a nation through whom he would bring the Messiah and Redeemer into the world, it was necessary for him to choose an individual with whom to start that nation. Abraham was his choice. Abraham had two sons one by Hagar, the bond-woman, and one by Sarah, the free woman. It was necessary to choose between these two, and Isaac was chosen as the one through whom the Redeemer would come. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. So another selection had to be made, and Jacob was chosen as the one through whom the Redeemer would be brought into the world. Jacob had twelve sons, and with these twelve sons and their families the nation to bring the Redeemer into the world was built. Being chosen for a specific purpose, the nation had experiences with God which no other nation ever had. This led them to believe that they were especially chosen of God because of their superiority and not for a particular service they were to render. They therefore came to look down upon and despise people of other nations and other races. Paul says that this gave the Jews many advantages. (Rom. 3: 1-8.) Paul also made it clear to the Jews that this peculiar relationship with God did not make them any better than the Gentiles, nor did it give them any license to do things which the Gentiles were not permitted to do, and gave as a reason that there

is no respect of persons with God. (Rom. 2: 1-16.) Since the Jews have brought the Redeemer into the world, there is no longer any advantage in being a Jew, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, bondman or freeman. (Gal. 3: 28; Col. 3: 11.) (b) There is neither social nor political advantage to be had in Christ. Since God is no respecter of persons, he does not accept the socially prominent and reject those who have no social standing. Neither president nor king has any more influence at the throne of grace than the humblest subject in their realms. It is difficult for men to keep from making distinctions based upon social and political positions. We are told, "Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 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; and ye have regard to him that weareth 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; do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2: 1-4.) It is difficult for preachers and elders to keep from catering to the wealthy members of the congregation. Sometimes they are not disciplined as the poorer members of the church are. God recognizes no such distinctions, because he is no respecter of per-

sons. We should strive to be like God in this respect, (c) God is no respecter of religious classes or groups. The application of this principle would do away with the priesthood in religious denominations. The priesthood is built upon the theory that the common man cannot approach God except through the priestly class, thus the priestly class has certain privileges and advantages which the common people do not have. There was a time when God recognized a priesthood among men, but in Christ Jesus we all are on equal footing, and one can approach God as effectively as another.

2. One plan of salvation for all. Since God is no respecter of persons, he has one plan of salvation both for Jew and Gentile, for rich and poor. Men can gain a lot of social and political privileges by the use of their money, but they cannot obtain salvation in Christ on easier terms than the poor. Peter said that both Jew and Gentile are saved through grace "in like manner." (Acts 15: 11.) Jesus said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6.) Since Jesus is the way, there is but one way for people to be saved; so the rich and the poor, the white and the black must all go to God through Christ. That plan humbles them all alike in that it requires them all to admit that they are lost, that they are unable to save themselves, that they must turn from their sinful way of liv-

ing and accept the Lord's way.

3. Proof that God is no respecter of persons. The fact that God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell and committed them to pits of darkness to be reserved until judgment (2 Pet. 2: 4), should impress us with the fact that God is no respecter of persons. Peter uses it to show that if God did not spare the angels, surely he will not spare us. (b) The fact that God did not spare Moses but punished him by forbidding him to enter the land of Canaan just like he punished him by forbidding him to Israel is another proof that God is no respecter of persons. Moses begged earnestly that God would allow him to enter Canaan in spite of his mistakes, but God refused to grant Moses a privilege which he had not granted those of less prominence in Israel. (Deut. 3: 23-25.) (c) When Miriam had sinned against the Lord in her criticism of, and rebellion against, Moses, she was smitten with leprosy. Moses besought the Lord to heal her immediately, not to put her outside the camp, but God said, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut up without the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again." (Num. 12: 14.) From these examples we learn that God refused to respect the person or position of the leaders in Israel. This should suffice to prove to us that God is no respecter of persons today.

Introduction

About ten or twelve years after the conversion of Cornelius, Peter reminded the apostles that he was God's choice to take the gospel to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. He said, "Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." (Acts 15: 7.) Jesus said he would give to Peter the keys of the kingdom, that what he should bind on earth should be bound in heaven, and what he should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16: 19.) Jesus did not give Peter any power that he did not give the other apostles. But Peter was the leader of the apostles and was permitted to use the keys first on the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2); and

he was permitted to use the keys to admit the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. At the Jerusalem conference, James tells us that Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius was the first instance of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. "Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15: 13, 14.) The word *first* in this verse does not leave us in doubt as to who the first Gentile was that became a Christian. There had been proselytes to the Jewish religion who had obeyed the gospel, but Cornelius was the first uncircumcised person to be offered church membership on the terms of the gospel. While on this point, it will be worth while to notice that

James also said that the offering of the gospel to the Gentiles was evidence of the fulfillment of the prophecy that the tabernacle of David, which had fallen down, would be rebuilt (Acts 15: 16-18.) Rebuilding the tabernacle of David simply meant the restoring of David's family to the position of authority over the people of God. This included the re-establishment of the throne of David. When Christ was

raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David, the tabernacle of David had been rebuilt. James says that the tabernacle of David had to be rebuilt before the Gentiles could seek after the Lord. But we see the salvation offered to the Gentiles; hence, we know that the tabernacle of David had at the time of Cornelius been rebuilt. Hence, Jesus was on the throne of David at the time Cornelius obeyed the gospel.

Exposition of the Text

I. Cornelius Sends for Peter (Verses 1-5)

There was a certain man in Caesarea. Caesarea was the Roman political center of Palestine. It was in this city that the Governor resided. (Acts 23: 32, 33.) Herod the Great built the city and named it in honor of Augustus Caesar.

Cornelius by name. We are told that this Cornelius was a centurion of a band of soldiers called the Italian band. The word centurion comes from a word which means one hundred, hence, Cornelius was over one hundred soldiers. This band was called the Italian band because it was made up of soldiers from Italy. It was necessary for Rome to keep soldiers garrisoned in Palestine to keep down riots among the people and to prevent the rebellion of the Jews.

One that feared God with all his house. The Greek word here translated fear means "to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience." (Thayer.) The fact that Cornelius feared or revered God is proof that he had some knowledge of God. This knowledge, of course, he had gained through his contact and association with the Jews. "Cornelius was one of those men, so numerous in this effete age of idolatry, who were yearning for a better worship, and under that impulse had embraced the pure theism of the Old Testament, so much superior to every other form of religion known to them. They attended the synagogues, heard and read the scriptures, practiced some of the Jewish rights, and were in a state of mind predisposing them to welcome the gospel of Christ when it was announced to them. This class of persons furnished the greater part of the first Gentile converts." (Hackett.)

Gave much alms to the people.

From verse twenty-two we learn that Cornelius was well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, indicating that the extent of his acquaintance with the Jews. This may suggest something of the extent of his almsgiving among them.

Prayed to God always. In verse four we are told that the prayers of Cornelius had gone up for a memorial before God. This simply means that God heard his prayer and was disposed to do something for Cornelius in answer to his prayers. Some brethren have difficulty in understanding how God could hear and answer the prayer of Cornelius when we are told that God hears not sinners. (John 9: 31.) The sinner in this statement is one who turns away his ear from the hearing of the law, and his prayer is an abomination in the sight of God. (Prov. 28: 9.) But Cornelius was not that type of person. He was one who was hungering and thirsting after righteousness and had the promise of our Lord that his hunger would be filled. (Matt. 5: 6.) Certainly Cornelius had no right to pray for those things which belong only to the children of God. Neither did he have the right to pray to be saved contrary to the will of God. He had no right to expect to be excused from obedience to gospel commandments because he prayed. To pray to God always does not mean that one must be on his knees continually or that he must be continually talking to God. To pray always means to have established habits of prayer and to allow nothing to interfere with those habits of prayer. The Jews had certain hours of prayer, and when they observed those hours of prayer, they were said to pray always.

An angel of God coming in unto him. Here we see again that an

angel has something to do with the conversion of a man, but the angel does not tell the man what to do to be saved, nor does he treat the man roughly until the man promises to be good. The angel simply serves to bring the man in contact with the gospel preacher, that the gospel may be preached to the man, so that he may believe it and obey it.

II. Peter in the Home of Cornelius

(Verses 25-27)

Cornelius . . . fell down at his feet and worshipped him. It is difficult to determine whether Cornelius intended his prostration before Peter as an act of worship or simply an act of honor to him as the messenger of God. Thayer says that the word is used in the New Testament to mean "homage shown to men of superior rank" or next, "of homage rendered to God and the ascended Christ." Since Cornelius had a knowledge of the one true God, it is difficult to believe that he intended to worship Peter as God. There are two good reasons why Cornelius would thus prostrate himself before Peter, (a) Cornelius was told that Peter would bring him a message from God. Hence, as God's messenger, he was worthy of great honor, which Cornelius proposed to show by prostrating himself before Peter,

(b) Cornelius knew how the Jews looked upon the Gentiles. Cornelius knew that Peter was a Jew, and he had every right to suppose that Peter would look upon him as every other Jew looked upon him. Since Peter had condescended, in his point of view, to come into his house, Cornelius would honor him by thus prostrating himself. It was according to usual Oriental custom for a Gentile so to honor a Jew.

Stand up; I myself also am a man. This is the language of Peter to Cornelius. From this statement we might infer that Peter thought Cornelius was either worshipping him or was about to exceed that honor and homage which one man owed to another. From this we learn that such prostration of one man before another is out of order, even though actual worship was not intended. But we are safe in saying that the man who now claims to be the successor of Peter has not forbidden anyone to prostrate himself before him. He rather encourages such prostration

and claims to be entirely worthy of it.

Findeth many come together. Cornelius was not only anxious for his own salvation, but was interested in the salvation of others. He was told that a man would come to him who would speak words whereby he should be saved. If these words could bring salvation to him, they could bring salvation to his family and friends, hence, he had them gathered together to hear the words which Peter should bring. This should be an example to us to lead us to show interest in the salvation of others.

III. Peter Commands Cornelius to Be Baptized (Verses 44-48)

While Peter yet spake these words.

If this were the only record we had of this incident, we would be justified in concluding that the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius near the conclusion of Peter's sermon; but when Peter expounded the matter to the apostles in Jerusalem in the order the incidents happened (Acts 11: 4), he said, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11: 15.) It should be noticed that the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his house without any human instrumentality. Peter did not lay his hands upon Cornelius that he might receive the Spirit. The Holy Spirit came direct from the Lord. We conclude therefore that this is another instance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (John 1: 33.) Some doubt that Cornelius was baptized in the Holy Spirit, but since Peter said that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius "even as on us at the beginning," we must conclude that Cornelius received the same thing which the apostles received at the beginning—that is, on Pentecost. Since Cornelius received the baptism of the Holy Spirit the same as the apostles, did Cornelius have all the power which the apostles had? It should be remembered that the apostles were not made apostles by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were apostles of Christ before the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Their power to impart spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands (Acts 8: 14-18) was not derived from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This power was inherent in and derived from their apostolic commission. They could impart the Holy Spirit because they had been commissioned as apos-

ties of Christ and not because they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Cornelius had not been commissioned as an apostle, therefore, did not have the power to impart spiritual gifts by the laying on of his hands.

They of the circumcision that believed were amazed. Peter took six Jewish brethren with him to be witnesses of the things which occurred at the house of Cornelius. These Jewish brethren were amazed that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles, (a) They were amazed because this should happen to a Gentile. (b) They were amazed that the Holy Spirit was poured out because there had never been anything like it since the day of Pentecost. Even Peter, when describing the incident, had to go back to Pentecost for another example. (Acts 11: 15.)

Was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. In verse forty-four we are told that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius. In verse forty-five we are told that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" was poured out upon him. Thus that which was poured out is that which fell upon him. The Holy Spirit fell on him. The gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out. Therefore, the expression, "gift of the Holy Spirit," simply means the Holy Spirit as a gift.

They heard them speak with tongues. This was the evidence which Peter and his six Jewish

brethren had that Cornelius and his house had received the Holy Spirit.

Can any man forbid the water. Peter decided that Cornelius and his family were subjects of Christian baptism because God had, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, demonstrated his willingness to accept Gentiles. "If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11: 17.) Peter realized that God was willing to accept them, and if he should refuse to accept them, he would be withstanding God.

He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter was to tell Cornelius words whereby he should be saved. (Acts 11: 14.) Peter was to preach to Cornelius so he could believe. (Acts 15: 7.) Here we learn that Peter commanded Cornelius to be baptized. These were a part of the words which he was to speak in order that Cornelius might believe and be saved. Since Jesus said he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16: 16), and since Peter's work was to preach that which was necessary for Cornelius to hear in order to be saved, and since he led him to believe in Jesus and commanded him to be baptized, we conclude that these things were essential to the salvation of Cornelius.

Lessons to Learn

1. God knows the hearts of all men and is willing to send the truth to those who are willing to accept it.

2. Gospel preachers are worthy of respect and honor, but not of that degree which elevates one man above another. For this reason Peter was not willing for Cornelius to prostrate himself before him.

3. In spite of the fact that Cornelius was a devout man, one that gave alms and that prayed to God always, Peter commanded him to be baptized. Baptism brings one into Christ where we enjoy all spiritual blessings. Cornelius needed to be in Christ; hence, he was commanded to be baptized.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Who was God's choice to build the Hebrew nation?

Was God a respecter of persons when he chose Isaac instead of Ishmael?

Did the selection of the Jews to give the world a Redeemer give the Jews any false ideas of their standing with God?

Was God a respecter of persons in that he gave the Jews these advantages over the Gentiles?

What does James teach us about respecting social and financial standing?

How may preachers and elders drift in the sin of respecting the person of the rich?

Does God respect the standing of priest or pope above the humblest?

Since God is no respecter of persons, how does this affect the salvation of rich and poor? Jew and Gentile? white and black?

What proof do we have in God's dealing with the angels that he is no respecter of persons?

How does God's dealings with Moses prove the same lesson?

Relate an experience of Miriam that proves God is no respecter of persons.

Introduction

Did Jesus give Peter any power he did not give other apostles?

What outstanding privileges of service were given to Peter?

What proof do we have that Cornelius was the first Gentile convert?

What is meant by rebuilding the tabernacle of David?

How was the salvation of Gentiles connected with the rebuilding of David's tabernacle?

What light does this throw on the throne on which Jesus sits today?

Cornelius Sends for Peter

What do you know of the city of Caesarea?

What do you know of Cornelius as a man?

What is meant by the word fear in our text?

How had Cornelius learned to fear God?

What evidence did the poor have of the goodness of Cornelius?

What is meant by praying always?

If God hears not sinners, why did he hear Cornelius?

For what did Cornelius not have a right to pray?

What part did an angel play in the salvation of Cornelius?

Peter in the Home of Cornelius

How did Cornelius greet Peter when he entered his house?

What is the meaning of the word worship in our text?

Why would Cornelius prostrate himself before Peter?

Why did Peter refuse to allow Cornelius to prostrate himself before him?

Does the man who claims to be Peter's successor act like Peter in this respect?

How did Cornelius manifest his interest in the welfare of his friends?

Peter Commands Cornelius to be Baptized

Did the Holy Spirit fall on Cornelius at the beginning or toward the last of Peter's sermon?

Did Cornelius receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Why do some doubt that Cornelius received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Were the apostles made to be apostles by the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

How many Jewish witnesses did Peter take with him to the house of Cornelius?

Why were these Jews amazed that the Holy Spirit was given to Cornelius?

What is meant by the "gift of the Holy Spirit"?

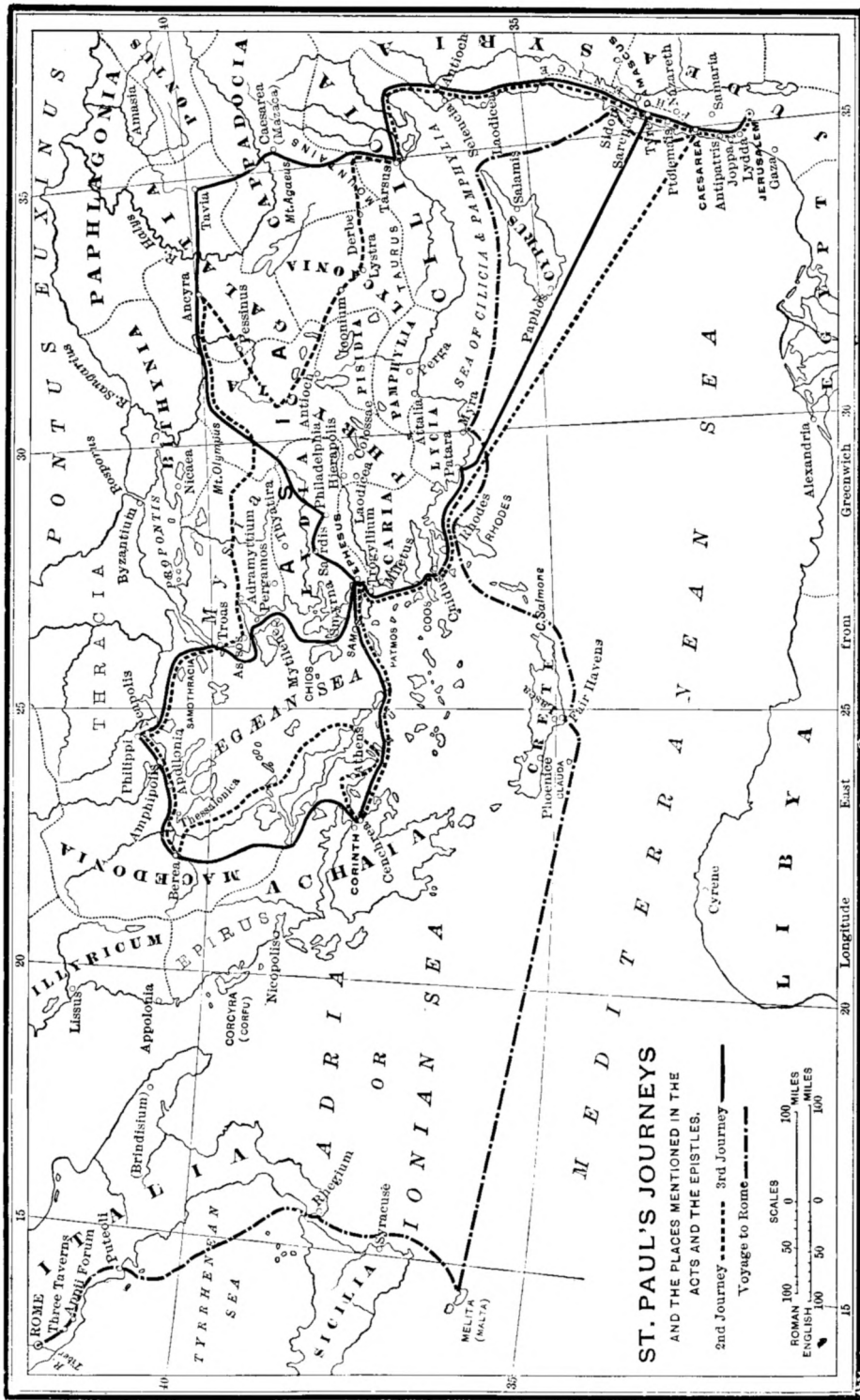
What evidence did Peter have that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius?

What was the purpose of God in giving Cornelius the Holy Spirit?

What caused Peter to command a Gentile to be baptized?

Can you show that Cornelius was saved like the Jews on Pentecost?

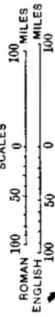
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?



ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE
 ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

2nd Journey - - - - - 3rd Journey - - - - -
 Voyage to Rome - - - - -



Longitude East from Greenwich

15 20 25 30 35

FOURTH QUARTER

HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH—LAST HALF

Aim—To study the inspired history of the early church that we may learn the details thereof, and the secret of its power in evangelizing the world.

Lesson I—October 3, 1954

THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED TO THE GENTILES

Lesson Text

Acts 11: 19-26; 13: 1-3

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Ste'-phen travelled as far as Phoe-ni'-ci-a, and Cy'-prus, and An'-ti-och, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cy'-prus and Cy-re'-ne, who, when they were come to An'-ti-och, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Je'-sus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.

22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Je'-ru'-sa-lem: and they sent forth Bar'-na-bas as far as An'-ti-och:

23 Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord:

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 And he went forth to Tar'-sus to seek for Saul;

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto An'-ti-och. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Chris'-tians first in An'-ti-och.

1 Now there were at An'-ti-och, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Bar'-na-bas, and Sym'-e-ón that was called Ni'-ger, and Lu'-cius of Cy-re'-ne, and Man'-a-en the foster-brother of Her'-od the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Bar'-na-bas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.”* (Acts 11: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 11: 27-30.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 27. M.....Paul in Antioch (Acts 13: 13-26)
- September 28. T.....Preaching in Antioch (Acts 13: 42-52)
- September 29. W.....First Gentile Converts (Acts 11: 1-18)
- September 30. T.....Leaders in Antioch Church (Acts 13: 1-3)
- October 1. F.....Missionaries Sent Out (Acts 15: 36-40)
- October 2. S.....An Open Door (Acts 14: 23-26)
- October 3. S.....Paul, Minister of Christ (2 Cor. 11: 23-31)

TIME.—A.D. 42, 43.

PLACE.—Antioch.

PERSONS.—Paul, Barnabas, and other leaders of the church at Antioch.

Golden Text Explained

1. The hand of the Lord was with them, (a) In miracles. Often the term “hand of the Lord” means that God was with his people in a mirac-

ulous way. His presence was manifested by the miracles which people were enabled to work. The hand of the Lord was with his people in

Egypt when the plagues were brought upon the Egyptians. (Ex. 9: 3.) And Luke tells us that the hand of the Lord was with John the Baptist in preparing him for his ministry. (Luke 1: 66.) Again, Luke tells us that the disciples prayed that they might speak the word with all boldness while the Lord stretched forth his hand to heal and that signs and wonders might be done through the name of Jesus. (Acts 4: 29, 30.) And Paul told the sorcerer, Bar-Jesus, that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he should be blind for a season. (Acts 13: 11.) So when we read that the hand of the Lord was with the disciples in this work at Antioch, we need not be surprised that he enabled them to work miracles in order to confirm the word which they preached. In fact this was a promise which the Lord made to his apostles. (Mark 16: 17, 18.) And then in verse twenty of this same chapter we are told, "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed." And the writer of Hebrews tells us that the great salvation was first spoken through the Lord, and then "was confirmed unto us by them that heard God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will." (Heb. 2: 3, 4.) (b) In providence. Not only was the Lord with his people miraculously, but he was with them providentially. He promised to be with them in the preaching of the gospel even unto the end of the world. (Matt. 28: 19, 20.) Paul and Barnabas recognized the presence of God with them in their work when they returned from their first missionary journey and gave a report to the church at Antioch. "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles." (Acts 14: 27.) From this passage we see that the apostles considered the things which had been accomplished by them as things which God had done with them. God was with them in the preaching of the gospel and in filling their needs physically and spiritually. We should always remember that God is not far from each one of us, that he gives

us life, breath, and all things, and that in him we live, and move, and have our being. (Acts 17: 25-28.)

(c) We may tie the hands of the Lord. This is a bold expression. But since God has chosen to do certain things through us as earthen vessels, he has limited himself to this means of accomplishing his purposes. He has placed the "ministry of reconciliation" in our hands. If we work diligently and faithfully, we will be the instruments through which God can accomplish great things. But if we are unfaithful and lacking in diligence, we in a measure tie God's hands so far as the accomplishments of the evangelization of the world is concerned. Churches with little or no program of evangelization in the community are tying the hands of God in this respect. Individuals who have the power and the opportunity to preach the gospel to the lost, but who are interested in their material welfare so that they will not give time and effort to preaching the gospel to the lost, are tying the hands of God in this respect.

2. **Believers turned to the Lord,**
 (a) Not all believers turned. Our text says "A great number that believed turned unto the Lord." The term "great number" simply indicates a majority. If a majority turned to the Lord, what of the minority that did not turn to the Lord? Since a *great number* of the believers turned to the Lord, the implication is that a *small number* of the believers did not turn to the Lord. This necessarily implies that a person may believe and never turn to the Lord. If one is saved the moment he believes, we would have some saved people who had never turned to the Lord. But the Bible teaches that salvation comes only to those who turn to the Lord. (Isa. 55: 7; Acts 3: 19.) Many of the Jews believed on Jesus, but refused to turn to the Lord, so were called children of the devil. (John 8: 30, 41-44.) Agrippa believed but refused to turn to the Lord. (Acts 26: 28.) No one would contend that these Jews were saved or that Agrippa was a Christian. Hence, we conclude that people may believe yet never turn to the Lord, (b) The order of belief and turning. The language of our text clearly implies that people believe before they turn to the Lord. Common sense tells us

that people cannot turn to the Lord until they have believed on the Lord. Hence, the order of belief and turning to the Lord is definitely established. People must first believe and then turn to the Lord; but if people are saved the moment that they believe, it follows that they are saved before they turn to the Lord. Hence, the doctrine of salvation by faith only, or at the point of faith, cannot possibly be true, (c) What is included in the act of turning? The expression "turned unto the Lord" may be used in a general sense to denote the conversion of people. Paul spoke of the Thessalonians turning unto God from idols. (1 Thess. 1: 9.) Yet it may be used in a specific sense as in the language of Peter, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3: 19.) In this

verse the word *turn* cannot be taken to mean repentance, for they are told in the same verse to repent. Hence, the turning is something different from, and additional to, the repentance. In Acts 2: 38 believers were told to repent and be baptized for remission of their sins. In Acts 3: 19 believers were told to repent and turn again that their sins might be blotted out. These two verses are parallel. The word "turn again" in Acts 3: 19 is in the place of "be baptized" in Acts 2: 38, so we may conclude that when these believers at Antioch "turned unto the Lord," they were simply being baptized into Christ. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. (2 Cor. 5: 19.) So when we are baptized into Christ, we turn to the Lord for remission of sins, which is enjoyed in Christ. (Rom. 6: 3, 4; Eph. 1: 7.)

Introduction

Considerable preparation had been made for carrying the gospel to the Gentile world. (a) We may look on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus as a part of this preparation for taking the gospel to the Gentile world. "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Gal. 1: 15, 16.) Again Paul says that the other apostles saw that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision even as Peter was entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision. Then he puts in this statement, "For he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles." (Gal. 2: 7, 8.) From these passages we see that it was the purpose of God even from the birth of Paul that he should preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Hence, his conversion was a part of the preparation necessary for carrying out this program of evangelization. (b) The conversion of Cornelius is a part of this preparation. Though Peter had preached on Pentecost that salvation was for all them that are afar off, the Gentiles (Acts 2: 39), yet neither Peter nor the rest of the apostles understood that as fully as they should. Hence, it was

necessary for God to put his stamp of approval in a miraculous way upon the conversion of a Gentile. This was done in the vision which Peter saw before going to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10: 9-16), and by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household in the presence of Peter and his Jewish brethren who went along as witnesses (Acts 10: 44-48). Peter used this at the Jerusalem conference to prove that the Gentiles were acceptable to God on the same condition as the Jews. He concluded his argument by saying, "We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they." (Acts 15: 11.) And then Jesus concluded the meeting by saying that Peter had told "how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15: 14.) From these passages we learn that Cornelius was the first Gentile to be converted and that God worked these miracles to put his stamp of approval upon the acceptance of an uncircumcised Gentile into the fellowship of the church, (c) The church at Jerusalem was scattered by persecution. This was seemingly necessary in order to get the church to leave Jerusalem and go into other parts of the world. They would necessarily and naturally preach the gospel as they went. (Acts 8: 4.) Having been scattered

into the various parts of the earth and having established themselves in their new communities, the disciples

were ready to offer the gospel to the Gentiles when the story of the conversion of Cornelius reached them.

Exposition of the Text

I. Gentile Church at Antioch (Verses 19-21)

They therefore that were scattered abroad. By a comparison of Acts 8: 4 with this verse of our text, the reader will see that the preaching of Philip, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and of Cornelius, and Peter's report of the conversion of Cornelius fill in the gap between Acts 8: 4 and Acts 11: 19. Having related these events, the writer begins in the first verse of our text where he left off at Acts 8: 4 to tell us about the work of those members of the church who were scattered from Jerusalem.

Traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch. While Philip went only to Samaria, others pushed on northward through Galilee into Syria. Phoenicia was a very small province of Syria. The entire length of this province was only twenty-eight miles (its greatest length was never more than 120 miles), while its width was from one to five miles. Tyre and Sidon were the two principal cities of this province. Cyprus was the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and was situated south of Cilicia, Paul's native province. Antioch was founded three hundred years before Christ and was named for Antiochus, the father of the founder, Seleucus Nicanor. It was farther north than Phoenicia and not very far from the city of Tarsus. Antioch was a free city, and all of its citizens entitled to the privileges of Roman citizens. Hence, they had the right of worship without molestation. "It is probable that the Christians would be regarded merely as a sect of Jews, and would be here suffered to celebrate their worship without interruption. On this account it may have been that the early Christians regarded this city as of such particular importance, because here they could find a refuge from persecution, and be permitted to worship God without molestation. This city was honored as a Roman colony, a metropolis, and an asylum." (Barnes.)

Some . . . spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. We are told in verse nineteen that some

of the disciples spake the word to none save only to Jews. These who preached to Jews only were following the customs of the apostles from the day of Pentecost until the time of the conversion of Cornelius. Some of those who were scattered abroad, "men of Cyprus and Cyrene," departed from that custom and preached the gospel to Greeks. We are not told whether they knew of the conversion of Cornelius or whether they took it on themselves, under the guidance of the Spirit, to preach the gospel to the Greeks. There is also some difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word *Greeks* here. Some manuscripts use the same term which is used in Acts 6: 1 and is translated Grecian Jews. However, the context here forbids that translation since in verse nineteen preaching to Jews only is mentioned, and in verse twenty an evident departure from that rule is implied. The men who were doing the preaching were Hellenists, which simply means they were Greek-speaking Jews. Having lived in Grecian territory and adopted the Grecian customs and language, they were well qualified to preach the gospel to Greeks.

Preaching the Lord Jesus. Here again we have the expression, as in Acts 8: 35. Preaching Jesus is the equivalent of preaching the gospel concerning Jesus. But the use of this term gives us an idea of the content of the sermons preached by these early disciples. They preached Jesus. They did not so much preach about Jesus or expound theories concerning his philosophies of life as they simply preached Jesus. They told of his birth, his baptism, his work among the people, his teaching, his death for their sins, his resurrection and ascension into glory, and his exaltation at the right hand of the Father. Then in verse twenty-one, treated in our golden text, we are told of the success of these preachers among the Greeks. Many people believed and turned to the Lord because of their preaching.

II. Jewish Brethren Aid the Gentiles

(Verses 22-26)

They sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch. When the news of the con-

version of the Greeks at Antioch reached the brethren at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to give them encouragement and perhaps to bring back a report to Jerusalem. The report of the conversion of Cornelius by Peter to the brethren at Jerusalem prepared these Jewish brethren to accept these reports from Antioch. We may well conclude that the Jerusalem church would not have received this report from Antioch with this enthusiasm before they learned of the conversion of Cornelius.

And had seen the grace of God. Since grace means favor, it cannot be seen; but the effects can be seen—the evidence of that grace can be seen. In this case, the conversion of the Gentiles was the effect of the grace of God. So when Barnabas saw the grace of God manifested in the conversion of these Greeks, he was glad. The attitude of Barnabas was very different from that of the average orthodox Jew. The Jews generally were jealous of the Gentiles and resented their acceptance as members of the church on the same conditions as the Jews. Paul speaks of the Jews forbidding him to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. (1 Thess. 2: 14-16.)

He exhorted them all. Barnabas was especially qualified to exhort people. In fact the word Barnabas means "son of exhortation." (Acts 4: 36.) His exhortation to them was to the effect that they should continue to cleave unto the Lord. The word cleave is from a Greek word which means "to keep on remaining loyal" to the Lord. The reader should notice that this is done "with purpose of heart." People do not cleave unto the Lord or remain loyal continually by accident. Such loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord are attained only through a purpose formed in the heart. It was this purpose of heart which enabled Daniel to attain unto that high state of perfection which characterized him. (Dan. 1: 8.)

For he was a good man. Here we have a description of the character of Barnabas. The first thing said about him is that he was a good man. True goodness consists of two things. First, freedom from faults, freedom from impurities; second, a determination to do that which is good. Too many people have the idea that goodness consists in refraining

from evil. That is a part of goodness, but only a part. Those who refrain from evil, but do not have a definite program of goodness, cannot qualify as good people. To be full of the Holy Spirit simply meant to be completely dominated by the Holy Spirit, controlled and directed in his life by the Holy Spirit. Barnabas was also full of faith. He believed in God and in Jesus as the Son of God. He accepted the gospel as the word of God and trusted in God for his salvation through Christ in obedience to the commandments of the gospel. Like the ancient worthies mentioned in Hebrews 11, Barnabas was characterized by his faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

He went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul. Sometime after his conversion Saul of Tarsus spent in Arabia. (Gal. 1: 17, 18.) When Paul came back from Arabia, he went to Jerusalem, but the brethren were slow to receive him. It was there that Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them of his conversion and led the brethren to receive him. (Acts 9: 26-30.) Knowing that the Jews would not listen to Paul, the Lord appeared to him and told him to leave Jerusalem quickly, for he would send him unto the Gentiles. (Acts 22: 17-21.) When he left Jerusalem, he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (Gal. 1: 21.) Tarsus was Paul's home town in the province of Cilicia, and it was there that Barnabas found him.

For a whole year they were gathered together with the church. These two great preachers spent a year teaching the church at Antioch. Within a very few months after their establishment, elders were appointed in the churches of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia. (Acts 14: 21-23.) Surely no one can doubt that there were elders in this church at Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were teaching the church. Yet there are some among us who affirm that it is sinful for a church to maintain men who spend all their time teaching the church, after elders have been selected and appointed for that church. Elders need teaching if they are to grow in the knowledge of the gospel, and Paul and Barnabas would spend some of their time developing these elders as well as other members of the church.

Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. There has been much discussion as to the origin of the name Christian. The statement that it was given in derision has no foundation. The Greek word translated *were called* usually means to be "divinely commanded, admonished, instructed," and is usually translated by the English "warned of God." (Matt. 2: 12, 22; Acts 10: 22; Heb. 8: 5; 11: 7.) Perhaps the word in our text means "called of God," and implies that these inspired teachers gave the name to the disciples. However, Thayer gives a third meaning, "to assume or take to oneself a name from one's public business, ... to receive a name or title, be called," and then gives Acts 11: 26; Rom. 7: 3 as instances of its use where it has this meaning. But Paul gave the name divine sanction when he said he would be glad to make Agrippa a Christian. (Acts 11: 28, 29.) And Peter gave the name divine sanction when he said, "If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4: 16.)

III. Gentile Church Engages in Missions (Acts 13: 1-3)

In the church that was there, prophets and teachers. A prophet was one who spoke exhortation, edification, and consolation as the Spirit moved him. (1 Cor. 14: 3.) This was one of the nine gifts of the Spirit given through the laying on of apostles' hands. (1 Cor. 12: 7-11.) Just how the teachers differed from the prophets we do not know; however, we do know that teachers were set in the church by divine authority as well as the prophets. (1 Cor. 12: 28, 29.) We also know that the work of teachers was for the perfecting of the saints. (Eph. 4: 11-16.) Of the prophets and teachers named we

know but very little, except Barnabas and Saul.

They ministered to the Lord, and fasted. These men were prophets and teachers. The word for minister here comes from a Greek word which means "to do a service, perform a work." Thayer says it is used of "Christians serving Christ, whether by prayer, or by instructing others concerning the way of salvation, or in some other way." He then cites our text here as an example of that meaning. Hence, one who instructs others concerning the way of salvation is a minister of the Lord. It is easy to drift into denominational customs and refer to the man who preaches the gospel as "the minister of the church." But since the man who instructs others concerning the way of salvation ministers to the Lord, it is not unscriptural to refer to him as a minister of the church.

Separate me Barnabas and Saul.

Barnabas and Saul were to be separated or set apart from the rest of the prophets and teachers of the church to do a special work for which they had been called.

When they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them. Jesus did not forbid fasting, but gave his disciples instructions as to how they were to conduct themselves when they fasted. (Matt. 6: 16-18.) There is no indication that we have here a hard and fast rule for appointment of preachers to preach the gospel in certain places, or for the appointment of elders to their work. The laying on of hands in the case was not to impart spiritual gifts, for the church at Antioch could not impart anything to Paul the apostle. Hence, we take it to mean simply a way of designating those who were being appointed to the service under consideration.

Lessons to Learn

1. The persecution of the church in Jerusalem seemed a terrible thing; but when many churches began to spring up in various sections of the world as a result of that persecution, we may even be thankful for it.

2. Barnabas was a man totally devoid of selfishness and jealousy. He recognized in Saul of Tarsus a man

of ability, qualified to do a work which he found needed to be done at Antioch. Hence, he called him to assist in that work.

3. It is significant that the first Gentile church of which we have record was the first great missionary church. This church was so thankful for its blessings that it wished to share them with others.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Can you show how the hand of the Lord was with his people in a miraculous way?

How is the Lord with his people providentially?

How may we tie the hands of the Lord?

In the use of this expression, do we limit the power of God?

Is it possible for one to believe in the Lord and not turn to the Lord? Give examples.

What does our text determine about the order of belief and turning to the Lord?

Is there a difference between repentance and turning again?

By comparing Acts 2: 38 and 3: 19, what is the meaning of "turn again"?

If God is in Christ, how do we turn to God for reconciliation?

Introduction

What is suggested in our lesson as the first step in preparation for the conversion of the Gentiles?

How was the Jewish church prepared for missionary work among Gentiles?

How did the persecution of the Jerusalem church aid in converting the Gentile world?

Gentile Church at Antioch

To what in our text is reference made in the term "scattered abroad"?

What do you know of Phoenicia?

What do you know of Cyprus?

Why was Antioch a good place to establish a Gentile church?

Who began first to preach the gospel to Greeks?

What evidence do we have that these were Greeks and not Greek-speaking Jews?

What do you know of the content of this preaching?

Jewish Brethren Aid the Gentiles

Whom did the Jerusalem church send to help the church at Antioch?

How could Barnabas see the grace of God?

Why was Barnabas a good man to send on this mission?

For what type of work was Barnabas specially fitted?

What did Barnabas exhort the people to do?

What Old Testament character is a good example of purposing in the heart?

Of what does true goodness consist?

What is meant by being full of the Holy Spirit?

Whom did Barnabas seek to help in the work at Antioch?

How long did they teach the church before they went on their missionary journey?

What evidence do we have that the Antioch church had elders while Paul and Barnabas were there?

How do you think the name Christian was given to the disciples at Antioch?

What divine sanction does the name have in the New Testament?

Gentile Church Engages in Missions

What is the meaning of the word prophet as used in the New Testament?

What authority is there for the use of teachers and prophets?

What is the meaning of the word minister in our text?

How were Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work for which God called them?

May Christians fast as a religious exercise today?

What was the purpose of laying on of hands in this ceremony?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson II—October 10, 1954

PAUL BEGINS HIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Lesson Text

Acts 13: 4-14

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Se-leu-ci-a; and from thence they sailed to Cy-prus.

5 And when they were at Sal-a-mis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant.

6 And when they had gone through the whole island unto Pa-phos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Je'-sus;

7 Who was with the proconsul, Ser-gi-us Pau-lus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Bar-na-bas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But El'-y-mas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.

9 But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Pa'-phos, and came to Per'-ga in Pam-phy-i-a: and John de-

parted from them and returned to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

14 But they, passing through from Per'-ga, came to An'-ti-och of Pi-sid'-i-a; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.”* (Mark 16: 15b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 13: 15-43.

Daily Bible Readings

October 4. M.....	Gospel to Be Preached to All (Col. 1: 19-23)
October 5. T.....	Word of Faith to All (Rom. 10: 8-21)
October 6. W.....	Great Commission Included All (Matt. 28: 14-20)
October 7. T.....	The Gospel in Europe (Acts 16: 6-14)
October 8. F.....	Field the World (Acts 1: 6-8)
October 9. S.....	Spreading the Gospel (Rom. 15: 15-21)
October 10. S.....	The Lord's Promise (Isa. 42: 6-10)

TIME.—A.D. 45.

PLACES.—Cyprus, Perga, Antioch of Pisidia.

PERSONS.—Paul, Barnabas, Mark, Elymas, and Sergius Paulus.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The field is the world.** When our Lord explained the parable of the tares to his disciples, he told them that the field is the world. (Matt. 13: 38.) Ever since that time there have been people who have had difficulty in grasping this idea of world evangelization in each generation, (a) Some have failed to grasp this idea simply because of a limited vision. There are people who have little knowledge of, or interest in, the things that are going on beyond the limits of their little community. They are interested only in those people whom they know, and they know a very few people. Hence, they cannot conceive of a missionary program that would reach out into every corner of the earth. Usually they ridicule people who wish to cross the ocean to preach the gospel. It has been said by some of these of limited vision that every time a man thinks of missionary work, he “gets seasick.” They mean by this that missionaries think they have to take a ship and sail somewhere in order to do mission work. It is significant in this instance to notice that, when Paul and Barnabas were set aside to do missionary work, they immediately “went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.” (b) Covetousness keeps some people from seeing the world as the field in which to preach the gospel. They love their money too much to use it in supporting the preaching of the gospel beyond their own community. And usually peo-

ple of this sort use very little of their money to support the preaching of the gospel in their own community, (c) Lack of self-sacrifice keeps some people from seeing the field as the world in which to preach the gospel. These are so much in love with their homes, their families, and the environment in which they were reared that they cannot leave their homes and go into other communities to preach the gospel. Covetous people are unwilling to sacrifice their money, but this class of which we now speak is that class that refuses to sacrifice the pleasures and the comforts of home in order that they may preach the gospel to those in foreign lands. Men who preach the gospel in foreign lands are being supported better than at any time before in our history. But even now salaries of the missionaries do not compare very favorably with the salaries of preachers in the home land. Men who work in difficult fields in the United States are not as well paid as the preachers for large congregations in our southern cities. Of course, such discrimination is not right. But a love for lost souls and a desire to see them saved will inspire us to be willing to make the sacrifice. And if these things are not enough to move us to make that sacrifice, we should be moved by the commandment of our Lord which serves as our text today—go into all the world, and preach the gospel to all creation, (d) A lack of love for lost souls keeps some

people from seeing the field as the world. As the elder brother could enjoy the blessings and comforts of his home, completely unmindful of his brother's pitiful condition in the swine pens, so there are people today who enjoy the blessings and privileges of church worship and fellowship and are totally unmindful of the lost, ruined, and undone condition of their fellow human beings in the swine pens of sin.

2. **The seed is the gospel.** When Jesus was explaining the parable of the sower to his disciples, he told them that the seed is the word of God. (Luke 8: 11.) Without the sowing of seed there can be no harvest; so without the sowing or preaching of the gospel there can be no harvest of souls. The word of God, the gospel, was revealed by the Holy Spirit unto the apostles and prophets and they wrote it and preserved it in the book we call the Bible. It follows, therefore, that any principle which is not found revealed in the book we call the Bible is no part of the seed of the kingdom. Hence, preachers today have no need to preach anything which cannot be read from the Bible. Human traditions are not any part of the seed of the kingdom and will not produce children of the kingdom. To follow the imagery of the parable, human traditions will produce tares (Matt. 13: 24-30), which will be burned at the end of the age. To establish and maintain a church of the Lord, only the word of God must be taught; but to establish and maintain a denomination, human traditions must be taught. Peter tells us the seed by which we

are born again is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us. (1 Pet. 1: 23-25.) So all we need to evangelize the world is the word of God.

3. **We are commanded to go.** Many people act as if this commission applied only to the apostles, or to the church of their generation. But the church of this generation is expected to take the gospel to the whole creation just like the church of the first century was expected to take the gospel to the whole creation in its generation. If the apostles and early preachers of the gospel had stayed at home like many of us, they would never have taken the gospel to all the world, and the Lord would have been displeased. Do we have any right to think the Lord will be pleased with us if we stay at home to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of our homes instead of taking the gospel to the whole world that people in sin may learn the truth and be saved? Certainly the Lord does not expect all to go; for if all were to go, there would be none to do the sending. (Rom. 10: 15.) But many who could and should go are salving their conscience by giving money to send others. Where we have dozens of missionaries, we should have hundreds. We could invest less in homes, furniture, cars, and vacations, and invest more in missions. Though we are doing more mission work today than ever before in our history, we are capable of doing very much more if each member would only practice a little self-denial. Let each member ask himself, or herself, What am I doing to take the gospel to the whole creation?

Introduction

Since it is the duty of the church to carry the gospel into all the world, surely it is the duty of individual Christians to know something of the missionary activities throughout the world. Every Christian should have a general knowledge of what is being done by the various churches throughout the world, and certainly he should have a knowledge of what the particular congregation where he holds membership is doing. There are many members of the church who know absolutely nothing about missionary activities of other congregations and very little about missionary activities of their own congregation. Many of them can tell

you the batting averages of the leading baseball players in the various leagues, or they can tell you the activities of their favorite cinema and television stars. There are others who can tell you how many races certain horses have won at the various race tracks over the country, but they cannot tell you who is preaching the gospel in Italy, South Africa, or the Philippine Islands. If someone complains that he has no way of getting this information, he is reminded that there are brotherhood publications which carry all this information. They pay for their information in these other fields of activity—why not subscribe for these

publications which will keep them informed on the missionary activities of the brethren? (a) Interest in missionary work will lead us to keep ourselves informed. The trouble with many brethren is they have little or no interest in the missionary activities of the church. They have no interest in the welfare of the missionaries themselves, and they have little or no interest in the salvation of the lost in other nations. If they were interested deeply in these things, they would keep themselves informed. Interest in the growth and development of these new churches established by missionaries would lead us to keep ourselves informed as to their progress. John could write that he rejoiced greatly that he had found certain people walking in truth. (2 John 4.) And Paul could write that he was so anxious about the welfare of the church at Corinth that he had no relief until Titus came with word of the progress of the church and then he could say, "I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you." (2 Cor. 7: 16.) (b) People need to know the facts concerning the missionary activities of the church that they may pray for missions as they are taught to do. Jesus said, "Pray ye therefore the

Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest." (Matt. 9: 38.) Many people cannot follow this instruction because they do not know for whom to pray. They do not know the missionaries; they do not know the fields where these missionaries are working. They know nothing of the conditions of those fields. They know nothing of the hardships the missionaries are meeting. They know nothing of the persecution the missionaries are enduring. Hence, they do not know how to pray either for the field where missionaries are, or for the relief and encouragement of missionaries on mission fields, (c) People need to know about the missionary activities of the world so they may give of their money intelligently. It is our duty to support missionary activities over the world, but just giving a little money occasionally is not enough. We ought to give with some degree of intelligence, knowing to whom the money is going and something about how the money is used. Knowing the needs of the field and being somewhat personally acquainted with the workers on the field will encourage us to give more liberally. All of us need encouragement to increase our liberality.

Exposition of the Text

I. Preaching the Gospel in Cyprus

(Verses 4-7)

Being sent forth by the Holy Spirit.

Anything which people are moved by the Holy Spirit to do is said to be done by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin and converts them to the Lord. Yet men are used in the accomplishment of these things. (John 16: 7-13.) So when the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on this mission tour, it is said that the Holy Spirit sent them forth because the Holy Spirit moved the church to do that work.

And when they were at Salamis.

We are told that this was the principal city and seaport of the island of Cyprus. It is possible that several human considerations entered into the decision to go by Cyprus. First, Barnabas was a native of this island. (Acts 4: 36.) Next, Paul's home at Tarsus was directly north of this island and only a short distance away. Next, from Acts 11: 19, 20 we learn that some work had already been done on this island. And since the

island was on the sea route to Asia Minor, where they did the principal part of their work on this first journey, it was convenient for them to stop on the island for some time.

They proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues. Since there were synagogues in Cyprus, we know there was a considerable Jewish population. Being Jews, Paul and Barnabas would be readily received in the synagogues, and, according to their custom, these visitors would be invited to speak. This gave them opportunity to preach the gospel to people who already believed in God and to people who were looking forward to the Messiah. The dispersion of the Jews among all the nations of the earth was a part of the preparation which in the providence of God was made for the growth and the spread of the church. In Acts 11: 20 we learn that some "spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus," but here we are told that Paul and Barnabas "proclaimed the word of God" in the synagogues. So to preach

Jesus and to proclaim the word must be the same thing.

They had also John as their attendant. The word here translated attendant is used of kings' officers both civil and military. It is also used of the attendant in the synagogue. (Luke 4: 20. The word is used once with reference to Paul and is translated *minister*. (Acts 26: 16.) This John Mark was the son of Mary, in whose house the disciples gathered for prayer in Jerusalem. (Acts 12: 12.)

A certain sorcerer, a false prophet. This man is also called Bar-Jesus, which simply means son of Jesus. Jesus was a common name among the Jews. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew, Joshua. Our text says he was a sorcerer. But this word is the translation of a Greek word which means magician. Since he is called a false prophet, we conclude that he posed as a prophet of God and depended upon his magician's tricks to convince people that he was a true prophet.

Who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The Roman Empire had two names for the men who governed its provinces. If a province needed soldiers to maintain order, the emperor sent the ruler, and he was called *procurator*. If the province could be maintained orderly without soldiers, the Senate named and sent the governor, and he was called *proconsul*. So this man Sergius Paulus was appointed and sent by the Senate to govern Cyprus. We are told that he was a man of understanding and that he was interested in the gospel and sent for Paul that he might hear the word of God.

Seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith. This is said of Elymas, or Bar-Jesus. The word Elymas is an Arabic word for "a wise man." Elymas realized that if the proconsul accepted the faith, he would lose his position and power and also lose his influence over the people generally. Hence, for personal reasons he sought to keep a man from learning the truth and being saved.

II. Meeting: Opposition in Cyprus

(Verses 8-12)

○ *full of all guile and all villainy.* This is the language of Paul to Elymas. In his fiery denunciation of Elymas Paul used four very strong terms, (a) The first term is *guile*, which means deceit, cunning; craft

and treachery, (b) Villainy is the next term. Webster says that this word means a villainous act, a deed of deep depravity, a crime, (c) Paul called this man the son of the devil. This simply means that he was the servant of Satan. He was engaged in the work of the devil for his own selfish purposes. Hence, he was the son of the devil, (d) Paul called him the enemy of all righteousness. Any person described correctly by the preceding words would be the enemy of all that is right. This man was not satisfied to be unrighteous himself, but he was opposed to others becoming righteous. Some preachers today use this incident to justify their use of strong abusive language in the pulpit. They should remember first that they are not inspired as was Paul, and so cannot be positively sure of the correctness of their judgment of men. In the next place, they should remember that Paul used this language concerning an *individual* and addressed it to the man *personally* and *individually*, while they are using such strong language publicly, where there are many listening to whom such language could not possibly apply. It is never wise and good to use any language in the pulpit that one would not have the courage to use when speaking to an individual personally. And since it takes more courage to say things to a man personally than it does to say them in the pulpit, many preachers resort to the latter.

Cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord. Paul's language here implies that Elymas had been giving considerable time and effort to the job of turning the proconsul from the faith. The word translated pervert means to distort or corrupt or turn aside from a path.

Thou shalt be blind . . . for a season. This is the punishment which Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, brought upon Elymas for his wickedness. This blindness was proof that the hand of the Lord was upon Elymas. In Acts 11: 21 we found the expression that the hand of the Lord was with certain people for good. Here we find that the hand of the Lord is on one for punishment. So the Lord may be with people either for good or for their punishment. And this punishment could have been for one or both of two purposes, (a) It could have been a punishment for his wickedness, (b) It could have

been intended to bring him to repentance that he might be saved. Stopping his opposition would lead to the salvation of the proconsul, and bring him to realize that a power sufficient to strike him blind might lead him to see his own wickedness and turn from his evil.

Then the proconsul . . . believed.

Miracles were for the confirmation of the word preached. This miracle so confirmed the teaching of Paul that the proconsul was convinced of the truth of his teaching. Whether the proconsul obeyed the gospel and became a Christian we do not know.

III. Preaching: the Gospel in Asia Minor (Verses 13, 14)

Paul and his company . . . came to Perga. The reader should notice that in this verse the missionary group is spoken of as "Paul and his company." Heretofore, Barnabas has been mentioned first, and Paul has been called Saul. In the ninth verse of our text the change was made from Saul to Paul.

John departed from them. We do not know why Mark went back home, but we do know that Paul thought he was not justified in doing so. When they would start on their second missionary journey, Barnabas desired to take Mark again, but Paul was so opposed to Mark going with them that he parted company with Barnabas rather than take Mark. (Acts 15: 36-41.) However, we learn from Paul himself that Mark actually made a successful comeback and proved himself worthy of confidence. (2 Tim. 4:

11.) We are told that Perga was the metropolis of Pamphylia. It was not on the seacoast, but on the river Cestus, which was some distance from the Mediterranean seacoast. It was

situated in a wild, mountainous country, and some have thought that this contributed to Mark's fear, which caused him to go home.

Came to Antioch of Pisidia. This Antioch was a Roman colony directly north about a hundred miles from Perga. Luke speaks of this city as "Antioch of Pisidia," but modern scholars tell us that the city was within the limits of Phrygia. Some have thought that Luke made a mistake, and that this would throw some doubt on his inspiration. But Barnes tells us that, though Antioch was within the limits of Phrygia, it was a free city and belonged to Pisidia and quotes Pliny and Strabo as his authority.

Went into the synagogue on the sabbath day. Again we find the early preachers going into the Jewish synagogue, because here they would find people who already believed in God, people who were looking for the Messiah, and they would find an opportunity to speak, for visitors were always given the opportunity to speak in the synagogue meetings. In verse fifteen, following our text, we learn something of the order of these synagogue meetings. It is said that the law and the prophets were read, and then the rulers of the synagogue sent unto Paul and Barnabas saying, "Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Being Jews, Paul and Barnabas would readily be accepted into the fellowship of the synagogue meeting, and since the rulers of the synagogue did not know their mission or business in town, they would not know that they had anything new to bring to the people. Hence, there was no prejudice against them, and they would be offered the opportunity to speak.

Lessons to Learn

1. We have no way of knowing how much support Paul and Barnabas had from the church at Antioch. In fact we have no way to determine whether they had any financial support at all. We cannot but admire their courage and their willingness to sacrifice that they might go out where the gospel had never been preached that souls might hear for the first time the gospel of salvation.

2. There were men in Paul's day who put selfish interest and personal ambition above the salvation of souls.

Such a man was Elymas. And there are people today who would gladly hinder the progress of the gospel in order to satisfy their selfish ambitions. The punishment of Elymas was light compared to the punishment that will be meted out to such characters in the judgment.

3. John Mark was young and wavering in his courage and steadfastness. He allowed his personal interests and selfish desires to get the upper hand of him temporarily. But he is a good example of one who stumbles and then comes back to

make good. We should rejoice, not that he stumbled, but that he made good and serves as an encouragement

to those of us today who have stumbled in the past, but who still have a desire to make good.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Where is the church of this generation obligated to preach the gospel?

How may limited vision keep churches from carrying out the great commission?

What effect does covetousness have on the great commission?

How does the love of ease, comfort, and pleasure affect the great commission?

How should the salary of the missionary compare with that of the home preacher?

How does love for lost souls affect our missionary programs?

What is the seed to be sown in the field?

Contrast the seed of the kingdom with that which produces fares.

Is every member of the church obligated to go into all the world?

How could we invest more money in missions without an increase in income?

Introduction

Are Christians obligated to keep informed as to the missionary activities of the church?

How may we get this information concerning missionary activities?

Give and discuss three reasons why Christians should be informed about missionary activities of the various churches.

Preaching the Gospel in Cyprus

In what sense were Paul and Barnabas sent forth by the Holy Spirit?

Do you know some reasons why these men would go first to Cyprus?

Where did they find their first audiences on this island?

Whom did they take along as their attendant?

What is a proconsul?

Who held that office in Cyprus?

What do you know of the man who tried to turn the proconsul from the faith?

Meeting Opposition in Cyprus

Name and discuss the four terms Paul used in denouncing the sorcerer.

Does this incident justify preachers today in the use of such terms publicly?

What are the "ways of the Lord"?

What was Elymas attempting to do to them?

What punishment was brought upon the sorcerer for his sin?

What were the probable purposes of this punishment?

Did the sorcerer succeed in turning the proconsul from the faith?

Preaching the Gospel in Asia Minor

What change is made at this point in speaking of the personnel of the company?

How was the number of the personnel decreased at this time?

What evidence do we have that Mark made good later in life?

What do you know of Antioch of Pisidia?

What custom of the synagogue gave Paul reason to think he would be invited to speak?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—October 17, 1954

THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

Lesson Text

Acts 15: 6-21

6 And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the o-en'-tles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us;

9 And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Je'-sus, in like manner as they.

12 And all the multitude kept silence; and they hearkened unto Bar-na-bas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the o-en'-tles through them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Sym'e-on hath rehearsed how first God visited the o-en'-tles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After these things I will return, And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof, And I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, And all the Gen'tiles, upon whom my name is called,

18 Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old.

19 Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them that from among the Gen'-tiles turn to God;

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood.

21 For Mó-ses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“For freedom did Christ set us free (Gal. 5: la.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 4: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 11. M..... Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15: 1-11)
- October 12. T..... Decision of the Council (Acts 15: 12-21)
- October 13. W..... Decrees of the Council (Acts 15: 22-29)
- October 14. T..... Circumcision Part of the Law (Lev. 12: 1-5)
- October 15. F..... Law Through Moses (John 1: 10-18)
- October 16. S..... Freedom from Bondage (Gal. 5: 1-6)
- October 17. S..... Dead to the Law (Rom. 7: 1-7)

TIME.—A.D. 52.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Paul, Barnabas, Peter, James and the elders.

Golden Text Explained

1. Notice the person who freed us.

Jesus said, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8: 36.) From these verses we learn that it is Christ, the Son of God, who makes us free. In the days of slavery, people with money often bought slaves and set them free. A slave would feel honored if a king or some other important person should buy him and give him his liberty. We should feel honored that Christ, the Son of God, should buy our liberty and set us free. We are told that he created all things. (John 1: 3.) We are told that he preserves and upholds all things. (Heb. 1: 2, 3.) Since he is the creator and preserver of all things, he is not dependent upon our freedom or welfare for his happiness. Hence, we know that he set us free, not for the sake of his own happiness, but for our happiness and our welfare. Paul tells us, "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8: 9.) In this we see demonstrated the love, pity, and goodness of our Lord. We ought therefore to rejoice in the fact that we have been made free by Christ, the Son of God. In this connection we should notice also the price which he paid for our freedom. Paul tells us, "Ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." (1 Cor. 6:

19, 20.) From Peter we learn that this price which Jesus paid for our freedom was his own life. "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." (1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) And again John speaks of Jesus in these words, "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, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth." (Rev. 5: 9, 10.) Since the life is in the blood and our freedom was purchased by the blood of Christ, we conclude that he gave his life that we might be free.

2. **That from which Christ sets us free,** (a) Christ sets us free from the bondage of sin. Paul represents us as being carnal and sold under sin. (Rom. 7: 14.) Being sold under sin, we were the servants of sin. **But** again in the language of Paul, "The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15: 56, 57.) To those who are in Christ, Paul says, "Let not sin therefore

reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." (Rom. 6: 12-14.) So in Christ Jesus and through the freedom he has given us, we are no longer the bondservants of sin. Though we still are subject to temptation, and on account of our ignorance and weakness we occasionally do wrong, yet we are not the slaves of sin, having been made free from that relationship by the power of the blood of Christ, (b) Christ makes us free from the guilt of sin. Sin is a crime against God, and guilt attaches to crime. No one can commit sin without being guilty before God. Only the forgiveness of God can remove that guilt, which is not removed except through the shedding of the blood of Christ, for, "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9: 22.) Paul said that animal sacrifices could not make perfect them that offered them, for if those sacrifices had been sufficient, there would not have been any more a consciousness of sins. (Heb. 10: 1-3.) He then presents the blood of Christ as far more efficacious than the blood of animals and says that "by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. . . . Then saith he, And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." (Heb. 10: 14-18.) (c) Christ makes us free from the pollution of sin. Sin is a defiling, polluting thing. No one can engage in sin without being made impure and unholy. Again, Paul contrasts the blood of the old covenant with the blood of Christ in the new covenant, showing that the blood of animals only sanctified to the cleanness of the flesh, but the blood of Christ is able to cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9: 11-14.) (d) Christ sets us free from the bonds of human tradition. Paul reminded the Galatians of the time when they were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods. He also warns them that their attitude and actions at the time of his writing indicated that they wished to go back into that bondage

from which they had been set free. And he says, "Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years." (Gal. 4: 10.) The observance of these human ordinances and traditions caused Paul to think they were going back into bondage again. To the church at Corinth Paul said, "Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men." (1 Cor. 7: 23.) Since we have been bought with a price, we should not become the bondservants or the slaves of men by obeying the teaching and traditions of men. To the Colossian church Paul wrote that, since they had died with Christ, they should not subject themselves to the ordinances, the precepts, and doctrines of men. He said that these practices, bound upon them by the doctrines of men, had indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, but that they were of no value at all against the indulgence of the flesh. (Col. 2: 20-23.)

3. **The purpose of freedom given by Christ.** (a) Paul tells us in our text that Christ set us free in order that we might have freedom. Hence, he would first have us to realize our freedom. One may be a Christian and yet not realize all that Christianity means to him, so Paul would have us to study and acquaint ourselves with this freedom in order that we may realize to the fullest extent what this freedom means, (b) Paul would have us to enjoy this freedom. There is little need of people being in possession of a great prize without enjoying the possession of that prize. Many people in our nation possess a political freedom, the value of which they little realize, and the use and practice of which they rarely enjoy. (c) Paul would have us to protect that freedom which is ours to enjoy. Paul follows our text by saying, "Stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." In these words Paul urges them to stand fast in the defense of their freedom that they not allow others to steal away this liberty of theirs and bring them into bondage to human traditions again. People who do not realize, enjoy, and protect their political freedom will not long have that freedom to enjoy, so with our religious or spiritual freedom. If we do not realize, enjoy, and protect it, we are liable to lose it to those who would take it from us. (d) Though our text does not suggest this, yet it is a scriptural point, **and**

we should realize that one purpose of our freedom is that we may make others free, so that they too may enjoy this liberty with us. This is but a natural expression of our at-

titude for the freedom from sin which we enjoy. We may safely conclude that an individual who does not wish to share this freedom with others does not appreciate his own freedom.

Introduction

The Jerusalem conference was made necessary because there were members of the church who believed that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. (Acts 15: 1.) Considerable preaching was being done, and Gentiles were being accepted into the membership of the church without circumcision as we have seen in our preceding lessons. Paul was the leader of that group which contended for the liberty of the Gentiles. It is impossible to determine who were the leaders of the group which contended for the circumcision of the Gentiles. Peter wavered on the question when he was at Antioch. (Gal. 2: 11, 13.) In this passage it is also said that, when certain men came from James, Peter refused to eat with the uncircumcised. This would indicate that some viewed James as being inclined to take that position. Hence, the purpose of the conference was not that Paul might learn the truth on the matter, but that the truth might be brought out into the open, where both sides would know the

truth and know that it came not from some man, but from God. Since Paul was careful to assert that he did not get his gospel from any man, but that he received it by revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1: 11, 12), we may well conclude that Paul did not go to Jerusalem for a conference simply on the invitation of these Judaizing brethren. It took more than an invitation from them, so we learn that he says, "I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles." (Gal. 2: 2.) And Paul took Titus, who was a Greek, along with him to that conference as a test case. We read, "But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." (Gal. 2: 3.) So, ever afterward, Paul could tell those who opposed him that he took Titus to this conference, and the apostles and elders at Jerusalem did not compel Titus to be circumcised. This was visible and positive proof that the apostles and elders at Jerusalem did not compel the Gentiles to accept circumcision and keep the law of Moses.

Exposition of the Text

I. Peter's Speech in the Conference

(Verses 6-11)

The apostles and the elders were gathered together. This conference was not a meeting of a select few. In verse four, we learn that the church was convened with the apostles and elders. Then in verse twenty-two, we learn that the apostles and elders "with the whole church" concurred in the decision of the conference and agreed to send reports of the findings of the conference to the brethren.

When there had been much questioning. The Greek word for our word questioning means mutual questioning or disputation. Both sides had ample time to put their positions before the brethren. Church troubles and differences are not settled by steam-roller tactics. Both sides must be heard fairly and freely.

Peter rose up, and said. Peter reminded the brethren that God chose

him to preach the gospel at first to the Gentiles. He also reminded them that it had been a good while ago, perhaps ten years or more, since he had preached to Cornelius. From Peter's statement we also learn how faith comes. The Gentiles were to hear the word of the gospel from Peter's mouth and believe. Paul said faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10: 17.) Since God is the giver of all good things, we may look upon him as giving us faith. But God chooses to give faith through the hearing of the preached word or the reading of the written word. (John 20: 30, 31.) Again, since the angel told Cornelius that Peter would speak words whereby he and his house should be saved (Acts 11: 14), and since Cornelius was to hear these same words that he might believe, we know that the faith which brings salvation is the faith which comes from hearing the word preached.

God, who knoweth the heart. The Gentiles had been denied religious freedom and equality with the Jews so long that God knew they would need some evidence of their acceptance, so God bore witness of the genuineness of their faith and of their acceptance with him by giving them the Holy Spirit as he did to the apostles on Pentecost. Peter made a similar statement to the elders at Jerusalem shortly after the conversion of Cornelius when he said, "If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11: 17.) Here the argument seems to be that God accepted the Gentiles and as evidence of it gave them the Holy Spirit as he gave to the Jews on Pentecost. Hence, the Gentiles should be accepted by the church, since they were accepted by the Lord.

Giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us. To the elders at Jerusalem Peter said, "The Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11: 15.) Hence, the time to which Peter refers is the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit; and for proof that this was called the baptism of the Holy Spirit we read, "But ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit, not many days hence." (Acts 1: 5.) This promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. (Acts 2: 1-4.) The idea is now quite acceptable among some brethren that Cornelius did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit because they think Cornelius did not have all the powers which the apostles had. But it is entirely possible that the apostles had these extra powers because of their apostolic commission and not because of their baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Cleansing their hearts by faith. This is Peter's proof that God made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The hearts of the Gentiles were cleansed, or purified, by faith in exactly the same way that the Jews were purified. Peter tells us that our hearts are purified in our obedience to the truth which is preached to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1: 22.) We therefore conclude that the whole teaching of scripture on the matter is that our hearts are purified by a faith which obeys the truth. Faith which does not obey the truth, such as the faith of Agrippa, does not purify the soul.

Why make ye trial of God? God had showed his willingness to accept the Gentiles and had demonstrated that by giving them the Holy Spirit. Now for the church to reject the Gentiles would be to make trial of God, or to take issue with God and declare that God had made a mistake.

Put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples. Peter speaks of circumcision and the keeping of the law as a yoke about the necks of people which neither their fathers nor they themselves had been able to bear. Brother Boles sums up Peter's speech as follows: "Peter has made four points that stand out distinctly: (1) he was directed by God to receive the Gentiles, as in the case of Cornelius; (2) God endorsed the reception of the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit; (3) faith produced exactly the same effect in both Jew and Gentile; (4) the Jews have no right to put on the Gentiles a yoke which God had not put on them." (Commentary on Acts.)

Saved through the grace ... in like manner. Peter affirms that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by the grace of the Lord in like manner. People who are saved by grace are saved in some manner. It is not enough to say that we are saved by grace. This says that we are saved by grace in a manner. And it affirms that the manner in which Jews are saved by grace is the same manner in which Gentiles are saved by grace. This simply means that they obeyed the same gospel. They obeyed the same commandments of that gospel in order to be saved. Those commandments were to believe in the Lord with all their heart, to repent of their sins, to confess Jesus before the world, and to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of their sins. This is the manner in which both Jew and Gentile are saved by grace. If one today is either Jew or Gentile, this is the manner in which he must be saved by grace.

II. James' Speech in the Conference (Verses 12-18)

They hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul. After there had been much debating, Peter made the first speech, then followed the speeches of Barnabas and Paul, which are not recorded, and then came the speech of James. Paul and Barnabas seem not

to have argued the doctrinal points, but rather rehearsed "what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them." Peter told of the beginning of the work among the Gentiles, while Barnabas told of the continuance of that work—how that God who accepted them in the beginning with Peter had continued to endorse the acceptance of the Gentiles through his blessing on Paul and Barnabas.

Brethren, hearken unto me. This is the language of James. Albert Barnes says this James was an apostle and the son of Alphaeus, but Meyer says, "When these had finished speaking, James, not the son of Alphaeus, but the *brother of the Lord*, a strict legalist, and highly esteemed in Jerusalem as chief leader of the church, delivered his address having reference to these matters." In agreement with this is Clarke, Boles, and others of equal reputation.

How first God visited the Gentiles. James says that Symeon, referring to Peter, had told how God first visited the Gentiles. This referred to Peter's work at the house of Cornelius. By this statement we know that Peter was the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The purpose of that visit was "to take out of them a people for his name." To take a people from the Gentiles for his name means simply that he won people out from among the Gentiles who were worthy to wear his name. Hence, James agrees with Peter that God had endorsed his work among the Gentiles in that the Gentiles were accepted as worthy to wear the name of the Lord.

To this agree the words of the prophets. James made a reference to prophets, plural, but quoted from only one. He might have quoted Isa. 2: 2-4; 49: 6; Mic. 4: 1-4 as instances of other prophecies concerning the acceptance of Gentiles.

I will build again the tabernacle of David. Under the picture of a tabernacle, tent, Amos pictured the fall and desolation, the rebuilding and glory of the family of David. After the fall and desolation of that tabernacle, it was finally to be rebuilt. And when that tabernacle was rebuilt, the Gentiles would have the privileges and blessings to be enjoyed in that tabernacle. Obviously, James considered Jesus, the Son of David, as the one to rebuild the tabernacle of David. The tabernacle of David

could not be rebuilt without the rule or throne of David being restored. Hence, James must have considered Jesus as being on the throne of David in the restored tabernacle of David. Since the Gentiles were to have a part in this, James sees the fulfillment of the prophecies in the work of Peter at the house of Cornelius and the work of Barnabas and Paul among the Gentiles.

That the residue of men may seek after the Lord. It will be noticed from this statement that the tabernacle of David had to be rebuilt in order for the residue of men, the Gentiles, to seek after the Lord. We have now sufficient proof by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the residue of men, or Gentiles, were permitted to seek after the Lord. Hence, the conclusion is that the tabernacle of David has been restored. If the tabernacle of David has not been restored, and if Jesus is not reigning on the throne of David, the Gentiles have no right to seek after the Lord, nor to wear the name of the Lord. But the Jerusalem conference settled the matter as to whether the Gentiles had the right to seek after the Lord and to wear the name of the Lord. That fact being settled, we are forced to conclude that the tabernacle of David has been rebuilt and the throne or reign of David over the people of God has been restored in Jesus Christ on the throne at the right hand of God.

III. Conclusions of the Conference

(Verses 19-21)

Wherefore my judgment is. It seems obvious that James presided at this meeting. It was James, not Peter, that summed up the arguments and announced the conclusion reached by the conference. If Peter had been the Pope, it seems that he should have been given the honor both of presiding at the conference and of announcing the conclusions of the conference.

But that we write unto them. James said it was his judgment that they should not trouble the Gentiles, who were turning to God, with the many ceremonies of the law of Moses, but that they should be told to abstain from certain things.

Abstain from the pollutions of idols. This is a caution against any form of idolatry. Very likely this included the eating of meats in idol's temples. "To partake of that food might not

be *morally* wrong (1 Cor. 8: 4), but it would give occasion for scandal and offense; and, therefore, as a matter of *expediency*, it was advised that they should abstain from it." (Barnes.)

From fornication. Fornication was included as a part of the forms of heathen worship. Hence, the Gentiles would be especially susceptible to that sin. They, therefore, would need special warning against the sin of fornication.

From what is strangled. From this we learn that any animal or fowl which is to be used for food is to be well drained of its blood. Some people have the practice of breaking the necks of fowls and eating the meat without the blood being drained from the body. This passage clearly teaches us that such practice is wrong.

And from blood. God has never allowed his people to eat blood. (Lev. 17: 13.) The reason given for this prohibition is that the life is in the

blood. Whether we understand the importance of this or not, it is still plain and positive teaching of God and must be restricted. And this is the reason why we are to refrain from eating things strangled.

Moses being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. The connection between this statement and the preceding is rather difficult to see. The letter was to be written to the Gentiles. The Jews had this instruction already in the writings of Moses, and they were familiar with these prohibitions. James is saying that these four things are the only things in connection with the law of Moses that the Gentiles need to be commanded to respect. And these four were not to be respected because they were a part of the law of Moses, but because they were the will of God in this dispensation. However, since the Jews were acquainted with the teaching of Moses and respected that teaching, there was no need to write this letter to them.

Lessons to Learn

1. Free, full, open discussion of all matters of difference is an effective means of obtaining the truth and of securing peace and harmony among brethren.

2. Gentiles should be grateful evermore to the apostle Paul for leading and winning the fight to keep Jewish ceremonialism from being a yoke upon their necks. He suffered persecution unequalled by that of any other man of his time and finally was brought to his death in order that we might enjoy this freedom.

3. This conference did not produce a new doctrine to take care of an emergency in the church and thus set an example for the church in all ages to produce doctrines for new emergencies. The decision of this conference was that of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 15: 28.) Hence, this cannot be used as proof that the church is at liberty to produce doctrines which may seem necessary to meet emergencies in changing conditions of 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.

Golden Text Explained

How were slaves often given their freedom?

Why should we feel honored that Christ should set us free?

What is the price of our freedom?

What is meant by the bondage of sin?

How are we freed from it?

What is the guilt of sin?

How are we freed from it?

How are we freed from the pollution of sin?

What is meant by freeing us from the bonds of human tradition?

What is the importance of realizing our freedom from sin?

What is meant by enjoying and protecting our freedom?

How can we share this freedom from sin with other people?

Introduction

Who led the fight to free the church from Jewish ceremonialism?

Did the Jewish position have prominent men in the leadership?

Why was Paul willing to go to Jerusalem for a conference?

Why did Paul take Titus with him to the conference?

Peter's Speech in the Conference

Who met in conference to consider this question of circumcision?

What can you say of the manner in which the conference was conducted?

What did Peter say about the way faith came to the Gentiles?

Can you show that the faith which comes by hearing is the faith that saves?

Why did God send the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his family?

What evidence do we have that Cornelius was baptized in the Holy Spirit?

How are our hearts cleansed from sin?

What is meant by making trial of God?

What do you know of the manner in which both Jews and Gentiles are saved by grace?
 Can you give a summary of Peter's speech?

James' Speech in the Conference
 What part did Paul and Barnabas take in the conference?
 Can you identify this James who spoke in the conference?
 What evidence do we have that Peter was the first to convert a Gentile?
 What did James say about the conversion of Gentiles being fulfillment of prophecy?
 What prophet did he quote?
 What others might he have quoted?
 What is meant by the tabernacle of David?

How is the throne of David related to it?
 What evidence do we have in this lesson that Jesus is reigning on the throne of David?

Conclusions of the Conference
 Who presided over the conference?
 Who announced the conclusions?
 Name and discuss four things the conference decided Gentiles were to refrain from.
 Why was not a similar letter written to the Jews?
 Are these four things bound upon Gentiles as a part of the old covenant?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—October 24, 1954

THE GOSPEL CARRIED INTO EUROPE

Lesson Text

Acts 16: 6-15

6 And they went through the region of Phryg'i-a and Ga-la-ti-a, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in A'-si-a;

7 And when they were come over against My'si-a, they assayed to go into Bi-thyn'-i-á; and the Spirit of Je'-sus suffered them not;

8 And passing by My'si-a, they came down to Tro'-as.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Mac-e-do'-ni-a standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Mac-e-do'-ni-a, and help us.

10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Mac-e-do'-ni-a, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Setting sail therefore from Tro'-as, we made a straight course to Sam'-ó-thrace, and the day following to Ne-ap'-o-lis;

12 And from thence to Phi-lip'-pi, which is a city of Mag-e-do'-ni-a, the first of the district, a Roman colony: and we were in this city tarrying certain days.

13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.

14 And a certain woman named Lyd'-i-a, a seller of purple, of the city of Thy-a-ti'-ra, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."* (Acts 16: 9b.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 16: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 18. M..... The Command (Matt. 28: 14-20)
- October 19. T..... The Vision (Acts 16: 6-10)
- October 20. W..... The Straight Course (Acts 16: 11, 12)
- October 21. T..... Activity in Philippi (Acts 16: 16-18)
- October 22. F..... Prisoners of Christ (Acts 16: 19-24)
- October 23. S..... Persecution in Philippi (1 Thess. 2: 1-12)
- October 24. S..... Paul's Love for Philippian Church (Phil. 1: 1-11)

TIME.—A.D. 53.

PLACES.—Troas and Philippi.

PERSONS. Paul and his company and Lydia and her household.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Who is calling?** Luke tells us that Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia calling for help. This man was calling for spiritual help. The religion he had known from his youth was not sufficient. It was not giving him the satisfaction which his soul desired. There are literally millions of people in the world today who are in that same condition. Let us classify these according to their religious conditions in order that we may be the more impressed by the need of answering that call, (a) Those in polytheistic idolatry. By the term polytheistic idolatry we mean those who have no knowledge of the true God, and who are worshipping many gods through the images which they have made. Paul tells us of people who "changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible men, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things." (Rom. 1: 23.) And again, Paul speaks of some who "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." (Rom. 1: 25.) Since man partakes of the likeness of that which he worships, the people who worship birds and beasts and creeping things will be debased and degraded in their nature. Those who worship a holy God tend to become holy like God, while those who worship birds, beasts, and creeping things tend to take upon themselves the nature of these beasts and fowls which they worship. Not having access to the revelation of God in the Bible, they have been left to the revelation of God in nature and they have made the mistake of worshipping the creature which they see in nature rather than the Creator of all nature. Could we but translate the yearning of their hearts, we would hear the message, Come over into Africa, India, and many other idolatrous nations and help us find a deeper satisfaction of soul here and a brighter hope for eternal life in the world to come, (b) Those in monotheistic idolatry. Those included in the term monotheistic idolatry are those who have learned that there is but one true God, but they have not advanced sufficiently that they can worship without material objects as likenesses of that which they worship. The entire Catholic world falls

within this classification. The fact that they claim that they do not worship the images which they make, but they worship God as represented by these images, does not mean that they are not idolaters. The use of images and idols in worship is idolatry. This is all they have been taught, and of course, they are sincere in this type of worship. These people know not the satisfaction of true spiritual worship, and could we but translate the yearnings of their hearts they would say to us, Come over and help us to become free of these human traditions and to know the joy and satisfaction of pure religion. (c) Those in denomination-alism. In this class there are multiplied millions of people who know the one true God and Jesus the Son of God, but they have not been taught how to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. They have been taught to be satisfied with faith only; a faith that does not obey God. They have not been taught how to worship God in spirit and in truth. Hence, they are doing just about whatever their imagination and desires prompt them to do as worship to God. They are taught to believe that, so long as they are honest and sincere in the things they do, God will be pleased. Many of them are little more than refined social clubs, which cannot minister to the soul's welfare, and could their longings be translated into a language we could understand, we could hear them saying, Come and help us out of this worldliness which passes under the name of religion, (d) Those who are depending upon good moral behavior. There are many millions of people who have become discouraged by the divided condition of those who profess to believe in Christ. They know not which way to turn, and they have come to think that so long as they are honest and upright in their dealings with their fellow men and live good clean moral lives, they will go to heaven when they die. But good deeds have not the power to atone for sins, and so they are condemned in the sight of God. Could we understand the longings of their hearts, they would say, Come over and help us.

2. **Who should answer these calls?**

(a) Preachers should answer these calls. One does not have to cross oceans nor even state lines in order

to answer many of these calls. Churches should support preachers who answer these calls, but, support or no support, preachers should answer the calls as their ability will permit. (b) Teachers should answer these calls. There are many men and women in large congregations in the southland who never have an opportunity to teach a class. If they would move into sections of the country where churches are small and weak, their opportunities for service would be greatly multiplied. (c) Elders should answer these calls. There are men who serve as elders in large congregations in the southland who, if they would move into the northeast or west part of the country, could bring a wealth of information and experience to these small, weak, struggling congregations. (d) Helpers of every class should answer these calls. There are young men and young women just getting out of college and looking for a place to settle and build a home. If they would go into these sections of the United States where the church is small and in cities where there are no congregations and settle there and build their homes, and work to build a strong church in the community, they would spend their lives to much better advantage than they could possibly do by settling in some community where there is already a large congregation. Others will need to cross the ocean and help those who have never known the one true God and who have no opportunity to learn of him unless we take the message to them.

3. Why answer these calls? There are some who say that these people are satisfied with the religion they have, so why bother them with something else? The fact that people can be satisfied with something that is displeasing to God and is unable to bring them the greatest happiness here and eternal life after a while

is sufficient reason why we should tell them the story of Christ, (a) These people are lost in sin. Only the truth of God can make them free. (John 8: 32.) All these people who know not the truth are lost in sin. They are not lost because they have refused to obey the gospel. The gospel has never been offered to them; hence, they cannot refuse to obey when it has never been offered to them. But they are lost because they have sinned. They have not lived up to the best light which they have. Hence, they are guilty of sin. Paul tells us that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3: 23.) Since the penalty for sin is death, and all men have sinned, all are condemned to death, (b) Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can save men from sin. Paul tells us that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom. 1: 16.) He told the church at Corinth that they had been saved by the gospel. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) Paul tells us that those who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. (2 Thess. 1: 8-10.) (c) We have the gospel of Christ and the ability to answer these calls. People used to excuse themselves by saying that we are poor and few in number, but that is true no longer. We are not poor in this world's goods nor are we few in number. There are many of us and we have sufficient means, financially and mentally, to take the gospel to the whole world in our generation. Multiplied millions of people are lost in sin. Only the gospel which we know and the knowledge of which we enjoy can save these people from their sins. If we love lost souls more than we love pleasures and comforts of life, we will either take the gospel to them ourselves or we will make the money available to send someone else to preach the gospel to them.

Introduction

There are three things we should notice by way of introduction. First, the decision of the Jerusalem conference was put into the hands of Judas and Silas, two brethren of Jerusalem, to be delivered unto the Gentile churches. These men were said to be prophets and chief men among the brethren. (Acts 15: 22,

32.) They not only took the letter, which the apostles and elders wrote, but they "exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them." The church at Antioch had been torn with strife and dissension on account of the doctrine of the Judaizers that the Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, and when

they heard this decision read, it is said, "they rejoiced for the consolation." (Acts 15: 31.) The second thing of interest is the separation of Paul and Barnabas. After Judas and Silas had delivered the decrees of the conference, it is said that Paul and Barnabas tarried at Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. How long they tarried there we have no way of knowing, but after some time had passed, Barnabas suggested that they return and visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the gospel on their first journey. Paul was willing to do so and quickly agreed to go on a second journey. However, Barnabas wished to take John Mark with them again. Paul thought it was not good to take him, because he had turned back on the first journey. But Barnabas contended that he should be given another chance and even went so far as to imply that, if Paul did not allow Mark to go, he would

not go with Paul. But Paul refused to give in, and it is said, "There arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord." (Acts 15: 38-40.) And the next thing of interest is that Timothy was added to the group of workers in Paul's company. Paul and Silas left Antioch and went first to Derbe. This is the city on the first missionary journey which was nearest Antioch. They visited Lystra also, and there they found Timothy, who joined their party and went with them on to Troas, and into Macedonia. Timothy was a favorite with Paul, and he assisted him much of the time from this time until the death of Paul. He was perhaps a greater source of joy and comfort to the apostle Paul than any other of his fellow laborers.

Exposition of the Text

I. Europe Calls for the Gospel

(Verses 6-9)

They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia. We are told that Phrygia was the largest province in Asia Minor. This province lay north of Pisidia and west of Galatia. The province of Galatia is of very uncertain boundaries. There are two theories with reference to the extent of the province of Galatia. One group of scholars holds that Galatia was a small province extending from about the middle to the northern edge of Asia Minor. Another group holds that the province of Galatia was a rather narrow strip of land extending practically all the way across Asia Minor from north to south. According to this theory, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe would be in Galatia, and the preaching which Paul did in Galatia was done there, and the letter addressed to the Galatians would include these churches. This province was settled by a hearty war-like people from France or Gaul. These Gauls came into Asia Minor in the third century B.C. Galatia became a Roman province in A.D. 26.

Forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. The word Asia here refers to the province of Asia of which Ephesus was the cap-

ital. It does not refer to the whole of this territory called Asia Minor. That portion of country called Asia Minor in the New Testament is the country now called Turkey. The providence of God can be seen in the guidance of Paul and his company. The Holy Spirit would not allow them to go directly west of Antioch of Pisidia which would have brought them into Asia.

When they were come over against Mysia. The term Asia included three small districts called Caria, Lydia, and Mysia. Mysia was the northernmost section of Asia.

They assayed to go into Bithynia. Bithynia was a province lying to the north and east of Mysia. It bordered Asia on the south and the Black Sea on the north. Not being allowed to go southward into Asia, Paul would have turned northward into Bithynia, for he did not care to go farther west and would not turn back.

The Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. Here we have a new term for the Holy Spirit. In verse eight we are told that the Holy Spirit was guiding Paul and his company. Here it is said that the "Spirit of Jesus was guiding them. In 1 Pet. 1: 11 we read of the "Spirit of Christ being in the prophets, enabling them to foretell the sufferings of Christ and

the glories that should follow. In 2 Pet. 1: 21 we are told that the Holy Spirit moved the prophets to speak the will of God. Comparing these two passages, we learn that the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit; and here in our text we have the terms Holy Spirit and Spirit of Jesus used interchangeably. Hence, the Spirit of Jesus or the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit.

They came down to Troas. Paul was not allowed to go either to the left hand nor to the right. He was not a man to turn back, so he went forward to Troas. Troas was a sea-coast town on the Hellespont. It is called Troy in Greek literature.

A vision appeared to Paul in the night. A vision was something different from a dream. In a vision one was enabled to see events pass in review before they actually transpired. In this vision Paul saw a man standing in Macedonia, beseeching him to come over into Macedonia to help him. This vision was sufficient to explain to Paul why he was not allowed to turn to the left into Asia nor to the right to preach the gospel in Bithynia.

II. Paul Answers the Call of Europe (Verses 10-12)

We sought to go forth into Macedonia. Paul neither hesitated nor delayed, to answer the call to go into Macedonia. If Christians were as willing to answer calls for help today as Paul and his company were, we would soon take the gospel to the whole world. It should be noticed here that this is the first time that Luke, the writer, uses the word "we" to describe the missionary company. We therefore conclude that Luke joined Paul's party at Troas. We may well suppose that Luke had an average income from his practice of medicine in the city of Troas. All of this he left in order to go with Paul to preach the gospel and to care for Paul's physical welfare. We need more men today with that spirit of self-sacrifice.

God had called us to preach the gospel. Luke says that they concluded from the vision that God had called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia.

We made a straight course to Samothrace. Samothrace was an island in the Aegean Sea. It was about sixty miles from Troas. It was a

small island, only about twenty miles in circumference. It is said to have been an asylum for fugitives and criminals. Their next stop was Neapolis, which word means "new city." It was about ten or twelve miles from Philippi. It was a seaport. Philippi was an inland city.

The first of the district, a Roman colony. This is Luke's description of Philippi. Whether the word "first" in our text means that Philippi was the first city of the district where Paul preached or that it was the principal city of the district is difficult to determine. Luke tells us that the city of Philippi was a Roman colony. "The word denotes a city or province which was planted or occupied by Roman citizens. It is a strong confirmation of the fact, here stated by Luke, that Philippi had the rank and dignity of a Roman colony, as coins are still extant, in which Philippi is distinctly referred to as a colony. Such coins exist from the reign of Augustus to the reign of Caracalla." (Barnes.)

III. Paul's First Convert in Europe (Verses 13-15)

We went forth without the gate by a river side. Luke tells us that it was on the Sabbath day when they went outside the city to find a place of prayer. This suggests that there was no synagogue in the city. And this in turn implies that there were very few Jews in the city. Usually, where there were as many as ten families of Jews there was a synagogue. These places of prayer were sometimes simple enclosures made of stones in a grove of trees, where there would be a convenient place to retire for worship. They were usually placed near the river so there would be sufficient water for the Jewish ceremonial cleansings. Luke says that they "supposed" that this was a place of prayer. This implies that Paul and his party had seen this place before, and they supposed it was being used as a place of prayer. So on the Sabbath day they went to confirm their supposition. The fact that they found only a small group of women is a further indication of the fact that Philippi had few Jewish citizens.

Lydia, a seller of purple. The word purple has two uses in the Bible, (a) It was a dye made from a gland secretion of a very small shellfish

taken from the Mediterranean Sea. At the base of the head, where it joins the body, a small gland afforded but a very few drops of secretion from which this dye was made. Hence, it was very expensive, and none but the rich, and kings, and the high priests could afford to wear it.

(b) There was a cloth called purple. We are told that the rich man, at whose gate Lazarus was placed, clothed himself in purple and fine linen. (Luke 16: 19.) This woman named Lydia was a merchant woman selling purple. Whether she sold the dye or the cloth called purple, or both, we have no way of knowing. Her hometown was Thyatira, a city of Asia Minor. John addressed one of his seven letters to the church at Thyatira. (Rev. 2: 18, 29.)

One that worshipped God. Lydia was a worshiper of God. She was a Jewess and, of course, worshiped according to the law of Moses. She kept the Sabbath holy, and so spent the day in retirement and in prayer and study of the law. While we are not commanded to keep any day holy in the sense the Jews were required to do, yet we would grow more spiritually if we would use the Lord's day in prayer and meditation and study of the word of God.

Whose heart the Lord opened. Many suppose that God miraculously opened this woman's heart so that she might receive the truth. They therefore conclude that there must be a work of the Holy Spirit on every human heart before that heart is in condition to receive the truth. But from the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), we learn that the honest and good heart is in condition to receive the word of God. The opening of this woman's heart was by the preaching of the gospel. Her heart was so opened and enlightened that she gave heed to the things or obeyed the teaching of the apostle Paul.

And when she was baptized. Verse fourteen tells us that she gave heed to the things spoken by Paul. Verse fifteen tells us that she was baptized. Consequently, Paul taught her to be baptized. But we know that

Paul preached the gospel to her; hence, we conclude that in preaching the gospel the preacher should tell the hearers to be baptized. From other scriptures we learn that we are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2: 38; we are baptized to get into Christ (Rom. 6: 3, 4; Gal. 3: 27); and we are baptized that we may enter the one body, which is the church, the family of God (1 Cor. 12: 13; Eph. 1: 22; 1 Tim. 3: 15).

And her household. The word household usually means family; hence, some think they have proof here for the baptism of infants, (a) There is no specific mention of children in this passage, (b) Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," so we conclude that it is the believer who is to be baptized. Infants not capable of belief are not subjects of baptism. (c) When the Ethiopian asked if he might be baptized, Philip required him to confess with his mouth that he believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. (Acts 8: 36-38.) So we learn that not only must one have faith, but he must be able to confess that faith in order to be baptized. (d) When people on Pentecost asked Peter what to do to be saved, he required them to repent and be baptized. From this passage we learn that subjects for baptism are penitent people. Infants are not capable of penitence, hence, are not subjects of baptism. Again, in this same passage we learn that baptism is for the remission of sins. Infants have no sins to be forgiven, hence, again, we say they are not subjects of baptism.

Come into my house. This is the invitation of Lydia to Paul and his company. They were on expense in the city. Lydia had quarters sufficient to take care of them. Hence, she invited them into her home that she might have fellowship with them in the work. When Paul wrote a letter to the church at Corinth, he gave thanks for their fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel from the first day. (Phil. 1: 5.) Through this act of hospitality Lydia had fellowship with Paul in the gospel.

Lessons to Learn

1. God in his providence guided Paul to take the gospel to Europe. Who can doubt that God in his providence has led our brethren to Japan,

Italy, South Africa, and other nations of our generation?

2. Lydia considered it a privilege to have fellowship in the great work

Paul was doing. We should eagerly seek the privilege of having fellowship with our missionaries at home and abroad, instead of forcing them to beg us to help them.

3. Lydia stopped her work on the

Sabbath and spent the day in worship. In this world of materialism and commercialism we need to spend one day in seven in worship and service to God that our inward man may be in good health.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Can you describe the condition of people in polytheistic idolatry?

What is monotheistic idolatry?

What of their condition?

Why do those in denominationalism need help?

What help does the good moral man need?

How can preachers and teachers answer these calls?

What can elders and other helpers do to answer these calls?

Give and discuss three reasons why we should answer these calls.

Introduction

Can you tell how the decision of the Jerusalem conference was published to the churches?

What do you know of the separation of Paul and Barnabas?

What young man was added to Paul's group at Lystra?

Europe Calls for the Gospel

Can you locate Phrygia and Galatia on the map?

What do you know of the people of Galatia?

To what territory is reference made by the word Asia in our text?

Can you locate Mysia and Bithynia on the map?

Relate how Paul was guided through this territory to Troas.

What does the expression "Spirit of Jesus" mean?

What vision did Paul have at Troas?

Paul Answers the Call of Europe

Who joined Paul's company at Troas?

What was Luke's interpretation of the vision Paul saw?

What do you know of Samothrace mentioned in our lesson?

What does Luke tell us about Philippi?

Paul's First Convert in Europe

What evidence do we have that there were but few Jews in Philippi?

What do you know of Lydia and her occupation?

What do you know of the meaning of the word "purple" in our lesson?

How did the Lord open Lydia's heart?

Why was Lydia baptized?

What evidence can you give that the baptism of Lydia's household does not authorize the baptism of infants?

How did the church at Philippi have fellowship in the gospel with Paul from the first day?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—October 31, 1954

PAUL IN ATHENS

Lesson Text

Acts 17: 22-34

22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Ar-e-op'-a-gus, and said, Ye men of Ath'-ens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious.

23 For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.

24 The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* ap-

pointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the God-head is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.

30 The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent:

31 Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the

world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, We will hear

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.”* (Acts 17: 23b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 17: 16-21.

Daily Bible Readings

October 25. M.....	Worldly Wisdom Rejected (1 Cor. 1: 18-31)
October 26. T.....	Human Traditions Condemned (Matt. 15: 1-9)
October 27. W.....	Man's Wisdom Leads to Ruin (Rom. 1: 18-25)
October 28. T.....	Gospel God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 13-17)
October 29. F.....	Truth Makes Free (John 8: 31, 32)
October 30. S.....	Simple Things Chosen (Matt. 11: 25-30)
October 31. S.....	Warning Against Worldly Philosophy (Col. 2: 8-15)

TIME.—A.D. 54.

PLACE.—Athens.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Athenian philosophers.

Golden Text Explained

1. Worshipers who know not God.

All people worship something. Man has been described as “a worshipping animal.” We have no intention of exhausting the field of study, but wish to suggest a few classes of worshipers who do not know God. (a) The heathen people where the Bible has not gone. Christianity is a revealed religion. It is one which must be taught, so where the Bible has not gone, men are in ignorance of God and the way to worship him. Men do not by nature, philosophy, or chance worship God acceptably. Nature worshipers usually change the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and creeping things. (Rom. 1: 23.) (b) Those who prefer to worship nature. Many people are lovers of nature. They go to nature for their happiness, for their consolation, for their inspiration. The English poet, Wordsworth, was a worshiper of nature. He said, “For nature then ... to me was all in all . . . an appetite; a feeling and a love, that had no need of a remoter charm.” By this he meant to say that nature was all he needed to calm and comfort his soul. There are lovers of the fine arts today who make such things their god. (c) Those who prefer philosophy. In this classification might be included

thee concerning this yet again.

33 Thus Paul went out from among them.

34 But certain men clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Di-o-nys'-i-us the Ar-e-op'-a-gite, and a woman named Dam'-a-ris, and others with them.

all the forms of higher learning. Many of the great educators of our day feel no need of God. They claim to find satisfaction in their quest for higher and greater knowledge. The only salvation they expect and for which they work is that which will come to the human race through avenues of higher learning. They do not believe in personal salvation from sin by a personal Saviour who died for them and rose again. They refuse to accept the Bible as from God. They refuse even to accept the Bible as a standard of morality. They contend that what was an acceptable standard of morality in Paul's day is not and cannot be an acceptable standard in our day. They further contend that a standard which is acceptable in our day may not be an acceptable standard a hundred years hence. So with these devotees of higher learning there is no such things as an unchangeable standard of right and wrong. Refusing to accept God and his word as the standard of authority in religion and morals, they are at sea and have no idea where they will cast anchor. (d) Those who love pomp and ceremony. In this class are to be found many religious people who profess to believe the Bible to be God's book. However, their love for pomp and ceremony leads them to disregard the teaching of

the Bible as the way to worship God. They build great religious temples, go to extremes to entertain the public, and put on a great show of piety and reverence, not because of their love of God, but simply because of their love of ceremony. Many of the great denominations of our day are to be found in this class. Nor should we think we are totally exempt simply because we have the name "church of Christ" over the doorway of our church buildings. There are some among us who look wistfully at these great religious temples with their pompous ceremonies, but through fear of the consequences of disobedience settle for membership in the congregation that has the most expensive building, and those members dress most nearly in keeping with the latest fashions.

2. **True worship is based on revelation.** (a) Man is unable to devise a way of worship. The prophet said it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. (Jer. 10: 23.) God said his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so his ways are higher than our ways. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) This has always been humiliating to man, but it is the truth, and we must accept it if we would please God. It is for this reason that the devotees of higher learning refuse to worship as God would have them do. (b) Jesus taught us the lesson that worship must not only be in spirit, but that it must be in truth. (John 4: 24.) To worship in truth simply means that we shall be guided by revealed truth in our worship. We will not only do the things which God commands us to do in worship, but we will do those things in the manner in which he has directed, (c) Paul tells us that we are to do all that we do in the name of Christ. (Col. 3: 17.) To do a thing in the name of Christ is to do it by the authority of Jesus Christ. The only way Jesus authorizes anybody to do anything is through his word revealed by the apostles and New Testament prophets. Hence, that which cannot be read from the New Testament is not by the authority of Jesus Christ, (d) John tells us that whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ hath not God. (2 John 9.) The teaching of Christ is contained in the book we call the

New Testament. Anything, therefore, which we may do as an act of worship which cannot be read from the New Testament is no part of the teaching of Christ. Since one who goes beyond the teaching of Christ has not God, it follows that when people do things in their worship which cannot be read from the New Testament, they have not God. God refuses to fellowship or recognize those who go beyond the teaching of Christ in their work and worship,

(e) Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5: 7.) Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10: 17.) So, if we walk by faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of God, we walk by the teaching of the word of God. John tells us, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1: 7.) To walk in the light is to walk in harmony with the teaching of his word, therefore, equal to walking by faith. So if we walk by faith, which comes from the teaching of Christ, the blood of Jesus cleanses us but if we go beyond the teaching of Christ and do not walk in the light of his word, we place ourselves beyond the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

3. **The object of true worship.** In our text, Paul says he sets forth that Being whom they worshiped in ignorance. (a) Paul taught the nature of this true God, the object of man's worship. He taught that this God is one, therefore, the unity of God in verse twenty-four. He taught that God is a Spirit, not a material being, in verse twenty-nine. He taught that God is independent of his creatures in verse twenty-five. In verses twenty-four and twenty-seven he taught the omnipresence of God. While in verses twenty-four and twenty-six he taught the sovereignty of God, that he is Lord of heaven and earth, (b) Paul taught the Athenians the relation of God to mankind. In verse twenty-four Paul taught that the true God is our maker. In verse twenty-five he taught that God is the source of all life. In verse twenty-eight he taught that in God we live the highest life. In verse twenty-nine he taught that God is the Father of our spirits. In verse twenty-seven Paul taught that God

desires to be the object of our search and our worship. In verse thirty-one Paul taught that God is the judge of all men through Jesus Christ. And

in verse thirty Paul taught that God no longer overlooks sin but commands that men should everywhere repent.

Introduction

At the close of our last lesson we left the apostle Paul in the home of Lydia. While making his home there, he was teaching in the city; and because he freed a young girl of a spirit of divination, her masters had Paul and Silas put in prison. They charged Paul and Silas of being exceedingly troublesome in the city and of setting forth customs which it was not lawful for Romans to receive or to observe. The magistrates took off their garments and beat Paul and Silas with rods. They put them in the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. But Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of praise unto God until the midnight hour, when an earthquake opened the doors of the prison and loosed the bands of the prisoners. The jailer would have killed himself, but Paul intervened and preached the gospel to him and baptized him the same hour of the night. Thus, another family was added to the little church in Philippi. The next day Paul and Silas were released, and they left Philippi for Thessalonica. There they found a synagogue and preached the gospel there until the Jews, moved with jealousy, took cer-

tain vile fellows of the rabble and set the city on an uproar. Thinking it best for their safety, Paul and Silas left there and went to Berea. Again they preached the gospel in the synagogue, and these in Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether the things Paul preached were so. This examination led many of them to believe, but the jealous Jews of Thessalonica followed Paul and Silas to Berea and stirred up the multitude there against them; and Paul, leaving Silas and Timothy to stay there with the infant church, went on to Athens. In Athens Paul preached both in the synagogue and in the marketplace every day. Epicurean and Stoic philosophers became interested in what Paul had to say. They called him a babbler, and "a setter forth of strange gods." So they took him to the Areopagus, Mar's Hill, that they, might know what this strange doctrine was. Luke says that these Athenians spent their time in doing nothing else "but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

Exposition .of the Text

I. Paul Makes Known the Unknown

God (Verses 22-28)

I perceive that ye are very religious. The Greek word translated religious in this text may also be translated *superstitious*, and is so translated in our common version. It is not likely that Paul would needlessly offend his hearers in the very first sentence of his sermon, so it is most probable that he commended them for being very religious. One writer gives the sense as follows, "I perceive that you are greatly devoted to reverence for religion; that it is a characteristic of the people to honor the gods, to read altars to them, and to recognize the divine agency in times of trial." (Barnes.)

Observed the objects of your worship. Paul saw the objects of their worship; he saw the things which they worshiped, yet it is obvious that he saw only the altars and the idols

which they had erected. The proof that they thought of something back of and beyond the altars and idols which they erected is found in the statement "to an unknown god." They had erected an altar to an unknown god. Paul could see the altar, but he could not see the unknown god; yet he said he could see the objects of their worship. Hence, those who say that the idols which they have are not objects of worship, but simply aids in worshiping God, are in this statement convicted of having these images as objects of their worship. It is impossible to distinguish between an image and a being which it represents so as to say you worship the being but not the image.

The God that made the world. Paul begins here to make known to these people the unknown God. (a) In this verse Paul sets forth the unity of God. The heathen world looks

upon the universe as being made by many gods. There is a god of the sun, a god of the moon, and gods of every other part of the universe; but with Paul there is but one God, the God that made the world, (b) He in this verse sets forth God as the Lord of heaven and earth. This is the sovereignty of God. (e) Paul sets forth his God as our Creator, for he made the world and all things therein, (d) Paul sets forth this unknown god as a spirit being, for he dwelleth not in temples made with hands. The students should study verse twenty-nine in this connection.

Neither is he served by men's hands. In this verse Paul sets forth God as independent of his creatures. Heathen worshipers often took food and placed it by the idol, thinking that they had to feed God. Paul exalts Jehovah above these dependent gods. God said, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." (Psalm 50:12.) Not only is God independent of man, but Paul sets God forth as one who is necessary to man; for he says that God himself "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." This was a direct thrust at both the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans admitted that there are gods, but believed them to be absolutely uninterested in the things that are done, on earth. The Stoic's feeling of self-righteousness and independence led him to deny the need of a supreme being.

Made of one every nation of men. In this statement Paul affirms that God made all men and that he rules over all men. He also affirms that all men came from one, therefore, the unity of humanity. There are people in the world today who claim to believe the Bible who deny that all men came from Adam. It is interesting to notice the unities of this sermon, (a) The unity of God; (b) the unity of humanity; (c) the unity of religion.

That they should seek God. In this verse Paul teaches that man's highest aim and greatest good is to seek God. This was a direct thrust at the philosophy of the Epicureans. There are many in the world today who think pleasure, education, and wealth are to be sought in preference to God.

He is not far from each one of its.

In this verse Paul teaches the omnipresence of God. This is an encouragement for man to seek after God; since he is not very far from us, he is not difficult to find.

In him we live. This statement is directed at the fatalism of the Stoics. This verse sets forth our need of God as a reason why we should seek after him. We need him because our life is dependant upon him. Our ability to move about and to accomplish anything is dependent upon him; and our being in this world is dependent on him and his goodness towards us.

II. Man's Duty to the True God

(Verses 29-31)

Being then the offspring of God. From a song written in honor of Jupiter, Paul quoted a line from a Greek poet which stated that we are God's offspring. He concludes that, since we are the offspring of God; we are duty bound to think of God not as something material or something made by art and device of man. A materialist of our day could learn a lesson here. We are not God's offspring physically. If we are the offspring of God at all, we are his offspring in the Spirit. Paul calls God the Father of our spirits. (Heb. 12: 9.)

Times of ignorance therefore God overlooked. By "times of ignorance" Paul refers to the time before the heathen world received a revelation of God. By the term "overlooked" Paul does not mean to say that God was pleased with idolatry, but rather a lack of their revelation from God was a mitigating circumstance. "The sense is, he passed over those times without punishing them, as if he did not see them. For wise purposes he suffered them to walk in ignorance, that there might be a fair experiment to show what men would do, and how much necessity there was for a revelation to instruct them in the true knowledge of God. We are not to suppose that God regarded idolatry as innocent, or the crimes and vices to which idolatry led as of no importance; but their ignorance was a mitigating circumstance, and he suffered the nations to live without coming forth in direct judgment against them." (Barnes.)

He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent. Paul gives his hearers to understand that

God will no longer overlook sin. He commands that people shall turn from sin and seek after God. On this point we should observe (a) that, since God commands all men to repent, we must conclude that all men are capable of repentance. The idea that man is incapable of repentance until God sends a mysterious and direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon him is not true. (b) If man does not repent and seek after God, he is lost and lost eternally,

(c) We should hasten to take the gospel to every creature on earth that he may learn of his duty to repent and seek after God.

He hath appointed a day. Paul says that God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness. There is to be a judgment day. That day is appointed, but only God knows that day. Since we do not know the day, the only thing for us is to be ready whenever it may come. In this sermon Paul urged them to repent and seek after God that they might be ready for that day. Righteousness will be the standard of judgment in that day, and those who have worked righteousness while here on earth will be saved in that day; and those who have worked unrighteousness will be lost. (Rom. 2: 5-9.)

By the man whom he hath ordained. Notice that our judge is to be a man. Let us not think that Jesus lost his humanity when he ascended to the Father. According to Paul, not only is a man to be our judge, but we have a man for a mediator. (1 Tim. 2: 5.)

He hath given assurance unto all men. Paul says that God has given assurance of this judgment in righteousness by the man whom he ordained, and that assurance is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Just as sure as God raised Jesus from the dead, we will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Response of the Athenians

(Verses 32-34)

Some mocked. Paul had three classes of hearers who responded in three different ways. When he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, some of his hearers mocked. Neither the Epicureans nor the Stoics believed in the resurrection or a life at all after death. Denial of life after the death of the body is very common among educators today. It is also coming to be rather common among denominational preachers.

We will hear thee . . . again. This is the second class of hearers in Athens. They were sufficiently impressed with Paul's sermon that they desired to hear more. Whether this desire was because of their insatiable thirst to hear something new or whether they were impressed with the reasonableness of Paul's sermon, we have no way of knowing; but the willingness to listen to further evidence is commendable. When people close their ears to any further teaching, there is no hope of saving them.

Certain men clave unto him, and believed. There was a certain woman named Damaris among those who believed. Dionysius the Areopagite was among those who believed. The word Areopagite simply means one connected with the court of Areopagus, but how he was connected we do not know. Some think that he was a member of the Athenian council or court. At any rate, he was a man of prominence. Here again we have an instance of people believing the gospel as preached, but no mention is made of their being baptized. We do not know whether Paul established a church in Athens. Paul did not have the success in this city of learning that he had in other places. This might suggest that higher learning and the study of human philosophy tend to turn men away from God rather than to lead them to God.

Lessons to Learn

1. People who know not God are entitled to an opportunity to know of him. Paul was willing to make great sacrifices to take the knowledge of God to those who knew him not.

2. The fate of those who know not God will be terrible in the day of judgment. But will their fate be any worse than those who know God

but refuse to share that knowledge with those who know him not?

3. Do you know the essential characteristics of God as revealed in this sermon? The greater our knowledge of God, the greater our love for him. The more we love God, the more faithfully and diligently will we serve 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.

Golden Text Explained

Why does Christianity have to be taught to men?

Can people learn enough from nature about God to be saved?

Discuss the condition of those who depend on higher learning for salvation.

How does the love of pomp and ceremony affect the worship of many people?

Why must the ways of God be revealed to man?

What did Jesus mean when he said we must worship God in truth?

What is meant by doing things in the name of Christ?

What is the consequence of going beyond the teaching of Christ in our worship?

What is meant by walking by faith in our worship?

What did Paul teach about the nature of God?

What did he teach about the relation of God to mankind?

Introduction

What persecution did Paul suffer in Philippi?

Tell the story of the conversion of the jailer at Philippi.

Can you trace Paul's journey from Philippi to Athens?

What two great philosophies were represented in Paul's audience in Athens?

What two great philosophies were represented in Paul's audience in Athens?

How did these Athenian philosophers spend their time?

Paul Makes Known the Unknown God

With what statement did Paul open his sermon in Athens?

What evidence do we have that idolatry includes the worship of images as well

as the beings back of and represented by the images?

How did Paul teach the unity of God?

What did Paul say of sovereignty of God?

What did Paul say of the spiritual nature of God?

How did Paul teach that God is independent of his creation?

How did Paul teach the dependence of creation upon God?

What did Paul teach about the unity of humanity?

What did Paul teach is man's highest aim and greatest good?

How did Paul teach the omnipresence of God?

Man's Duty to the True God

What did Paul teach about man's relation to God?

To what time does Paul refer by the statement "times of ignorance"?

What was God's attitude toward idolatry during the "times of ignorance"?

What is God's attitude now toward sin?

What three observations in our lesson are based upon the fact that God commands all men everywhere to repent?

What does Paul teach in this lesson about the judgment?

What does Paul teach about the nature of our Judge?

What assurance has God given us of the judgment?

The Response of the Athenians

What caused some of Paul's hearers to mock?

What did the second class of Paul's hearers say?

Can you give the names of some of Paul's hearers who believed?

Do we have any evidence that Paul established a church in Athens?

What does Paul's work in Athens suggest with reference to establishing the church in seats of higher learning?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VI—November 7, 1954

PAUL IN CORINTH

Lesson Text

Acts 18: 1-11

1 After these things he departed from Ath-ens, and came to Cor-inth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aq-ui-la, a man of Pon-tus by race, lately come from It-a-ly, with his wife Pris-cil-la, because Clau-di-us had commanded all the Jews to depart from Home: and he came unto them;

3 And because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tentmakers.

4 And he reasoned in the syna-gogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Si-las and Tim-o-thy

came down from Mac-e-do'-ni-a, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Je-sus was the Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gen-tiles.

7 And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Ti-tus Jus-tus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Cris-pus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with

all his house; and many of the C6-rin'-thi-ans hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace:

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace” (Acts 18: 9b.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 18: 12-17.

Daily Bible Readings

November	1. M.....	Paul in Athens (Acts 17: 22-32)
November	2. T.....	Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 1-11)
November	3. W.....	Paul Before Gallio (Acts 18: 12-17)
November	4. T.....	Paul Leaves Corinth (Acts 18: 18-21)
November	5. F.....	Paul Writes to the Church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 1-9)
November	6. S.....	Division in Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 3: 1-11)
November	7. S.....	Paul's Second Letter (2 Cor. 1: 1-11)

TIME.—A.D. 54.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul, Silas, Timothy, Aquila, and Priscilla.

Golden Text Explained

1. What our text tells us about

Paul, (a) Our text suggests that Paul was suffering unusual hardships in Corinth. Paul was accustomed to suffering hardships. Everywhere he went he was persecuted, but not everywhere did the Lord make a special appearance to him for his encouragement; hence, we conclude that he was under special and prolonged hardships at Corinth, (b) Our text suggests that Paul was discouraged under this continued persecution. We must not think of Paul as being something more than human. He was a human being and subject to all the frailties of a human being, and these continued persecutions would tend to discourage him. He writes about persecutions which seemed beyond his power to endure so that he despaired even of life. (2 Cor. 1: 8, 9.) He speaks of his afflictions in Macedonia and says there were fightings without and fears within until comforted by the coming of Titus. (2 Cor. 7: 5-7.) The accumulative force of continued persecution would tend to wear down his resistance and sap his courage until he would need just such an experience as was afforded him at this time, (c) Paul was afraid. The very fact that the Lord told Paul to be not afraid is an indication of the fears which were haunting Paul. We do not belittle Paul by saying that he became discouraged and afraid under certain circumstances and in certain conditions of life. As cited above, he indicates that when there

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he dwelt *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

were fightings without, there were fears within his own heart. (2 Cor. 7: 5.) (d) Paul was uncertain as to the course he should pursue. Sometimes it was the will of the Lord that Paul should leave when persecution was unusually heavy. When he first returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem quickly, for the people would not receive his testimony. (Acts 22: 17-21.) And as we have seen recently, he left both Philippi and Thessalonica on account of the intense persecution which he was suffering. Sometimes he had an indication from the Lord whether he should stay or leave, but at Philippi and Thessalonica there seems to have been no such indication. He was left to make up his own mind whether he should stay or leave, and undoubtedly Paul was giving some consideration to the matter of leaving Corinth at the time the Lord appeared. But the Lord had other work for him, so he commanded him to stay in Corinth.

2. What our text tells us of the Lord's care of his servants,

(a) Our text teaches us that the Lord knows each one of his servants and knows the difficulties under which they labor and the persecutions which they suffer. The Lord is all-wise—omniscient. We are told that he notes the fall of the sparrow, that he knows even the number of hairs on our heads. Such knowledge of so great a universe is beyond our power to conceive. If God knows about the

sparrows, surely he knows about each one of his servants. The fact that Paul was an apostle does not mean that the Lord would be more attentive to him and be more sympathetic with him in his sorrows and troubles than he is with each one of us; hence, we should derive a lot of courage from the fact that the Lord knows each one of us. (b) That the Lord is a merciful and faithful high priest. The writer of Hebrews tells us that the Lord was made like unto his brethren. That is, he partook of our nature in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, and that he might make satisfaction for the sins of his people. Furthermore, we are told that because he suffered in the flesh he is able to succor them that are tempted. (Heb. 2: 17, 18.) And again, we are assured that "we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4: 15.) Since Jesus had suffered persecutions in the flesh, he knew how Paul was feeling under the continued sufferings he was undergoing for the sake of the gospel, (c) That the Lord protects us from trials too hard to bear. The Lord allowed Paul to suffer many persecutions, but never did one come which Paul was not able to bear. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13.) Many times our trials, sorrows, and persecutions are too hard for us to bear alone, so God gives us strength and courage sufficient to bear these trials. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, which he thought was too much for him to bear, so he prayed to the Lord three times to take the thorn out of his flesh; but the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12: 9.) And again, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and

he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (James 4: 6, 7.)

3. **What our text tells us about the gospel,** (a) That the gospel must be preached. Though Paul was discouraged because of the sufferings of the past and afraid of what the future might hold for him, the Lord said the gospel must be preached in Corinth. Being the seed of the kingdom, there can be no children of the kingdom unless the seed is planted in the hearts of people. Hence, the gospel must be preached if the kingdom is to spread, (b) The gospel must be preached even to people who persecute the preacher. Usually we are prone to say that, if people do not wish to hear the gospel, we certainly will not force it on them; but very likely this is only an indication of the fact that we are unwilling to suffer for the privilege of preaching the gospel—unwilling to suffer in order that we may save those who are lost. When Paul was rescued from the mob in Jerusalem who would have torn him to pieces, he asked the chief captain for the liberty to speak unto them. (Acts 21: 37-40.)

(c) The offensive principles of the gospel must be preached. In Paul's day salvation through the blood of the crucified Galilean peasant was a very offensive thing to preach, yet Paul had no choice of what he preached. Again, Paul preached that Gentiles need not be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. To the Jews this was as offensive as any principle could possibly be; but Paul was not at liberty to revise the gospel and make it acceptable to his hearers. That is man's trouble today. We are too prone to leave off those principles which are offensive to our hearers. We are afraid that, if we offend them, they will not return to hear us preach. Some justify their actions by saying that, unless you can get people to come to hear you, you have no chance at all of saving them. That sounds plausible, but it is also true that, unless you preach to them the thing that is offensive and lead them to believe and accept that, they cannot be saved.

Introduction

"The city of Corinth is alike remarkable for its distinctive geographical position, its eminence in Greek and Roman history, and its

close connection with the early spread of Christianity." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.) Corinth was situated on the narrow neck of land be-

tween Achaia and Greece. Corinth was taken over by the Macedonians in 338 B.C. Then it was occupied by the Romans in 197 B.C. Finally, in 146 B.C., the old city was completely destroyed, and all its treasures of art were carried to Rome. Just one hundred years later Julius Caesar rebuilt the city, so the city was really only one hundred years old when Paul visited there. But in this period

of time, Corinth had won back its place of leadership in the Grecian world. On account of its situation with reference to travel and commerce, Corinth had a cosmopolitan population. This in turn tended to produce a low state of morals. The worship of Venus flourished there and was attended with shameful licentiousness. The standard of morals was so low that to "Corinthianize" a person was to make him sensual and immoral.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Works and Preaches (Verses

1-4)

He departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. Corinth is about forty-five miles almost due west of Athens. Another statement of moral conditions will not be out of place. "Lasciviousness here was not only practiced and allowed, but was consecrated by the worship of Venus; and no small part of the wealth and splendor of the city arose from the offerings made by licentious passion in the very temples of this goddess. No city of ancient times was more profligate. It was the Paris of antiquity; the seat of splendor, and show, and corruption. Yet even here, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of splendor, gaiety and dissoluteness, Paul entered on the work of rearing a church; and here he was eminently successful." (Barnes.)

He found a certain Jew named Aquila. Being alone, Paul would look for some companionship. The statement that he *found* shows that he took the initiative in forming this acquaintance with Aquila. There has been considerable discussion as to whether Aquila and his wife were Christians when Paul met them. The inference is that they were not Christians. Our text tells us that Paul found a *certain Jew*. If Aquila had been a Christian, he would have been called a disciple. Even those who had received the baptism of John at Ephesus, though not actually Christians, were referred to as disciples. (Acts 19: 1, 2.)

Lately come from Italy. Though Aquila is said to be a man of Pontus by race, yet he came to Corinth from Italy. We conclude therefore that, though reared in Pontus, which was northeast of Galatia and bordered the Black Sea, Aquila had left his home and had gone to Rome. Peter addressed his letters to the Jews

dispersed in Pontus and surrounding provinces (1 Pet. 1: 1), which suggests to us that there was considerable Jewish population in this section of Asia Minor. Aquila's wife, Priscilla, is also mentioned in connection with Paul's coming to Corinth. "She was a prominent woman and stood high in social positions, so that her name is sometimes placed before that of her husband. (Verse 18; Rom. 16: 3; 2 Tim. 4: 19.)" (Boles.)

Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. Claudius reigned in Rome A.D. 41 to A.D. 54. A Roman historian mentions this expulsion of the Jews, and says that it was because they were constantly exciting tumults under their leader, Chrestus. "Who this Chrestus was is not known. It might have been a foreign Jew, who raised tumults on some occasion of which we have no knowledge, as the Jews in all heathen cities were greatly prone to excitements and insurrections. Or it *may* be that Suetonius, little acquainted with Jewish affairs, mistook this for the name *Christ*, and supposed that he was the leader of the Jews. This explanation has much plausibility; for, (1) Suetonius could scarcely be supposed to be intimately acquainted with the affairs of the Jews. (2) There is every reason to believe that, before this, the Christian religion was preached at Rome. (3) It would produce there, as everywhere else, great tumult and contention among the Jews. (4) Claudius, the emperor, might suppose that such tumults endangered the peace of the city, and resolved to remove the cause at once by the dispersion of the Jews." (Barnes.)

By their trade they were tentmakers. We are told that Paul attached himself to these people because they were tentmakers by trade. Undoubtedly Paul made his acquaintance with these people at the synagogue, so to

begin with they had two things in common, (a) They were Jews; (b) they were tentmakers, and soon they had the third point in common, that they were Christians. Paul's home province, Cilicia, was noted for its unusually fine goat hair for making tent cloth. The best cloth which could be procured in that time for making tents was called "cilicium" because it was produced in Cilicia. All Jews were taught a trade by which they could earn a living. Even those who were educated in the arts and sciences were taught to work with their hands "lest they should be dependent on the charity of others." Paul, though an apostle of Jesus Christ, was not ashamed to work with his hands. Sometimes preachers with a string of letters following their names indicating degrees which they have earned in college and university think that they should not be expected to do any manual labor. But there come times when the preacher, along with other members of the church, need to lay their coats aside and do a few hours or days of real manual labor. The preacher who refuses to carry his part of the load will lose the respect of his people, and thus will lose his influence with them.

And persuaded Jews and Greeks. Paul went every Sabbath to the synagogue as was his custom, and we are told that he both reasoned and persuaded. The word *reasoned* suggests that Paul discussed, argued, and taught the word of God, and the word *persuade* suggests that he pleaded with them to receive the teaching which he had given them. Brethren are long on the former, but short on the latter, method of saving souls. We need to do more persuading

II. Paul Is Driven from the Synagogue (Verses 5-7)

Silas and Timothy came down. These workers had been left in Macedonia when Paul went to Athens. They now rejoin him in Corinth. (Acts 17: 14.)

Paul was constrained by the word. "It indicates an intense divine impulse, urging to a work which would not be delayed or hindered by anything. . . . The meaning seems to be that he was engrossed by the word, or engrossed by the preaching of the gospel. He had been relieved of anxiety and toil by the arrival of Silas and Timothy with the gifts from Macedonia, and was now giving all

of his time to preaching the word." (Boles.)

Testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. The word testify comes from a Greek word which means "to testify, religiously to charge; to confirm a thing (by the interposition of) testimony, cause it to be believed." (Thayer.) This word has the force of unusual solemnity and earnestness. This word suggests the use of evidence to prove a proposition, and Paul was proving to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

They opposed themselves and blasphemed. To oppose themselves means to act contrary to their own best interests. The word blaspheme means to speak evil of someone, so these people were acting contrary to their best interests, because they opposed the preaching of the gospel and spoke blasphemously of the Christ whom Paul preached.

Your blood be upon your own heads. It is said that Paul shook out his raiment when he said this. To shake out the raiment is about the same as shaking off the dust of one's feet. (Matt. 10: 14; Acts 13: 51.) And to tell a person that his blood is upon his own head is about the same as saying that he takes his life in his own hands. It is a declaration of assuming no further responsibility for one's welfare. Having given these Jews their first opportunity as the Lord instructed the apostles, and they had rejected the Christ, Paul was now free to speak to the Gentiles.

Went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus. This man Titus Justus seems to have been an open-minded Jew. His name suggests that he was a Greek, but since he was in the synagogue and is said to have been a worshiper of God, we conclude that he was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. But since he is not spoken of as a disciple at this time, it is likely that he had not accepted Christ. His house being next door to the synagogue would give Paul an opportunity to continue to reach such Jews or proselytes as were open-minded.

III. Paul Is Encouraged to Stay in Corinth (Verses 8-11)

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed. Paul's work in the synagogue was not a failure, for he took with him the ruler of the synagogue. Paul baptized Crispus with his own hands. (1 Cor. 1: 14.)

Hearing believed, and were baptized. This is said of many of the Corinthians. This gives us some idea of the success of Paul's work in Corinth. Though he had a slow and difficult beginning, his work was richly rewarded in that many of the Corinthians obeyed the gospel. Incidentally, we learn from this that belief comes as a result of hearing. (Rom. 10: 13-17.) Joining this statement with Paul's salutation to the church at Corinth, we learn that those who hear, believe, and are baptized constitute the "church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." (1 Cor. 1: 2.) If that is the way people became members of the church of God at Corinth, it is the way people must become members of God's church today.

The Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision. At what time in Paul's stay in Corinth this vision came to him, we do not know. However, we may be sure that it came to him before the many of verse eight believed and were baptized. It came at a time when he was discouraged and afraid, and it came before the "much people" of verse ten had heard, believed, and were baptized.

No man shall set on thee to harm thee. This was the encouragement which Paul needed in his efforts to stay in Corinth. However, we are forced to conclude that the minor injuries of ordinary persecution were not included in this statement. The Lord simply assured Paul that the persecution would not be too difficult for him to bear, so he was to remain in the city so that the many people of that city who would obey the gospel could have the opportunity to hear it and be saved.

He dwelt there a year and six months. Here we have another example of a preacher of the gospel laboring with a church through an extended period of time. Those who contend that a preacher of the gospel cannot stay regularly after elders have been selected and appointed have to prove that there were no elders in the church at Corinth for the first eighteen months. Since elders were appointed within a very few months after the establishment of the churches in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14: 21-23), we may safely conclude that elders had been appointed in the church at Corinth for some time before Paul left.

Lessons to Learn

1. Paul worked with his own hands to support himself and to contribute to the support of others while they preached in difficult fields. Many preachers should be encouraged by his example to go into fields where the church is weak, or where there are no churches, and spend their lives building the church of the Lord.

2. The blood of the Corinthians was not upon Paul's hands because he had given them ample opportunity to ac-

cept the gospel of Christ. Until we have given the people of our generation an opportunity to accept Christ, their blood is upon our hands.

3. The Lord has "much people" in many cities and countries of the world. If the gospel were taken to them, they would accept it. But if you and I do not take the gospel to them, they will be lost. What are you as an individual and your congregation where you worship doing to take the gospel to these people?

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What four things does our text tell us about Paul when he was in Corinth?

Do we detract from Paul's greatness to suggest that he was afraid and uncertain?

Name and discuss three things our text tells us about the Lord's care for his servants.

Cite an example of God giving grace to bear trials rather than removing them.

What does our text tell us about the necessity of preaching the gospel?

What does our text teach us about the necessity of preaching all the gospel?

Introduction

What do you know of the location of the city of Corinth?

What do you know of the history of the city of Corinth?

What are told about the morals of the city?

What Greek goddess contributed to the low standard of morals?

Paid Works and Preaches

What use did the worship of Venus make of lasciviousness?

Whom did Paul find for companionship in Corinth?

Do you think Aquila was a Christian when Paul found him?

Why had Aquila and his wife left Rome?

What reasons can you give that Claudius

may have banished the Jews from Rome as a persecution of the church?
 What things did Paul and Aquila have in common?
 What did Paul teach us about the dignity of manual labor?
 What do you know of Paul's method of getting the gospel to the people
 Paul Is Driven from the Synagogue
 What fellow workers joined Paul in Corinth?
 What effect did their coming have on Paul's preaching?
 How did the people of Corinth react to Paul's preaching?
 What did Paul do when the people opposed themselves?

Who received Paul into his house? and what do you know of him?
 Paul Is Encouraged to Stay in Corinth
 What man in Corinth did Paul baptize with his own hands?
 What is said of Paul's success in Corinth?
 In what way did the Lord encourage Paul to stay in Corinth?
 What did the Lord mean when he said Paul should suffer no harm?
 How long did Paul labor in Corinth?
 What do you think of the probability that elders were appointed long before Paul left?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—November 14, 1954

PAUL IN EPHESUS

Lesson Text

Arts 19: 29-41

29 And the city was filled with the confusion: and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, having seized Ga'-ius and Ar-is-tar'-chus, men of Mac-e-do'-ni-a, Paul's companions in travel.

30 And when Paul was minded to enter in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31 And certain also of the A'-si-archs, being his friends, sent unto him and besought him not to adventure himself into the theatre.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was in confusion; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they brought Al-ex-an'-der out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Al-ex-an'-der beckoned with the hand, and would have made a defence unto the people.

34 But when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Di-a'-na of the E-phe'-sians.

35 And when the town clerk had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Eph'-e-sus, what man is there who knoweth not that the city of the E-phe'-sians is temple-keeper of the great Di-a'-na, and of the *image* which fell down from Ju'-pi'-ter?

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash.

37 For ye have brought *hither* these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38 If therefore De-me'-tri-us, and the craftsmen that are with him, have a matter against any man, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls: let them accuse one another.

39 But if ye seek anything about other matters, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.

40 For indeed we are in danger to be accused concerning this day's riot, there being no cause *for it*: and as touching it we shall not be able to give account of this concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.” (Acts 19: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 19: 24-28.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 8. M.Paul's First Visit (Acts 18: 18-21)
- November 9. T.Apollon at Ephesus (Acts 18: 24-26)
- November 10. W.Paul Preaches in Ephesus (Acts 19: 8-20)
- November 11. Th.Paul Writes to the Church in Ephesus (Eph. 1: 1-14)
- November 12. F.Paul's Address to Ephesian Elders (Acts 20: 17-35)
- November 13. S.Wild Beast in Ephesus (1 Cor. 15: 29-34)
- November 14. S.The Lord's Letter to Church in Ephesus (Rev. 2: 1-7)

TIME.—A.D. 59.

PLACE.—Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul, Gaius, Aristarchus, and the Ephesians.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The growth of the word of the Lord,** (a) In our text the word of the Lord is represented as something alive and able to extend itself, to spread. Such expressions are used in connection with unusual events connected with the gospel. When the apostles organized the church to take care of the needs of the Grecian widows that the apostles might give themselves wholly to prayer and to the ministry of the word, we read, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6: 7.) And again when James was murdered by Herod, and Peter was imprisoned but released by an angel, and not long afterwards Herod died because he gave not God the rightful glory, we read, "But the word of God grew and multiplied." (Acts 12: 24.) Our text says that the word of God grew mightily. This word mightily suggests the idea of overpowering force and strength which nothing could resist. We are told also that this word *grew* applies to the extension of the gospel externally—the new territory gained rather than the inward growth in the hearts of disciples. (b) This growth of the word of the Lord came about through preaching. We read that Paul "entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God." (Acts 19: 8.) Then again we read, "Reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 19: 9, 10.) Preaching is indispensable to the growth of the word of the Lord. The church that neglects or limits its program of preaching and teaching of the word of God will soon cease to grow and prosper, (c) The word of God also grows through the lives of believers. One thing which contributed to the growth of the work in Ephesus was the fact that some who had practiced magical arts brought their books together in the

streets of the city and burned them in the sight of all. Such a demonstration of sincerity on the part of members of the church will go a long way toward impressing the world with the power of the word of God. There are some people who will not listen to the word as it is preached by public proclaimers of the gospel, but they will pay attention to the changed life and the devoted self-sacrifice of those who profess to be Christians.

2. **The prevailing power of the word,** (a) To change the lives of men. This word *prevail* applies to the effect of the word in the lives of people. We suggested that the word *grow* in our text suggests the external extension of the word, but this word *prevail* suggests the power over the minds and hearts of people as expressed in their daily lives. The gospel has the power to change the lives of people. Paul says that some of the Corinthians were fornicators, idolaters, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, but the gospel was preached to them, and in obedience to that gospel they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 6: 10, 11.) The gospel has the power to lift one out of the mire and filth of sin, to cleanse him, to transform his life into a holy, useful life in the service of God here and fit him for heaven after this life is over, (b) The word of the Lord has power to inspire unselfishness and self-sacrifice in the lives of people. "There is no way by which we can so powerfully affect the judgment and win the sympathy of men as by sacrificing for Christ's sake that which all men prize and strive for. When the world sees all who profess and call themselves Christians not only engaging in devotion, and endeavoring to make converts, but also denying themselves pleasures they would otherwise enjoy, spending on others the money they would else have spent on themselves, foregoing worldly advantages which they cannot conscientiously appropriate, then it will be convinced by arguments which now are without any cogency and will be won by

persuasions which now are urged in vain." (Pulpit Commentary.) (c) The word of the Lord has power to change our beliefs concerning both God and man. There is power in the word of the Lord to change the atheist and the agnostic into believers in the existence and the power and the goodness of God. There is power in the word to convince the infidel that the Bible is God's message to man. There is power in the word of God to convince us that the traditions of men are weak and false and unable to give us happiness here and eternal life in the world to come. Before the gospel was preached in Ephesus, many people believed in the magical arts of the sorcerers, but when Paul preached the gospel there, they saw the falsity and inadequacy of the teaching of the sorcerers, so they accepted the word of God and burned the books of their teachers of magic.

3. Growing and prevailing in spite of opposition, (a) Humanity is so depraved that the word of the Lord always has opposition. Paul had not been in Ephesus more than three months when some were hardened and disobedient and began to speak

evil of the way before the multitude. (Acts 19: 8, 9.) The Jews who loved their exclusiveness and Jewish ceremonialism would oppose the gospel. The sorcerers who profited by their magic and the sale of their books of magic would oppose the gospel, and the silversmiths, led by Demetrius, opposed the gospel because it hurt their business. (b) The gospel grew in spite of counterfeit works. There was one Sceva, a chief priest, who had seven sons, who attempted to perform miracles in the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. The evil spirit which they attempted to drive out leaped upon them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. (Acts 19: 14-16.) The word of the Lord is still growing and prevailing in spite of counterfeit religions, (c) The word of the Lord grows and prevails in spite of human philosophies. The teachers of magic had their instructions so systematized that they published them in books, but the word of the Lord prevailed over these teachings and caused the people to repudiate these teachers and their books and to burn the books in the city streets.

Introduction

In our last lesson Paul was at Corinth. When he left Corinth, he went to Ephesus. As was his custom, he went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews of Ephesus. They were interested and requested him to stay longer than he was willing to stay, but he did make them a promise that, if God willed, he would come again and preach the gospel to them. (Acts 18: 18-21.) With that short stay in Ephesus, Paul closed his second missionary journey, and with his return to Ephesus he began his third missionary journey. The incidents of our lesson today transpired during his third missionary journey. Another incident of interest between the lessons is the coming of Apollos. When Paul went from Corinth to Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him to Ephesus. Paul left them there while he went on to Jerusalem. Apollos came to Ephesus about this time and began preaching what he knew of the gospel, but he knew only the teaching and the baptism of John the Baptist. So Priscilla and Aquila took

him unto themselves and "expounded unto him the way of God more accurately." (Acts 18: 26.) We are told that Apollos was an eloquent man, that he was mighty in the scriptures, that he helped them much that had believed through grace and powerfully confuted the Jews publicly. After learning the truth from Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos went to Corinth. We hear of him there as one after whom a division was named. (1 Cor. 1: 10-14.) We should notice also that the church of Ephesus had its beginning in the conversion of twelve men, who, like Apollos, knew only the baptism of John. (Acts 19: 1-7.) When Paul found these men, he asked of them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They said they had not so much as heard whether the Spirit was given. Paul then knew that something was wrong with their baptism. They told him they had received John's baptism. Immediately Paul understood why they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. So

Paul commanded them to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. These men had received the baptism of John after Pentecost. Before the day of Pentecost, John's baptism was valid and accepted by the Lord as obedience. But after Pentecost the baptism was not valid, was not accepted as obedience, and those who received such baptism were in re-

lation to God as if they had not been baptized at all. This shows us that not every immersion in water is baptism into Christ. There are many people today who are immersed in water in order to join the denomination of their choice. This is no more Christian baptism than was that which the twelve men at Ephesus received.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul's Life Endangered by a Riot

(Verses 29-32)

The city was filled with the confusion. Beginning with verse twenty-three of this chapter, we have the record of a riot caused by the silversmiths of Ephesus. Demetrius was the leader of this riot. Paul's work in Ephesus had been so successful that the silversmiths were feeling the effect of his work. So many people had been converted from idolatry that these silversmiths were not selling as many of their shrines and images as they ordinarily did. These shrines were silver models of the famous temple of Diana, which was located at Ephesus, and we are told that they were carried as charms on journeys or placed in people's houses to insure them the protection of the goddess. The shrine was a likeness of the temple with the goddess seated inside. Demetrius made an inflammatory speech and threw the craftsmen into an uproar, and they rushed into the theater, where they questioned some of Paul's companions.

Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia. This is probably the same Gaius whom Paul baptized with his own hands at Corinth. (1 Cor. 1: 14; Rom. 16: 23.) Aristarchus was one of Paul's companions on this third missionary journey, and he was also a fellow prisoner with Paul in Rome. (Col. 4: 10.)

Paul was minded to enter in. Paul seems to have had little fear of the danger encountered by going into the theater. His friends and fellow workers were there, and he wished to come to their defense. The gospel which he preached had been a cause of the uproar, so he wished to defend the gospel. He was willing to endanger, even to sacrifice, his own life that he might defend the gospel which he preached, and that he might be true and loyal to his fellow workers in the gospel.

Certain also of the Asiarchs. "The

Asiarchs, ten in number, were officers annually chosen from all the cities of proconsular Asia, to preside over all sacred rights, and to provide at their own expense the public gains in honor of the gods and of the deity of the emperor. This necessitated their being men of high rank and great wealth." (Pulpit Commentary.) The fact that some of these Asiarchs were friends of Paul shows how powerful the gospel was and how Paul cultivated the acquaintance and friendship, not solely of the poor and outcast, but of those who were powerful in the circles of society and government. These men, joined by the disciples of Ephesus, restrained Paul and kept him from venturing himself into the theater where he might have lost his life.

Some therefore cried one thing, and some another. In this verse we have a good description of mob tactics and practices. We are told that the majority of the people did not know why they were in that theater nor did they know why they were crying at the top of their voice.

II. Jews Attempt to Defend Themselves (Verses 33, 34)

They brought Alexander out of the multitude. Paul mentions a copper-smith by the name of Alexander as having done him much evil (2 Tim. 4: 14, 15), but we do not have positive proof that he is the same man mentioned in our text. Since he was a coppersmith, he is probably the same one. Again Paul mentions Alexander with Hymenaeus (1 Tim. 1: 20), whom Paul said he had delivered unto Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme.

Would have made a defence unto the people. We are told that the Jews put Alexander forth to make a defense. Since the Jews were opposed to idolatry, and this riot was caused by Paul's teaching against

idolatry, these Jews feared that they might be connected with Paul, since he too was a Jew. The Jews wished the people of Ephesus to know that they had no connection with Paul and his company, and that they were not responsible for the decline in the business of the silversmiths.

When they perceived that he was a Jew. The people could tell by his voice and his general appearance that he was a Jew, and when they determined that he was a Jew, they refused to allow him to speak. They shouted for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." This goddess, Diana, was called Artemis by the Greeks. She was one of the twelve superior deities. She was sometimes represented with a crescent on her head, a bow in her hand, and dressed in a hunting habit, while at other times she was represented with a triple face and with instruments of torture. By some she was regarded as the goddess of hunting. She was also represented with a great number of breasts to denote her being the fountain of blessings or as distributing her benefits to each in their proper station. She was worshiped in Egypt, Athens, and Cilicia and among some other heathen nations. But the most celebrated place of her worship was Ephesus." (Barnes.)

III. Uproar Quieted by the Town Clerk (Verses 35-41)

When the town clerk had quieted the multitude. "The functions of this officer, in some respects, correspond to those filled by the recorder of modern times; among his duties were the guardianship and tabulation of the state papers, the archives of the city, and in drawing up the public records." (Boles.)

City of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana. This town clerk began his speech by reminding the people that Ephesus was the home of the great goddess Diana. He also reminds them of the tradition among them that the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter. This was a tradition connected with the temple

worship of this particular goddess. Where the tradition got its start no one seems to know. The town clerk spoke of these things as matters which everybody knew and which could not be disputed, and because of this he said, "Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash."

Ye have brought hither these men. The town clerk reminded the mob that they had brought innocent men into the theater, and he reminds the people that these men were neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of their goddess. "This statement shows how Paul had preached against error; he seems to have preached positive truths rather than making a direct attack on their error. He had hurt no religious prejudices by rude invectives; he was no blasphemer of the gods of Greece and Rome, but led men to the knowledge of truth by positive and kind representation of it. Paul had not shunned to preach the truth to them; this truth opposed all of the error to which they were wedded; but he had preached the truth in such a way that they could not take offense at him, if we take the statement of the town clerk at face value." (Boles.)

The courts are open, and there are proconsuls. This is the advice of the town clerk to Demetrius and his craftsmen. He reminds them that the courts are open, and there are judges presiding in these courts. He recommends that Demetrius and the craftsmen make their accusations against Paul and his fellow workers before the judges of these courts, and let the matters be settled in the regular assembly.

We are in danger to be accused concerning this day's riot. The town clerk was anxious to get the matter settled, because he did not wish to have to make a report of the riot to the Roman authorities. He knew there was no reason for the riot, and consequently he said, "As touching it we shall not be able to give account of this concourse." And having said these words he dismissed the assembly and sent them away.

Lessons to Learn

1. It is easier to stir up a riot against a gospel preacher than it is to answer his scriptural arguments. Many people have resorted to the same unprincipled tactics that De-

metrius resorted to in his opposition to Paul.

2. Alexander, the spokesman for the Jews, was willing to compromise his position on idolatry in order to

hold the favor of the people of Ephesus. Though these Jews did not themselves practice idolatry, they were not militant in trying to rescue others from idolatry as were Paul and his co-workers in the gospel.

3. The town clerk was a man of

courage to champion right when held by a small insignificant group of people, and to oppose wrong which was championed by the powerful guild of silversmiths. He set a good example for officeholders of all times to come.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What is said of the extent of the growth of the word in Ephesus?

What two things caused the word to grow in Ephesus?

How could the growth of the word be increased in your community?

Can you illustrate how the word has power to change the lives of men?

What is said of the power of godly living to change the lives of others?

What is said of the power of the word to overcome human traditions?

What three things are mentioned in our lesson as opposing the growth of the gospel in Ephesus?

What opposition does the gospel have in your community?

What are you doing to overcome this opposition?

Introduction

Can you trace Paul's steps from the time he left Ephesus at the close of his second journey to his arrival there on his third missionary journey?

Who converted Apollos?

What do you know of his work?

What religious group did Paul find on his arrival in Ephesus?

Why was their first baptism not acceptable to Paul?

What does this teach us about many baptisms of the present day?

Paul's Life Endangered by a Riot

What was the cause of the riot which endangered Paul's life?

Can you name some of Paul's companions who were involved in this riot?

Why was Paul not involved personally in the riot?

With what important people in Ephesus did Paul make friends?

How did these men show their interest in Paul's safety?

What description do we have in this lesson of mob tactics and practices?

Jews Attempt to Defend Themselves

Whom did the Jews of Ephesus put forth to represent them?

Why did the Jews wish to make a defense?

How did the Ephesians respond to this defense of the Jews?

What do you know about the goddess Diana?

Uproar Quieted by the Town Clerk

What do you know of the duties of the town clerk at Ephesus?

What did this town clerk say about the origin of the image of Diana?

What did the town clerk say in defense of Paul's companions?

What light does the statement of the town clerk throw on the preaching of Paul?

What advice did the town clerk give the silversmiths?

Why was the town clerk so anxious to quiet the mob?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—November 21, 1954

PAUL IN MILETUS

Lesson Text

Acts 20: 17-27; 36-38

17 And from Mi-1e'-tus he sent Eph'-e-sus, and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in A'-si-a, after what manner I was with you all the time,

19 Serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews;

20 How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to Jews and to

Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Je'-ru'-sa-lem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Je'-sus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about

preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God.

36 And when he had thus spoken,

he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified”* (Acts 20: 32.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 20: 28-35.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 15. M..... Elders in Every Church (Acts 14: 21-28)
- November 16. T..... Elders Examples to the Flock (1 Pet. 5: 1-11)
- November 17. W..... We Are to Obey Elders (Heb. 13: 17-21)
- November 18. T..... To Know Elders (1 Thess. 5: 12-22)
- November 19. F..... Qualifications of Elders (1 Tim. 3: 1-7)
- November 20. S. Other Qualifications of Elders (Tit. 1: 5-11)
- November 21. S. Elders Worthy of Double Honor (1 Tim. 5: 17-22)

TIME.—A.D. 60.

PLACE.—Miletus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Ephesian elders.

Golden Text Explained

1. Paul commends us to God. (a)

Paul commends us to God because God saved us. Paul writes to Timothy that God “saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal.” (2 Tim. 1: 8, 9.) And he writes in like manner to Titus. “But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Tit. 3: 4, 5.) If God loved us enough to give his Son to die for us while we were his enemies, surely now, since we are his children, he will care for us. (Rom. 5: 8-11.) Hence, Paul could commend people unto God with the assurance of placing them in safe hands, (b) Paul commends us to God because he supplies our spiritual needs. We are told that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 1: 3.) Again, Paul assures us that “my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4: 19.) And he assures us that God is “able

to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” (Eph. 3: 20.) And Paul teaches us that God is so interested in the salvation of souls that he “will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom.” (2 Tim. 4: 18.) And Peter writes with like assurance that we are guarded by the power of God through our faith “unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Pet. 1: 4, 5.) And Jesus gives us assurance of the interest of heaven in our spiritual welfare and in our final victory over sin when he said of his sheep, “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.” (John 10: 28, 29.) (c) God guards his people from temptation. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6: 13), and Paul assures us that “that the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one.” (2 Thess. 3: 3.) And Paul assures us that as surely as God is faithful he “will not suffer you to be tempted

above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13.) (d) God will supply our material needs. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus taught his disciples not to lay up treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal, but to lay up treasures for themselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can consume, and where thieves cannot break through and steal; and as encouragement for them to lay up their treasures in heaven, he taught them that God takes care of his people. In proof of God's care of his people, Jesus pointed to the lilies of the field arrayed in more glory than even Solomon, yet they toil not, neither do they spin. Then he concludes his argument in these words. "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?" (Matt. 6: 19-34.) Since God does all these things for his people, there is no wonder why Paul commended these elders of the church at Ephesus unto God.

2. **Paul commends us to the word of God.** Paul speaks of this word as "the word of his grace," which may be also translated "his gracious word." The word of God is gracious—it favors, or blesses, us in many ways, (a) We grow by his word. Paul prayed that the love of the church at Philippi might abound more and more in knowledge and discernment. (Phil. 1: 9.) Hence, our love grows in proportion to the knowledge of his word which we have. And Peter said, "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1: 2, 3.) From these passages we learn that not only grace and peace are supplied through a knowledge of God's word, but that all things that pertain to life and godliness are granted us through a knowledge of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. Hence our spiritual growth is dependent upon the knowledge of the word. Again, Peter tells us that we are to put away all kinds of sins,

and that as a newborn babe longs for its food, so we are to have a commanding appetite for the spiritual milk, which is without guile, that we may grow thereby unto salvation. (1 Pet. 2: 1, 2.) This spiritual milk is the milk of the word of God. Hence, we grow unto salvation by feeding upon the word of God. (b) God will establish us through his word. Paul prayed for the church at Thessalonica, that God might establish their hearts unblamable in holiness. (1 Thess. 3: 13.) Then in his letter to the church at Rome he tells us how God establishes people. "Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." (Rom. 16: 25.) From this we see that it is God who establishes our hearts, but that he does it through the gospel preached by Paul, (c) The word of God comforts us. Paul prayed that Jesus Christ and God the Father who gives "us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word." (2 Thess. 2: 16, 17.) But in 1 Thess. 4: 18 Paul says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Hence, we see that, though God gives us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, this manifestation of grace is in the word which is the instrument of comfort, (d) Our text tells us that the word of God is able to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified, and Peter describes this inheritance to us as "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. 1: 4, 5.)

3. **Paul commands us to God because of the faithfulness of God.** The faithfulness of God to his people is taught in such passages as 1 Cor. 1: 9; 1 Thess. 5: 23, 24; 1 Cor. 1: 8, 9; and 1 John 1: 9. (a) The faithfulness of God is manifested in keeping his covenants with his people. (Heb. 10: 23, 36, 37.) (b) His faithfulness to his people is shown in his defending and delivering them in time of trial. (1 Pet. 4: 19; 2 Tim. 4: 16-18.) (c) God's faithfulness is

shown in keeping his people out of temptations which they are unable to bear. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) (d) His

faithfulness is shown to his children in forgiving them of their sins. (1 John 1: 9.)

Introduction

After the riot of the silversmiths, Paul left Ephesus and went north-westward into Macedonia. How long he stayed in Macedonia we are not told, but he turned southward again and went into Greece, where he spent three months. When he learned of a plot by the Jews to take his life, he returned through Macedonia, instead of sailing for Syria. His fellow workers in the gospel were waiting for him at Troas, so he sailed from Philippi for Troas, and there

tarried seven days until he could meet with the brethren on the first day of the week to break bread. It was there that he preached until midnight and raised from the dead the young man who went to sleep during the sermon and fell from a third-story window. Leaving Troas, Paul sailed southward down the coast to Miletus. Not having time to go to Ephesus for a visit, he requested the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Reminds Them of the Past (Verses 17-21)

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus. Miletus was about twenty or thirty miles from Ephesus. Long before Paul's day it was a city of considerable importance, but it lost its importance as a seaport by the fact that the coast line was rising. The ruins of the town are now more than ten miles from the seacoast. (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

Called to him the elders of the church. In verse twenty-eight these same men are called bishops. Hence, we conclude that the terms elder and bishop refer to the same men, though the words do not have the same meaning. Primarily the word elder means older, but it also has an official meaning, for we read, "When they had appointed for them elders in every church." (Acts 14: 23.) From this we learn that men were made elders by appointment. Hence, it cannot here mean simply an older person. There is no authority for saying that all bishops are elders, but not all elders are bishops. Some contend that all the old men in the church were elders, and from among these elders certain men with qualifications, listed in 1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1, were appointed as bishops. Nor is there any authority for the denominational practice of having several men to serve as elders and one man to serve as bishop over a congregation.

After what manner I was with you. Paul reminds these elders of his first visit in Asia and of the manner in which he served the church while

he lived in Ephesus. He was not ashamed of his conduct among them, nor was he afraid to mention the manner of his life and service among them. It is a commendable thing when a preacher can go back to a place where he served for a long time and freely remind the brethren of his conduct and teaching among them.

With all lowliness of mind. Paul was a humble preacher of the gospel and taught others to follow his example in this. (Col. 3: 12-14.) Not only was Paul humble, but his sincerity stands out prominently, being manifested by his tears which he shed for these people. In verse thirty-one of this chapter he reminds them that "by the space of three years I cease not to admonish every one night and day with tears." See also 2 Cor. 2: 4; Phil. 3: 18.

I shrank not from declaring. Persecution was so severe at Ephesus that Paul speaks of it as fighting with wild beasts. (1 Cor. 15: 32.) Yet in spite of this persecution he shrank not from declaring the whole counsel of God. Men need to know all the gospel in order that they may become Christians and serve and worship God acceptably. The preacher who shrinks from preaching the whole truth does his audience an injury and proves himself to be a coward.

Teaching you publicly, and from house to house. Paul was not ashamed nor too busy to go from house to house teaching people the gospel. There are many people who will not attend a public service until

their interest has been sufficiently aroused by personal visitation and teaching to attend the public services of the church. Every church should have a house-to-house visitation program, and young men who intend to be preachers should be taught the art of visiting and teaching from house-to-house. Not only those who intend to be preachers, but both men and women who can teach the word of God, should be taught the art of going from person to person, teaching the word of God.

Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks. Since God is no respecter of persons, preachers of the gospel cannot afford to show respect for races. Hence, Paul preached both to Jews and Greeks.

Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The order of mention here does not establish the order of occurrence. In Rom. 10: 9 we have, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." In this verse the order of mention is obviously impossible. People cannot confess Jesus as Lord before they believe in their heart, so with this verse in our text the order of mention is impossible. People cannot repent before they believe. Some have explained this order of the words by saying that Jews had to repent toward God before they could believe in Christ, but that explanation breaks down because Paul said he testified both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Paul Looks to the Future (Verses

22-27)

I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem. To be bound in spirit means to have a strong conviction as to one's duty. Paul had collected considerable money from churches of Asia and Macedonia for the relief of the poor in Judea. He had promised the brethren that he would see that the money reached Jerusalem safely. He felt bound by his conscience to fulfill his promises. (Acts 24: 17.)

The Holy Spirit testifieth unto me. Paul said he did not know what things would befall him in Jerusalem. The only thing he knew was that the Holy Spirit was telling him in every city that bonds and afflic-

tions were awaiting him. He did not know whether the afflictions would be stoning or beating, nor did he know whether the bonds would be in Jerusalem or elsewhere.

I hold not my life of any account. Life was not so dear to Paul as some other things. He could have quit preaching the gospel and lived a long time, but fulfilling his duty to God and to his fellow man was dearer to Paul than life. He could have left out the offensive principles of the gospel and not only lived a long time, but enjoyed the praises of men. But life was not dear enough to Paul to pay him for losing the approval of God. We must not allow life in this world with its pleasures, honors, comforts, and material rewards to become so dear to us that we will compromise the truth or neglect our duty to worship and serve God as we are directed.

To testify the gospel of the grace of God. That was Paul's mission in life. It was the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus; and he would not allow this life with its pleasures and rewards to become so dear to him that it would interfere with his business of preaching the gospel of the grace of God.

Shall see my face no more. Paul did not expect to see these men again in this life. There were several reasons which helped Paul to form this opinion. First, the Holy Spirit testified that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him in Jerusalem. He could not know the outcome of these things. Next, he had a long-time desire to go to Rome and on into Spain. Such a journey would take a long time and would be fraught with many dangers. He did not know whether he would live to return to Asia, but many scholars are of the settled opinion that Paul was released from imprisonment in Rome, and that he went into Spain, came back through the Mediterranean Sea, left Titus at Crete and Timothy at Ephesus while he went on into Macedonia for another visit. (1 Tim. 1: 3; Tit. 1: 5.) We have no record in Acts where Paul could possibly have left Timothy at Ephesus while he was going into Macedonia. Hence, this release from the first imprisonment and another trip into Macedonia sounds very probable.

I am pure from the blood of all men. Paul was pure or clean from

the blood of others because, in the first place, he had preached the whole gospel unto them; in the next place, he had persuaded them to believe that gospel; and third, Paul had lived the gospel before them, setting for them an example how they ought to live by the gospel which he had taught them.

III. Paul Departs in Sorrow (Verses 36-38)

He kneeled down and prayed with them all. While kneeling is not the only acceptable posture for prayer, it was the general posture used by godly people. It shows reverence and humility. (Acts 7: 60; Luke 22: 41.) These men were on the sea-shore, where men were coming and

going to and from the ship. They were not ashamed to be seen kneeling on the shore in prayer.

They all wept sore. Eastern people are much more expressive of their emotions than the people of the west. They not only showed their emotions by weeping, but also by kissing Paul. The word translated kiss is a rather significant word. In the first place it has a prefix which denotes the fervency with which they kissed. In the next place, it is in the imperfect tense in Greek, which denotes repetition, so they fervently kissed him again and again. Luke tells us that their sorrow was increased by the fact that he said he did not expect ever to see them again.

Lessons to Learn

1. We should so live and preach the gospel to the people among whom we reside that at death we can say we are pure from the blood of all men.

2. We should be careful to set our affections on things above and not on things of this earth, so that life on this earth will not become so dear to us that our love of life will interfere with accomplishing our mission for the Lord in this life.

3. In this lesson we have authority

for a program of teaching the gospel, not only publicly, but from house to house. The congregation which does not have a program of house-to-house teaching is not discharging its duty to the people of the community, nor is that church measuring up to the expectation of the Lord. Jesus said we are to teach every creature. Since every creature in the community does not attend our public services, we must take the gospel to them.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Name and discuss four reasons why it is good to commend people to God.

With what assurance did Paul and Peter write of God's care for our spiritual welfare?

What proof did Jesus give that God will care for our material needs?

Name and discuss four reasons for commending people to the word of God.

After studying this lesson, have you been impressed with the need of more Bible study?

How can the word give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified?

Name and discuss four ways in which the faithfulness of God is manifested.

Introduction

What caused Paul to leave Ephesus?

How long did Paul stay in Greece?

Why did he return through Macedonia instead of sailing for Syria?

How long did Paul stay in Troas?

Where did Paul ask the elders of Ephesus to meet him?

Paul Reminds Them of the Past

What do you know of the city of Miletus?

What is the meaning of the words elder and bishop?

Can you cite some unscriptural practices with reference to elders and bishops?

What did Paul say about his manner of life among the Ephesians?

What did Paul say about his teaching and preaching among them?

What of the necessity and effectiveness of house-to-house teaching?

What is taught in our lesson about the order of faith and repentance in the plan of salvation?

Paul Looks to the Future

What did Paul mean by being bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem?

How did the Holy Spirit testify to Paul?

How did Paul value his life as compared with his duty to preach the gospel?

Are there other things which are of more value to you than life?

What was the greatest source of Paul's sorrow on this occasion?

Why did Paul think he would never see these people again?

Is it possible that Paul visited Asia again?

What is meant by being pure from the blood of all men?

Does your present program of teaching others give you reasonable assurance that you are pure from the blood of all men?

Paul Departs in Sorrow

What is said in our lesson about the posture of prayer?

What evidence do we have that these men were not ashamed to be seen worshipping God?

What proof do we have of the love these elders had for Paul?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—November 28, 1954

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Lesson Text

Acts 21: 2-12

2 And having found a ship crossing over unto Phoe-ni'-ci-a, we went aboard, and set sail.

3 And when we had come in sight of Cy-prus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed unto Syr'-i-a, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And having found the disciples, we tarried there seven days: and these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

5 And when it came to pass that we had accomplished the days, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell;

6 And we went on board the ship, but they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at

Ptol-e-ma'-is; and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Caes-a-re'-a: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him.

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied.

10 And as we tarried there some days, there came down from Ju-dae'-a a certain prophet, named Ag'-a-bus.

11 And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Je-ru'-sa-lem bind the man that own-eth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gen'-tiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place be-sought him not to go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The will of the Lord be done"* (Acts 21: 14b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 21: 1, 2.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 22. M.....Steadfastness of Purpose (Acts 20: 18-24)
- November 23. T..... Advice Given (Acts 19: 39-41)
- November 24. W.Willingness to Suffer (Acts 21: 7-16)
- November 25. T..... An Earlier Prediction by Agabus (Acts 11: 27-29)
- November 26. F.Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21: 27-40)
- November 27. S..... Things Paul Suffered for Christ (2 Cor. 11: 22-29)
- November 28. S..... Faithful unto Death (Rev. 2: 8-11)

TIME.—A.D. 60.

PLACES.—Ptolemais and Caesarea.

PERSONS.—Paul and his company, Philip and Agabus.

Golden Text Explained

1. Our text teaches us a lesson of respect, (a) First we are taught to respect God. We should always remember that we are mere creatures, and that God is the Creator. We should also remember that we are unable to preserve our lives without the provident care of God continually about us, and we should remember that we are wholly and absolutely unable to save ourselves from our sins. Such realizations as these will help us to respect God as our Creator, Preserver, and Saviour, (b) Our text teaches us to respect the will of God.

It is good for children to respect the will and wishes of their parents. Those who refuse to do so bring sorrow to their parents and disgrace and injury to themselves. We are God's children, and so are in such relationship to him that we need to respect his will and wishes with reference to the affairs of our life, (c) The Bible is the revelation of God's will to us. Since we are to have a deep and abiding respect for the will of God, and since the Bible reveals and contains the will of God, we should have that same deep and

abiding respect for the Bible and its teachings. We are taught that the Bible is a complete expression of the will of God, "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3: 17.) Since the Bible is the complete revelation of the will of God, it follows that the doing of anything or the teaching of any principle which is not revealed in the Bible is contrary to the will of God; so it is as necessary for us to respect the silence of the word of God as it is for us to respect the expression of his will, (d) We should respect God's will as it is revealed in his providential care. God regulates our activities by the teaching of principles. Not all the details of life are expressed in the Bible. Where we shall live or what we shall do to make a living is not a matter of revelation. Yet God in his providential care seeks to direct us into those paths where we can accomplish the most good. We should desire to know and to do his will in these matters. James tells us that, if we lack wisdom, we can ask of God, and he will give it. (James 1: 5.) James also rebukes people who make their plans to go to this or that city and spend a year there and trade and get gain. He says they should say, "If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." (James 4: 13-15.) This shows us that God does have a will concerning where we live, where we trade, and other things of that sort. And it does suggest that we can through prayer determine the will of the Lord in these matters.

2. Our text teaches us subordination of self to God. (a) We should subordinate self in spite of well-wishing friends. When the friends of Paul learned that bonds and afflictions awaited him in Jerusalem, they begged him not to go to Jerusalem. Paul considered it the will of the Lord that he go to Jerusalem at this time. Hence, he had to do the will of God in spite of his well-wishing friends. Our family and friends often advise us against making great sacrifices, or exposing ourselves to dangers in order that we may do that which we believe to be the will of God. Though they mean well, yet they in a sense and to some degree are standing in the way of the accomplishment of the will of God. (b) We must do the will of God in spite of physical dangers. If Paul had avoided physical dangers,

he would have stayed out of Jerusalem, because he was warned that physical dangers awaited him there; but his sense of love for God and loyalty to his brethren and to his mission in the behalf of his brethren forced him to face those dangers, (c) We are to subordinate self in spite of the loss of friends and material wealth. Lot moved into the well-watered valley around Sodom and Gomorrah to increase his material wealth. Obviously, this was contrary to the will of God concerning Lot. People often make the mistake today of subjecting themselves and their families to hurtful environments in order that they may increase their material wealth. Through study of conditions and situations and continued prayer that the Lord may direct us to do his will, such hurtful mistakes can be avoided. The trouble with many people is that they do not realize that God exercises care and concern for our welfare in such details of life. Others do not seem to believe that God's will in such matters can be determined through prayer. While there are still others who are not as much concerned about pleasing God in these matters as they are about pleasing themselves.

3. The example of Jesus in doing: the will of God. (a) Jesus said that it was his meet to do the will of him that sent him to accomplish his work. (John 4: 34.) Jesus never undertook any great work without first praying to his Father about it. Before he appointed his twelve apostles, he spent the whole night in prayer. (Luke 6: 12.) (b) Jesus suffered according to the will of God. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Pet. 2: 21.) Then again we read, "For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3: 17, 18.) In these passages we learn that Christ suffered and that it was the will of God that he should suffer. We also learn that his suffering is an example for us, that we should suffer according to the will of God. "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 Pet.

4: 1.) Since Jesus, the sinless Son of God, respected the will of God and subordinated his own desires to the will of God, and since inspiration tells us that he did this to set us an example, we see how necessary it is

for us that we respect the will of God, and that we subordinate our own wills to his will. All of us should be willing and ready to say with the apostle Paul, "The will of the Lord be done."

Introduction

The purpose of Paul's journey to Jerusalem at this time has been mentioned, but it is worthy of more study. As has been suggested, Paul took a collection of money from among the churches of Asia Minor and Macedonia to feed and clothe the poor saints in Judea. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.) The company of men along with Paul on this journey consisted largely of men who had been appointed by the churches to go along with Paul to see that the money reached its destination safely. (1 Cor. 16: 3, 4; 2 Cor. 8: 18-21.) In the last reference given it seems that a number of churches had agreed on the appointment of one man whose name is not given to travel with Paul in the matter of collecting and disbursing this money. While it was the purpose of Paul in going to Jerusalem to take this collection to the poor saints, there is a deeper and greater reason for taking the collection from among these Gentile churches to be used and enjoyed by the Jewish brethren. "But now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure: and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things." (Rom. 15: 25-27.) From this we see that the Gentiles were making a contribution to the Jews. Next, Paul says the Gentiles

are debtors to the Jews because the Gentiles were made partakers of the spiritual things which came from and through the Jews. And next, since the Gentiles partook of the blessings made possible by the Jews, the Gentiles owe it to the Jews to minister unto the Jews of their carnal things. Jesus was a Jew and came of Jewish stock; hence, the gospel of salvation through the death of Christ came through the Jews. Not only was it made possible through Jesus, who was a Jew, but the first churches of Christ were composed of Jews, and these Jewish churches preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Hence, Paul says that the Gentiles were obligated to make a contribution of the material wealth to the relief and comfort of the Jews. The Jewish churches in Judea had found it almost impossible to accept the Gentiles without circumcision. Paul thought that, if he could get the Gentile churches to make a great contribution of money for the relief of the poor in Judea, this would prove to these Jewish churches that the Gentiles were sincere, and that they were doing the work of God. Hence, Paul hoped by collecting this money and disbursing it among the Jews to remove that spirit of envy and jealousy which lingered in the hearts of the Jewish brethren. Paul was so earnest about this matter that he wrote the brethren at Rome and asked them to strive together with him in their prayers to God that "my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints." (Rom. 15: 31.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Visits Brethren Along the Way (Verses 2-7)

Having found a ship, it is probable that Paul had sailed down the western coast of Asia Minor in a small ship, one which was not capable of sailing the rough Mediterranean. Patara is the last seaport before launching out into the sea. so Paul changed vessels there, finding one that was sailing to Phoenicia.

The Phoenicians have been known from antiquity for their seamanship. Phoenicia was a very small country and could not depend upon internal activities for its livelihood, so its people in their early existence turned to the sea for a livelihood.

We had come in sight of Cyprus.

It will be remembered that Cyprus was the place where Paul and Barnabas first went on their first missionary

journey, but Paul and his company hurrying on to Jerusalem left Cyprus on the left and sailed on to Syria, landing at Tyre. It will be remembered that Tyre was the home of King Hiram, who assisted Solomon in the building of the temple about 1000 B.C. (1 Kings 15: 18.) The only visit which Jesus made outside of the land of the Jews was in the vicinity of Tyre. (Matt. 15: 21; Mark 7: 24.)

And having found the disciples. Paul tarried seven days in Tyre, visiting with disciples. Paul had preached the gospel in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (Gal. 1: 11.) Of course, we cannot say that he had preached in Tyre, but there is the possibility that he had done so since he had preached in the region of Syria. Paul loved his brethren and enjoyed their fellowship and association. Whenever it was possible, he took time out to visit with them.

He should not set foot in Jerusalem. This is a rather difficult statement. On first reading, it seems that the brethren told Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go to Jerusalem. But since Paul was determined to do nothing except the will of God, we cannot conceive of his disobeying a direct command of the Holy Spirit to stay out of Jerusalem. In Acts 20: 23 we read that the Holy Spirit testified unto Paul in every city, saying that bond and afflictions awaited him there. Hence, it seems best to conclude here that the Spirit revealed to these disciples at Tyre that persecution and hardships awaited Paul in Jerusalem, and that it was their conclusion that Paul should not go to Jerusalem. And since this is exactly what happened at Caesarea, as we shall later learn in this same lesson, we conclude that this is a reasonable explanation of this verse.

Brought us on our way. Again, we see the disciples escorting Paul to the seashore in order to bid him an affectionate farewell; and here again as at Miletus we see the group kneeling down on the beach, praying and bidding one another farewell.

We arrived at Ptolemais. This city is about thirty miles south of Tyre. It had in Paul's day recently been made a Roman colony by Emperor Claudius. It was also a very important commercial center. In the Old Testament we learn that it was situated in the territory of the tribe of Asher (Judges 1: 31), and was

originally called Accho. However, its name was changed to Ptolemais in honor of one of the Ptolemies of Egypt. Here again Paul spent some time visiting with the brethren.

II. Paul in the Home of Philip the

Evangelist (Verses 8-12)

Entering into the house of Philip the evangelist. We are told that this man Philip was "one of the seven." This takes us back to the time when the Grecian widows in Jerusalem were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The apostles said that it was not good that they should forsake the word of God and serve tables, so the brethren selected, and the apostles appointed, seven men to take care of the distribution of food among these widows. Philip was one of that number. (Acts 6: 1-6.)

Four virgin daughters, who prophesied. We are told that Philip the evangelist had four virgin daughters, and that these daughters were prophetesses. Joel the prophet said that in the last days God would pour forth his Spirit on sons and daughters, and they would prophesy. (Acts 2: 17, 18.) To prophesy means to speak edification, exhortation, and consolation. (1 Cor. 14: 3.) Hence, these young women spoke edification, exhortation, and consolation. But no one could prophesy unless they had had apostles' hands laid on them to impart to them the gift of prophecy. (Acts 8: 14-18; 1 Cor. 12: 10.) Hence, some apostle had laid hands on these four virgin daughters of Philip and had imparted to them the gift of prophecy, thus enabling them to speak edification, exhortation, and consolation. And we may be sure that these young women did not restrict their prophesying to their own home. They had no children, for they were virgin daughters. Their father was an inspired preacher and did not need to be instructed by them. Hence, these young women taught somewhere outside of the home relationship.

So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle. As Paul and his company tarried in Caesarea, enjoying the fellowship and association with Philip the evangelist and other brethren of that city, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. It was Agabus who took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and told Paul that the Jews in Jerusalem would

bind Paul and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. The only other mention we have of this prophet Agabus is in Acts 11: 28, where it is said that he went to Antioch and predicted a great drouth throughout all the world; and Luke says that the prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. In this instance the Spirit only foretold trials, sufferings, persecutions which Paul would be called upon to undergo, if he went to Jerusalem. It was the conclusion of the brethren that he should not go to Jerusalem. They wished to spare him that suffering. They did not see the necessity of his going to Jerusalem. They felt that the other brethren who had been appointed by the churches to deliver this collection to the poor saints could do that work without Paul being there, and so would save

him that suffering. It was a reasonable and sensible view to take of the matter. But it was contrary to Paul's intentions and to a conviction which he had and by which he felt himself bound. He had said to the Ephesian elders, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." (Acts 20: 22.) But the brethren put considerable pressure on Paul to stay out of Jerusalem. Finally Paul said, "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Verse 13.) From this we see that Paul's conviction that he should go to Jerusalem was so strong that he was willing to sacrifice his life in order to go. Then Luke said, "When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done." (Verse 14.)

Lessons to Learn

1. Association with Christian brethren is not only a very delightful thing, but it is a very helpful thing. As a single coal of fire soon loses its warmth and brightness, so a Christian who is denied association and fellowship with other Christians will soon lose his fervor and faithfulness.

2. Philip's four virgin daughters had a place for work in the New Testament church. We have brethren among us today who could not use these four unmarried young women.

They have no place in their church program for such workers. We should be careful that our church program is large enough to include any and all which were included in the program of work and worship in the New Testament churches.

3. We should have deep convictions with reference to our duty to God. We should not allow anything, even persecution and suffering unto death, to keep us from doing that which it is our conviction we should do.

Questions for the Class

- What is the subject of the lesson?
- Repeat the golden text.
- Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.
- Golden Text Explained
- Why are we obligated to respect God?
- Why should we respect the will of God?
- What reasons do we have for respecting the Bible?
- What do you know of God's will with reference to the everyday affairs of life?
- How did Paul subordinate self to God in spite of his friends?
- How did he subordinate self with reference to physical dangers?
- How may we fail to subordinate self to God with reference to material wealth?
- Why do some fail to subordinate self to God?
- What did Jesus say about subordinating self to his Father?
- What is our relation to the sufferings of Christ?

Introduction

- Why did Paul take a collection from among the churches of Asia and Macedonia?
- Why did Paul think the Gentiles were obligated to help the poor Jews?

- By whom was this money taken and delivered to the churches in Judea?
- What was the main thing Paul hoped to accomplish by gathering this contribution?
- In what way did Paul ask the church at Rome to assist him in this matter?

Paul Visits Brethren Along the Way

- For what were the Phoenicians well known?
- What two, well-known places did Paul pass in his journey to Jerusalem?
- At which of these places did he stay seven days to visit brethren?
- What was said at Tyre about his going to Jerusalem?
- What do you know about Ptolemais?

Paul in the Home of Philip the Evangelist

- How is this Philip identified to us in our lesson?
- What do you know about Philip's family?
- For what were his daughters distinguished?
- Could these young women exercise their gifts in your congregation?

- What prophet brought Paul a message?
- What was the message?

How did Paul's friends react to this message?
 What was Paul's reaction?
 Did Paul's friends have a reasonable view of this matter?

What was Paul ready to do in Jerusalem?
 What does this reveal about Paul's sense of duty to God and his fellow man?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson X—December 5, 1954

PAUL A PRISONER AT JERUSALEM

Lesson Text

Acts 21: 30-40

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut.

31 And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that all Je-ru-sa-lem was in confusion.

32 And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and inquired who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne

of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd;

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek?

38 Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins?

39 But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tar-sus in Ci-li-ci-a, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying.

Golden Text.—*“For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard”* (Acts 22: 15.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 21: 27-29.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 29. M..... Lose Life to Save It (Matt. 16: 21-28)
- November 30. T. Cross to Be Borne (Luke 14: 25-35)
- December 1. W..... Suffering Rewarded (Mark 10: 23-31)
- December 2. T..... Imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16: 1-40)
- December 3. F..... Imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 22: 22-30)
- December 4. S..... Imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 23: 1-35)
- December 5. S..... Imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28: 11-22)

Time.—A.D. 60.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Paul, the chief captain, and the Jewish mob.

Golden Text Explained

1. Paul a witness for Christ, (a)

Paul was a witness of what he had seen. If Paul ever saw Jesus in the flesh, we have no record or even an intimation of the fact. He was not privileged to see Jesus crucified, nor

did he have the privilege of seeing the empty tomb three days after his crucifixion. It was not his privilege to walk and talk and eat with the Lord during the forty days which Jesus spent with his disciples, as he

gave them many infallible proofs of his identity. (Acts 1: 3.) Nevertheless, Paul did see Jesus personally. When Paul argued his apostleship with the brethren at Corinth, he based it on the fact that he had seen Jesus our Lord. (1 Cor. 9: 1.) Again, when he was enumerating the various appearances of Christ to the apostles and others, he said, "And last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also." (1 Cor. 15: 8.) Since Paul saw Jesus after his death and resurrection, he could be an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead, had ascended into heaven and been exalted at the right hand of the Father, (b) Paul was to be a witness of what he had heard. Before his baptism, Ananias told Paul that "the God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth." (Acts 22: 14.) In Acts 22: 7 we are told that Paul heard Jesus speaking to him; and in Acts 26: 14-18 we have a lengthy report of the conversation which Jesus had with Paul. Seeing and hearing Jesus after his resurrection was essential to qualify a person to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ. Hence it was necessary that Jesus appear to Paul, and Paul might see him and hear him in order that he might be an apostle and to witness to the fact of the resurrection and glorification of Christ, (c) Paul was to be a witness of the things in which Jesus would later appear unto him. During the conversation which Jesus had with Paul he said, "But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." (Acts 26: 16.) "Of those further manifestations of my person, purposes, and will, which I will yet make to you. It is evident from this that the Lord Jesus promised to manifest himself to Paul in his ministry, and to make to him still further displays of his will and glory. This was done by his rescuing him from destruction and danger; by inspiration; by the growing and expanding view which Paul was permitted to take of the character and the perfections of the Lord Jesus." (Barnes.) One instance of these further appearances may be learned in Acts 22: 17, 18, and Paul affirms

that he did not get his gospel from men, but that it came to him directly by revelation from Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1: 11, 12; 1 Cor. 11: 23.)

2. Paul, a witness unto all men.

(a) Paul's chief mission was to the Gentiles, but it would have been unwise to make mention of his being a witness unto the Gentiles at this time, for he was speaking to an angry mob of Jews. Hence he simply says that he was a witness for Christ unto all men and this would include his special mission to the Gentiles. When Paul was talking before Agrippa and Festus, he made mention of his being sent especially to the Gentiles. (Acts 26: 16, 17.) (b) Since Paul was to be a witness unto all men, it behooved him to reach and influence as many as possible. The only limit to his work was time and his ability. To the Romans he said, "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." (Rom. 1: 14, 15.) When speaking of his efforts to witness for Christ before as many people as possible, he said, "For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written, They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, and they who have not heard shall understand." (Rom. 15: 17-21.) In order to evangelize the world in our generation, we must have more men who make it their aim to preach the gospel where Christ has not already been heard.

3. The purpose of Paul's witnessing.

The purpose of witnessing for Christ is well stated in the Lord's own words. "To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26: 18.) (a) To open their eyes. Of course, this was not intended as a physical operation. He was to open the eyes of their under-

standing. Paul quoted a prophecy of Isaiah concerning some people who had closed their eyes lest they should see and understand the gospel. (Acts 28: 27.) Again Paul prayed, "Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." (Eph. 1: 17-19.) So Paul was to witness for Christ that he might open the eyes of those who had hitherto refused to see and that he might bring enlightenment to the eyes of the heart so that people might know what is the hope of the calling, (b) Paul was to witness for Christ that he might turn people to God. People who close their eyes to the truth are walking in the opposite direction from God, so the operation that opens the eyes of their understanding will

turn them back in the direction of God. (c) That people might receive remission of sins. People whose eyes are closed to the truth, who are walking away from God cannot receive remission of sins. Their eyes must be opened, they must be turned from darkness to light, from Satan unto God in order that they may receive remission of sins, (d) Purpose of Paul's witnessing was that people might have an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ. Sanctification is the process of conversion continued throughout life. It is that process by which the Holy Spirit through the use of the word of God transforms us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Paul's witnessing for Christ would contribute, not only to the conversion of people, but to their sanctification that they might enjoy the eternal inheritance with all the saints.

Introduction

In our last lesson we left Paul at Caesarea, visiting in the home of Philip the evangelist. From Caesarea he went on to Jerusalem. In Acts 21: 17, we read, "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly." Since Paul's primary mission in Jerusalem at this time was to deliver the contribution which the Gentile churches were sending to the poor saints of Judea, and since Luke says that the brethren in Jerusalem received Paul gladly, we conclude that the purpose of his mission in Jerusalem was acceptable to the saints. This we take as an indication of the answer to his prayer which he asked the Romans to join with him in praying, "That my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints." (Röm. 15: 31.) On this occasion Paul visited with James, the Lord's brother, and with the elders of the church. He told them what God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry, and the brethren were glad and glorified God on account of it. However, they reminded Paul that his teaching had stirred up considerable strife between the Jewish and Gentile elements of the church, and that many of the Jews had misunderstood and exaggerated some of the things which Paul had taught. They therefore advised Paul to purify himself with certain men who had

a vow, and that he was to take part with them in the ceremonies of purification in order that he might prove that these Jewish enemies were extreme in the statements they made, and that he, Paul, still respected the law of Moses. These elders at Jerusalem reconfirmed their decision reached at the Jerusalem conference, with reference to the Gentiles, but insisted that Paul make a demonstration of his belief that it was permissible for the Jews to continue certain ceremonies of their law. There has been, and will continue to be, much argument as to whether Paul did wisely or unwisely to follow the suggestions of these Jewish brethren. Surely all will agree that Paul would not have gone into the temple to observe these Jewish ceremonies without the pressure of the brethren, which was brought upon him at this time. Paul acceded to their wishes only because those brethren insisted that Paul's taking part in these ceremonies would go a long way toward mending the breach between the Jewish and Gentile elements in the church. The ceremony of purification required seven days for completion. The record tells us, "when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him." Thus, Paul was not allowed to complete this

ceremony of purification. The record tells us that these Jews had seen Trophimus, an Ephesian Greek, with Paul in the city, and when they saw

Paul in the temple, they *supposed* that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple with him, thus defiling their sacred place.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Rescued from the Mob

(Verses 30-32)

And all the city was moved. The news of this incident spread like wildfire through the city. It was only a short time until many were gathered together at the scene. The Jews were naturally excitable, and when they thought their holy temple was in danger of being polluted, they were capable of murder on short notice. They did not lead or escort Paul; they literally dragged him out of the temple, and shut the doors, lest the temple should be profaned.

They were seeking to kill him. No doubt their intention to kill Paul caused them both to drag him from the temple and to close the doors. Some suggest that the Jews closed the doors for fear Paul would run to the altar as a place of refuge. This may or may not be true, but it seems from Ex. 21: 13, 14 that the altar was a place of refuge only for those who were guilty of accidental murder.

Tidings came up to the chief captain. The Greek word for chief captain is *chiliarch*, and means commander of a thousand. The word band or cohort was a tenth part of a legion, but like our companies and divisions of present-day armies, the number of men in these divisions varied considerably. "He had his station in the castle of Antonia, which was on a rock or hill at the northwest angle of the temple area. The tower at the southeast corner of the castle was seventy cubits high, and overlooked the whole temple with its courts. The fortress communicated with the northern and western porticos of the temple area, and had flights of stairs descending into both; by which the garrison could at any time enter the court of the temple and prevent tumult." (Hackett.)

He took soldiers and centurions. The word centurion denotes a leader or captain over one hundred men, and since the word centurions is in the plural, we know that the force sent to quiet this uprising consisted of at least a few hundred men. The chief captain knew the unruly disposition

of the Jews, and knew that it would take a sizable force to stop such a disturbance. From this verse we learn that the Jews did not cease beating Paul until the arrival of the soldiers. Since it would not require much time for such a mob to beat a man to death, we conclude that the soldiers were on constant guard, and that they made their arrival immediately.

II. Paul in the Hands of the Chief

Captain (Verses 33-36)

Commanded him to be bound with two chains. The Greeks had a special word for a manacle which was placed on the feet. The word used here is a general term for a manacle to place on any portion of the body. Hence, it is most likely that Paul's hands were chained to two soldiers—one on either side. Putting him thus in chains would do two things, (a) It would protect Paul from this angry mob. (b) It would suggest to the Jews that the chief captain intended to keep Paul safely until he could be given a fair trial.

Some shouted one thing, some another. This was and still is characteristic of mobs. Under excitement people join in the activities of a mob without knowing the purpose of the gathering.

He commanded him to be brought into the castle. We are told that, because some shouted one thing and some another, the chief captain could not know with certainty the purpose of the gathering, so it was necessary that he take Paul inside the castle, where he could make an investigation.

He was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd. Such was the frenzy and determination of these Jewish fanatics that it was necessary for the soldiers to put Paul on their shoulders and carry him up the steps of the castle. Jealousy and prejudice are bad in any relationship of life, but they seem to go to their most bitter and unreasonable extremes in the realm of religion.

Crying out, Away with him. When these Jews could no longer get their hands on Paul to do physical violence,

they tried to satisfy their thirst for blood by shouting directions to the chief captain to do away with Paul. This was their way of demanding the death penalty for Paul. Since they had been thwarted from their purpose of killing Paul with their own hands, they do the next best thing in demanding that the chief captain put him to death.

III. Paul Identifies Himself. (Verses 37-40)

May I say something unto thee?

This was Paul's statement to the chief captain as he was being carried up the stairs of the castle. Undoubtedly Paul had in mind to ask the permission of the chief captain to make just such a speech as he made a little later and as is recorded in the twenty-second chapter. When Paul addressed the chief captain, he used the Greek language. This caused the chief captain to ask if he knew how to speak Greek.

Art thou not then the Egyptian?

During the time Felix was governor of Judea, an Egyptian, perhaps a Jew who lived in Egypt, gathered a few thousand men together and brought them to the Mount of Olives. Josephus says that the man gathered thirty thousand people, but Luke tells us that the chief captain put the number at four thousand. Luke is not responsible for the discrepancy between Josephus and the chief captain. This Egyptian claimed that he was a prophet of God, that, if the people would go with him, he would cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall down at his command, and would lead the people in, taking the city. It was just another of the many efforts of the Jews to rebel against

Roman rule. When the Egyptian and his followers reached the Mount of Olives, the troops sent by Felix fell upon them and destroyed about four thousand of them, according to Josephus. The fact that Paul could speak Greek was the first indication that the chief captain had that Paul was not this Egyptian. Hence, we conclude that it was common knowledge that the Egyptian who led this rebellion could not speak Greek.

Four thousand men of the Assassins. The Greek word translated Assassins here is a word which means one who carries a short sword. It was the practice of these men to disperse themselves among a crowd, and at a given signal to draw these short swords from under their cloaks and begin stabbing people without warning.

I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia. Paul identifies himself in this way to the chief captain. He tells the chief captain that is of Cilicia and not of Egypt.

Give me leave to speak unto the people. This was Paul's request of the centurion. He wished to speak to the people. Notice the calm, fearless attitude of the apostle Paul. He was so near death, and yet was not afraid. The bruises and lacerations which must have been inflicted on him during the beating by the mob would be painful which, added to the mental anguish of being despised and rejected by his own brethren, would have caused many strong hearted men to be unable to calm themselves and collect their thoughts sufficiently to speak intelligently to the people. But in spite of his physical bruises and his mental anguish, Paul preached a wonderful sermon to the people who were about to take his life.

Lessons to Learn

1. From bitter experience Paul could say of the officer of the law, "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." (Rom. 13: 4.)

2. The suffering of Paul at this time is a part of that predicted by the Holy Spirit, as Paul journeyed toward Jerusalem, and which his friends begged him to avoid by stay-

ing out of Jerusalem. Paul preferred to suffer such persecution, that he might fulfill his obligations to the Lord and to his brethren.

3. We often excuse ourselves from preaching the gospel to people who wrongfully treat us on the ground that Jesus tells us not to cast our pearls before swine. Yet Paul begged for the privilege of preaching the gospel to this mob, who would have killed him. We are too quick to judge people to be swine.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What evidence do we have that Paul ever saw Jesus?

Why was it necessary that Paul see and hear Jesus?

Did Jesus promise to make any further appearances to Paul?

To whom was Paul chosen to be a witness for Christ?

By what was Paul limited in his work of witnessing for Christ?

What was Paul's aim in preaching the gospel?

Over what expanse of territory did Paul say he had fully preached the gospel?

Name and discuss four purposes Paul mentioned for witnessing.

What is sanctification?

What is the inheritance of the sanctified?

Introduction

How was Paul received in Jerusalem by the brethren?

What was Paul's primary purpose for going to Jerusalem at this time?

What did the reception by the brethren indicate as to the success of his mission?

What did the brethren in Jerusalem advise Paul to do?

What motive did the brethren have in asking Paul to observe these Jewish customs?

What hindered Paul from completing the ceremonies in the temple?

Paul Rescued from the Mob

How and why did the Jews put Paul out of the temple?

Do you know a reason why the Jews should close the doors of the temple?

What do you know of the duties and location of the chief captain?

What words indicate something as to the number of soldiers on duty at this time?

What intentions did the Jews have with reference to Paul?

Paul in the Hands of the Chief Captain

How was Paul bound by the chief captain?

What was the captain's purpose in binding Paul?

Why did the captain take Paul into the castle?

What indicates the extent of the frenzy and determination of the Jews?

What demands did the Jews make of the chief captain?

Paul Identifies Himself

In what language did Paul address the chief captain?

Paul's ability to speak Greek saved him from the suspicion of what crime?

What do you know of a rebellion started by an Egyptian?

What were the followers of this Egyptian called?

What hindrances would Paul have to overcome at this time to make a speech?

Would this seem to be an instance of casting pearls before swine?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—December 12, 1954

PAUL RELATES HIS OWN CONVERSION

Lesson Text

Acts 22: 1-16

1 Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence which I now make unto you.

2 And when they heard that he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet: and he saith,

3 I am a Jew, born in Tar'-sus of Ci-li'-ci-a, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Ga-ma'-li-el, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day:

4 And I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to Da-mas'-cus to bring them also that were there unto Je-ru'-sa-lem in bonds to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Da-mas'-cus, about noon, sud-

denly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Je'-sus of Naz'-a-reth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Da-mas'-cus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Da-mas'-cus.

12 And one An-a-ni'-as, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked up on him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One,

and to hear a voice from his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.

Golden Text.—*“Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”* (Acts 26: 19.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 22: 17-21.

Daily Bible Readings

December 6. M.....	Paul’s Conversion Related by Luke (Acts 9: 1-9, 17-19)
December 7. T.....	Paul’s Own Report (Acts 26: 2-23)
December 8. W.....	Events Following His Conversion (Gal. 1: 11-24)
December 9. T.....	Saul an Honest Man (Acts 26: 4-16)
December 10. F.....	Saul Preached Christ (Acts 9: 20-30)
December 11. S.....	Saul’s Conversion an Example (1 Tim. 1: 12-17)
December 12. S.....	Gains and Loses (Phil. 3: 1-16)

Time.—A.D. 60.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Paul, and the Jewish mob.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The heavenly vision.** When Paul spoke of the heavenly vision, he referred to the time when he saw and heard Jesus on the road to Damascus—the time of his conversion. It was not a heavenly vision in the sense that it was so glorious, rapturous, so beautiful and inspiring. It was not a heavenly vision because it calmed and soothed an already troubled soul. It was a heavenly vision because it came from heaven. “The heavenly vision shall best justify its name often when it apprises one experimentally, not of the delicious sensations of angels, but of the fear and trembling and anguished amazement that pertain to sinful hearts and injured consciences.” (Pulpit Commentary.) Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints. He was so determined to rid the world of the influence of Christ that he obtained letters of authority from the chief priests to go even unto Damascus, that if he found any there who confessed Christ, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. It seemed there was no force on earth sufficient to stop this man in his destruction of the church, so heaven itself intervened, and Jesus spoke to Paul the word necessary to stop him in his persecuting zeal, from further harassing the church of the Lord.

2. **What Paul learned from the heavenly vision,** (a) Paul learned that Judaism was no longer pleasing

to God. Paul says that he advanced in the Jews’ religion beyond many of his own age among his countrymen. (Gal. 1: 14.) He finished the synagogue schools and then sat at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel that he might become a doctor of the law. He was exceedingly zealous for the law and for the traditions of the fathers. He was blameless in his application of the law in his own life. (Phil. 3: 6.) But in a very few moments of time, Jesus convinced Paul that he was wrong about Judaism. Judaism had served its purpose in bringing the Messiah into the world and, having served its purpose, it was to pass away to give place to a new covenant dedicated by the blood of Jesus Christ, better blood than that which dedicated the law of Moses, (b) Paul learned that his pride in his Jewish connections and traditions was of no value. Paul once boasted of the fact that he was a Jew, ‘circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.” (Phil. 3: 5, 6.) He was proud of the fact that he had studied under the greatest teacher of the age, Gamaliel, and he had no patience with the apostles who had gained their learning and their doctrines from an unknown peasant in Galilee Jesus had never

studied in the great schools of learning among the Jews and hence was looked upon as an ignorant and unlearned man. But when Paul saw and heard Jesus of Nazareth speaking to him from heaven, he realized that his Jewish ancestry and the traditions of his fathers meant nothing. (c) Paul learned that he was to *preach* instead of *persecute* Christ. He had spent several years persecuting Christ and no doubt had dedicated his life to the persecution of the church until it was extinguished. But in this short visit with the Christ from heaven, Paul learned that he was no longer to persecute that church and Christ, but that he was to preach Jesus as the Christ and the head of the church, (d) Paul learned that he was to serve the Gentiles. During that short visit with Jesus, Paul was told that he was to be appointed as a minister and a witness of the things wherein he had seen the Lord and the things wherein the Lord would appear unto him; and further, that the Lord would deliver him from the people, "and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee." (Acts 26:

17.) Like every zealous Jew of his day, Paul looked down upon the Gentiles as being so far beneath him that they were not entitled to religious privileges unless they should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Now, the Lord tells him that he is being appointed a minister to the Gentile race. This piece of information must have been both shocking and humiliating.

3. Paul's response to the heavenly vision, (a) Paul's response to this vision was immediate. In the vision Paul was told to go to Damascus and wait that he might be told what further to do. He did not take time out to go back to Jerusalem to put the proposition before the chief priests who had authorized him to go on this journey. There is no intimation that he asked his associates for their advice and counsel on whether he should respond to this vision. He

did immediately and exactly what he was told to do. This should be the response of each one of us to each and every commandment which the Lord gives us. (b) Paul's response to this vision was both determined and irrevocable. Paul never did just halfway make up his mind about anything. He never did enter upon any mission in a halfhearted way. He was a man of decision and determination. These are the characteristics which the Lord looks for in people who are to serve him. No doubt, these characteristics in Paul had something to do with the Lord's choice of him for the work to which he was called. His response to this vision was irrevocable or unalterable in that, having once put his hands to the plow, he never one time looked back. (c) Paul's response to this heavenly vision was at a considerable price. Being the proud Pharisee that he was and able to move freely among the very leadership of Judaism, it was a humbling experience for Paul to be made a minister to the Gentiles and to be counted as a fool for the sake of Christ. He uses these very words in describing his condition and goes further to say, "Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things, even until now." (1 Cor. 4: 10-13.) In the next place, Paul's response to this vision cost him a lot in physical suffering. If the reader will turn to 2 Cor. 11: 22-29, he will find a short list of the things which Paul suffered in order to be an apostle of Christ. But another indication of the cost of Paul's response to this heavenly vision is seen in the lonely life which he lived. He had no family, no home, or certain abiding place. All of these things he gave up or chose to do without in order that he might be free to give his whole time and physical and mental vigor into the ministry to which the Lord called him. The reader should close the study of this text by a careful reading of Philipians 3: 1-14.

Introduction

Since we are studying Paul's record of his own conversion, it will be worth while for us to give some thought to the value of his conversion as evidence of the truth and genuineness of Christianity. George Lyttelton, a distinguished member of the

English House of Commons, imbibed the principles of infidelity. He and his friend proposed to expose Christianity as a fraud. Lyttelton chose the conversion of Paul while his friend chose the resurrection of Christ as points in the Christian system to

expose as error. In their study both were convinced of the truth of Christianity. Lyttelton wrote his findings in proof of the truth of Christianity. He summed them up in four points as follows. 1. Either Paul was an impostor who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive; or, 2. He was an enthusiast who imposed on himself by the force of an overheated imagination; or, 3. He was deceived by the fraud of others; or, finally, 4. What he declared to be the cause of his conversion did all really happen; and, therefore, the Christian religion is a divine revelation. If Paul was an impostor intent to deceive people, what was his motive? Was it wealth, reputation, power, gratification of any other passion? The ordinary student of the Bible and of human nature would know that neither of these things so common as motives for the actions of men could possibly have motivated Paul to do what he did and live the life he lived. Next, was Paul an enthusiast who imposed on himself? If so, why did he thus impose on himself? Did he lose his discretion and power to reason? and did he fly into a rage and do the things he did and suffer the persecutions he suffered? Next, did he in a fit of melancholy decide to give up the Jewish religion and embrace Christianity? If so, why? He was at the height of his career and had the complete confidence of superiors and his associates. Did Paul leave

Judaism and embrace Christianity because of ignorance, credulity, or vanity and self-conceit? One who knows only a little about human nature would know that such motives as this could not carry a man through such a long period of service and suffering as characterized Paul. Next, was Paul deceived by the fraud of other people? Did someone make Paul think that he saw a light on the Damascus road? Did someone throw his voice so as to make Paul think that the voice was coming from heaven? Who in Paul's crowd that day would have had a motive for doing such and, if any of these Jews are considered as probable, we still have to account for Paul's knowledge of Christianity. Paul says he got this knowledge by revelation from Jesus Christ. If we accept any of these theories as true, we must deny Paul's statement and account for his unusual knowledge coming to him in a way of which he was not conscious. But if none of these theories are true, we must conclude that Paul was sane, that he actually had the experience which he relates, that this experience was from heaven, that he got his gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ, and that, therefore, all he taught about Christ and the church is true. The conversion of Paul cannot be accounted for in a sensible way by infidels and atheists. It affords some of the strongest proof we have of the truth and genuineness of Christianity.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul's Life before Conversion

(Verses 1-5)

Brethren and fathers. We are told that Paul addressed these Jews in the Hebrew language, and here we see he addresses them very courteously as brethren and fathers. Paul asked the privilege of making his defense before the people. The word defense here simply means to give reasons why he had lived and acted as he had. Luke tells us that when the Jews heard him speak in the Hebrew language they were the more quiet. By speaking in the Hebrew language, he identified himself as one of them and as one who had studied in the Jewish schools, and was therefore entitled to be heard by the people.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia. There is a tradition to the effect

that Paul was born in Galilee, but according to Paul's statement this tradition is untrue. However, it does seem that there is some ground for thinking that his parents formerly lived in Galilee before going to Cilicia.

Brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel. Though Tarsus was a city of learning and had a great university located there, Paul went to Jerusalem for his training. The fact that he had a sister living in Jerusalem may have had something to do with his coming there for his education. (Acts 23: 16.) This celebrated teacher of the law is generally identified with the one who is known by the title of "the glory of the law" and was the first to whom the title "Rabban," which means "Our Master," was given. He was the son of

a rabbi named Simeon and the grandson of the celebrated Hillel. We are told that he was president of the Sanhedrin under three Roman emperors, and that he died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Jewish custom, Paul would leave home at the age of fifteen to go to the rabbinical college called "the house of interpretation." The course of study in this school was the entire Old Testament. They learned to interpret scripture, to define and apply the legal code, and the process of allegorical exegesis, which consisted of four operations:

(a) to learn the simple meaning; (b) the suggested or remote meaning; (c) to get the meaning evolved in investigation; and (d) to learn the mystic meaning.

I persecuted this Way unto the death. The word "way" is another term for Christianity. In Phil. 3: 6 Paul speaks of persecuting the church, so the word way here is the same as the church.

Binding and delivering into prisons. In Acts 26: 11 Paul tells us something of his method of persecution. There he tells us that he strove to make Christians blaspheme. Since the penalty for blasphemy was death, he could secure their conviction and execution. Under severe and continued questioning, a person could very easily say something about the law or the temple or Moses that could be construed by a zealous Pharisee as blasphemy.

The high priest doth bear me witness. Paul was relating this during the lifetime of the very men who gave him authority to go on that journey to Damascus. He mentions not only the high priest, but "all the estate of the elders" from whom he had received his letters of authority. In this way Paul sought to establish a connecting link between himself and those Jews who were clamoring for his life. In effect he told them, I used to be one of you I felt then as you do now about Christianity, and I was as zealous to exterminate Christians then as you are this day.

II. Paul Meets Jesus on the Damascus

Road (Verses 6-10)

About noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light. After telling the people that he had received letters of authority to go to Damascus and relating the fact that he had

journeyed to a point near Damascus, he then describes how suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about him. He mentions the fact that it was at noon in order to impress them with the exceeding brightness of the light. Since it was noon, neither the moon, nor stars, nor any other heavenly body could produce a light which would exceed that of the sun. It follows, therefore, and Paul wished his audience to get this idea, that the light which exceeded the brightness of the noon-day sun was of the Lord.

And heard a voice saying unto me. Paul's conviction came not through only one of the physical senses, sight, but he also heard a voice. Neither was that voice an inarticulate sound, the interpretation of which had to be left to his imagination. The voice said in words which he could understand, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He was addressed by name, and the name was repeated, and the mission on which he was then engaged was specifically mentioned.

Who art thou, Lord? The word Lord here does not necessarily mean deity. If Paul had recognized his visitor as the deity, he would not have asked the question he did. However, the term does indicate superiority, and so Paul was addressing a superior in an effort to identify him.

I am Jesus of Nazareth. The word Jesus was a common name among the Jews. The Hebrew form was Joshua. The word Jesus is a Greek term. The word Nazareth was added to identify the Jesus who was speaking. The term persecute was used to teach Paul that whatever he did to the disciples of Jesus was done to Jesus himself. (Matt. 25: 45.)

Beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice. In Acts 9: 7 we are told that those who accompanied Paul heard the voice but beheld no man. In this verse we are told that they heard not the voice that spoke to Paul. The harmony of the two statements is found in the fact that, when it is said they heard the voice, the sound waves reached their ears; but when it is said they heard not the voice, it is meant that they did not understand what was said. We often ask people to repeat a statement because we did not hear it. But the fact that we asked it to be repeated is proof that we did hear the sound of the voice. The story of

Paul's conversion was related during the life time of some of these men who accompanied him. The fact that the reality of his experience was never denied is in itself proof that it actually occurred.

What shall I do, Lord? Here we find an alien sinner asking the Lord what he should do. It is significant that the Lord did not tell Saul what to do to be saved, but rather, told him to go into Damascus, where he would be told by one of the Lord's servants what to do in order to be saved. The ministry of reconciliation has been given into the hands of men or earthen vessels, (2 Cor. 5: 18-20.)

III. Paul Obeys the Gospel (Verses 11-16)

One Ananias, a devout man. Saul was led into the city, being blinded by the brightness of the light. Paul refers to Ananias here as "a devout man according to the law," that he may secure the favor of his hearers. In Acts 9: 10 he is referred to as a disciple.

The God of our fathers hath appointed thee. It was appointed for Paul to know three things, (a) It was appointed that he should know God's will. Paul needed to know God's will concerning his own salvation. Further, Paul needed to know the will of the Lord with reference to the life that he should live and the service he should render, (b) It was appointed of God that Paul

should see the Righteous One. That term refers to Christ. In order for Paul to be an apostle, he must see Jesus after his resurrection. This would enable him to testify that Jesus arose from the dead, (c) It was appointed by the Lord for Paul to hear a voice from the mouth of the Lord. This too was a part of the qualification of one who would serve as an apostle and a witness of the resurrection of Christ. The fifteenth verse is given as a reason why Paul was to know the will of God, see the Righteous One, and hear a voice. The reason was, "For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."

Arise, and be baptized. Since Ananias knew of the appearance of the Lord to Paul on the road, he did not feel it necessary to tell Paul to believe. He knew that Paul was already a believer in Jesus Christ. Next, since Paul had been there three days, neither eating nor drinking, Ananias knew that he was a penitent man—that he had repented of his sins. Hence, there was no need to tell him to repent. Since Paul had both believed and repented, there was nothing further to do but to tell him to be baptized and wash away his sins. From this we learn that, in order for people to be saved, they must believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and be baptized for the remission of those sins. The phrase, "wash away thy sins," simply means the forgiveness of sins.

Lessons to Learn

1. From the apostle Paul we learn that a man can be sincere and yet be wrong; that he can be acting in harmony with his conscience and yet be wrong.

2. When Saul was convinced of his wrong, he turned immediately to that which is right. In this he set an example for all who find them-

selves believing and practicing things contrary to the will of God. If we wish to follow a good example we will change immediately upon being convinced that we are in the wrong.

3. Jesus appeared to Paul to make him an apostle and a witness and not to save him. Jesus sent Saul to Ananias, a gospel preacher, to learn what to do to be saved.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

Why did Paul speak of his experience on the Damascus road as a heavenly vision?

Contrast the mental attitude of Saul of Tarsus on leaving Jerusalem and entering Damascus.

What did Paul learn from this vision about Judaism?

Of what was Saul of Tarsus most proud?

What did he learn about them from the vision?

What lesson did Saul learn about Jesus of Nazareth from this vision?

What did the proud Saul learn about his future field of labors?

What good example did Saul set for us in his response to this heavenly vision?

With what mental attitude did Saul obey this heavenly vision?

Discuss the price which Paul paid to obey this heavenly vision.

Introduction

Can you show that Paul was not an impostor intentionally deceiving people?
 What evidence do we have that Paul was not an enthusiast and self-deceived?
 Is there any evidence that Paul was deceived by others in his conversion?
 Can you show the value of Saul's conversion as evidence of the genuineness of Christianity?

Paul's Life before Conversion

What did Paul do in the beginning of this speech to gain the sympathy of his audience?
 What did Paul say of his birth and early life?
 Who was his teacher?
 What do you know about him?
 What do you know of the course of study Paul pursued under this teacher?
 What do you know about Paul's method of persecution of the saints?
 How did Paul seek to establish a connection between himself and his audience?

Paul Meets Jesus on the Damascus Road

Why does Paul mention the fact that his conversion took place at noon?

Through what physical senses did this experience appeal to Paul?
 What is the meaning of the word Lord in Saul's question?
 What do you know of the form and meaning of the word Jesus?
 Did the men with Saul see the light and hear the voice?
 What evidence do we have that the work of preaching the gospel has been left in the hands of men?

Paul Obeys the Gospel

What gospel preacher did the Lord send to Saul of Tarsus?
 Can you name three things for which God had appointed Paul?
 Why was it necessary for Paul to see and hear Jesus?
 What did Ananias tell Saul to do?
 Why did he not tell him to believe and to repent?
 From a study of Saul's conversion, what do you say is necessary for one to do to be saved from sin?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—December 19, 1954

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Lesson Text

Acts 25: 1-12

1 Fes'-tus therefore, having come into the province, after three days went up to Je-ru'-sa-lem from Caes-a-re'-a.

2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they besought him,

3 Asking a favor against him, that he would send for him to Je-ru'-sa-lem; laying a plot to kill him on the way.

4 Howbeit Fes'-tus answered, that Paul was kept in charge at Caes-a-re'-a, and that he himself was about to depart *thither* shortly.

5 Let them therefore, saith he, that are of power among you go down with me, and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him.

6 And when he had tarried among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Caes-a-re'-a; and on the morrow he sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews

that had come down from Je-ru'-sa-lem stood round about him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove;

8 While Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cae'-sar, have I sinned at all.

9 But Fes'-tus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 But Paul said, I am standing before Cae'-sar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest.

11 If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is *true* whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cae'-sar.

12 Then Fes'-tus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Cae'-sar: unto Cae'-sar shalt thou go.

Golden Text.—*"Yea and before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles"* (Matt. 10: 18.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 25: 13-21.

Daily Bible Readings

December 13. M.	A Prisoner in Caesarea (Acts 24: 22-27)
December 14. T.	Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25: 1-12)
December 15. W.	A Storm at Sea (Acts 27: 14-27)
December 16. T.	Shipwreck (Acts 27: 28-44)
December 17. F.	Paul at Mileta (Acts 28: 1-10)
December 18. S.	A Miracle of Healing (Acts 28: 7-10)
December 19. S.	Paul Arrives in Rome (Acts 28: 11-16)

Time.—A.D. 62.

Places.—Jerusalem and Caesarea.

Persons.—Paul, Festus, and the principal men of the Jews.

Golden Text Explained

1. Suffering for Christ's sake, (a) Following his example. Peter tells us that Christ suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps. (1 Pet. 2: 21.) He also tells us that, when we are suffering for the sake of Christ, we become partakers of Christ's suffering. (1 Pet. 4: 13.) Jesus reminded his apostles before his crucifixion that they would suffer for his sake. "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." (John 15: 18-20.) (b) Suffering for Christ's sake contributes to the growth of the church. When Paul was in prison at Rome, he wrote, "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." (Phil. 1: 12.) No doubt many good brethren thought the cause would suffer because of Paul's imprisonment, but Paul gives them to understand that God can turn such experiences to the good of the church rather than to the hurt of the church. Persecution never did hurt the church of the Lord. When the church at Jerusalem was persecuted, it scattered, and churches sprang up all over the country. When the apostles were murdered for the sake of the Lord, other man sprang up to preach the gospel in their place. The fact that persecution assisted rather than hindered the growth of the church was

so obvious that it is often said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." (c) Suffering for Christ's sake contributes to the growth of the sufferers. Whether we are made stronger and better by persecution depends upon how we take the persecution. If we become discouraged and rebellious, we will not be made stronger by it. James tells us that suffering manifold trials not only proves our faith, but the proving of that faith works patience, or steadfastness, in us. (James 1: 2-4.) And Peter tells us that the suffering of manifold trials purifies us in somewhat the same way that the refining of the ore purifies the gold. (1 Pet. 1: 6-9.) (d) Suffering for Christ's sake enriches the sufferer in eternity. Paul tells us that, if we suffer with Christ here, we shall also be glorified with him. Then he says, "For 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: 17, 18.) Again he says, "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4: 17.) So when Christ foretold the sufferings of his apostles for his sake, he did not foretell some terrible events which would not be for anybody's good or happiness here and hereafter. He simply told them that they would go through certain experiences which would enrich their souls here and honor and glorify his name on earth, and which would contribute greatly to their eternal reward in heaven.

2. The spirit in which we should suffer for Christ. (a) We should consider it a blessing. Peter tells us that if we are "reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the

Spirit of God resteth upon you." (1 Pet. 4: 14.) Paul considered it a blessing and a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ, because such experiences gave him the opportunity to suffer in his flesh for the sake of the body of Christ, which is the church. (Col. 1: 24.) (b) We should rejoice in our sufferings for Christ. James tells us to rejoice when we fall into manifold trials. (James 1: 2, 12.) Peter rejoiced in trials to that extent that he could say, "Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Pet. 1: 6-9.) The apostles, when persecuted in Jerusalem, counted it a privilege and an honor to be counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. (Acts 5: 41.) (c) Suffering for Christ works for our good. Again we turn to Paul's imprisonment and we find him saying, "For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1: 19.) Since suffering for the sake of Christ does not work us any harm but works us much good, we should consider it a blessing and therefore rejoice that we have the opportunity to suffer for the name of Christ.

3. The purpose of appearing before the rulers, (a) For a testimony to them. Since the gospel started among the poor class of people, rulers would not be expected to attend the religious gatherings in order to hear the gospel of Christ. About the only way kings and governors would hear the gospel of Christ would be for

the preachers of that gospel to be brought before them for examination and trial. Hence, when Paul was before the governors of Judea, he did not appeal to them for his release from suffering, but rather took occasion to preach the gospel that he might save those rulers from sin.

(b) To get the gospel before people in high places. Not only would the governors and kings hear the gospel as preached by these apostles when on trial, but there would be many others in high places in the government who would be associated with these kings and governors. God would see to it that all men would have an opportunity to hear the gospel, (c) To demonstrate the power of God. Jesus told his apostles, "But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. 10: 19, 20.) When ignorant and unlearned men stood before kings and governors and spoke with courage and with power not common to the ordinary man, these rulers were impressed with the fact that they had been with Jesus. They were also impressed with the fact that these men must be inspired from on high. Hence, when they stood before these kings and governors, the power of God to speak through these ignorant men was demonstrated. This tended to impress these rulers not only with the power of God, but with the goodness and mercy of God in his efforts to save them from sin.

Introduction

In our last lesson we left Paul standing on the steps of the castle preaching to the people who would have destroyed him. But when he mentioned his mission to the Gentiles, the Jews rioted with such fury that the chief captain carried him inside the castle that he might be examined. And there Paul perceived that the Jews who were clamoring for his death were divided between Pharisees and Sadducees. Hence, he announced that he was a Pharisee and so divided the counsel. When they failed to secure his conviction and condemnation, they formed a plot to destroy him. Forty men bound themselves under a great curse, saying that they would eat

nothing until they had killed Paul. Paul's nephew learned of the plot and made it known to the chief captain, and immediately the chief captain gathered four hundred and seventy soldiers to escort Paul out of town and to Caesarea, where he might be kept with more safety. In about a week the Jews went to Caesarea to prosecute Paul. They said, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who moreover assayed to profane the temple: on whom also we laid hold: from whom thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to take

knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him." (Acts 24: 5-8.) But Felix was not to be deceived by these empty charges of the Jews, so he did not grant the wish of the Jewish leaders. Another thing of importance is the evil intentions of Felix. He learned that Paul had brought money from all over Asia Minor and portions of eastern Europe to relieve the poor in Judea. Knowing that he had access to enough money to relieve the suffering of that many people, Felix thought Paul would offer him a bribe for his release, and so he sent for Paul often to hear him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. His primary pur-

pose was not to learn of Jesus, but rather to get a bribe from Paul. But Paul was not interested in bribing Felix to release him. Rather, "he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come." And Paul preached with such power and conviction that Felix was terrified and answered, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." (Acts 24: 25.) Felix kept Paul in prison for two years, and then he was removed that Porcius Festus might replace him, and Felix was willing to do the Jews a favor, so he left Paul in prison in Caesarea. Hence, Paul becomes the prisoner of Festus instead of Felix.

Exposition of the Text

I. Jews Renew Their Persecution of

Paul (Verses 1-5)

Festus therefore, having come into the province. Very little is known of Festus. He was sent by Emperor Nero to take the place of Felix, against whom the Jews had many complaints. Latin historians are curiously silent about Festus, and what little we know of him is gleaned from Josephus. Gleaning from all available sources, one writer says of him, "The new procurator had a straightforward honesty about him, which forms a strong contrast to the mean rascality of his predecessor. He certainly did not do all of the justice that he might have done; but allowing somewhat for the natural desire to ingratiate himself with the people of his government, his conduct, on the whole, was exemplary, and his firmness in resisting the unjust demands of the Jews cannot fail to elicit our admiration." (Lewin.) Festus lost no time in entering upon his duties as the governor of the province, for on the third day after he landed in Judea, he went to Jerusalem and began his duties.

Jews informed him against Paul. Neither did the Jews lose any time in their efforts to put Paul to death. As soon as the new governor came to Jerusalem, the principal men of the Jews and the chief priests informed the governor against Paul.

Asking a favor against him. The favor which the Jews asked of Festus was that he would bring Paul back to Jerusalem for trial. The Jews planned to kill Paul on the

way from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Paul was kept in charge at Caesarea. It is hardly possible that Festus had had time to learn of the enmity of the Jews for Paul and of their determination to kill him. It is difficult to keep from seeing the hand of God in his providence as he cared for the apostle, (a) The providence of God in favor of Paul is seen in that an honest and just governor was sent to replace a dishonest and unjust man. (b) God's providential care of Paul is seen in that Festus is led to deny the request of these evil Jews.

Them . . . that are of power among you go down with me. After firmly but kindly denying their request to bring Paul to Jerusalem, Festus suggested that those of power among them would go down to Caesarea with him that he might look into the merits of their case. Festus knew the proper procedure for such a case, and he was unwilling to grant these Jews any special privileges. It is always a mark of just and equitable dealings when those in power refuse to show favors toward the wealthy and prominent men, but when a ruler takes the part of one who is unknown socially and politically against the express desires of those who are of power socially and politically, we have evidence of a determination to deal justly and to show no favoritism.

II. Paul Answers Their Charges Against Him (Verses 6-8)

When he had tarried among them. We are told that Festus stayed only

eight or ten days in Jerusalem. There is every indication that Festus was not only a just and honorable man, but that he was a man of dispatch. He took his business seriously instead of playing the social butterfly currying the favor of the leading Jews. His businesslike way of doing things is seen also in the fact that "on the morrow," after he returned to Caesarea, he sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. He was not one to put off such a matter until he could learn what would be the most popular course to pursue.

Bringing against him many and grievous charges. This is said of the Jews who went down from Jerusalem to Caesarea to press their charges against the apostle. What the charges were at this time are not told. However, the charges at this time were likely a repetition of the charges which they made against Paul before Governor Felix. At that time, they charged him with being "a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who moreover assayed to profane the temple: on whom also we laid hold: from whom thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him." (Acts 24: 5-8.)

Paul said in his defence. From the things mentioned in this defense we can learn some of the charges which were brought against him. (a) Neither against the law of the Jews. Paul said that he had not sinned against or violated the law of the Jews. This perhaps refers to their accusation that he attempted to profane the temple. This was one of the accusations brought against Paul at the time the people tried to mob him. (Acts 21: 28, 29.) (b) Paul says he had not sinned against the temple. Of course, this refers to the time when they thought he had taken Trophimus, the Greek, into the temple, and thus had defiled it as suggested in the last reference. (c) Paul affirms that he had not sinned against Caesar. In their first trial before Felix, they accused him of being "a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world." By this they meant that Paul was stirring up the Jews to rebel against Caesar. Paul denied that charge.

They had no evidence to present, hence, their bare assertion would not be accepted in the court.

III. Paul's Appeal Granted (Verses 9-12)

Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews. This is the first indication we have of the weakness of Festus. It was natural that Festus would desire the favor of the Jews. He was sent there to govern them, and if he could gain their good will, his task of governing them would be somewhat simplified; but if he intended to give Paul over to the Jews to win this satisfaction, it was little better than casting a human being to the lions. Whether Festus suggested that the trial be moved from Caesarea to Jerusalem with him as the presiding judge, or whether he suggested that Paul be turned over to the Sanhedrin for trial, is a matter difficult to decide.

I am standing before Caesar's judgment-seat. This was Paul's reply to Festus. He was standing at the judgment seat of Caesar, where he had a right to be tried. The court of Festus was called Caesar's judgment seat because Festus was an appointee and a representative of Caesar.

To the Jews have I done no wrong. Paul had so effectively answered the accusations of the Jews that he could say that Festus knew he had not wronged the Jews. This was equal to an accusation on the part of Paul that Festus was willing to do the Jews a favor in spite of the fact that he knew Paul was innocent of their charges.

I refuse not to die. Paul says that, if he were a wrongdoer and had committed anything worthy of death, he did not refuse to die. To Paul, death was not a horrible experience. He even desired to depart and be with Christ. (Phil. 1: 23, 24.)

No man can give me up unto them. Paul said that he had done the Jews no wrong, and he did not intend to allow Festus to give him up unto the Jews. This intimates that Paul thought that Festus wished to transfer the case from Caesarea to Jerusalem in order to give the Jews the opportunity to carry out their plot to kill him. If this be true, the show of justice and equity which Festus made when he first arrived in Jerusalem was not a matter of deep conviction with him.

I appeal unto Caesar. To appeal to Caesar in order to get justice was the right of every Roman citizen. Being a Homan citizen, Paul had this right, and so exercised it at this time. This meant that Paul would have a free voyage to Rome. Being a prisoner of the emperor, he would be transported from the place where he made his appeal to Rome at the cost of the empire. Next, he would be given a safe journey. He was entitled to be placed in the custody of a Roman centurion with soldiers sufficient to guard him safely on the trip from the point where he made his appeal to the emperor. Paul had long had the desire to go to Rome. (Rom. 1: 9-12.) So his appeal to Caesar would do two things for him. (a) It would give him a safe and free voyage to Rome, where he might have a fair trial, (b) It would satisfy his desire of long standing to see the church at Rome, and by them to be sent on into Spain, where he hoped to labor.

Unto Caesar shalt thou go. We are told that Festus conferred with

the council before he rendered his decision on this appeal. It was the custom of these governors and pro-consuls to appoint a number of men to be advisers to them on the laws and customs of the provinces in which they ruled. It was this group with which Festus conferred on the matter of Paul's appeal to Caesar. Usually such appeals were granted, but this council presided over by the governor did have the right in extreme cases to deny the Roman citizen the right of appeal to Caesar. "Writers on Roman law inform us that the provincial magistrates had a certain discretionary power in this respect. An appeal to the emperor was not granted in every case. It was necessary to consider the nature of the accusation, and also the amount of evidence which supported it. Some offenses were held to be so enormous as to exclude the exercise of this right; and when the crime was not of this character, the evidence of guilt might be so palpable as to demand an immediate and final decision." (Hackett.)

Lessons to Learn

1. Tenacity is a commendable trait in people only when it is exercised in the interest of that which is right. The Jews were tenacious in their prosecution of Paul. Had they been as tenacious for doing right, they could have accomplished great good.

2. Courage and hope are never seen to better advantage than in Paul while he dealt with these determined

enemies. When we become discouraged and lose hope, we should study Paul's action under persecution.

3. Since government is of God, and those in power are God's servants to do us good, we have the right to appeal to the government to protect us from those who would do us harm.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What did Jesus predict with reference to the suffering of his disciples?

What evidence do we have that suffering contributes to the growth of the church?

In what way does suffering contribute to the growth of the sufferer?

What connection is there between suffering here and one's welfare in eternity?

What should be our attitude toward suffering for Christ?

Do we actually suffer for Christ or do we evade suffering by refusing and neglecting to do our duty?

What three purposes did the Lord have in allowing his apostles to appear before rulers?

How would the power of the Lord be demonstrated by their appearances before rulers?

Introduction

What did Paul mention in his sermon on the palace steps which caused the Jews to refuse to hear him further?

How did Paul divide the Jewish council for his own good?

Why was Paul transferred to Caesarea?

What accusations did the Jews bring against Paul at Caesarea?

Why did Felix wish to hear Paul often?

On what three points did Paul dwell when preaching to Felix?

How did Felix finally dispose of Paul?

Jews Renew Their Persecution of Paul

Who took the place of Felix?

What do you know of him?

What shows the intensity of the hatred of the Jews for Paul?

What request did the Jews make of Festus?

What was his answer?

Is there any indication of God's providential care of Paul in these events?

What evidence do we have that Festus intended to be just and impartial?

Paul Answers Their Charges Against Him

What indication do we have that Festus was a man of dispatch?

What is said of the charges the Jews brought against Paul at this time?

From Paul's defense, what do we learn about the charges?

What charges did Paul deny?
 What charge involved his citizenship and loyalty to his government?
 Paul's Appeal Granted
 What is the first indication we have of the weakness of Festus?
 Why is the court of Festus called Caesar's judgment seat?
 In what statement did Paul accuse Festus of being partial to the Jews?

What do you know of Paul's attitude toward death?
 What did Paul's appeal to Caesar mean to him?
 Did Festus have the right to deny this appeal?
 Who determined whether this appeal would be granted?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XIII—December 26, 1954

PAUL AT ROME

Lesson Text

Acts 28: 16-31

16 And when we entered into Home, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Je-ru'-salem into the hands of the Romans:

18 Who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cae'-sar; not that I had aught where-of to accuse my nation.

20 For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with me: for because of the hope of Is'-ra'-el I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Ju-dae'-a concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he

expounded *the matter*, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Je'-sus, both from the law of Mo'-ses and from the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some dis-believed.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit through I-sa'-iah the prophet unto your fathers,

26 Saying, Go thou unto this people, and say, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive:

27 For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gen'-tiles: they will also hear.

30 And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Je'-sus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

Golden Text.—*"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest "* (Acts 28: 22a.)

Devotional Reading.—Rom. 1: 8-12.

Daily Bible Readings

- December 20. M.....Prominent Jews Assembled (Acts 28: 17-22)
- December 21. T.....Day Appointed (Acts 28: 23, 24)
- December 22. W.....Paul's Address to Them (Acts 28: 25-28)
- December 23. T.....Paul's Activity in Rome (Acts 28: 30, 31)
- December 24. F.....Paul's Reference to His Imprisonment (Phil. 1: 1-11)

December 25. S.....Results of His Imprisonment (Phil. 1: 12-18)
 December 26. S.....Paul, Prisoner for Gentiles (Eph. 3: 1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 62 to 64.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the leaders of the Jews in Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. Their desire to hear implies: (a) Open-mindedness. People should never close their minds to further study of any matter and especially that which has to do with their welfare, both here and in eternity. These Jews in Rome had heard only uncomplimentary things about the church. Yet they were willing to listen to Paul to see if he had added truth which was worthy of their consideration. Whenever we close our minds to further study of any question we must affirm, (1) that we know everything that is worth knowing about the subject; or, (2) that we are satisfied with the amount of knowledge we have and are willing to die without ever gaining any possible to one who has thus closed his mind. Peter commands us to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3: 18.) In order to obey that commandment, we must keep our eyes open and hearts receptive to further light and information on all matters that pertain to our spiritual welfare. (b) These people had a desire for information from an authoritative source. Being an apostle of Jesus Christ, the information which Paul would give to them would be information which they could rely upon. All of us should have a desire to go to an authoritative source for our information on our spiritual welfare. When men seek counsel and guidance in investing their money, they seek for authoritative information. They go to men who have experience and men who have official connections with the company or commodity in which investment is desired. So when we seek information on our spiritual welfare, we should go to a source that is dependable. Only the inspired apostles and prophets are thoroughly and completely dependable. To take the word of some uninspired man is dangerous and may lead to our eternal destruction. Peter speaks of some who, failing to understand the scriptures, pervert the same to their own destruction and the destruction of all who follow them. (2 Pet. 3; 15, 16.)

(c) These people were willing to change their mind about a despised sect. They frankly told Paul that they had not heard anything good about the sect with which they believed him to be identified, but, in spite of the fact that they had heard nothing good about that sect, they were willing to hear what he had to say. This implies that, if he could present sufficient evidence to change their mind with reference to the standing of that group with which he was identified, they would become identified with it also.

2. What they thought of Paul, (a) They looked upon Paul as a representative of Christ. These Jews had heard of Jesus, and they knew that Jesus had many followers. They spoke of these followers as a "sect", and they knew that that "sect" was not very favorably known in Rome. They looked upon Paul as a follower of Christ and, no doubt, a representative capable of giving definite and dependable information concerning Christ and his church, (b) They looked upon Paul as an uninspired person. They said they desired to hear "what thou thinkest." They did not say, We desire to hear what God has given you; they did not say, We are ready to hear you speak as the Spirit gives you utterance. When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, Cornelius told him, "We are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord." (Acts 10: 33.) Cornelius regarded Peter as an inspired spokesman of God, but these people said they desired to hear what Paul *thought*, thus indicating that they did not look upon him as an inspired man speaking the things God had commanded him to speak, (c) They looked upon Paul as capable of informing them of the work and teaching of Jesus. Of course, they viewed Jesus as a man, and only a man, and they viewed the church as an institution started by a man. Whether they conceived Jesus to be honest, or whether they conceived him to be an intentional impostor,

we have no way of knowing. But Paul's presence in Rome afforded them an unusual opportunity to hear of Jesus and the church which he founded, and they were willing to listen with an open mind to learn what he thought about it.

3. **Their example suggests to us:** (a) that Christianity is worth investigating. Christianity was not very old when these men visited Paul, neither had they an opportunity to observe Christianity at work; but in spite of the fact that Christianity was not very old and they had not long observed its workings, they thought it was worth investigating. Since Christianity is now more than nineteen hundred years old and since we have observed its workings, surely we have more reasons to consider it worth investigating than they had. One who closes his eyes against the evidences which are everywhere about us and claims that Christianity is not worth his time and effort to investigate must be very narrow-minded indeed. A system of moral and spiritual truths which has revolutionized the world and has delivered countless millions of souls from the oppression of sin and has pointed them to a purer, more useful life and planted in their hearts a hope of eternal life after the death of the body, surely commands itself to each one of us as being imminently worthy of investigation. (b) Christianity bears minute investigation. Infidels, atheists, and agnostics have doubted the truth of the Bible and have sought for many centuries to disprove its historical statements as well as its spiritual principles. Time after time these men have been converted while doing their best to

gather sufficient evidence to prove the Bible to be false. Metal is polished by continual rubbing, stones are made smooth and beautiful by continued rubbing, so the truths of God are made clearer and more beautiful by continued investigation. Error will not stand investigation, but truth thrives on study and investigation, (c) Paul is a dependable witness for Christ. As these people went to the apostle Paul to hear what he thought on the matter of Christianity, so we should go to the same authoritative source to learn definitely what we wish to know about Christianity. Too many people listen to the critics of Christianity. Some critics of Christianity have gone so far as to write books to disprove the genuineness of Christianity, and yet they confess that they have never made a careful systematic study of the Bible. When people depend on such critics as the sources of their information about Christianity, they are unfair both to themselves and to Christ. If one wishes to know about Mormonism, he would do well to go to an official representative of that system of religion. So if one wishes to know about Christianity, he should consult an official authoritative representative of Christianity. All the apostles and inspired prophets of Christianity are authority with reference to the principles of Christianity. These apostles and prophets have written their teaching, and those writings have been preserved in the book we call the New Testament. Hence, if we wish to know the principles of Christianity, we do not go to the critics of Christianity, but to the official authoritative source, the New Testament.

Introduction

In our last lesson we left Paul in the hands of Festus, the newly-appointed governor over Judea. Festus had, in order to secure the favor of the Jews, suggested to Paul that he go to Jerusalem for further trial. Paul refused to be turned over to the Jews and, hence, he made his appeal unto Caesar. The appeal was granted, and he was waiting for an opportunity to go to Rome. While he waited for this opportunity, Agrippa II, who was king over a very small portion of his father's territory and resided at Caesarea Philippi, came to visit with Festus. When Festus men-

tioned the fact that he had Paul as a prisoner, and that Paul had appealed to Caesar, Agrippa expressed the desire to hear Paul. Festus was glad for Agrippa to hear him, for Festus had difficulty in writing out the charges which were against Paul, and for which he was being sent to the emperor for trial. Festus thought that Agrippa could assist him in making out these accusations, so on the day appointed Agrippa and his sister Bernice, with chief captains and the principal men of the city, gathered at the command of Festus to hear what Paul had to say. In this we

see Paul the prisoner talking to Agrippa the king, but from another point of view we may say that Paul the freed-man was talking to Agrippa the slave of sin. Paul did not so much seek to free himself of the accusations against him as he sought to free his hearers from the dominion of sin. At the close of his sermon, Agrippa was convinced that Paul might have been set free if he had not already appealed to Caesar. When a suitable means of transportation had been secured, Paul, in the keeping of the centurion along with other prisoners, was put on board a ship to go to Rome. Paul advised the owner

of the ship to spend the winter in Fair Havens, but his advice was disregarded, and they set sail. They had not been out in the sea long when a storm overtook them, and they were driven furiously before the gale for many days. Finally their ship was caught between two seas, just off the island of Melita, and was torn to pieces. They all swam to the shore in safety. On the island Paul performed many cures and made friends with the natives. After three months they resumed their journey toward Rome. Brethren from Rome came to meet Paul as far out as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Visited by Representative Jews

(Verses 16-22)

Paul was suffered to abide by himself. Paul had been in the custody of a centurion named Julius. (Acts 27: 1.) This centurion had had ample opportunity to be convinced that Paul was no ordinary prisoner. He had seen his predictions of disaster to the ship come true. He had stood by Paul as Paul prayed to God. He had seen Paul shake a deadly viper off his hand into the fire and receive no harm. (Acts 28: 1-6.) He had seen him cure the sick on the island of Melita. (Acts 28: 7-10.) Seeing and experiencing these things on the voyage to Rome, this centurion undoubtedly gave a very fine report of Paul to the authorities in Rome. Hence, Paul was not subjected to the ordinary conditions of prison life, but was allowed to abide by himself. The only inconvenience attached was that a soldier was chained to him at all times.

He called together those that were the chief of the Jews. Paul took the initiative in calling for this meeting with the chief men among the Jews. He would have two purposes in this. (1) He would wish to put the gospel before them, for it was his business to preach the gospel to as many people as possible. (2) Paul did not wish to have the Jews of Rome for his enemies in his coming trial. He could hardly expect them to render any assistance, but it would be very encouraging to him if they did not openly accuse him before the emperor as their Jewish brethren had done in Judea.

I had done nothing against the peo-

ple. Paul assures these Jewish brethren that he had done nothing against his people as a nation, nor had he repudiated the customs of the fathers. But, in spite of these things, Paul says he had been delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. The courtesy and kindness of Paul toward his Jewish brethren who hated him are very obviously demonstrated here. He simply said he had been delivered a prisoner to the Romans. He did not say who had delivered him into the hands of the Romans.

Desired to set me at liberty. Paul says that when the Romans had examined him, meaning the trials in Caesarea, they desired to set him at liberty. Though he calls no names, there is an implied contrast here. His Jewish brethren wished to put him to death, but the Romans, after sufficient examination, desired to set him at liberty. His Jewish brethren thought there was cause for death, but the Romans, after sufficient examination, saw no cause of death in Paul.

I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar. Paul says that, when the Jews spake against his being set at liberty, he was constrained or compelled to appeal to Caesar. Though Paul openly charged that the Jews opposed his being set at liberty, he wishes his Jewish friends in Rome to know that he did not care to accuse his nation. If Paul should accuse his nation, it might bring further punishment or severe hardships on them at the hands of the Roman government. Hence, Paul assured his Jewish friends that he

would not bring an accusation against his nation.

Because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. This hope was twofold. (1) The hope of a Messiah to redeem and deliver Israel. Paul speaks of it as "the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain." (Acts 26: 6, 7.) (2) This hope was for a resurrection from the dead. "Having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24: 15.) Paul is anxious that these Jewish people in Rome would understand that he is a prisoner, not because of any misconduct on his part, but because of the hope of Israel.

We neither received letters from Judea concerning thee. News traveled slowly in those days. Paul's ship was the last one to get through before the stormy season set in, and no one had had time to come from Judea to Rome since the stormy season had ended; hence, no word had come to Rome concerning Paul. Since they had heard nothing against Paul personally, they were willing to listen to him concerning Christ and the church. They make it plain, however, that they regard him as being connected with a group of people which is not in very good standing in Rome. This would suggest that the church was rather small in Rome at that time or that these Jews intentionally refrained from giving Paul any information about the church in Rome.

II. Paul Preaches to the Jews (Verses 23-28)

They came to him into his lodging in great number. Paul's first meeting was with a representative number of the Jews in Rome. This second meeting was on a day appointed for the purpose, and these representatives who first met with him told others and brought a large group to hear Paul speak of Christ and the church. It is interesting to note that Luke says they came "into his lodging." While in verse thirty he is spoken of as having "his own hired dwelling." Greek scholars tell us that the word for *lodging* is a word which indicates that it was a place where he was entertained as a guest.

That is, he was a guest in the home of some friend, while the word for *hired dwelling* indicates that it was a house of his own or for which he paid rent.

Testifying the kingdom of God. On this subject Paul would remind the Jews of the promise of a kingdom in their own prophecies. Then he would seek to prove that Jesus as the head of the church is the fulfillment of those prophecies of a kingdom. Hence, he would assure them that the kingdom foretold in their prophecies, for which they had longed, had been established, and that it was now possible to be a citizen in that kingdom under the promised Messiah. (Col. 1: 12-14.)

Both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. Paul used the Old Testament as a source for his sermons. His teaching was based on the word of God. He was not interested in philosophical speculations or in human traditions, but he was intensely interested in teaching them what the prophets had foretold and in convincing them that Jesus and the church were the fulfillment of their prophecies.

Some believed . . . some disbelieved. The Jews of Rome were no different from the Jews of other lands, nor were these Jews any different from the people of all nations. When the gospel is preached, some believe and some disbelieve. Those who believe have the privilege of becoming children of God through obedience to the gospel of Christ. (John 1: 12; Acts 2: 38.) And those who disbelieve are condemned already because of their lack of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. (John 3: 18, 36.)

Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah. Paul picks a passage from the prophet Isaiah, which describes the condition of those who disbelieved. Isaiah described people as hearing and seeing but never understanding or perceiving, because their heart had waxed gross, their ears were dull of hearing, their eyes were closed. When people shut their eyes and close their ears to the truth of the gospel, there is no possibility of their being saved.

This salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. Paul said that, since these Jews had refused the salvation offered by the Lord, he would now offer it to the Gentiles. It was his custom, as commanded by the

Lord, to offer the gospel to the Jews first in each community and then to the Gentiles. Paul followed this custom even in Home as a prisoner. The expression *salvation of God* does not mean a salvation which pertains to God, but a salvation which comes from God. From past experience Paul was sure that, when this salvation was offered to the Gentiles, many of them would accept it. Hence, with confidence he turns from the Jews to the Gentiles with the salvation which is from God.

III. Paul's Extended Stay in Rome

(Verses 30, 31)

He abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling. Luke's account ends rather abruptly. We do not know whether Paul had been put to death or had been set free at the time Luke wrote this. Some scholars contend that the grammatical construction forces us to conclude that Paul's condition at the time of the writing was changed from that during the two years in his own hired house. Others think that Luke wrote

his record when Paul had spent two years in his hired house, and that he continued for some time after that in the same condition.

Received all that went in unto him.

Paul was too well known to be long in Rome without friends coming to see him. We have a record of friends from Philippi, Colossae, and Ephesus visiting him. Paul was too much interested in the salvation and edification of souls to spend his time in idleness. He preached and taught the gospel of Christ to those who visited with him, and he wrote letters to various churches while he was there. The letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon were written during this imprisonment. And if he had only one imprisonment, the letters to Titus and Timothy were written there: but if he was set free for a while and then imprisoned a second time, Titus and First Timothy were written after his release and while he was in Macedonia; and Second Timothy was written during his second imprisonment.

Lessons to Learn

1. Paul did not spend his time in prison complaining about his unhappy lot and the unfairness and injustice of his trials, but he made opportunities to preach the gospel to as many people as possible.

2. Paul was not discouraged when some who heard him preach the gospel disbelieved and blasphemed. He

simply sought an audience elsewhere.

3. Though Paul preached the gospel by word of mouth to many people, he exerted far more influence on the world through his writings. Preachers and teachers should avail themselves of the opportunity of perpetuating their influence through writing the gospel so that others may read.

Questions for the Class

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What evidence do we have of the open-mindedness of the Jews who visited Paul?

What do we affirm by closing our mind to further study of a subject?

What should all consider as an authoritative source of information in religion?

What was the attitude of these people toward the church?

What did these Jews think about Paul?

What did they think of his ability to inform them of Jesus and the church?

Can you give solid reasons why Christianity is worth investigating?

Would you be afraid for Christianity to be subjected to the minutest investigation?

Introduction

While waiting for transportation to Rome, to whom did Paul have the opportunity to preach?

Why was Festus glad for this king to hear Paul?

What was Agrippa's conclusion after hearing Paul?

Relate briefly Paul's experiences from Caesarea to Melita.

Where was Paul met by brethren from Rome?

Paul Visited by Representative Jews

What centurion was Paul's guard?

What did he think of Paul?

Why do you think Paul was allowed to abide by himself while in prison?

What reasons can you give for Paul calling the Jews of Rome to visit him?

How did Paul seek to gain the good will and sympathy of these Jews?

How did Paul contrast the attitude of the Jews and rulers in Judea?

What assurance did Paul give these Roman Jews of his attitude toward their nation?

What is meant by the hope of Israel?

What did this have to do with Paul's imprisonment?

Why had not the Jews of Rome received letters concerning Paul?

Paul Preaches to the Jews

What is suggested in our lesson with reference to Paul's first lodging in Rome?

What do you think Paul told these Jews of Rome about the kingdom of God?

What did Paul use as a source for sermon material?

What was the central theme of Paul's sermons to these Jews?

What is said of the length of time spent in preaching to them?

What was the response of these Jews to Paul's preaching?

What prophecy did Paul quote and apply to these Jews in Rome?

What did Paul propose to do when the Jews rejected the gospel?

Paul's Extended Stay in Rome

How long did Paul stay in Rome?

What is said of the place where he was imprisoned?

From what places do we know of friends visiting him while in prison?

What letters in the New Testament did Paul write while in prison?

What do you know of the possibility of his release from prison, his further travels, and his second imprisonment?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?